

“It’s a game, you've got to play the game”: Motivation and ‘Being
Employable’ in Ontario Unemployment Supports

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ABSTRACT

This thesis research analyses and explores the ways neoliberal conceptualizations of individual responsibility are embedded in practices of becoming employable. This occurs through provision of employment services, which reflect neoliberalization in funding policy documents. An ethnographic case study was conducted in one agency providing job-seeking assistance and services to unemployed Ontarians in a region experiencing high unemployment. Research methods included participant observation of the processes of service provision, as well as interviews with seventeen unemployed job-seekers. During field research, the concept motivation emerged as a mechanism for filtering whether job-seeking clients are suitable for receiving provincially-funded employment resources. Definitions of motivation in funding policy documents embody a neoliberal rhetoric that positions individuals as ‘agents’ responsible for enacting willingness and flexibility to engage in the labour market. Findings suggest that definitions and interpretations of the concept motivation lead to practices that delegitimize disincentives to employment, thus exacerbating demotivation.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"Most people are fairly flexible, the only time they're not flexible is when they're being forced into a situation that's not to their liking or they kind of resent it. No it's just basically the trend on now, on what's happening. It's an employer market. They get to pick and choose [...] so you kind of have to suck up to them and fit in."

- Interview Participant "Cal"

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis research explores the ways in which unemployed job-seekers negotiate the individual responsabilization focus of current provincially-funded employment policies in Ontario. In part this project was inspired by my own experiences of job-seeking and unemployment as a teenager and young adult. Difficulties of obtaining employment in my home town led me to question whether my experiences were a consequence of my own limited human capital (was I unemployable?) or a symptom of a much larger pattern of unstable and / or diminishing employment opportunities. I became aware that unemployment was not a consequence of my individual capacity or incapacity when, upon moving to Ottawa, I was able to procure employment almost immediately. This was in stark contrast with several previous experiences of unemployment, in which I would search and apply for employment for several months without success. This experience revealed to me that inequality of employment opportunities is not necessarily a question of merit, but is often a consequence of larger political and economic contexts.

My thesis research asks the question, "how do unemployed Ontarians experience and perceive access to resources for obtaining employment?" I ground this question within insights that suggest discourses of becoming employable are embedded in neoliberal rhetoric. This rhetoric positions individuals as economic agents who are responsible for

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their own employability (Brown, 2005; Gershon, 2011; Phillips, 1993; Siltanen, et al, 2009; Walkerdine, 2003). At the theoretical level, this research dissects and elaborates the ways neoliberal conceptualizations of individual responsibility are embedded in practices of being and becoming employable.

I situate my study of employment services and resources in a socio-political context, predicted by Bourdieu (1998), in which neoliberalism has become the dominant economic doxa. This doxa is evident in the conceptualization of motivation in social services and employment funding policies and guidelines. I frame my research in Bourdieu's (1977) theory of fields of power, and explore the notion of a neoliberal doxa. In this doxa, individual workers are expected to embody a habitus of flexibility, responsibility and willingness in relation to navigating their positions in the labour market (Siltanen et al, 2009; Walkerdine, 2003). Thus, my thesis research explores the consequences of the saturation of neoliberal doxa at the level of individual Ontarians, where unemployed can be equated with an apparent failure to adopt this neoliberal habitus and assert the 'right kind' of self-responsibilized agency.

ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

I chose to conduct an ethnographic case study in one agency that provides job-seeking assistance and services to unemployed Ontarians, in a region experiencing high unemployment. In order to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of my participants, the case study region is referred to as "Region A" and the particular branch of the province wide agency is called "Branch A". Research methods suited to this investigation included ethnographic tools such as participant observation of the processes of service provision practiced at the agency itself, as well as interviews with seventeen unemployed job-seekers attempting to access these services. Through interviews with unemployed and

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underemployed job-seekers I examined concrete experiences of navigating unemployment. I also explored the ways in which interview participants situate these experiences in relation to disincentives and demotivating factors for obtaining employment. I examined these experiences and perceptions in conjunction with several government policy and service provision documents that mediate and mandate access to employment and social services resources.

While I began this study as an exploration of the lived realities of those with human capital disadvantages, I soon discovered a more interesting paradox at work. On the one hand, the concept motivation emerged as the most significant factor in determining whether job-seekers are suitable for receipt of publicly funded social and employment services¹ supports, resources and programs. On the other hand, the concept of motivation seemed to be a taken for granted reality that identified whether clients were ready to reengage in employment. This means that the political and social construction of motivation, in the context of service provision, is one that creates disincentives and demotivating factors. In turn these factors have consequences that inhibit access to employment resources and services.

This paradox caused me to focus my attention on exploring the concept motivation as a mechanism that determines access and entitlement. If unemployment has various negative consequences, including lack or reduction of income, increased indebtedness, social isolation as well as loss or reduction in social status, why are some job-seekers not motivated to search for or obtain employment? What I discovered is that the construction

¹ By social services I mean the specific publicly funded sources of temporary or long-term financial support provided to unemployed individuals with demonstrated need. These include the Ontario Disability Services Program (ODSP), Ontario Works (OW) and employment insurance (EI).

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of motivation in public funding documents, as well as employment and social service guidelines, embodies a neoliberal rhetoric of individual responsabilization. This doctrine positions individuals as economic agents who are responsible for enacting willingness and flexibility to engage in the labour market (Braedley and Luxton, 2010; Brown, 2005; Gershon, 2011; Phillips, 1993; Thomas, 2010; Walkerdine, 2003). In this sense, the construction of motivation delegitimizes the disincentives and barriers faced by job-seekers, and is a justification for the gatekeeping of public resources. Indeed, the constitution of motivation can be traced back to a neoliberal doxa of flexibility, willingness and individual responsabilization. This inquiry helped me to see that the construction and interpretation of the concept motivation leads to practices that ignore and delegitimize disincentives to employment thus exacerbating demotivation. This paradox is set out and examined in the following chapters.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

In Chapter Two, I identify the theoretical standpoint of this research and define key concepts. I then briefly review other studies of unemployment, work change, social services and neoliberalization, while also situating my research in the current geopolitical and public policy contexts that frame unemployment services in Ontario. In Chapter Three I explain my methodological standpoint as a qualitative ethnographer, and describe my research methods, reflexive processes, coding and analysis strategies. Following that, in Chapter Four I describe the various aspects of this case study, such as regional economic and demographic characteristics, as well as job-seeking practices and services provided and promoted by Branch A. In Chapter Five I begin delving into the findings of my case study, identifying the emergent theme of motivation, and exploring the definition of this concept in funding policy documents, service provider guidelines and in

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work motivation literature. I then explore the implications of these definitions in the interpretation of motivation in the filtering practices of the service providing agency, “Branch A”.

I continue this discussion in Chapter Six, this time juxtaposing the findings from my interview data against the embodiment of neoliberal policies in service provision. I do so in order to allow interview participants’ voices to “talk back” to these policies and practices. Indeed, in this chapter I identify several key factors, which I call demotivating factors, that interfere with job-seeking motivation. This is an attempt to re-legitimize the ‘exogenous’ barriers that are positioned as excuses to remain unemployed and / or dependent on social services benefits. Finally, in Chapter Seven I acknowledge the limitations of my research in relation to discussions of structures of inequality such as race, gender, and ageism, suggesting several areas for potential further research. As well, I identify the contributions of this research to the sociology of work and employment, and the sociology of neoliberalization in public policy and social service provision. It is my hope that this research will be a force to re-legitimize the voices of unemployed Ontarians, contributing to current Canadian public policy discussions in both the public and academic arenas.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to contextualize the thesis research theoretically, and in terms of the geopolitical and policy context. In the first section I provide a brief description and history of neoliberal ideology particularly as it relates to employment and unemployment. Next, I articulate the theoretical concepts in which this study is located, those of habitus and doxa. In the third section I review other studies of work change, employment and neoliberalization of social services. I situate my research along the intersecting lines and absences in these other studies. In the final section I identify the geopolitical and economic policy context that frames the provision of services and resources for unemployed Ontarians. As I will demonstrate, this chapter explores the tension between the neoliberal doxa, infused in policies regulating the distribution of, and access to, employment services and supports, and the consequences of failure to embody the right kind of neoliberal employability habitus.

WHAT IS NEOLIBERALISM?

Neoliberal economic ideology began as a revisiting and reformulation of classical liberal economic theory, propounding liberation of the abstract market from the chains of state intervention and regulation (Braedley and Luxton, 2010; Brown, 2005). There is a claim that neoliberal economic theory is an extension of classical civic liberalism, in which citizens are provided with the rights of freedom and individuality. Yet the concepts of freedom and individuality have undergone a particular evolution (Brown, 2005; Dietz, 2002). In the reformulation of “freedom”, economic liberalization has become synonymous with practices in which governments actively deregulate industry, so as to allow the capitalist ‘free market’ to operate effectively and competitively (Braedley and Luxton, 2010; Thomas, 2010). Simultaneously economic policies have

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been reshaped to support a compulsive capitalism, in which the state's role is to promote and protect the interests of capital rather than those of its citizens (Gershon 2011; Luxton, 2010). Meanwhile responsible citizenship has become synonymous with demonstrating self-reliance, rather than state-dependence, by actively remaining employed (Brown, 2005; Gershon, 2011). This has been accompanied by a transition from prioritizing political and civic liberty to promoting economic freedom and individual autonomy, in which choice is synonymous with the individual responsibility to be employable.

Initially implemented through conditional loans to developing nations by international financial institutions, the widespread adoption and application of neoliberal doctrines in public policy indicates that neoliberalism has become the dominant economic doctrine. This is a trend that has been well documented in other studies (Braedley and Luxton, 2010; Brown, 2005; Chopra, 2003; Gershon, 2011; Glyn, 2001; Prasad, 2006; Silva 1993, Wilson, 1994). While the specific permutations of neoliberal doctrine are not uniform across nation states, in general neoliberal ideology is characterized by rhetoric promoting deregulation of industries and national economies, privatization of state enterprises (including social services) and flexibilization of labour (Chopra, 2003; Clark, 2002; Gershon, 2011; Luxton, 2010; Siltanen et al, 2009; Thomas, 2010; Ward, 2007).

Privatization of state services and deregulation of the market have been justified through the promotion of a rationally self-interested and economically driven individual and, in turn, state institutions have been permeated with provisions that reinforce economic rationality at the individual level (Brown 2005). This market rationality is supported through governing processes and policies that actively deregulate and

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downsize state intervention in human welfare (Braedley and Luxton, 2010; Brown, 2005; Thomas, 2010). Reduction of public services then creates conditions in which individuals are compelled to be responsible for their own wellbeing and those of family members or others in relational social networks (Armstrong, 2010; Luxton, 2010).

In contrast with the liberal democratic conceptualization of individuality, in which the individual is an inherently rational and calculating economic actor, the neoliberal individual is viewed as needing to be actively constructed. This construction of the neoliberal individual is one that facilitates neoliberal markets (Gershon 2011). This has been mirrored in the reformulation of agency: neoliberal conceptions of the self are of a product, an entity that is constructed through social interactions as well as through the right kind of psychosocial pressure (Gershon, 2011). Agency is then equated with ownership over the self as not only a marketable commodity, but also as an enterprise, or an assemblage of assets. This construction is facilitated by discourses of compulsive individuality, freedom of autonomy, flexibility and willingness, as well as responsibility and failure (Brown, 2005; Cronin, 2000; Phillips, 1993; Walkerdine, 2003). Neoliberal agency is encoded in rhetoric of responsibility and flexibility, in which individuals are conceptualized as perpetual economic actors, who must transform themselves to fit the demands of the labour market (Walkerdine, 2003). Thus, neoliberalism constitutes people in such a way as to become the kinds of economic actors needed to sustain a neoliberal form of market economy (Brown, 2005; Gershon, 2011).

Even before the economic recession of 2008, economic liberalization, couched in terminology of restructuring, and labour reforms, had been touted as a necessary process for reinvigorating struggling economies and creating jobs (Chopra, 2003). Since 2008, international governments and policy makers have reaffirmed their belief in the

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effectiveness of competitive and free capitalist markets and have instituted measures to support this doctrine (Braedley and Luxton, 2010). Such crises have prompted proponents of neoliberalism to acknowledge that both neoliberal markets and neoliberal individuals are necessarily constructed, rather than naturally occurring phenomena (Gershon, 2011).

Neoliberal theorists and policy makers have contended that capitalist markets must be created through policies which decrease state ‘interference’ in the market by deregulating the economy and reducing social welfare dependence (Braedley and Luxton, 2010; Gershon, 2011). Economic restructuring has been posed as the ‘common sense’ solution to rising unemployment rates and to capital flight in western nations (Druine and Wildemeersch, 2000). State labour policies have become complicit with, and oriented to, creating flexible markets and flexible labourers, constituted as neoliberal agents, embodying values of autonomy and individual responsibility (Ward, 2007; Gershon, 2011).

In Canada flexibilization of the economy and the labour force has been touted as the necessary solution to high unemployment (Betcherman, 2000). Furthermore, recreation of capitalist markets, as necessarily embodying a neoliberal sensibility, has entailed a reregulation of employment policies to constitute a flexible and willing labour force (Thomas, 2010). This reregulation has entailed active measures in policy documents that prioritize, promote and reward unemployed job-seekers for evidence of flexibility and willingness to engage in employment (EOPG, 2011; Daubé 2004; MCSS, 2012a; Service Canada, 2014: 9.4.1). This is because a flexible workforce is needed in order for corporations to maximize profits, a project promoted by rhetoric indicating that flexible labour attracts capital investments (Ward, 2007). Yet these policies ignore

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potential drawbacks, or disincentives, to participation in the labour market that may hinder flexibility and willingness. Thus the state's role has been inverted, moving from protecting the equal rights of individual citizens to protecting the conditions of free market competition, by configuring individuals as responsible for their own positions in markets.

The labour market is then characterized as an ever changing and flexible entity, to which individual workers must themselves change and adapt (Siltanen, et al, 2009). A competitive and free market requires a competitive and 'free' workforce (Braedley and Luxton, 2010; Thomas, 2010), one that is willing to engage in employment, despite potential disincentives, and that is flexible, adapting to or cooperating with employment ebbs and flows. This notion, of an inherent responsibility to be or become employable, constitutes individuals as successes or failures in relation to their employment status. As Walkerdine (2003) indicates, failure is a discursive mechanism through which the individual is transformed into a self-regulating subject, one who is deemed responsible for their position in economic relations. It is this underlying assumption, that individuals are responsible to practice agency that renders invisible the structural inequalities of distribution and access to employment supports (which includes services and resources for unemployed job-seekers).

NEOLIBERALISM AS DOXA AND THE EMPLOYABILITY HABITUS

I draw on the concepts of doxa and habitus to explore neoliberalization and its consequences in the lived realities of individual people experiencing unemployment (Bourdieu, 1990; Kraus, 2006). Bourdieu (1990) indicates that social interactions occur in a field of power relations in which individual actors must learn and internalize the hidden norms of the field in order to fit. Fields are relations of power in that they are the

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institutional or structural arenas, or social networks, in which various forms of symbolic capital are utilized in order to gain access to scarce resources (Bourdieu 2004). The unwritten and assumed norms in a particular field are called “doxa”, while the individual person’s internalization and habitual practice of these norms is a “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1977).

The individual person’s ability to fit in a particular social field is evaluated by others in the field in relation to whether doxa are enacted in the ‘right’ way. While at the same time their power is dependent on the types of symbolic capital they have access to and are able to maneuver (Bourdieu, 2004; Krais, 2006). Those in positions of power in the field undertake actions to reinforce the field’s doxa, so as to maintain the current structure of power relations. In this sense, the doxa, or norms, are mechanisms through which power relations are maintained, whereas the habitus is evidence of how well an individual has internalized their knowledge of social norms (Bourdieu, 1990). Tension between expectation and fulfillment of the right kind of routine interactions, or habitus, reveals the doxa of a particular field. What is more, the power relations within a field are evident when the habitus is not enacted as it is expected to be. This means that the field, its doxa and the internalization of this doxa (habitus) are socially constructed and informally enforced through the social interactions that occur in that field (Bourdieu, 2004).

I situate my study of employment services in this political and economic context in which neoliberalism has become the taken for granted economic doxa (Bourdieu, 1998; Chopra, 2003). Neoliberal doxa infuses economic and social policies² at both the national

² By “policies” I mean the specific documents that are used to ameliorate problematic labour market issues, such as unemployment rates. In constructing solutions to such problems, these documents mandate

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and federal level and is reinforced in particular fields by way of access to federally and provincially funded resources (Armstrong, 2010; Luxton, 2010; Thomas, 2010). This doxa positions responsible citizenship as necessarily individualized, responsible, flexible and employment oriented. As such, in the neoliberal economy, ‘deserving’ and ‘contributing’ citizens are expected and assumed to embody a neoliberal habitus (Brown, 2005; Chopra, 2003; Dietz, 2002). The components of this habitus are of flexibility, individual responsibility and willingness to engage in employment and adjust to work change (Siltanen at al, 2009). These qualities are demonstrated through the unemployed individual’s determination to maintain employment, even if available work opportunities entail a reduction in income, material wellbeing, social status or accustomed quality of life (MCSS, 2012a). Failure to habitually enact ‘responsible’ agency is blamed on the individual’s failure to properly internalize and embody the rules, values, and norms of neoliberal capitalism (Chopra, 2003; Gershon, 2011).

This neoliberal habitus entails an economically oriented autonomy that situates employed and unemployed workers as individually responsible for their position vis-à-vis the labour market (Bourdieu, 1998; Chopra, 2003). Enacting the neoliberal habitus demonstrates internalization of the doxa of individual responsabilization, in which economic structures are rendered invisible by the emphasis on the individual’s agency, or capacity, to be employable. This employability habitus is embodied as a compulsive responsibility to enact the individual agency necessary to maintain or obtain employment, and to avoid state assistance during periods of unemployment.

programs with accompanying guidelines for service provision and practice. Policies are then enacted through agencies or organizations that are government funded, either federally or provincially. The weight of these policies is felt in requirements for accountability from the organizations receiving funding, which then enact the required practices as mandated in funding guidelines.

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In the particular fields of employment and social services in Ontario, neoliberal doxa is articulated in the expectation that responsible citizenship entails being and becoming employable. What this means is that regardless of economic structures that have produced large-scale unemployment, or structural barriers that impede individuals in their job searches, obtaining employment has become both an obligation and a responsibility. This is evident in the way in which the definition of structural unemployment has been individualized by Canadian Government publications as, “the situation in which workers cannot occupy positions available because they do not have the desired skills, do not live where the positions are offered, or are not willing to work at the market wage” (Finance Canada quoted in Osberg and Lin, 2000 S142 and Daubé 2004:8). This definition places the blame for unemployment on the worker, for reasons of inflexibility or lack of skills, thus entrenching individual responsabilization in the very definition of “structural”.

RESEARCH ON WORK CHANGE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Studies of social welfare policies in Canada indicate that unemployment is often constituted as a temporary period of work change to which the individual experiencing unemployment must adapt (Grummel, 2007; Walkerdine, 2003). This myth positions the responsibility for navigating work change on the individual job-seeker, perpetuating the notion that overcoming unemployment is a matter of practicing agency. This is evident in recent neoliberal reforms to Ontario welfare policies (Breitzkreuz and Williamson, 2012).³ Despite structural conditions of economic recession, these policies have become increasingly more stringent in compelling individuals to obtain employment.

Privatization and cost cutting measures of neoliberal policies have brought about a shift,

³ Specific policy reforms relevant to this thesis are discussed in the following section and in Chapter Four.

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“from “welfare states” - those aimed at the decommodification of labour power through forms of social protection - to “workfare states” geared towards a recommodification of labour power through elimination of policies that buffer workers’ exposure to market forces” (Thomas, 2010:75). Across Canadian provinces, welfare policies reveal an assumption that the key to transforming welfare recipients into responsible, employed citizens is in promoting practices of self-sufficiency (Breitkreuz and Williamson, 2012).

These individual responsabilization oriented policies are supported by the promotion of job skills retraining and ‘upgrading’ as the solution to unemployment. As Handel (2003) indicates, upgrading services are situated as an individually focused response to structural conditions of unemployment. Such programs are promoted by evidence that completion of job skills upgrading programs has significant financial and employment benefits in the long term, leading to reduced dependence on welfare (Riddell and Riddell, 2006). Although, rather than acknowledging the intersection between liberalization policies and chronically high unemployment, the structural conditions are blamed on a skills mismatch in the labour market (Handel, 2003). Completion of these programs, however, is related to both the availability of time and of finances, provided through social assistance. Yet, little has been mentioned of the institutional mechanisms that restrict access to such programs, or of the ideologies underlying eligibility or suitability criteria. Moreover, the focus of skills upgrading places responsibility for becoming employable on the shoulders of the individual, to fit with the demands of the labour market.

Tropes of individual agency and choice in the labour market are perpetuated through the myth of a “second chance” (Grummel, 2007). In this myth, in order to succeed in overcoming structural barriers, individuals must practice taking responsibility

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for their circumstances and enacting practices for becoming employable. Individually oriented language perpetuates the neoliberal notion that sustained unemployment is a consequence of the individual person's failure to engage in remodeling practices that are oriented to being the 'right kind' of desirable worker (Walkerdine, 2003; Druine and Wildemeersch, 2000). While acknowledging that rising unemployment rates are a consequence of widespread economic recession, in their evaluation report of Ontario education and employment programs, Hennessy and Kaattari (2008) take for granted the competitiveness of the labour market. This then positions labour market competition as an individual hurdle to be ameliorated by retraining and learning more marketable work skills.

In addition, numerous studies indicate that rising unemployment and increasingly precarious forms of work inhibit the individual's 'capacity' to become self-sufficient by obtaining full employment. Despite this reality, individual responsabilization is persisting and intensifying because of the apparent absolutism of neoliberal doxa (Brown, 2005; Chopra, 2010; Cranford, et al. 2006; Gershon, 2011; Grummel, 2007; Handel, 2003). This is particularly evident in the area of work change, in which the blame and responsibility for adapting to unemployment rests on the individual, rather than acknowledging the consequences of large-scale economic shifts, such as that caused by the 2008 financial recession. As Siltanen, Willis and Scobie (2009: 1006) note, "[m]essages from all levels of government in Canada make it clear that dealing with the demands for and of work change is primarily an individual responsibility". Certainly, discourses supporting labour market flexibility focus on the capacity of individuals to enact resources of human and social capital, linking successful employment seeking strategies to the individual's capacity to manipulate the resources of skills, cultural

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knowledge and social networks (Siltanen et al, 2009).

This is visible in Walkerdine's (2003) study of the social mobility practices of urban working class women in England. In this study, research participants adapted to the demands for a flexible workforce by adopting practices of becoming flexible themselves. These practices include mimicking the habits and practices of the 'middle class' through make-overs both of the self and the home. Internalization of the individual responsabilization doxa was evident in participant's responses to discourses of failure. This indicates that internalization of individual responsibility, and the moral imperative to practice agency, are supported by discourses of failure, in which the individual is blamed, and thus assumes blame for prolonged unemployment (Walkerdine, 2003). Neoliberal doxa positions the individual as responsible for being or becoming the 'right kind' of employable agent, thereby absolving the state of responsibility for structural inequality which perpetuates unemployment and underemployment (Breitzkreuz and Williamson, 2012; Walkerdine, 2003).

Finally, much of the research into employment services has focused on policy initiatives and their effects, or on the consequences of neoliberal discourses in framing practices of teaching and socializing (Breitzkreuz and Williamson, 2012; Druine and Wildemeersch, 2000; Grummel, 2007; Riddel and Riddle 2006). Employment services market skills upgrading, such as computer skills, second career and job search skills as instrumental in empowering unemployed individuals to become successful job-seekers (Glass, et al, 2007; Hennessey and Kaattari, 2008). In Ontario, status reports and evaluations of such organizations and programs focus on the effectiveness of imparting skills, as well as providing access to community supports (Glass et al, 2007; Hennessey and Kaattari, 2008). Several such reports have touted skills upgrading practices and

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programs as a means of transforming individuals into responsible citizens, emphasizing not only employability but also parenting skills (Brietzkreuz and Williamson, 2012; Rahbari, 2011; Riddell and Riddell, 2006). Rhetoric of the ‘transformation’ of the service recipient into a responsible citizen, through employment, reveals the assumption that the individual is a lone actor who must accept more responsibility for becoming the ‘right kind’ of employable citizen.

Yet, studies of unemployment have indicated that not all people experience unemployment equally. As Siltanen et al (2009) and Shaw (1985) have indicated, unemployment may be experienced as anything from a temporary period of work change, a transitional period into other forms of work, to a long-term or cyclical period of chronic unemployment. The individual’s position on this spectrum is mediated by consequence of structural inequalities in access to human or cultural capital resources. Likewise, participation in employment services programs and job-seeking practices has been found to be subject not only to time and financial constraints, but also to resources, such as skills, as well as to obligations such as caregiving (Brietzkreuz and Williamson, 2012; Riddell and Riddell, 2006; Shaw, 1985; Siltanen et al, 2009). Financial limitations may require alternative means for obtaining childcare, transportation and basic needs through support networks of family members, friends or not-profit community supports (Brietzkreuz and Williamson, 2012).

Thus, there is a tension between the logic of neoliberal economic policies and the lived realities of individual people (Brietzkreuz and Williamson, 2012; Druine and Wildemeersch, 2000). This tension has been critiqued in Canadian studies of health care provision and informal caregiving, as well as studies of employment standards regulation (Armstrong and Armstrong, 2003; Braedlely, 2010; Luxton, 2010; Thomas, 2010).

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Studies such as these provide a frame of reference for exploring the consequences of neoliberalization in the realm of unemployment, in the mandating of service provision and in the mediation of access to services and supports.

My thesis research is concerned with the intersection between access to employment services and resources, and the neoliberal doctrine that mandates how this access is granted to individual unemployed job-seekers. I explore the ways in which job-seekers perceive of and experience unemployment and job-seeking in light of their access to job-seeking resources, as well as their ‘extrinsic’ life and employment goals. While critiques of ‘upgrading’ policies are oriented towards the relationship between the state and service providing institutions, which are mediate by policies (Grummel, 2007; Breitzkreuz and Williamson, 2012), I also examine the relationships between individual job-seekers and the actual interpretative processes and practices of employment services. Certainly it is these practices that mediate the individual’s access to resources and supports for navigating unemployment. Therefore, my research is situated along intersecting absences in these analyses, examining the ways in which neoliberal conceptions of agency and self-sufficiency are mobilized in organizational practices. Indeed, my research is concerned with exploring the way in which neoliberal doxa, are embodied in discursive practices of being and becoming employable.

NEOLIBERALIZATION IN ONTARIO UNEMPLOYMENT POLICIES

I situate my research in the geopolitical context in which recent shifts in public funding of services and resources for those experiencing unemployment evidences an intensification of neoliberalization. This intensification is one of reducing public expenditures on human welfare in order to force or compel economic self-sufficiency. Despite structural conditions of economic recession In Canada, neoliberalization of the

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labour market and social services is evident in “welfare-to-work” policies which include more stringent conditions for receiving social assistance services in which individuals must prove continuous efforts to obtain employment (Breitkreuz and Williamson, 2012). These discourses are visible in recent changes to Canadian Employment Insurance policies, which have reduced both eligibility and duration of benefits in what can be described as work-first tactics.⁴ Policies like this are oriented to producing a self-sufficient citizenry who will adhere to the demands of a flexible labour market.

While Canadian EI is provided to individual job seekers and is legislated, regulated and distributed at the federal level, the responsibility for distribution and mediation of finances for various employment services programs has shifted to the provinces (Government of Canada, 2013). Beginning in 2010, the government of Canada began intensifying the process of downloading financial responsibility for unemployment to the provinces.⁵ In particular, I was informed that the way Branch A experienced operational funding and funding for various packages of supports, changed during this time from “activities based” funding to “outcomes based” funding (FN 22/10). Activities-based funding from the federal government was a “hands-off” approach that simply required employment service providers to teach job-seekers how to find work (through workshops). In contrast, provincially mandated outcomes-based funding is accompanied by requirements for greater accountability that links provision of specific services with employment results.

⁴ Federal legislation now requires newly unemployed workers to conduct daily job searches and accept jobs up to one hour commute from home, seasonal workers must now search for and accept any employment up to one-hundred kilometers from their homes and at wages thirty percent lower than their usual earnings, after only seven weeks of unemployment (Service Canada 2013a; Service Canada, 2013b).

⁵ The provinces had already been responsible for administering and distributing some aspects of financial resources for employment services, for example, employment supports were already available to OW recipients and were funded provincially.

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As a result, public funding to such programs has been reduced while, at the same time, funding accountability conditions demand greater success (in terms of reemployment and independence from social services) from funded programs and agencies. In order to gain access to provincially-funded resources and services provided by employment services organizations, as well as to federally distributed individual supports through EI, individual unemployed job-seekers must prove that they embody the qualities of a neoliberal employability habitus. This is evident in the conditions for granting access to employment services and resources. Stipulations in these conditions are that unemployed individuals must be actively engaging in job-seeking activities, must be flexible in terms of their employment expectations, and must demonstrate willingness to engage in “any and all” available employment (EOPG, 2011; MCSS, 2012a; Government of Canada, 2013). The federal and provincial employment and social service policies that mandate access and distribution of funding for employment and social services frame these resources in terms of ‘suitability’. Suitability in this context is a euphemism for ‘deserving’, and is the mechanism for restricting access to resources in relation to job- seeking obligations and willingness to obtain employment (EOPG, 2011; Government of Canada, 2013; Ontario Works, 2013a; ODSP, 2013b; MCSS, 2012a;).

Access to Canadian employment insurance⁶ is available to previously employed workers “who have lost their employment through no fault of their own [...] and who are ready, willing, and capable of working each day but unable to find work” (Service Canada, 2015: Section 1, np.). Eligibility conditions include length of time worked before becoming employed and willingness to engage in work, and active job-seeking

⁶ Employment insurance (EI) falls under federal jurisdiction, and is collected from employed workers (with the exception of self-employed persons) and distributed by Service Canada for the purpose of providing financial assistance to unemployed workers. Workers must have completed a specified number of hours of

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activities (Service Canada, 2015). In Ontario, unemployed workers who are ineligible for EI, or who are chronically unemployed, may access financial assistance through either the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or Ontario Works (OW). OW provides temporary financial assistance if there is a demonstrated and immediate financial need (Ontario Works, 2013a). In order to receive this assistance, unemployed workers must sign a “participation agreement” pledging to participate in specific job-seeking and employment preparation activities (Ontario Works, 2013b). Willingness to engage in job-seeking activities is required of OW clients in order to continue receiving financial assistance (MCSS, 2012a; Service Canada, 2014: 9.4.1). Activities include participation in employment services such as employment counseling or attending workshops, participation in skill building programs, and demonstration of active job-seeking strategies (MCSS, 2012b). ODSP provides similar services for individuals categorized as disabled, applying for financial support either for long term or chronic illnesses, permanent mental or physical disabilities, or injuries, which may present barriers to obtaining employment for at least a year (ODSP, 2013a; ODSP, 2013b).

In this context, agencies providing employment services in Ontario, that receive funding packages from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), are situated as gatekeepers. This means that the organizations providing services to unemployed job seekers are required to mediate the flow of resources to unemployed Ontarians by accounting for a specified rate of successful reemployment.⁷ In this way, neoliberal policies, which prioritize individual responsibility and agency in the labour market, are embodied in the discursive practices of services provision and resource distribution for unemployed and under skilled job-seekers (Breitkreuz and Williamson,

work in the previous fifty-two week period to be eligible to apply for EI (Service Canada, 2015).

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2012; Druine and Wildemeersch, 2000; Handel, 2003).

What is missing in these policies is room for job-seekers to express divergent perspectives, or reasons, for not enacting a neoliberal habitus. This is because the construction of legitimate barriers does not allow for articulation of alternative or exogenous disincentives, or barriers to obtaining employment, other than those expressly qualified in funding documents. Rather, financial assistance and access to employment services and resources are available to those job-seekers demonstrating the neoliberal employability habitus of motivation, flexibility and internalization of individual responsibility. Thus, the implications of neoliberalization of unemployment policies demand articulation and exploration.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to identify where the thesis research fits in the broader scholarship. As I have demonstrated, my research considers the saturation of neoliberal doxa at the micro level, that of individual unemployed and underemployed Canadian workers. As well, the research fits into an existing framework of academic literature exploring the effects of neoliberal policies and practices in the everyday lived realities of specific subsets of the population (Armstrong and Armstrong, 2003; Thomas, 2010; Luxton, 2010). The plethora of academic work devoted to critiquing and analyzing neoliberal policies has in a sense rendered the study of neoliberal hegemony as commonplace. However, it is precisely the ordinariness of this doxa, and its consequences in the lived realities of people experiencing unemployment that demands articulation.

⁷ I discuss this process further in Chapters Four and Five.

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INTRODUCTION

In Ontario, provincial employment and social services policies frame the way in which unemployment is conceptualized, and supported, in the profession of employment services and thus experienced by unemployed job-seekers. This is particularly evident in regions experiencing both high unemployment and loss of manufacturing jobs. Those living in such regions are more likely to be exposed to the consequences of high unemployment, including job competition and stress on social services, than those living in regions with an average or low unemployment rate. For this reason, I chose to examine the experience of unemployment in one region in which the unemployment rate was significantly high. A case study was conducted at Branch A, an employment services agency, and involved interviewing those job-seeking clients with whom I made contact through this volunteer position.

As Michel Foucault (1980) suggests, relations of power are evident in the exercise of power. These relations manifest at the intersection between the subject and object of power, that is, between the individual and the socio-political instruments of power. This case study provides an in depth opportunity for exploring the point of contact between the neoliberal policies that mandate the distribution and access of resources for unemployed Ontarians and the individual unemployed job-seekers who seek such resources. As set out in detail in Chapter Two, the values, or doxa, underlying the construction and interpretation of employment and the practices of becoming employable are those of the neoliberal construction of a motivated, flexible and responsible citizenship. These values encompass a neoliberal employability habitus in which a particular form of economic agency and citizenship are prescribed through either reward

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or censure of the unemployed person's willingness to engage in job-seeking practices (EOPG, 2011; MCSS, 2012a; MCSS, 2012b; MCSS, 2012c).

My thesis research is an ethnographic case study of employment service provision. The study was conducted in one agency that provides job-seeking assistance and services to unemployed Ontarians in a region experiencing high unemployment. This was done to explore the way in which constructed meanings of being and becoming employable, responsible citizens intersect with the unemployed job-seeker's access to resources. Conducting an ethnography within a specific case of employment services allowed me to explore the way in which the concept of becoming employable is constructed and reinforced at the level of resource distribution and access.

In this chapter I first frame my methodological position as a qualitative researcher, engaging in a holistic and iterative process of data collection and analysis. I identify the relevance of my use of an ethnographic methodology, particularly as the means for conducting a case study. Then I describe the challenges of accessing and inviting participants and justify my use of a dual data collection strategy. Following that, I describe the processes I used for connecting with participants for both data collection methods, namely participant observation and interviews. After that I identify the various ways in which I engaged with reflexive practices, specifically, in the process of interviewing, as a means for engaging with ethical decisions and for maintaining transparency during data collection and analysis. Finally I describe the data analysis process, in terms of interview transcription and coding, as well as my practices for identifying and interpreting themes.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: AN ITERATIVE, HOLISTIC APPROACH

I approached data gathering and analysis as a holistic process in which the

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combination of inductive and deductive analysis provides a framework for contributing to larger theoretical discussions. As well this framework allows for the examination of new and emergent concepts and their implications. In this approach, data analysis begins before entering the field and is infused in choices regarding selection of the case study and instruments for data collection, as well as in construction of the interview guide (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). Such an approach is often associated with grounded theory, in which the focus is on building theory based on observations of themes as they emerge from analyzing the data, rather than using empirical research to test pre-existing theories (Kirby et al. 2010; Neuman and Robson, 2009; Pawluch et al. 2005). Unlike grounded theory, in which theories of social life are built through inductive analysis, a holistic approach integrates inductive and deductive analysis (Neuman and Robson, 2007; Rossman and Rallis, 2012). This means that, in as much as the themes that emerge from data collection and analysis frame the creation of new theories, these same themes may in fact be evidence in support of pre-existing theories. Just as analysis is an iterative process, theorizing is also iterative.

While the general theories of neoliberalism and Bourdieu's habitus and doxa have shaped my research question and topic, my data analysis was mostly inductive, exploring the themes and concepts that emerged from the data. My analysis draws on the emergent themes of motivation and demotivation, which I observed during phases of data collection and analysis. In doing so it contributes to, dissects, and builds on concepts of the right kind of economic agency and habitus in a hegemonic neoliberal doxa (Bourdieu 1990; Gershon, 2011).

Before entering the field, methodological choices are made that justify the selection of the research case (Gobo, 2008). My case study has elements of both critical and

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extreme characteristics. The combination of these two qualities allows for a critique of neoliberalization in a context in which neoliberal doxa does not necessarily make sense. The case is critical in that it has “strategic importance in relation to the general problem” (Flyvbjerg, 2011:78). The employment services agency chosen for my field research is one branch of a larger organization, with a number of branches in various regions of Ontario, that receives packages of provincial funding in order to operate. At the same time the case is extreme in that purposive sampling was used to select a region with an extreme level of unemployment (Gobo, 2008). Both the agency itself and its sources of operational funding are provincial in terms of programs, policies and guidelines for standardized service quality (EOPG, 2011). This standardization provides an interesting background for examining the experience of unemployment and access to resources in a region of high unemployment. In this way, the concept of critical case is particularly pertinent when exploring the social relations that contextualize experiences of unemployment.

ACCESSING PARTICIPANTS: THE BENEFITS OF MULTIPLE METHODS

While ethnography itself is a methodology rooted in participant observation, meanings and interpretations are often clarified through formal or informal interviews with participants (Gobo, 2008). I chose to combine the data collection methods of interviews and participant observation while volunteering in an organization that would grant me access to people navigating the experience of unemployment. In addition, combining the data collection methods of interviews and participant observation provided a depth and richness to the data that I could not have gathered otherwise.

Combining volunteer work with participant observation was advantageous both for Branch A and for myself as a researcher. This is because I was able to assist in the doing

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of organizational work, which alleviated some staffing stress, a challenge often faced by organizations whose budgets are limited by funding constraints. In addition, being involved in the work of the organization itself forced me to learn about the processes and practices of service delivery, as well as the language and implicit meanings of employment service provision, in a way that I could not have grasped had I been a passive observer.

As well, active participation at Branch A, in the role of a volunteer, gave me an avenue to meet and connect with potential interview participants in a non-threatening context. Potential interview participants were also provided with the opportunity to observe me and become informed about my research before committing to participate in interviews. Over a period of several weeks of volunteer work I established a rapport with various clients in which they vetted my interests, agenda and sincerity. I found that those who agreed to participate in my research were often clients with whom I frequently interacted as a volunteer.

One of the advantages of combining more than one data gathering method is that each method provides information that expands the findings of the other (Hesse-Biber, 2010). In my experience, intersecting aspects of data gathering and analysis led to the discovery of emergent themes, which I then incorporated into formal and informal interviews. It was in fact through participant observation that I became informed of the language and practices of job-seeking services and resources, services that have become standardized in a sense, due to provincial funding guidelines (EOPG, 2011). From these observations I became aware of relevant themes, which I then explored through informal conversations with Branch A staff and through formal interviews with job-seekers. These conversations and interviews then became avenues for not only exploring the

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experience of job-seeking from the perspective of the job-seeker themselves, but as a means for engaging with the interpretations of concepts and themes that emerged during participant observation.

In turn these interpretations gave rise to new and emergent themes that changed the direction of my research. I was initially interested in the types of resources and strategies job-seekers utilize to navigate unemployment, particularly relational support. As my fieldwork progressed it became apparent that the kinds of resources job-seekers have access to are mediated by employment and social services. Moreover, the ideological frameworks of the institutions that provide funding to employment and social services organizations shape the way access to resources is mediated by the agencies themselves. As interviews progressed I found that participants had very little in terms of relational support outside of the official services offered by Branch A. This means that the supports unemployed job-seekers receive from employment and social service professionals is often their only avenue of relational support. Such changes of focus are not uncommon in ethnographic field research, particularly when interviews are incorporated as a data generating method (Ranson, 2005).

DATA PRODUCTION METHOD ONE: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

In June of 2013 I contacted Branch A expressing interest in volunteering and researching for my master's thesis and inviting the agency to participate. I chose Branch A as it is one branch of a larger agency that has a uniform philosophy regarding service provision and also provides standardized services at all branches. The program manager (PM) of Branch A responded positively and, following a favourable reception and interview with both the PM and the team leader (TL), it was agreed that Branch A would participate in the research project for a negotiable time period. This negotiable aspect

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was pivotal in ensuring that I was able to continue generating data until I had reached theoretical saturation (Gobo, 2008).

Nancy Planky-Videla (2012), in her organizational ethnography of factory work in Mexico, suggests that the process of providing participants with information and gaining consent is ongoing. What this means is that consent entails more than simply gaining entry to the field or completing the ethics review process. I attempted to enact this principle by providing various levels of information and by updating staff of Branch A at various junctures in the research process. Prior to my start date I created a poster introducing myself and stating the purpose of my research for circulation in the Branch A office (see Appendix D). I also introduced myself in person at a staff meeting on the first day of my research. Periodically at staff meetings I provided updates about my progress. The last update was delivered on my final day of volunteering on December 11, 2013 as an initial summary of themes. The introduction poster was placed in several prominent locations in Branch A to inform clients of my presence as a university student researcher. In addition, at the beginning of each workshop I attended, I explained my research to clients and extended invitations to participate in interviews about their experiences of job searching and navigating unemployment. While assisting clients in the resource and information center (RI) I was often recognized by the image on my poster and frequently had the opportunity to explain my research, while also providing my contact information and extending invitations to participate in interviews. When observing meetings between clients and employment counselors, I first explained that the purpose of the observation was to learn about the process of the meeting and assuring each of my responsibility to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. I then requested permission of both the client and counselor.

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In the second week of September, 2013 I began participant observation as a volunteer at Branch A for two days each week with the aim of continuing for a four-week period. In addition to this, it was agreed that I volunteer with Branch A for an unspecified period of time, until I was satisfied that I had gathered enough interview data. After the first four days of participant observation it became apparent that the time period originally chosen would not be sufficient to learn about the full range of services and job searching strategies offered at Branch A. After discussing this with the TL it was agreed that I increase my time allotment to three days each week for a period of five more weeks, with an overall time period of seven weeks. I then corrected the dates on my introduction poster to inform staff and clients of this extended time period. I also informed Branch A staff individually of this change. I continued volunteering at Branch A for a further five weeks after completing the period of participant observation, until I was satisfied that I had reached sampling saturation for interviews.

One of the challenges of this approach, of combining volunteer work and research, is that I was restricted from recording some aspects of the information I encountered in my role as a volunteer. In particular because one of the training curricula, which I call “Job Direct”, is under license by Agency A, I was not allowed to include the trademarked terms that this curricula utilizes in its approach to job development. Additionally, because my period of volunteer work extended beyond the data generating phase for participant observation, there were aspects of the processes I observed, or became more familiar with as time progressed, that I have not included in my field notes.

As an unpaid volunteer I provided customer service to clients of the RI center, as well as completing various other projects requested by the TL. My work included

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assisting clients in using the computer, printer and photocopier, as well as answering the telephone, answering client questions, booking appointments, administering intake forms to new clients and educating first time clients about the services provided by Branch A. In addition to working in the RI center, I was invited to participate in and observe several workshops relating to topics such as: job searching, resume and cover letter building, personality testing, career transitions and job interviews. As well, I was included in workshops specifically oriented to experienced workers participating in the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW) program and youth participating in the Youth Employment Fund (YEF). Participation in the work of the organization offered an avenue through which to become familiar with the processes of job-seeking promoted by RI staff, as well as the services delivered to primarily ‘independent’ and self-directed job-seekers.

My data gathering strategies entailed daily practices of record keeping. These included keeping field notes⁸ for recording the practices and processes I observed at Branch A, writing analytic memos relating to my interpretations and analyses of themes I noticed in my field notes, and keeping a reflexive journal (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). Most often I recorded my observations during breaks from my volunteer duties, after observing meetings or engaging in informal interviews with staff, or at the end of the day. The two settings in which I recorded field notes during participant observation were in workshops and during Branch A team meetings. This is because in both of these scenarios, the practice of note taking is common and is therefore unobtrusive. At other times I wrote short-hand jottings on scraps of paper to record particular words or phrases that I later described in my field notes (Emerson et al, 2011; Rossman and Rallis, 2012). In addition, the practice of

⁸ All field notes are cited as (FN day/month)

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keeping headnotes, in which key words are used as triggers for memory, enabled me to track key observations at times when participation in the organization rendered written jottings unfeasible (Emerson et al, 2011).

Rather than observing the social interactions between staff, or between staff and clients, my data gathering focused on the processes and practices of service provision at Branch A (Gobo, 2008). This focus on process and practice, rather than interaction, was a consequence of reaching a compromise with the Ethics Review Committee, which was concerned about potential power relations involved in my role as a researcher and participant observer.⁹ So, I approached participant observation as a means of exploring how the work of job-seeking is facilitated by routine organizational practices. I also observed the linguistic cues that shape the way job-seeking practices were conveyed to service clients through various services. This included the particular terms and concepts used to describe job-seeking practices, service provision, accountability for funding, and the particular practices promoted for becoming employable.

Participant observation may be practiced in a variety of ways. One method is to prioritize observation and refrain from interaction so as not to be obtrusive and ‘interrupt’ the processes being observed. The other method is an almost entirely interactive, or participatory, approach that involves establishing relationships with the members of the field being observed so as to become fully immersed in the meanings of the field (Gobo, 2008; Desmond, 2006). The way in which I engaged as a participant observer entailed a combination of the two extremes. While occupied with my volunteer duties my observations were embodied experiences, recorded during breaks or at the end of the day.

⁹ One drawback of this approach is that I was not able to clearly identify variations in the backgrounds, job orientations, or ideological stances of staff members. This means that practices of “working around” bureaucratic processes and organizational practices are not explored in depth in this thesis.

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At the same time, I was given multiple opportunities to attend appointments, team meetings and workshops, each of which had varying ratios of observation and participation. In appointments my role was strictly to observe, after which I would ask the staff member about the meanings and interpretations of what I had observed. In meetings and workshops I engaged as a participant, while also having the opportunity to observe and record the practices, symbols or language employed. My research observations about processes and practices are then a composite of interpretations of information gathered through conversations with staff about the work of employment services at Branch A, information presented to job-seekers in workshops about the job search strategies in the current labour market, and my own embodied experiences and interpretations of employment services gathered through participation in service provision to RI clients.

After the first three weeks of volunteering I found that my field notes were focused primarily on the RI services and on workshops and were excluding the other dimensions of services offered to clients. I realized the need to seek another avenue for becoming familiar with the language and practices of job-seeking embodied in these other service dimensions. Therefore, I requested to be allowed to observe meetings between ECs and clients and I also sought informal, information clarifying conversations with staff in other organizational roles.

Over the following three weeks, I observed first meetings between six of the eight employment counselors and new service clients. During these appointments I refrained from interjecting or interacting unless specifically addressed by either the employment counselor or the client. In these meetings employment counselors set the parameters of the counseling relationship, established job search strategies and goals with clients and

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engaged in motivational assessments to determine the extent to which clients were committed to obtaining employment. Such assessments were a means of filtering in order to determine whether clients qualified for assisted or unassisted services at Branch A. These filtering practices were not formally mandated by Branch A, but were rather practices that individual employment counselors used to interpret suitability criteria and to assess client motivation. However, there were similarities and consistencies in these practices that indicated a more general filtering process.¹⁰

Filtering was not always evident to clients, as particularly service-oriented counselors would still provide some level of job-seeking mentoring for clients who did not qualify for assistance. This sometimes included editing resumes and crafting a job search plan. Other counselors were more focused on the filtering process as a means of assessment and so would be more vigilant in applying concrete methods for filtering. Regardless of these differences there were observable patterns for filtering used by the majority of employment counselors that I discuss further in Chapters Four and Five.

After these meetings I returned to my assigned cubicle and recorded my observations and reflections in my field notes and reflexive journal. I later conducted informal informational interviews with the employment counselors in which I asked that they describe how they measure client motivation, how they assess whether to continue with specific clients in assisted coaching relationships, and how they perceived the labour market based on their work of assisting job-seekers in job searching.¹¹ These conversations clarified the employment counselor's role in service provision and resource distribution, their relationship to the funding accountability and guidelines, their interpretation of these guidelines and their understanding and reliance on training

¹⁰ See Chapter 5 for more detail regarding the filtering process.

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materials.

Next, I sought informal information generating meetings with job developers (JDs) to learn more about their role in the organization. While each job developer invited me to meet with local employers, none of these meetings materialized during the time frame of my research. So, in order to learn the way in which the job-matching model intersects with and disrupts traditional job-seeking and hiring practices, I was accepted to participate in job matching training. I participated in Agency A's officially licensed "Job Direct" job development training workshop in my final week at Branch A. I have supplemented my field notes with the embodied knowledge from this training, in order to better explain the practices and processes of the job matching service.

Finally, to ensure that my observations and interpretations of Branch A's services reflected that of the staff as closely as possible, I conducted individual information clarifying conversations with most staff members in each organizational role as intersubjective, or dialogical, reflexive checks (Finlay, 2002). This included all three RI center staff members, all three JDs¹² and one of the two vocational rehabilitation specialists. This method was my primary means for observing the vocational rehabilitation specialist (VRS) role and the JD role, as direct observation was not possible. Through informal conversations I asked similar questions to those I had asked employment counselors. This included descriptions of their roles, the significance of funding accountability and service unit targets in their roles, their interpretations of motivation and the significance of motivation in the services they provide. Additionally staff members explained how the roles they occupy fit with other roles in the

¹¹ See Chapter Four for more details.

¹² Near the end of my research, after the phase of participant observation had concluded several other staff members were being trained in JM practices and were transitioning to JD roles, either as full or in part.

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organizational context, their perspectives on job-seeking in the local labour market, and the ways in which they interpret and respond to funding guidelines and concepts, such as motivation. These informal information-generating meetings were particularly pertinent for examining the definitions and interpretation of motivation, in organizational filtering practices.

DATA PRODUCTION METHOD TWO: INTERVIEWS

In the second week of participant observation, I began actively inviting unemployed job-seeking clients of Branch A to participate in semi-structured interviews. I explained that these interviews would be asking participants to relate to their experiences of job searching, as well as their strategies and resources for navigating the current period of unemployment. I issued invitations to job-seekers by providing several layers of information to clients of Branch A. This included issuing verbal invitations to participate in an interview before, during, or after Branch A workshops. To explain my research and my practices for maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, I also and distributed the letters of informed consent.¹³

My interview population was limited to unemployed job-seekers over the age of nineteen, who were either currently unemployed or under-employed¹⁴ at the time of my research. Due to a restriction regarding my access to the research site, I did not conduct formal interviews with staff. This restriction was negotiated as a compromise in dealing with the requirements for ameliorating potential power relations and issues of free consent raised by the Research Ethics Committee.¹⁵ Instead, eligibility for participating in formal interviews was limited to individuals who were clients of an employment

¹³ See Appendix C

¹⁴ Under-employment includes part-time or precarious short-term work of twenty hours per week or less.

¹⁵ This restriction meant I was not able to explore possible variations in how staff conduct their relations with clients.

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services agency in Region A, either during my research or within the previous six months. I noticed that positive responses to interview invitations seemed to be a consequence of both to my physical presence at Branch A and direct personal contact or relationships with myself. This was evident in that new interview participants did not contact me for interviews on the days I was not physically present at Branch A.

I aimed to continue interviewing participants until the themes that emerged from participant observation were saturated. I found that the particular themes I noticed in participant observation, namely motivation and access to resources, were also present and recurring in my interview data. I then focused on exploring the meanings of these concepts and their consequences in both data sets. Particular attention was concentrated on the similarities and divergences in participants' experiences and responses to the meanings I observed and recorded in my field notes. I began to notice recurring themes in responses after conducting close to fifteen interviews. However, I continued actively seeking interview participants until I had ceased volunteering at Branch A. This modified form of theoretical sampling was more practical given the time limitations of a master's thesis. It also ensured that while my sample size was small, my data was no less 'thick' than a conventional application of theoretical sampling.

The significance of direct relational contact in the data-gathering may have been a consequence of several factors. One factor I noticed was access to transportation. While I offered to conduct interviews at a location far from the Branch A premises for privacy reasons, most participants preferred to meet me at a coffee shop in direct proximity to Branch A. These meetings were also usually on days the participants were planning to attend Branch A for workshops, meetings with employment counselors, or to use the RI center. Another factor may be that because the experience of unemployment is in itself

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stigmatized (as many of my interview participants mentioned), the prospect of discussing this experience with a stranger might have been a deterrent to some potential participants. Finally, relationship building was a significant component in generating trust and proving my intentions to potential participants, a factor that I describe further below.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

From October ninth until December thirteenth 2013, I interviewed twenty job-seekers about their experiences of unemployment and job-seeking in Region A, which I recorded using a computer software program. Unfortunately, six of the audio recordings were lost due to a computer malfunction. Of the six, three of the participants agreed to engage in a second interview. The three who consented to second interviews were clients I had regularly interacted with while volunteering at Branch A. In contrast, two of the three interviews that were permanently lost had been one-time users of Branch A. The third had since been rehired at his previous place of employment and so did not return to Branch A.

Of the seventeen completed interviews, nine participants are female and eight participants are male. Demographically there is a clear division of interview participants into two distinct cohorts, a mature worker cohort and a young worker cohort. One male participant and three female participants are between the ages of twenty-five and thirty years old, whereas six female and seven male participants are between the ages of fifty and fifty-five. In fact, most of job seekers I met and interacted with during my volunteer work at Branch A are of mature or young worker cohorts, with only a few exceptions. This is a consequence in part of the targeted populations that were being politically recognized for facing age and experience barriers to obtaining employment. Of the seventeen participants,

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only one was not a client of Branch A, although his experiences of employment services assistance were comparable to those of others in the mature cohort of my interview participants. This is because his participation was in the same standardized TIOW program, which is funded by the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU).

In terms of participants' unemployment duration, this extended from only a few weeks to over ten years. Of those experiencing chronic unemployment,¹⁶ three participants had been unemployed for ten years or more and six had been unemployed between one and five years. In terms of recent unemployment, four were unemployed for six months to one year and three were unemployed for one week to five months. Participants who had been unemployed for more than one year generally were receiving some sort of social service assistance, such as OW or ODSP. Two young job-seekers and one mature worker were the exception to this. "Nina" was being supported by her parents and "Elizabeth" was receiving financial contributions from her family overseas. One participant in the mature workers cohort, "Kim", was also relying solely on support from her spouse. As well, two participants were engaged in part time, precarious or very low paying employment. Elizabeth considered herself unemployed, where as another participant, "Tyler", considered himself underemployed and was seeking a supplementary job or full time work.

The length of time participants had been actively job-seeking ranged from several weeks up to two years with the majority of participants having been actively seeking for three to seven months. I make a distinction between job-seeking as an activity and unemployment as an experience. Job-seeking includes a range of activities, such as

¹⁶ I define chronic unemployment as continuous unemployment for more than one year, or recurrent unemployment in which the worker is unable to maintain or sustain employment. This does not include

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constructing and distributing resumes, and contacting employers, which have employment as their aim. To be a job-seeker does not mean engaging in the activities of job-seeking per-se, as these activities may be unfamiliar, confusing, or anxiety ridden. Rather a job-seeker is simply, one who desires employment, as such I considered all individuals who sought the services or resources of Branch A, or an equivalent employment services agency, as a job-seeker. This is because, as the staff at Branch A indicated, the fact that an individual seeks out assistance for learning how to search for jobs demonstrates that they have a level of incentive for obtaining employment. Thus while some participants had been unemployed for up to ten years, this did not necessarily mean that they had been seeking employment or were considered job-seekers during the entirety of the period of this unemployment.

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS AS REFLEXIVE DIALOGUES: THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Each interview was conducted with an interview schedule, in which participants were asked to relate their experiences of job searching and navigating unemployment.¹⁷ My approach in conducting interviews, however, was as a method for pursuing reflexive dialogues. By this I mean that participants were encouraged to think out loud when describing their locatedness in economic relations, in regards to their past and present experiences of work, their perceptions of labour market opportunities and of the resources available to them through formal and informal relational supports (Finlay, 2002). Each interview was conducted as a conversation in which the interview questions were interwoven into the conversation as it unfolded.

Interviews were also semi-structured with the interview schedule used as a map for

seasonal unemployment.

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prompting conversation. This means that while the first question was always the same, the order of the rest varied in relation to the dynamics of the conversation with each participant. Interviews lasted between thirty-five and one hundred and twenty minutes with the majority lasting approximately one hour. As the majority of participants agreed to be interviewed only after interacting with me for several weeks, interviews were an outcome of concerted efforts to build trust and create a context in which participants could engage in reflexive dialogues. In this sense, interviews as a form of dialogical reflexivity provided a point of reference for engaging with participants' experiences through both their voices and their thoughts.¹⁸

This manner of interviewing allowed for participants to engage in a type of self-reflexive analysis of their experiences with, and perceptions of, unemployment and job-seeking. As I interviewed I became aware that what my interview participants wanted to say was a different story from what I had set out to learn. From these reflections I noticed the recurring themes of disincentives and demotivating factors to obtaining employment. Therefore reflexive narratives were an essential part of the iterative data analysis process.

REFLEXIVITY, ETHICAL RESEARCH AND THE DYNAMICS OF RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

An iterative approach to data collection and analysis necessitates using various reflexive strategies to account for the ways in which data analysis and generation intersect and inform each other. Documenting of interpretive choices ensures

¹⁷ See Appendix B.

¹⁸ Margaret Archer (2003; 2010) identifies reflexivity as both an 'internal conversation', or thought process, and a social relation in which people evaluate decisions, motivations, and reactions, in relation to their social context, their social interactions and socioeconomic position. This 'self-reflexivity' is then a dialogue in which the self is cognitively positioned in relation to a perceived 'you', which encompasses social norms and expectations (Archer, 2010). In this way, individuals produce knowledge about the self, which contributes to the way decisions and actions are understood (Archer, 2010).

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accountability for this ongoing decision making process. As well, practices of reflexive transparency are embedded in acknowledging the researcher's own situatedness. By this I am referring to the ways in which my experiences, world-views and demographic characteristics shape my interactions with others and thus infuse the research process. To account for this, I used reflexive journal entries for tracking my decisions regarding emergent themes, coding, ethical decisions, and theoretical insights (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). In addition, I kept a reflexive journal to account for my ideological and theoretical stances as an academic and researcher.

Researching in one's own social field can present challenges, such as overlooking and taking for granted the subtleties of social interactions and symbolic meanings (Gobo, 2008; Kirby et al, 2010). At the same time there are advantages in that the researcher's knowledge of the culture can aid in navigating the precarious terrain of gaining access to the field and building trust with potential participants. The experiences that framed my research topic and questions are those of being a job-seeker in a small town in which there seemed to me to be few opportunities for work. In addition, my background as the daughter of a local trades person, in a region in which the trades were particularly saturated with competing small businesses, meant that I was not immune to the experience of cyclical lack. Certainly, before entering the field I anticipated that my socioeconomic background provided me with a small town habitus that could aid me in navigating the taken-for-granted norms and expectations of relationship building in Region A. This habitus also gave me credibility for gaining in-group belonging.

Throughout my three months at Branch A, I was conscious of ways in which I practiced identification with potential interview participants, clients and staff of Branch A. By this I mean that I was aware of the contexts in which I related various aspects of

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my background, and experiences. This first surfaced during the process of requesting access to Branch A. In an interview with the TL and PM I related my previous experience with a similar organization to explain my interest in conducting research at Branch A. Positive experience with a job-matching program and familiarity with employment services were assets in gaining entrance to the field.

I also found myself identifying my social locatedness as a means of building trust and relating to potential research participants. While volunteering at Branch A I was aware of the way in which I mobilized my small town cultural capital as a means of relating with staff of Branch A as well as potential interview participants. For example, my information poster identified me as a Carleton University student. If clients appeared to withdraw on learning I lived in Ottawa, I would verbally identify the small town of my upbringing to eliminate some of the sociocultural distance. Practices of identification were not always necessary or beneficial, as some clients who identified me as an outsider were eager to inform me about the cultural and economic context of Region A. Several times, job-seekers with similar educational backgrounds identified with me because of my status as a university student researcher and would inquire about my research interests and theoretical stances. In these instances, I did not need to actively qualify my identification, rather such clients would identify with me based on my information poster.

In other instances, my status as a university student and role as a volunteer at Branch A were barriers to identification with potential interview participants. In order to unravel the perceived lines of social or economic status, I would identify my father's occupation as a 'blue collar' trades person. In so doing I acknowledged that my socioeconomic and cultural upbringing shaped my life experiences and were the reasons for my interest in

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researching unemployment, rather than a detached curiosity or a paternalistic sense of ‘doing right’. At times I internally questioned the extent to which I still identified with this upbringing after so many years in academia and I wondered if my research motive was after all, paternalistic. I used my reflexive journal as a means of working out these various crosscutting identifications and social locations. I found that reflexively tracking these experiences helped me to recognize the ways in which social location informed my research and my experiences of relationship building.

Reflexive practices were also a means of ensuring that I practice an everyday ethics. As Rossman and Rallis (2010) suggest, although passing the ethics review process is one dimension of ethical researching, an everyday ethics is attentive to the dynamics of interpersonal relationships and trust built between researchers and participants. Because relationship building was particularly significant in recruiting interview participants, this dimension of reflexivity was particularly pertinent. Also, I found that this depth of relationship building encouraged active participation in, and ownership of, the research process.

Through formal and informal interactions in workshops and in the RI center several service clients engaged in various levels of active participation in my research. During interviews clients often engaged in asking back (Kirby et al, 2010; Oakley 1981), directing questions at me and inquiring what observations I was making, what my theoretical standpoints were, what had motivated me to research the topic, what my regional connections were and what my socioeconomic background was. One such client, after participating in being interviewed began actively searching for and recommending potential policies to be analyzed, community research organizations to

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consult, and city council meetings that may be of interest for my research (RJ 28/11).¹⁹ Another two clients engaged in daily conversations with each other about their views on city council policies, the regional economy, and changes they suggested needed to be implemented for the purpose of creating employment and business opportunities. During these conversations these clients would extend comments to myself and ask my opinion on specific issues. Through these public conversations I realized that I was being informed about these client's views, perceptions and ideas of political and economic life in Region A. I wrote reflexively about the experience, although decided against recording conversational content in my field notes.

Finally, ethics of the everyday entails that the researcher take account of “ethically important moments” through various reflexive practices such as analytic memos, and reflexive journals, as well as mental notes (Rossman and Rallis, 2010). Certainly, I found that on more than one occasion I encountered ethical decisions I had not anticipated. Reflexive journaling was a means of recording and engaging with these moments and my decision-making processes. For example, while my initial intention was to interview in places of privacy in order to maximize anonymity, several issues arose that meant this was not always possible. I recorded each of these interview location decisions in my reflexive journal to account for the factors that influenced these decisions and my decision making process. Additionally, to account for any potential risk of inadvertently revealing participants' identities, I have ensured that in my descriptions of interview participants I do not include any individualized personal information. I have also given my interview participants pseudonyms and have redacted the names of previous employers, the names of employment counselors, specific jobs and fields of

¹⁹ References to reflexivity journal are: RJ day/month.

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work these clients were applying for.

DATA ANALYSIS: TRANSCRIPTION AND CODING

As previously mentioned, a holistic approach has infused analysis throughout each phase of my research in that data collection, analysis, interpretation and theorizing are all treated as overlapping or iterative processes (Rossman and Rallis, 2012; Neuman and Robson, 2009). This approach has entailed elaborating on meanings and themes as they emerged during participant observation and interviews, through transcription and coding, and finally while writing (Rossman and Rallis, 2012; Snyder, 2005). My data analysis strategy has also drawn on daily practices of reflexive journaling, analytic memos and reflexive memos to track my decisions regarding emergent themes, ethical decisions, and theoretical insights (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). In approaching data analysis as an iterative process, I have recorded concepts and recurring themes as analytic memos in my field notes, in my reflexive journal and in analytic updates sent to my thesis supervisor. These recordings were made while still in the field, and informed subsequent observations and interviews. Focusing on the themes and concepts that emerged from data, while still in the data production phase, strengthened the refining process because I was able check my interpretations with those of my research participants.

The process of coding itself entailed a thematic analysis of both interviews and field notes, which I completed in four phases. This process was dialogic in that the themes I noticed in my participant observation were refined through informal interviews with Branch A staff and during formal interviews with unemployed job-seekers. Themes were again refined through observations in the field, and so on.

At the same time, coding was conducted in stages in which each stage informed the

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next. The first, “observational” phase of analysis began during field research in which I recorded observations of preliminary recurring themes as analytic memos. I then refined these themes through informal conversations with Branch A staff, and through formal interviews with job-seekers. The second phase was a pilot analysis of the preliminary findings and emergent themes, which was prepared for a presentation to Branch A staff. In a third phase, themes were further refined and defined while transcribing interviews. In the fourth phase I used the refined categories to recode interviews and to code all field notes. Finally, I conducted a policy analysis of provincial employment and social services funding documents and work motivation literature. I used this analysis to refine definitions of motivation and to explore the ways in which ‘official’ definitions converged with or diverged from the meanings I had uncovered in my research.

The preliminary observational phase of coding began as a way of recording the reoccurring words, phrases or processes that I encountered while still in the field volunteering at Branch A field, and conducting interviews. The two themes I noticed in particular were motivation and employment readiness, which I recorded as analytic memos in my field notes, in my reflexive journal and in analytical updates for my supervisor. In order to understand the definitions and practices of determining motivation and employment readiness I informally met with staff members individually. These conversations were used as a means of delineating and clarifying the processes, practices, services and meanings that I was observing. Meanings that came out of these reflexive conversations were then further refined when interviewing unemployed job-seekers. These became the main themes I used in the following coding phases, as well as in identifying and deconstructing Branch A’s filtering process.

The second phase, which was the first formal phase of data analysis, began while

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preparing a presentation of preliminary findings that would accompany my exit from the field. Before entering the field I applied for and received ethics approval for preparing an informal report for the Branch A staff team. This presentation was an extension of my position as a feminist researcher in which I view research as a collaboration between researcher and research participants. Because of this perspective, I desired to give back knowledge in gratitude for the knowledge I had been given (Ranson, 2005). To prepare for this presentation, I examined my interview data for themes and constructed a preliminary coding grid. I paid particular attention to the themes I had noted in my observational phase of coding. This report, given as presentation in a team meeting, demonstrated the way in which the Branch A team had participated in my research. As well, the report provided a preliminary picture of my findings regarding the experience of unemployment.

In the third phase, I refined my coding grid while transcribing each interview. When transcribing, I first listened to all of the audio recordings of the interviews and constructed a profile grid of interview participants where I recorded demographic information, as well as general answers to main interview topics.²⁰ Included in this grid was the category, “source of motivation for obtaining employment” which was later expanded as a separate grid that became the primary coding sheet for my findings.

To begin, I fully transcribed seven of the seventeen interviews filling in the profiles of each interview participant and building on the grid as new topics emerged or split. As themes became more formed and refined they were immediately recognizable and it became apparent that full transcriptions of all interviews would not be necessary. So, for the final ten interviews I conducted analytic transcriptions, recording all aspects

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of the interviews that were related to the three main themes of motivation, strategies and resources and employment readiness.²¹ After all interviews were transcribed I recoded each one, as well as all field notes, line by line, with the new, more detailed grids.²²

Finally, I read and analyzed the funding policies for employment and social services assistance. I consider this process as part of coding rather than as a separate research method because I read the documents with a particular focus on discovering the way in which themes of motivation and employability were defined and framed. I also explored work motivation literature and research, examining the dynamics and qualities other researchers had used to identify and define motivation. I then compared these definitions with my own research and the definitions I had found in the funding policy documents. I added these to my coding grid.

CONCLUSION

Qualitative methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation allow the researcher to explore the various ways in which the concepts and meanings that mediate social interaction are socially constructed. This is because a qualitative methodology engages with the rich meanings of social interaction by gathering in-depth and textured data artifacts relating to the concepts, symbols and norms that mediate social interaction (Gobo, 2008; Kirby et al, 2010). In particular, ethnographies lend themselves to studying the ways in which the social relations of a particular social context intersect with the creation, interpretation, evolution and resistance to these socially constructed meanings.

This is then a case study of the political, economic and social relations that mediate

²⁰ See Appendix F for an abbreviated sample of this grid.

²¹ During this phase I became aware that the term employment readiness was used in relation to legitimate and illegitimate barriers to employment. Illegitimate barriers were identifiable in fieldnotes as evidence that clients were not motivated enough. It became apparent that the category employment readiness could not be used independently from motivation.

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the job search process. In a sense, this case study is a narrative exploring the constructed language and practices, strategies and resources that shape experiences of unemployment (Flyvbjerg, 2011:85-6). Given the standardization of policies and programs providing employment services to unemployed individuals across the province, it is likely that the implications of this study have relevance for other job-seekers in Ontario, in municipalities that share similar socioeconomic and demographic characteristics.

²² See Appendix G for a sample of the Motivation coding grid.

INTRODUCTION

Between 2013 and 2015, Ontario has experienced significant economic upheaval due to the downsizing and closure of several manufacturing companies. Amongst them are Kellogg Co. in London, Heinz near Windsor, Baskin Robbins in Peterborough and Lance Canada in Cambridge, to name a few (Atkins and Grant, 2013). An outcome of these closures and others has been an excess of unemployed workers in regions of Ontario whose economies were supported by manufacturing. Scarcity of ‘well paying’ manufacturing jobs has created an environment in which employment services have become a much in demand resource. As well, these closures have exacerbated job competition in the labour market. It is this context that shaped my research, and so I chose to conduct my research in one such Ontario county, “Region A”, that has experienced a significant reduction in the availability of ‘well paying’ manufacturing jobs.²³

The case study within Region A involves a detailed and in depth depiction of the economic and socio-political relations at one particular branch of a larger employment services agency, called “Agency A”. As Agency A has a number of branches across the province and because the policies that govern resource distribution are provincial in scope, the findings of this study have relevance for the experience of unemployment in much of Ontario. To introduce the case study, I first describe the characteristics of Region A, highlighting economic and demographic features that frame the experience of unemployment in that region. Then I examine the funding policies that frame the kinds of services that agencies, such as Agency A, provide and to which these agencies are accountable. Next, I outline the services provided by one branch of Agency A, called

²³ In order to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of my research participants and Branch A, I refer to the city

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Branch A, paying particular attention to the intersection between access to the job matching and employment counseling services and the designation of “assistance”. Finally, I explore the linkages between funding policies, practices of service provision and the consequences of an employer-centered labour market.

REGION A: ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Region A is a mixture of rural townships, First Nations communities and urban developments. The largest urban center serves as the economic hub of the region’s industry, commerce and employment opportunities and accounts for most of the county’s population. A large portion of the county’s population lives in or around the urban location that was the site of my research. As the majority of my seventeen interview participants lived in the area near Branch A, my data reflects a more urban experience of unemployment. Therefore I focus almost entirely on the features of the urban center when describing Region A in the following case study.

Experiences of unemployment between urban centers and rural regions are hardly identical in terms of the availability of employment opportunities and concentration of social services. In Region A this is evident in that the urban centers have a public transportation system and several food banks (albeit poorly stocked) within a 10 km radius, a relatively small area compared to that available in the surrounding rural regions. In addition, the urban centers have a higher concentration of businesses than the surrounding rural regions and villages, meaning that there are relatively more employment opportunities. Yet, there is a distinctly rural flavour in the culture of the urban areas that echo that of the surrounding towns and villages. Firstly, the relatively small size of the urban areas, as compared to other cities, allows residents the luxury of

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regular engagement in city council meetings, a fact that two of my interview participants recounted. Also, local residents prefer the term small town when describing economic and social interactions, contrasting qualities, such as safety, with that of other big cities.

Demographically this rural flavour is evident in the lack of linguistic diversity and the low proportion of recent immigrants to Canada as compared with urban centers in Ontario, and the statistical average for Ontario as a whole (see Table 4.1). The proportion of recent immigrants to Canada living in Region A is considerably lower than the provincial average (see Table 4.2) and there is a significant lack of ethnic and racial diversity in the region. In contrast to the average for the province itself (which speaks to the trend in other more urban centers), in which the proportion of the population that self-identifies as visible minority is 23%, in Region A those who self-identify as visible minorities make up only 3% of the population (Statistics Canada 2007).

Table 4.1 Percent Living in Region A and Ontario Who Speak English at Home

Language spoken at home	Region A County	Region A City	Ontario
English	96 %	97%	80%

(Statistics Canada, 2007)

Table 4.2 Percent Living in Region A and Ontario Who are Non-Immigrants

Immigrant status and period of immigration	Region A	Ontario
Non-immigrants	90%	70%

(Statistics Canada, 2007)

Despite the region's lack of demographic diversity, the economic features reflect that of Ontario generally. As of 2006, the highest employing occupations were sales and service, which accounted for 30% of the labour force. Next, business finance and administration accounting accounted for 15%, while trades, labour and transportation accounted for 13%, followed by education, social sciences, religion and government administration accounting for 12% of the labour force. By industry, the highest share of

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employment was in the retail trade and service sector (34.6%), followed by business services (16%), health services (13.5%), and manufacturing (10%) (Statistics Canada, 2007).²⁴ Median after taxes income in Region A is the less than \$23,000 per year, which is not dissimilar to the provincial median of \$24,604 per year (Statistics Canada, 2007).

The critical aspect of this case study is in the actual aspects of unemployment that distinguish Region A as one of interest for this thesis research. Firstly, because the area struggles with high chronic and seasonal unemployment, there is a tangible tension between neoliberal rhetoric of individual failure for unemployment, and the structural economic conditions of Region A. Even before the 2008-2009 recession, only roughly half of the labour force²⁵ were actually employed (Statistics Canada, 2007). In the two years prior to my research, the percentage of employed workers in Region A had dropped by more than a quarter. As a consequence of this shift, the unemployment rate was among the highest in Ontario for the period of January to December 2013.

In addition, in the months prior to my research and immediately following, several prominent manufacturing plants either closed or downsized leading to a significant decrease in the manufacturing sector and a surplus of unemployed workers. Those who were left unemployed in the wake of these changes have been caught in a skills mismatch, in which their skills and experience, as well as wage expectations, are incompatible with the types of occupations available in Region A. Available jobs tend to be either in the low skilled and low paying retail and service sector, or in higher skilled and higher paying business administration sector.

²⁴ Due to the elimination of the long form census, Statistics Canada has not collected data for labour force participation, occupation and industry characteristics, or household income since 2006. This is unfortunate, as the recession of 2008-2009 has caused a significant economic shift in the region that was arguably still affecting the local economy and labour force at the time of my research.

²⁵ The labour force includes all adults over the age of fifteen (Statistics Canada, 2007).

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As my interviews with unemployed job-seekers in the region reveal, the consequences of this reality are prolonged unemployment. This is either due to the unavailability of jobs or job-seekers' apprehension at the prospect of lower wages, as well as the subsequent effects these reduced wages have on accustomed standards of living. Given these economic and labour market contexts, employment services, like those provided by Branch A, are critical resources for assisting unemployed workers in Region A in navigating the job-seeking process.

FUNDING POLICIES: 'SUCCESS', TARGETS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In 2010 a shift in responsibility for distributing and mandating funding for employment services from being predominantly federal to predominantly provincial. In Ontario, the primary funding agency, the Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU), instituted a set of policies that emphasize accountability for employment outcomes. This outcomes-based funding contrasts with the previous paternalistic "hands-off" approach of federal funding packages in that it emphasizes the tri-pillars of efficiency, effectiveness and accountability (FN 22/10; EOPG, 2011).

In order to ensure a standardized quality of service delivery across employment service providers in Ontario, the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU) has established a set of guidelines to which all agencies receiving public funding are expected to conform. Values delineated in the guidelines include individually focused service plans and client-centered care (EOPG, 2010). The kinds of services agencies are expected to provide are also outlined, as are criteria for determining which clients are eligible and suitable to benefit from these services. Implicit in these criteria, and in service provision requirements, is the value of outcomes-based accountability for the funds received. This means that "service

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provision [...] meets a measurable provincial standard of overall service quality” in that publicly funded agencies are required to consistently prove that they have met a quantifiable target for the number of clients they successfully assist (EOPG, 2011:1.1-1). This model of accountability is directed towards ensuring that employment agencies spend fewer tax dollars while also providing more visible, and politically favourable, results. In this sense outcomes-based refers to a quantifiable and measurable number of successes (jobs obtained) in relation to government dollars spent. Underpinning this outcomes framework is the neoliberal ideological concern with reducing the size of the state, in terms of public expenditures (Armstrong, 2010; Braedley, 2010).

Through this directive, funding packages are granted with the agreement that agencies are responsible for serving a specified number of service units with a target ratio of success (FN 11/9). Success is measured according to whether the target ratio of service units (meaning assisted clients) obtain employment within the given time frame of four months (FN 8/10). Targets are set in relation to regional economic factors, such as the rate of unemployment and industry closures, as well as the size and capacity of each agency’s local branch (EOPG, 2011). Furthermore, all agencies are required to submit to quality control auditing and accountability (EOPG, 2011). These are tracked through the Employment Ontario Information System Case Management System (EOIS-CMS) a province-wide case management system, called “CaMS” by Branch A staff. This database tracks the number of service units each agency serves, the services provided to each service unit, and whether employment or training goals are “attained” or “unattained” (FN 22/15).

In addition to being responsible for meeting service unit targets, each employment service provider in Ontario must offer clients several service components. These

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comprise a resource and information (RI) center, which is available as a resource for everyone in the community, job matching and placement incentives (JM) and employment counseling (EC) for job search assistance and / or educational upgrading recommendations (EOPG, 2011). Funding is funneled almost entirely to those forms of service that provide individualized assistance to clients, with only a small portion directed to unassisted services such as workshops and the RI center (FN 22/10). In the context of accountability and efficiency, assisted services are offered to those job-seekers who are at risk of remaining chronically unemployed (EOPG, 2011).

All job-seekers who are unemployed or underemployed,²⁶ are not currently enrolled in full time studies, and are citizens or permanent residents of Canada, are eligible for assisted services. Actual access to assisted services, however, is mandated by suitability criteria (FN 18/9; EOPG, 2011). This includes variables such as, potential employer perceptions of the client, motivation to work, previous work performance and work history, as well as demographic characteristics such as age, ability, and socioeconomic status (EOPG, 2011).²⁷ In this sense the MTCU guidelines concede that specified socio-economic barriers may limit an individual's capacity to obtain employment.

Nevertheless, there is a subtle distinction between legitimate and illegitimate barriers. In order to be classified as assisted, clients must exhibit certain socioeconomic or demographic barriers that are recognized as impeding their appeal to employers, I refer to these as legitimate barriers. Legitimate barriers include a lengthy unemployment period, visible barriers to obtaining employment, such as physical or developmental ability, length of time out of school, employment skills and previous work experience

²⁶ At branch A this designation indicates that the client is employed but is working less than twenty hours per week.

²⁷ There is no acknowledgement of gender, race or ethnicity in the discussion of barriers to employment.

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and access to income. As well, legitimate barriers extend to specific politically in vogue strata of the unemployed population (EOPG, 2011:2.5-1). Target cohorts are determined by political policies that recognize that specific categories of people are facing barriers to employment at specific political moments. At the time of my research, these strata were youth between the ages of fifteen and twenty-nine, and experienced workers over the age of fifty-five, represented by two distinct funding programs, which I describe below.²⁸

Barriers are used to determine the level of assistance a client may receive from the agency. This may include motivational counseling for a client with minimal barriers, or a job placement with financial training incentives for clients with more significant barriers. The designations of assistance and suitability ensure that funding is used efficiently to provide the highest level of assistance to those clients who will remain chronically unemployed if left to find employment independently.

BRANCH A: TARGETS, SERVICES, ACCESS AND SUCCESS

Branch A is the local branch of Agency A, a province wide organization providing employment services to unemployed or underemployed job-seekers. Although it is a private business, the majority of Agency A's operational capital is derived from funding packages provided by EO and the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU). This means that it is a private company whose primary source of income is derived from government contracts.²⁹ In compliance with MTCU *Employment Services Service (sic) Providers Guidelines* (EOPG, 2011), each of Agency A's branches

²⁸ All of my interview participants qualified as one of these politically targeted cohorts and were assisted under the banners of the Youth Employment Fund (YEF) and the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW).

²⁹ The line between the profit and non-profit status of Agency A is particularly fuzzy. While I was informed that it is a private business by the TL, Agency A's website stresses its link to a non-profit quality assurance company. Indeed, while working as a volunteer and participant observer it was difficult to differentiate whether Branch A was operating as a non-profit or for-profit company. This may be largely because there were no profit generating revenue streams operating at

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deliver a variety of mandated services. These services may include employment counseling (EC), job matching (JM), vocational rehabilitation (VR) and a resource and information center (RI center), all of which are available at Branch A. As previously mentioned, while all unemployed individuals in the region are eligible to access the services of the RI center, clients seeking more in depth support through JM, EC, and VR must qualify for the designated category assisted. Likewise, clients who do not qualify for assisted services are directed to use the RI center for independent job searches, while those clients who are deemed 'suitable' are entered into CaMS as service units.

As previously mentioned, one aspect of legitimate barriers outlined in funding documents is politically in vogue cohorts, which are identified as facing significant barriers to obtaining employment. Funding for these cohorts is designated separately from operational funding, and is attached to various necessary dimensions of services to be offered to eligible members of such cohorts. When I began my research, Branch A was reaching the conclusion of a funding package that provided job searching services, including mandatory workshops, to experienced workers over the age of fifty-five, called the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW) (EOPG, 2014). This transition was overlapping with the beginning of a new targeted initiative, called the Youth Employment Fund (YEF), that aimed to create opportunities for immediate employment for young workers aged twenty-nine and under (MTCU, 2013).

The TIOW initiative is a funded training package, conditional on the provision of at least twenty-five hours per week of job search training specifically for unemployed workers over the age of fifty (EOPG, 2014). This program provides some income support averaging \$1000.00 per month, as well as a travel allowance. This funding is

Branch A. Rather all of their services were funded through MTCU funding packages.

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provided to assist clients in covering the costs of participating in training and job-seeking activities (EOPG, 2014). At Branch A, the assistance provided is primarily workshop based, with employment counseling for job search assistance. If clients demonstrate sufficient motivation they are also recommended for the job matching service, however, the majority of the clients I interviewed did not benefit from this service. In this sense, Branch A's approach to the TIOW initiative places the responsibility for finding work on the older worker, while providing pedagogical motivational tools to aid workers in this self-directed search.

In contrast, the YEF “provides enhanced access to **training**” through training subsidies provided to employers on the condition of job placements that last between four and six months, or up to \$7,800 per worker (bold in original, MTCU, 2013:4). This funding is used to entice employers to provide on the job training for inexperienced workers. The relationship between employer and employee is mediated by employment counselors, who assist the young workers in setting job-seeking goals and practices, and by job developers (JDs), who make contact with potential employers and monitor the training process. YEF candidates are required to attend workshops that teach young workers about the work habit expectations of employers, as well as appropriate behavior at work. Attendance is a prerequisite for being included in the program, and is used to identify whether clients are motivated enough. Thus, the latent purpose of these workshops is to filter candidates for suitability and for potential employment success.

As Branch A is a regional appendage of Agency A, its service unit targets are mandated by the national head office of Agency A, which applies for funding packages from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), Ontario Works (OW), and Employment Ontario (EO). An overall target ratio is assigned to Agency A in

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relation to the amount of funding it receives, as well as its specific funding packages. Agency A's head office then divides the target, and portions out funding packages, between each regional branch, depending on the size of the branch and the socioeconomic characteristics of the region. These packages in turn prescribe the kinds of services offered to specific categories of clients. Due to the high unemployment rate of Region A, Branch A is responsible for a specific target of approximately eleven-hundred service units, or eleven-hundred people assisted to find a job with a success rate of at least seven-hundred and fifty-nine employment placements, for each fiscal year (FN 11/9; FN 25/9).³⁰

The expected statistical success rate of each region and each agency is a firm number, with ramifications for future funding. The ramifications of meeting or exceeding service unit targets are financial. Underperformance endangers Branch A of receiving significantly less funding in subsequent years, which could mean program and staff cutbacks. In contrast, over-performance might mean the implementation of a higher ratio of success, one that could be difficult to fulfill in the future (FN 3/10; FN 25/9). This places a significant amount of professional and emotional pressure on employment counseling staff and on the TL of Branch A, to ensure that service unit target rates are met.³¹ This is because the employment counseling staff members are the front line workers responsible for assessing whether clients are most likely to seriously pursue employment and so successfully "close to employment". At the same time, the TL is responsible to Agency A head office for the performance of Branch A and so must ensure that service unit targets are on track. In this sense, funding is the leverage with

³⁰ While I could not find a reference for this in the EOPG guidelines, the consistency with which these ratios were cited by staff of Branch A, and the authority of the Team Leader who is primarily responsible for ensuring the Branch meets these targets, indicates agreement in the significance and correctness of funding success targets.

³¹ While this pressure could generate tension in the workplace between management and workers, at Branch A there is a

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which the province ensures that Agency A, and other employment agencies receiving government funding packages, provide standardized services and submit to accountability measures that justify effectiveness of dollars spent on reducing unemployment.

Assisted clients are entered into CaMS as service units once an employment counselor (EC) establishes a service plan. Service plans outline the particular ways in which the client will be receiving funded assistance (FN 8/10). Assistance may include job search strategies or resume assistance, funded short- or long-term training (such as a college course or job specific upgrades), or offers of financial training incentives to potential employers, in exchange for job placements. Assisted clients are tracked in CaMS in relation to whether their service plan goals are attained or not attained (FN 22/10).

After four months, a service unit file is closed to one of three potential categories: “to employment”, “to unemployment”, or “to training” (FN 8/10). There are specific limitations for how many clients may be closed to unemployment, as well as how many new clients must be opened each month. For employment counselors, at Branch A, monthly targets include opening fifteen new cases, with thirteen cases closed to employment or closed to training, and a maximum of two cases closed to unemployment (FN 3/10). If there is deviation from these numbers in one month, the employment counselor must ensure that over the next several months they reduce these deviations until the numbers eventually even out to match the monthly targets. In this context, Branch A’s overall success is dependent on the success of each employment counselor in ensuring that their ratios are on target each month (FN 11/9; FN 22/10).

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RESOURCE AND INFORMATION CENTER: SELF-DIRECTED JOB SEARCHING

Each of the services offered by Branch A can be identified as providing a level of service in relation to the extent of barriers to employability a client faces. The first level of service consists of the resource and information center (RI), which provides free access to a listing of advertised job openings in the community, computer and internet access for independent job searches and resume building, as well as printers, a fax machine, a photo copier and a telephone line (FN 12/9). In addition, workshops on topics such as, writing resumes and cover letters, career planning and job search tips are open to the public. Two workshops each week are entirely devoted to teaching the current target population relevant job search practices.

The RI center is the first point-of-contact between Branch A staff and the general public. This level of resources is classified as independent, meaning that all clients, particularly those who are not suitable for the designation assisted, may use the RI facilities to conduct independent job searches (EOPG, 2011). RI center staff are available to help clients navigate technologies and to facilitate workshops. Their primary role is to mediate the relationship between clients and available resources, rather than providing one-on-one support. I observed, however, that the three staff who occupied this role tended to be willing to assist clients with tasks that were beyond the scope of their role, such as in providing limited feedback regarding clients' written resumes or cover letters.

Two of the three RI facilitators suggested that they find themselves providing both emotional and psychological support for regular RI center users, particularly in workshop settings (FN 2/10; FN 3/10). These staff explained that clients who regularly

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use the RI facilities demonstrate a tendency to interact with each other, and with RI facilitators, similarly to a support group or community. Indeed, workshops were promoted as networking possibilities in which clients were encouraged to cultivate relational support among their workshop cohort (FN 1/10; FN 3/10). During my research, this promotion came close to creating a cohort community. A cohort of TIOW clients planned to create a regularly scheduled job-seeking support network (RJ 28/11).³² I also observed this use of Branch A facilities while volunteering in the RI center, and attending workshops, recording the following observations of Branch A as community in my reflexive journal:

The RI center seems to be more than simply workshops and computer access, people ‘hang around’. This is where I built relationships with regular clients who worked on resumes for weeks without seeming to get anywhere. Are they hiding behind resume writing? Why? Are they intimidated of the job search? Or are they just looking for an excuse to remain in this this ‘community’ space?
“R” and “M” are here daily; they talk together, critique city decisions and local politicians while working independently on their job searches. They address me and try to engage me in their conversations by having me come and help them with some aspect of the computer or navigating the internet. (RJ 6/12)

Those who enacted a type of community in the RI center were by and large assisted clients, whose involvement was fostered by their integration into several levels of Branch A services.

I found that this view of agency-as-community-of-moral-support was not restricted to Branch A. Two of my interview participants expressed gratitude to the staff of the local branch of the New Canadians’ Center as providing a community of emotional and psychological support during the process of integrating into Region A, as well as for providing some job-seeking support. Again, both of these interviewees were enmeshed in several layers of relationships with the New Canadians’ Center, one being a client

³² For various reasons, this plan did not materialize.

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assigned to a regular counselor, the other being a volunteer.

EMPLOYMENT COUNSELING: ASSISTANCE FOR CLIENTS WITH LEVEL ONE BARRIERS

The next level of service that Branch A provides is through individual appointments with qualified staff, this includes employment counseling (EC) and vocational rehabilitation (VR). Firstly, EC is a primarily coaching and motivational role that is available to service clients who meet ‘eligibility’ and ‘suitability’ criteria and are entered as assisted into CaMS. While all unemployed or underemployed Canadian citizens over the age of fifteen are eligible, assisted services are reserved for those clients who are most suitable (EOPG, 2011). Candidates are considered suitable for EC if they exhibit level one barriers (which are factors identified by the MTCU guidelines as inhibiting a job-seeker’s appeal to employers) but who are still considered motivated to seek and obtain employment. Visible employment barriers include aspects or characteristics of the client that are intrinsic to their person, such as age or ability, as well as work performance indicators such as skill level, work experience, work history, education level, or even hygiene (EOPG, 2011). Only those barriers that are outlined in the EOPG guidelines (2011) are deemed legitimate by employment counselors, when assessing the suitability of clients. Yet these guidelines ignore a number of other factors that could prevent employment appeal, such as gender, race, ethnicity, citizenship status, language proficiency or accent.

When conducting suitability assessments, employment counselors decide whether clients will be opened as service units in CaMS (FN 2/10). They also assess client suitability for training or financial assistance through particular MTCU funding

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programs, and for JM. I call the specific practices of assessing and interpreting client suitability, “filtering”.³³ The filtering process is directly linked to maintaining MTCU funding by meeting required success targets for a specific ratio of service units (FN 3/10).

In a team meeting employment counselors noted that the difference between an independent client and a level one client is blurry and can be interpreted differently. They suggested that the difference is in a client’s ability to interview well, but that other factors, such as mental health, anxiety, or confidence, can negatively influence this ability (FN 8/10). Clients who are designated as level one and who qualify for assistance are entitled to regular counseling sessions for career planning and resume building. Services may also include recommendations by employment counselors for subsidized educational upgrading, such as Second Career (SC), as well as for targeted initiative programs such as YEF or TIOW. Employment counselors then work directly with ‘suitable’ clients to create job- planning and resume building. Services may also include recommendations by seeking strategies and skills, to refer clients for services such as workshops or job matching, and to monitor client job-seeking progress and activities. Clients who are identified as particularly motivated are referred to JDs as candidates for JM (FN 12/9). I explain this process further below.

Among indicators for determining clients’ suitability, the Employment Services Guidelines list “characteristics which may result in motivational challenges or work habit issues, such as work expectations, behavior and attitudes” (EOPG, 2011: 2.2-3). Later in the document, job-seeking motivation is associated with external pressure to engage in job-seeking activities. When insufficient, motivational coaching and job

³³ See Chapter Five for a more detailed discussion of the filtering process.

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placement are suggested as mechanisms for reengaging motivation (EOPG, 2011: 3.1-4). Yet, the specter of funding target accountability renders such suggestions impractical in the practices of service delivery. The pressure to meet service unit targets means that employment counselors at Branch A must ensure that the clients they enter in CaMS are most likely to succeed. This involves a bureaucratic process of record keeping and data logging that can compete for employment counselors' attention during appointments with clients. While assessing whether clients meet suitability criteria, employment counselors must also focus on identifying and interpreting indicators of client motivation.

This position seems to be the most emotionally intensive position (equal only to vocational rehabilitation) because employment counselors establish longer terms relationships with clients in which they become invested in their clients' success. This is because, employment counselors must balance the intersecting, and at times contradictory, job directives of emotional investment in success, meeting caseload targets and interpreting whether clients are ready to engage in employment. This complicates the role and is managed in several ways, depending on the employment counselor. However there are several general means by which employment counselors ameliorate the tensions between these job directives. Techniques vary depending on the way each employment counselor interprets their role in relation to the accountability and record keeping directives versus person-centered service provision.

When entering a client as an assisted service unit, employment counselors with an orientation that favours person-centered services take on the role of a motivational coach. These employment counselors may be more apt make exceptions for clients

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whose motivation they interpret as ‘borderline’. In this role the client is entered as being assisted through motivational coaching. Pedagogical techniques to promote the effectiveness of exhibiting a positive attitude and to encourage clients to continue a difficult, tedious, or discouraging job search process. Use of this technique varies in relation to how the employment counselor perceives their caseload and the extent to which they connect with the “Job Direct” interpretation of the importance of motivation in job readiness. Other employment counselors may provide a lengthier period of follow-up time before determining to designate clients as assisted or unassisted. During this period they offer these clients resume writing assistance and coaching for job searching, as if the client was “assisted”, without providing recommendations for JD. In contrast, employment counselors who view their role as one of determining program suitability are more likely to focus on their role of assessment and entering case files than making exceptions for clients. Interpretation of the EC role is more in line with the requirements of funding guidelines and “Job Direct” training curriculum.³⁴

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION: ASSISTANCE FOR CLIENTS WITH LEVEL TWO BARRIERS

Similarly to employment counseling, the vocational rehabilitation (VR) service offers counseling and career rehabilitation planning for individuals who are transitioning back to work after a temporary or chronic illness or injury. This includes clients of ODSP, OW, the Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB), as well as other private insurance companies (FN 11/9). Vocational rehabilitation specialists (VRS) provide a service similar to employment counselors, serving clients with ‘level two’ barriers. Level two clients may be differently abled or are transitioning into an entirely

³⁴ See section “Branch A Training Models: Internal Justifications for Service Delivery Priorities” below.

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new industry because of a previous accident, illness or criminal record (FN 15/10).

Barriers such as these are recognized as being significant visible obstacles to obtaining employment because of the potential for employer discrimination and misconception.

Like employment counselors, VRSs assess client motivation for obtaining employment, however, they also assess whether clients are emotionally and psychologically ready to reengage in employment. Additionally, in order to assess whether clients are physically, socially, or emotionally ready to engage in employment VRCs immediately seek unpaid work placements. Work placements may last for a period of two weeks to three months, and they provide clients with the crucial dimension of on the job experience and work skills. In the first appointment, the VRS and client establish a list of potential workplaces in which the client would like work experience. The VRS then uses this list to contact employers on the client's behalf, explaining the work placement process and asking to use the workplace to conduct a job trial. Employers who agree to the job trail are expected to assign tasks and provide task specific job training. In return, the VRS assesses the client's job performance and mediates the relationship with the employer (FN 15/10). During this trial, the VRS will also periodically assess work skills and habits. At the end of the time period, the employer provides additional comments regarding the client's habits, skills, and ability to perform tasks. The VRS then informs the appropriate third party (WSIB, ODSP, or private insurance) regarding whether the client is ready and able to reenter the labour force.

Clients who pass this stage are then connected with a JD and are entered in the pool of potential candidates who may be matched with job openings. It is this intensive and intentional aspect of vocational rehabilitation that distinguishes this service from

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EC. While level one clients must prove motivation first, before being recommended for job matching, level two clients are assessed for motivation while engaged in a job placement. The distinguishing factor here is the way in which level two barriers are identified as legitimate enough to justify expenditure of publicly funded resources and services. Indeed, the visibility of level two barriers distinguishes these clients as part of a ‘deserving’ strata of the populace, who are unemployed by no fault of their own. This does not mean that a neoliberal habitus is not required of such clients, but rather that the clients themselves are identified as needing concrete assistance to become the right kind of responsible and independent neoliberal citizens once again.

Finally, because of the intensity of this service, VRSs have different and lower success target ratios than employment counselors. This variation allows them to focus on advocating for their clients, rather than on fulfilling bureaucratic accountability requirements. The difference in target ratios is in part due to the way in which VR is funded. Rather than being provided with a piece of Agency A’s MTCU funding budget, VRSs must apply for a variety of funding grants from a variety of other external sources (FN 15/10). Additionally, their services are paid for directly by the third parties, such as ODSP, WSIB and private insurance companies, who request the work-readiness assessments of clients.

JOB MATCHING: CONNECTING EMPLOYERS WITH “MRD” JOB-SEEKERS

Aside from VR, JM is probably the most effective element of services offered at Branch A in terms of employment success.³⁵ This service involves establishing and

³⁵ In the last week of my research, Branch A began shifting their model of service provision from employment counseling focused to job matching focused. This shift meant that job matching would become the first step of service provision, with employment counseling as a follow-up for clients who cannot maintain employment placements (RJ 5/12). This change came in response to recent changes to employment services funding, which emphasizes outcomes based service provision. At the beginning of my research, the proportion of employment counselors to job developers at Branch A was 6.7 to 1. This meant that access to job matching came secondary to employment counseling, as job developers dedicated to establishing long term relationships with employers

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maintaining long-term relationships with employers. In particular, JDs describe their role as marketing Branch A services to employers as a cost-effective hiring method. In turn, this service provides employers with employment ready workers who are reliable, dependable and motivated (FN 11/9). This is described as a means of reducing training costs and off-loading the hiring process to Branch A. JDs identified JM as a mechanism for reducing employer hiring needs and equalizing the mismatch between employee skills and credentials and employer hiring expectations (FN 11/9). The goal is to establish Branch A as the primary resource local employers use for fulfilling recurring employment needs (FN 3/10). For this reason, the primary concern of JDs is with cultivating successful employment matches between employers and employees, rather than with providing all suitable clients with jobs (FN 17/10).

The JM process occurs in several stages through a set of practices I will call “exploring”. This entails making contact with employers who have employment needs, but have not yet posted job advertisements (FN 17/10). In the first step of exploring, Branch A staff members use computer software called “Random Lead Generation” (RLG), which randomly selects forty businesses from a list of eleven hundred local employers (FN 18/9). Two staff members each week perform this duty in a four-week rotation, each completing forty calls over two hours. This ensures that the agency contacts eighty businesses every week in the hopes of generating ten “warm leads” with potential businesses that are hiring, a success rate of 5% (FN 18/9). Session results are tracked in Branch A’s internal computer data system to ensure that different businesses

were reaching their maximum case load capacity. In response to this, the team leader and program director began shifting some of the employment counselors into job development roles, with the aim of shifting employment counseling to a secondary service, offered only if clients struggled to maintain job placements or integrate into workplaces. This shift began approximately eight weeks into my volunteer timeframe. At that time one RI facilitator transitioned into a JD role, and one employment counselor was being trained for a slow transition into a JD role, with the expectation that several other employment counselors would make the transition.

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are contacted each session, and to track patterns in business seasonal hiring needs. All businesses that are entered as “warm leads” are flagged in to be followed-up by JDs (FN 25/9). In this final follow up phase, JDs market JM to employers, demonstrating that the traditional hiring process does not test the actual work habits of the prospective employee in advance of hiring (FN 22/10). Instead, JDs suggest that potential employees who have weak interview skills, work history or qualifications, may be unnecessarily disqualified by the resume and interview hiring structure. They suggest that this disqualification may rob businesses of potentially valuable employees. To ameliorate this weakness in hiring practices, JDs advocate for on-the-job interviews, and promote Branch A services as a kind of tax-funded hiring resource.

After the exploring phase, JDs conduct an analysis of the interested employer’s needs, observing the workplace culture and interviewing the employer about the task-specific requirements of the job. This step is to ensure that candidates who do not have the ideal qualifications, such as a secondary school diploma or college certificate, but are still capable of completing the tasks required of the job, are not disqualified (FN 17/10). Next, JDs interview potential candidates and, if a match is found, the candidate is presented to the employer for an on-the-job interview. As some candidates have more significant barriers, or may not have the relevant or requested skill set, matching is facilitated through job-training subsidies. These subsidies compensate the employer for training time and simultaneously equalize the labour market field for the barriered candidate (FN 3/10). In such instances, the personality and work style of the employee is matched with the workplace culture and expectations of the employer. In the final “support” stage, JDs mediate the relationship between the employer and employee for the duration of the training period, addressing any personality or work habit issues, and

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replacing the candidate if necessary (FN 17/10). The primary concern of support is with establishing a successful relationship with the employer.

This service is distinctly employer focused in that JDs position JM as a cost effective hiring service for employers, rather than as a ‘charity’ service for unemployed workers (FN 17/10). While assisted clients who demonstrate sufficient “motivation, reliability and dependability” (MRD) are placed on a list of potential employment candidates, this does not guarantee a job placement. Unless these candidates fit with the needs of a specific employer, they will not be offered as a match. JM is then positioned as a service oriented to meeting the hiring needs of local employers rather than for providing immediate unemployed job-seekers. This is a consequence of the prioritization of what job developers view as success, which is first, establishing long term relationships with employers, second, managing service unit targets, and third, obtaining employment for clients (FN 22/10).

The employer-focused orientation of the JM service fits with the outcomes-based model of program funding, in that it is viewed as producing the greatest employment success. Certainly, the saturation of readily available labour in the job market has created a context in which employers may demand employees to be and become a specific kind of resource. This translates in the way ‘becoming employable’ is framed in workshops and counseling sessions, as well as in the way job developers approach job matching, from the employers’ perspective (FN 3/10).

BRANCH A TRAINING MODELS: INTERNAL JUSTIFICATIONS FOR SERVICE DELIVERY PRIORITIES

Finally, the internal mechanisms through which Branch A services are delivered are shaped by two training models, an outcomes based model of service provision,

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which I call “Job Direct,”³⁶ and a framework for delivering services to individuals with socioeconomic barriers, called *Bridges Out of Poverty* (Payne et al, 2009). These training models equip staff with pedagogical justifications for Branch A filtering practices by providing rationales and concepts for predicting client success. Firstly, the primary filtering framework Agency A uses is Job Direct, an outcomes-based framework that promotes the particular model of job-matching that is used at Branch A (FN 22/10). This model identifies the intersecting concepts of “motivation, reliability, and dependability” (MRD) in predicting client success, concepts which align with MTCU criteria for identifying ‘suitable’ clients (EOPG, 2011; FN 24/9). Branch A staff cite the extent of a client’s MRD as crucial for predicting employment success, in both independent job searches and in JM (FN 25/9). In particular, the concept motivation is used as the primary filtering concept for determining whether clients are suitable for being designated as assisted (FN 22/10), a process that I delineate in depth in Chapter Five.

Next, the *Bridges Out of Poverty* (Payne et al, 2009) training curriculum provides an epistemological framework that explains the way in which sociocultural knowledge is situational in relation to an individual’s experience of socioeconomic class. This epistemology suggests that people of different class backgrounds think and respond differently to life stresses. More specifically, the framework identifies people of a ‘middle class’ orientation as more able to embody the cultural expectations of employability than those with a ‘poverty’ orientation (FN 11/9). The problematic and solution are framed as twofold: first, thought processes are a consequence of

³⁶ Due to licensing conditions, my agreement for keeping the identity of the organization anonymous prevents me from disclosing the name or even terms specific to this training model. In addition, as a condition for allowing me to research at Agency A, I was required to only discuss those training materials that were available online, regardless of my access to these materials as a volunteer. As such, my acquaintance with this training model is much deeper than that which I am allowed to disclose in my thesis.

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socialization and access to resources, second, the job market is subject to middle class ‘hidden rules’ (FN 25/9). This framework then suggests that the key to assisting clients in poverty is to teaching the hidden rules of the middle class (Payne et al, 2009).

The idea of hidden rules is similar to Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, however, the underlying ideologies of these rules are not identified or critiqued. Rather the particular rules of the middle class are implied to be the right kind of employable citizenship that should be learned and embodied. These rules mirror the neoliberal employability habitus of individual responsabilization and flexibility, a habitus that is oriented to the economic needs and demands of the market (Brown, 2005; Gershon, 2011). Further, the three social class groupings identified by this model as ‘lower’, ‘middle’ and ‘upper’, are assumed as realities. However, the definitions and boundaries of these classes are largely unsupported by academic research or even national statistics relating to income, employment or education. Finally, while there is some acknowledgment of structures of inequality, this material does not critique these structures. Rather ‘positive thinking’ is emphasized as a mechanism for overcoming structural barriers.

Belief in the Job Direct “MRD” and *Bridges out of Poverty* frameworks translates into faith in the capacity of Branch A programs and services to empower individually motivated clients to become employable (FN 25/9). Branch A RI facilitators and employment counselors draw on this combined framework in their interactions with clients, to encourage clients to begin thinking differently about unemployment as a potential avenue for change in their circumstances (FN 18/9; FN 19/9; FN 25/10; FN 2/10; FN 16/10). For example, in job searching workshops various positive behavioral and attitudinal practices are promoted as a means to re-conceptualize unemployment as

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an opportunity for work change. Facilitators emphasize that unemployment is part of a continuous job-cycle in a flexible market. This encourages job-seekers to engage in practices of flexibility, such as continuous career upgrading and continuous job-seeking (FN 18/9; FN 19/9; FN 25/9; FN 26/9; FN 8/10; FN 10/10). Cultivating continuous practices of upgrading and job-seeking are framed as essential aspects of becoming a successful and flexible worker in the current neoliberal labour market. In this sense, unemployment is defined as a period of work change and the job-cycle is a representation of the flexible labour market.

While success is measured in terms of clients obtaining employment, there is also another level in which success is implied but never stated. This is in the assumption that employment has been attained as a result of learning the hidden rules of the middle class. However, work obtained is rarely more lucrative than previous employment, and may actually be less so (FN 22/10). Most attained occupations are in minimum wage, blue-collar, part-time or unstable employment, fields that are not necessarily ‘middle class’ in terms of wage expectations or social status. This tension, between the aim of transforming working class workers into middle class workers and the reality of work opportunities, is resolved by the mantra that “any employment is better than no employment”. This means that, in order to overcome structural barriers of poverty, ‘the unemployed’ must be willing to live through short-term poverty for long-term employment gains (EOPG, 2011; FN 22/10).

CONCLUSION: EMPLOYABILITY, FLEXIBILITY AND EMBODYING A NEOLIBERAL HABITUS

What the above descriptions of Branch A services and provincial employment funding policies demonstrates is that the structure of funding and accountability

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requirements has unintended outcomes in the practices of service provision. Tensions in Branch A's role as both a client centered service provider and simultaneously a distributor of provincially funded resources, has created a context in which employment counselors must enact filtering practices for ensuring that limited resources are distributed most effectively. At the same time, funding policy documents and training curriculum used by Branch A are infused with neoliberal doxa. So, various forms of job-seeking assistance are framed as pedagogical methods for empowering unemployed workers to become independent job-seekers. Clients are supposed to receive just enough assistance in counseling and workshops to become self-directed, self-reliant, and thus desirable, employees. These are qualities that embody the neoliberal habitus of a flexible and responsible, economically oriented, citizenship. As noted, tensions between the language of becoming employment ready and self-motivated, and the actual practices of support provided by Branch A, seem to be resolved in the *Bridges Out of Poverty* epistemology. This training model is invoked when particularly service oriented staff members describe their roles as assisting clients to become employment ready and independent. The "becoming" in this sense is about learning the hidden rules of social interaction, such as self-motivation, positive self-representation, and flexibility, in order to fit the 'middle class' framework of employment (Payne et al, 2009).

There is a tension between providing assistance and identifying suitability that is visible in the actual practices of service provision. On the one hand, where Branch A and the MTCU guidelines converge is in the JM strategy, of placing appropriate candidates directly in jobs. The JM strategy converges with the neoliberal outcomes-based funding conditions in which funding has been reduced while agencies are required to be more efficient in proving that their services result in employment success (FN 9/10). On the

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other hand, there is a discrepancy between the MRD model used by Agency A and the MTCU outcomes-based funding. The MRD model focuses on selling candidates that fit employer needs (FN 22/10). In contrast, MTCU funding guidelines specify that suitability criteria be used as a guide with which “service providers will target and outreach to people at the greatest risk of continued or long term unemployment, or those who are marginalized in the labour market” (EOPG, 2011: 2.1-1). This would seem to imply that needs and barriers are the greatest measures of suitability. While Branch A employment counseling staff have various ways for coping with and “working around” the stringent accountability requirements, stringency of MTCU outcomes-based accountability measures has cornered even the most service oriented employment counseling staff members at Branch A into identifying suitability in relation to the potential for clients’ employment success.

This is because there is ambiguity regarding the ratio of client suitability for assistance, versus the impact of services (in terms of successful employment). In the measure of service effectiveness, the MTCU guidelines weight suitability at half that of impact (EOPG, 2011:2.5-2), nonetheless the consequences of not meeting success targets inevitably leads to a disproportionate weighting of the motivation, or willingness, requirement in practice (EOPG, 2011). So, rather than ensuring that all clients are provided with tangible and immediate support to obtain employment, Branch A employment counseling staff are expected to identify and interpret the legitimacy of client identified barriers in accordance with MTCU suitability criteria. This in turn has ramifications for how barriers are identified and deemed as legitimate in service provision practices, which I discuss further in Chapter Five.

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INTRODUCTION

Shortly after completing my field research at Branch A, Employment Ontario (EO) released a set of advertisements on YouTube and television titled “Ready Set Work”. These advertisements feature the tagline “You’ve got ambition / Vous-avez de l’ambition” and depict job-seekers taking desperate measures to be noticed by employers. The stated purpose of the campaign is to inform unemployed job-seekers of resources available through EO funded employment agencies. Yet implicit in these depictions is the problematic of legitimate entitlement to support: what type of unemployed person is entitled to government resources? What qualities entitle some people to accessing these resources more than others? The answer in these depictions is ambition, or as it is called in employment and social service guidelines, motivation.

In the clip “Hire Jim” the character “Jim,” a male job-seeker in his mid to late twenties, dangles from a harness outside the window of an upper story corporate boardroom and tapes the phrase “HIRE JIM MCFURNSON” to the window (Employment Ontario, 2013a). The depiction of desperation is humourised when a gust of wind removes enough letters from the window for the miscommunication: “HI IM UR SON”. As this mishap has the effect of garnering a different attention than Jim intended, viewers with this type of misdirected ambition are advised that they qualify for the assistance of EO resources. Likewise, in the clip “Manager’s Office”, a young woman is shown in the ventilation shaft of an office building, following a map that appears to lead to the manager’s office (Employment Ontario 2013b). This job-seeker’s plan to garner employer attention is also depicted as faulty when she suddenly falls from the ventilation shaft and crashes through a restroom ceiling. A man, presumably the manager, exits a stall and washes his hands while the woman attempts to thrust her resume at him. In

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both of these advertisements, humour is used portray the kind of unemployed person that is in need of assistance from employment services, a motivated, albeit misdirected, job-seeker.

The underlying theme of both advertisements is that of identifying and legitimating the kind of unemployed person who deserves government resources to help them obtain employment.³⁷ Ambition, as depicted in the clips, is a sort of internal psychological and emotional desperation that is oriented to impressing a potential employer. Indeed, the motto “you’ve got ambition” indicates that ambition, or motivation, is a resource embodied in the job-seeker. This definition then positions the right kind of unemployed person as one who has this resource. In this sense, access to provincially funded resources is framed by the construction of motivated as a euphemism for “actively seeking at all costs”.

Additionally, the type of job-seeker targeted in these portrayals is able bodied, ‘white’, and unattached, albeit inexperienced. Noticeably absent from these fictitious job-seekers are barriers of the type mentioned by interview participants in this study, such as: ableness, immigration status, employment readiness, over-experience and ageism, over- or under-qualification, caregiving commitments, material limitations, and competing commitments. The only barrier evident in these depictions is that of misdirected zeal. In showing youthful job-seekers as engaging in preposterous attention grabbing activities, EO is legitimating specific kinds of needs or barriers to employment and disqualifying others. These images then define the kind of motivation, which I term “legitimate motivation”, that is evident in the policies governing resource distribution to unemployed Ontarians, as well as in the training provided to agency professionals.

³⁷ While aimed at young worker, the message of identifying the ‘right kind’ of worker as ‘deserving of provincially funded services is more general and is evident in the EOPG (2011; 2014) guidelines.

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This project of legitimation hinges on the social and political construction of the concept motivation in provincial funding policy documents for social and employment services. As these documents frame the language of access and assistance to provincially funded employment services, the conceptualization and operationalization of the concept motivation has implications at the level of service provision. It is this problematic, of identifying, defining and mobilizing a socially and political constructed motivation, that I engage with in the current chapter. As I will demonstrate, the social construction of legitimate motivation reveals the tentacles of neoliberal individual responsibilization in the qualifications of resource distribution to unemployed Ontarians. First, I explore the definitions and discussions motivation in scholarly work motivation literature, arguing that a complex discussion of work motivation must delve deeper than simply attempting to harness internal motivation for instrumental tasks. Next, I review the definition of motivation in the provincial funding policies that outline access to social service and employment service resources. Third, I review the operationalization of motivation in Agency A training curricula. Finally, through analysis of observational field notes, I demonstrate that the ambiguity with which motivation is mobilized in funding guidelines and training materials has ramifications in the filtering processes with employment service resources are distributed to clients of Branch A.

COERCING PRODUCTIVITY VERSUS MEANINGFUL WORK IN WORK

MOTIVATION RESEARCH

Scholarly dialogues about work motivation have focused on processes and factors through which work motivation is enhanced, whereas the social construction of motivation has been neglected. Preoccupation with harnessing forces that internalize self-regulation for greater productivity mirrors the neoliberal project of constructing a labour

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market that prioritizes individual responsiblization, self-driven agency and self-regulation, as well as flexibility (Gershon, 2011). This conceptualization upholds a portrayal of the economy as a marketplace in which individuals are ‘free to choose’, while also being flexible and becoming the right kind of employable person (Brown, 2005; Dietz, 2002; Phillips, 1993). In this context, the definition and mobilization of the concept motivation has ramifications for unemployed job-seekers in that it is used to measure how well individuals embody self-regulation. Whether or not an unemployed job-seeker is perceived to embody the tenets of a neoliberal worker determines whether they are granted access to financial or professional resources for surviving and navigating the job-seeking period. Here the concepts of demotivation and legitimate motivation are essential in exploring the consequences and implications of the mobilization of motivation in neoliberal doxa.

Among motivational theorists, there is general consensus that motivation is defined as a catalyst for action that is either internally inspired or externally required (Gagne and Deci, 2005; Lock and Latham, 2004; Michaelson, 2005). Beyond agreement as to a basic internal / external binary in defining motivation as catalyst, operationalization is slippery. Internal and external motivations are either conflated or polarized. In work motivation literature there is an implicit characterization of intrinsic motivation as a ‘pure’ catalyst, in that it requires no coercion, or pressure, external to the individual person’s desire, to undertake an action for enjoyment or self-fulfillment (Ryan and Deci, 2000). This characterization is then extended as the ‘true’ form of motivation. Consequently, internal motivation is sought as the most effective means for harnessing productive action. As I will demonstrate, this characterization of intrinsic motivation has significant consequences when applied in policies that structure resource distribution for

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those experiencing unemployment.

Work motivation literature is particularly guilty of using a conflated internal / external hybrid of motivation. This is evident in that studies in this field primarily attempt to discover the psychosocial factors that enhance or detract from internal motivation to undertake instrumental tasks. More complex discussions elaborate on the fluctuation of this 'resource' over time and in relation to individual orientation (positive or negative) to external incentives or pressures for action. But in this hybridization of the internal and external catalyzation of action, theories of motivation have converted intrinsic forces into the currency of psychological and emotional of resources (Gagne and Deci, 2005; Payne et al. 2009; Wanberg et al, 2012).

In his article, "Meaningful Motivation for Work Motivation Theory", Michaelson (2005) critiques work motivation theory for focusing almost exclusively on how to internally motivate workers to greater productivity. Within this discussion, there is great interest in psychological or emotive influences that enhance self-regulated motivation as the link between extrinsic motivation and intrinsic, interest driven, motivation (Gagne and Deci, 2005; Steel and Konig, 2006). It has been found that the greater the extrinsic coercion, the less overall motivation an individual has for undertaking an instrumental task. This proposition is supported by early studies of work motivation, which discovered that, whereas menial tasks benefit most from external pressures in the short term, extrinsic motivation is not sustainable for long-term productivity. The kinds of external pressures here are those that create a psychosocial pressure independent of the individual person's interest in, or commitment to, the task outcome. Thus, autonomous self-regulation is propounded as the key to long term protracted productivity in tasks that are both menial and complex (Gagne and Deci, 2005; Michaelson, 2005; Ryan and Deci,

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2000; Steel and Konig, 2006).

Yet, the weakness in this preoccupation is that it has wandered from the discussion of motivation as a catalyzing force, whether internally or externally initiated.

Psychologists Gagne and Deci (2005:340) express frustration at this simplistic hybridized conception of external and internal motivation, noting, “the central motivational issue in most theories is the amount of total motivation a person has for a task, so the type of motivation is not considered in making predictions”. Indeed, a plethora of explanations have been proposed for uncovering the factors that may increase the amount of motivational ‘resources’. These include: conscious and subconscious goals (Locke and Latham, 2004), the use of language by management to construct work as meaningful (Sullivan, 1988), as well as the temporal aspect of perceptions of immediate or delayed need satisfaction and success in increasing or diminishing amount of motivation (Steel and Konig, 2006; Wanberg et al. 2012). This project, of determining the factors for harnessing the internal qualities that make people self-regulating, reduces human beings to pliable instruments for organizational success (Michaelson, 2005). Further, the conceptualization of the right kind of motivation as always internal, albeit externally extracted, has consequences in the realm of access to and distribution of resources for people experiencing unemployment.

One work motivation theory, self-determination theory (SDT), proposes a return to motivation as a dynamic action-oriented continuum. It suggests that instrumental action fluctuates in relation to external constraints and individual perceptions of autonomy or choice, probability of success, and belonging. Motivation for instrumental tasks is enhanced when the individual identifies with the outcome in relation to a goal that has relevance for their identity, or success, and internalizes the regulation for completing the

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task (Gagne and Deci 2005; Ryan and Deci, 2000). The opposite effect is produced in the absence, or repression, of one of the factors of autonomy, competence or relatedness.

This is what the authors refer to as “externalization” of motivation in which external pressures undermine internal motivation to varying degrees, ultimately leading to amotivation (Gagne and Deci, 2005).

Further, SDT is the only theory that shifts the focus from the amount of motivation individuals have, to the type of motivation they are experiencing. This is evident in the proposition that instrumental actions can become self-driven and self-regulated through identification with a task as meaningful to the self (Gagne and Deci, 2005). This kind of motivation is identified as part of a continuum from intrinsic to extrinsic, in which extrinsic motivation has become internalized. This conception is closer to the dynamism of motivation as catalyst, rather than, as some studies have suggested, as a thing possessed in varying amounts, mediated by time (Steel and Konig, 2006). SDT proposes that in the following conditions individuals will identify with the goal of the instrumental task and thus internalize extrinsic motivation: 1) individuals have autonomy or choice in the way they approach the task; 2) they feel supported by others in this autonomy which fosters a sense of belonging; 3) attempts to engage in the task demonstrate competence or are satisfied with measures of success (Gagne and Deci, 2005; Ryan and Deci 2000).

In refocusing work motivation theory to engage with motivation as a continuum, rather than a dichotomy, SDT provides a foundation for deconstructing the interpretation of motivation in the context of unemployment. However, while this continuum is useful, I found that it only partially explains the context in which job search motivation is either promoted or inhibited. In this chapter, I expand the SDT explanation of motivation-as-continuum to focus on the social relations involved in interpreting motivation in the field

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of employment services. Chapter Six addresses the formation of a theory of demotivation that attempts to explain how the social construction and interpretation of a particular kind of neoliberal motivation can in fact promote demotivation for those job-seekers who do not embody the ‘right kind’ of socially constructed motivation.

MOTIVATION AS ‘SUITABILITY’ IN FUNDING GUIDELINES

While the tensions in work motivation theory have fostered a degree of complexity, this has not filtered into the ‘real world’ of political and employment decision-making. As I will demonstrate below, provincial funding guidelines for unemployment resource distribution and access mobilize a simplistic conception of motivation as an indicator of responsabilization. Preoccupation with leveraging the concept motivation, for the purposes of forcing a kind of self-regulated productivity, has significant implications when exploring the mediation of access to resources for unemployed Ontarians. This simplistic construction is evident in provincial social services and employment service funding, as well as in professional training resources, and subsequently by agency professionals. Indeed, the construction of a particular kind of motivation, as an internally derived resource, supports and perpetuates the neoliberal doctrine that has reconstructed responsible citizenship to embody neoliberal tenets of flexibility and self-responsibilization (Gershon, 2011; Siltanen et al, 2009). As such, this particular permutation of motivation is central in identifying ‘deserving’ versus ‘undeserving’ job-seekers in relation to the habitus of a motivated job-seeker. This habitus is evident in the funding policies that structure distribution of resources to unemployed Ontarians. What is more, the assumption in policies and training materials, that all motivation is internal, leads to practices that promote demotivation.

During periods of unemployment, several types of resources are available to

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Ontarians, these include: Employment Insurance (EI), which provides short term financial support to sustain workers who have been laid off, either temporarily or permanently; OW, which provides long term financial support and job-seeking assistance during protracted periods of unemployment; WSIB, which provides short term financial support for workplace related illness and injury, until such time as workers are able to return to work or seek alternative employment; and ODSP which provides long-term financial support and employment assistance to those who are unemployed due to chronic illness, injury or ability limitations (MCSS, 2012a; MCSS 2012c; Service Canada, 2014). Requirements for continued receipt of both OW and EI benefits are willingness to seek employment and the willingness to accept any ‘suitable’ employment (MCSS, 2012a; Service Canada, 2014: 9.4.1.).

The explicit purpose of OW support is to uphold the ideal of “individual responsibility and promote self-reliance through employment” (MCSS 2008: 1.1 p. 1). The employment seeking activities that OW clients are required to commit to enacting include educational and skills training as well as job placements or voluntary community work (MCSS, 2012b). Further, employment supports, in terms of resume and job search planning, skills training and job placements, are available to all recipients of social services. Once clients of OW and ODSP begin to earn employment income, only the first two hundred dollars is exempt from deductions. After that, fifty percent of employment income earned is deducted from OW benefits (MCSS, 2014; MCSS, 2013b).

Mobilization of motivation in EI and OW guidelines supports the neoliberal doxa that requires workers to be self-regulated, and individually responsible for their survival. The concept of motivation serves as a standard for identifying legitimate and illegitimate barriers to unemployment. This is apparent in that, unlike OW and EI clients, clients of

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WSIB and ODSP are not required to seek employment or engage in job-seeking activities until a qualified VRS has vetted their recovery. Nowhere in WSIB and ODSP guidelines is there a requirement that clients prove that they are motivated. Instead these documents are preoccupied with proof of barriers (MCSS, 2012c; MCSS, 2006). In the event that an individual is unable to sustain employment and embody an individually responsible type of agency, it falls to them to prove that extenuating circumstances prevent employment.

In addition to the above agencies, employment support services are available through employment service agencies, as well as through Service Ontario affiliated agencies. Employment Ontario (EO) and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) jointly release funding packages to employment service providing agencies for the purpose of distributing resources to unemployed Ontarians. A set of guidelines accompany funding packages which delineate criteria for determining which prospective clients are suitable for inclusion in these supports. Among these, a variety of flow-through incentives, such as YEF and SC, are granted to agencies for administering specific time-sensitive programs.

Operating funding for services such as EC, JM and a technological resource center, is provided via a partnership between the MTCU and EO. A document listing guidelines for service delivery and quality standards also delineates eligibility and suitability criteria for prospective clients, in which services are classified as "assisted" and "unassisted" (EOPG, 2011). While all unemployed Canadian citizens residing in Ontario are eligible for both assisted and unassisted support, suitability criteria streamline agency resources to those individuals who are most needy, and most likely to try to obtain employment. While RI supports are available to virtually any person who enters the agency, the guidelines suggest that self-directed clients, those with "good motivation and work habits

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and strong interpersonal skills” are best served through this avenue (EOPG, 2011: 2.2-5). Assisted services are limited to those who exhibit legitimate barriers, such as limited work or interpersonal skills and unrealistic expectations of labour market opportunities, as well as to those who may suffer from discriminatory employer perceptions of ability and demographic characteristics. Legitimate barriers are constructed as an individual person’s incompatibility with the structural and economic conditions of the local labour market. However these do not account, or provide, for barriers such as responsibilities of providing care for family members (EOPG, 2011). Illegitimate barriers, in contrast, are constructed as ‘excuses’ which evidence a lack of willingness, or motivation, to participate in job-seeking.

The way in which motivation is constructed is evident in the delineation of requisite filtering processes that determine whether clients of employment and social services ‘have’ motivation and are therefore deserving of employment service resources. In this context, motivation is defined as willingness, or attitude, towards job-seeking activities (EOPG, 2011: 3.1-3, 3.1-4). Evidence of this disposition towards job-seeking is a prerequisite for being categorized as assisted. In turn the concept of motivation is positioned as an entity, or quality, that is intrinsic to the self, the presence of which must be proven. A more recent publication of these guidelines further qualifies those factors “which prevent clients from initiating the job search, or participating fully in the activities required to secure and maintain employment” as attitude, willingness and ability (EOPG, 2014: 11). The 2014 publication demonstrates a greater focus on ensuring that clients have this internal motivation, suggesting that suitability is dependent on whether and how much clients “are motivated to work” (EOPG, 2014: 83). Terminology such as ‘good,’ ‘low’ and ‘high’ indicates that motivation is possessed in degrees, and

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that it may be increased using external pressures (EOPG, 2014: 20, 84).

The logic in the above employment service and social service guidelines is that the internal desire to obtain employment is evident in a job-seeker's perseverance to obtain employment in the face of any kind of barrier. In the event that clients of employment or social services do not demonstrate evidence of motivation (because they lack either evidence for job-seeking, or the willingness to prioritize employment above wage expectations, caregiving obligations and other commitments) such clients are categorized as 'unassisted' (EOPG, 2011; Service Canada, 2014). In this case, barriers regarded as illegitimate are viewed as evidence of low motivation and therefore disqualify clients from accessing directed support resources. Motivation is then characterized both as action and as willingness to engage in, and accept, any and all employment, regardless of barriers and the potential reduction of income or material wellbeing this may entail (Service Canada, 2014). The social pressure to overcome poverty, or the shame of being a recipient of social services such as OW or ODSP, entails being willing to endure this reduction in financial and material wellbeing for the short term, in order to gain employment. In this version of reality, any employment is logically better than remaining unemployed, yet concern for the consequences of poorly paying employment are not considered legitimate enough reasons for being 'unwilling' (Payne et al, 2009).

This construction of motivation as attitude, or willingness, to participate in job-seeking action falls into the same trap as much of work motivation literature in that there is an assumption that motivation is an internally derived resource. Moreover, the positioning of motivation as an internal resource evidences the neoliberal construction of this concept as an indicator of embodiment of the neoliberal habitus. While motivation is the key to accessing assisted employment services, there is little beyond the one-

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dimensional definition of attitude, or willingness, to direct service providers in how to identify whether clients are motivated. Such a one-dimensional construction of the concept motivation trickles into the practices of service provision, as is visible in the discussions of motivation in the employment services training material utilized by Agency A.

CONSTRUCTIONS OF MOTIVATION IN AGENCY TRAINING DOCUMENTS

The neoliberal habitus is evident also in the training materials used by Branch A. These materials guide staff in filtering whether clients are suitable candidates for agency services and resources and they also justify staff decisions in this process. Employment service agencies are encouraged to apply their own industry specific training for assessing client service needs, this means agencies are responsible for interpreting the suitability criteria outlined in funding guidelines and for training staff in how to identify whether each client is suitable (EOPG, 2011). In my field research, I found that Branch A staff draw heavily on the Job Direct and *Bridges Out of Poverty* (Payne et al. 2009) training models in discussions of motivation, and in individual interpretations of what motivation “looks like” in client behavior (FN 22/10).

In *Bridges Out of Poverty* (Payne et al. 2009), the authors outline and explain the worldviews of three main social classes, the poor, the middle class, and the wealthy. The aim is to train industry professionals in mentoring and teaching skills for assisting clients from socioeconomic backgrounds that differ from what Payne et al. (2009) refer to as the norm of the ‘middle class’ labour market. In this training, staff are taught that all aspects of the client’s self are viewed as moldable. Moldability includes learning to communicate in a more formal language register, learning to become self-disciplined, increasing cultural capital by learning the ‘hidden rules’ of the middle class, and

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changing hygiene practices for more palatable self-presentation (Payne et al. 2009).

Professionals working with people of low socio-economic status are positioned as mentors for navigating the ‘middle class rules’ of employment.

While the principles of positive affirmation and relational support have been integrated into service provision by Branch A staff, a connection between relational support and promotion of motivation and demotivation has been unintentionally overlooked. The focus on ensuring the flexibility and moldability of the individual, rather than on social structures, mirrors the individual responsabilization doctrine inherent in a neoliberal construction of the state / economy matrix. The project of remaking the self, so as to embody the right kind of work-focused agent, shifts the responsibility for ‘fixing’ the problem of unemployment to the individual, rather than to the political structures that regulate economic activity (Breitkreuz and Williamson, 2012; Walkerdine, 2003).

Eligibility for programs and assistance is detailed in reference to specific ‘grids’, or forms, provided by funding agencies. The employment counselor mediates the tension between the rigid requirements of eligibility grids and the needs of individual clients. In order to ‘fit’ the qualitative life experiences of individual clients into standardized, quantitative grids, employment counselors refer to the *Bridges Out of Poverty* and “Job Direct” training models to justify ‘bending’ or maintaining program eligibility requirements. These frameworks are used to measure a client’s readiness to actively engage in the job searching process and to orient pedagogical practices towards reshaping thought processes and attitudes about job searching practices.

In the recently adopted Job Direct training model, the conceptual trinity of motivation, reliability and dependability (MRD) are cited as the requisite factors for

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being job-ready (FN 24/9). Of these, evidence of motivation is emphasized as the most significant attribute a client must possess, whereas reliability and dependability are ‘teachable’ (FN 19/9; FN 16/10). Additionally, employability is defined as a “combination of motivation and ability” (FN 24/9). Again, an undefined motivation is emphasized as the most critical element leading to employment success, with ability being considered relevant only in assessing the type and extent of support clients need for their job search. If a client lacks the appearance of a positive attitude towards job-seeking and work, they are identified as needing motivation development, regardless of ability, barriers and skills. The assumption being that without enough motivation, clients will not succeed in obtaining or maintaining employment. While motivation is the linchpin in this doctrine, it is not explicitly defined, other than in relation to attitude, which leads to ambiguity in practice. Thus employment service professionals are taught that service provision is most successful when it is client driven. Then, once motivation, reliability and dependability are determined, Branch A employment counselors are better able to determine the kinds of supports that clients need (FN 24/9).

Together, the training models and provincial funding suitability criteria distill the following themes that have become principles of practice in Branch A service provision. First, that motivation is imperative to client employment success. Second, the individual person is moldable and, as long as there is enough motivation, a client can become employable. Third, motivation is synonymous with willingness to engage in job-search activities. Finally, motivation is visible in the client’s attitudes towards employment and towards barriers to employment. These principles are most visible in the practices of employment counselors practices for filtering whether clients are suitable for “assisted” services. Below I outline these practices as part of a more general filtering process.

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FILTERING FOR SUCCESS: INTERPRETING MOTIVATION AND THE BURDEN OF PROOF

As discussed in Chapter Four, employment agencies are awarded funding based on a specific number of “service units” (i.e. clients who are designated as “assisted”). In order to continue receiving funding, agencies must ensure that they meet a monthly and yearly target ratio of 69% of assisted service units recorded as “closed to employment” in CaMS (FN 18/9; FN 22/10). Being opened as an assisted case file entitles clients to a specific kind of access to counseling and job matching services. This access entails the expenditure of resources, such as staff time, financial subsidies etc., for which agencies are accountable. In order to maximize success, each agency uses practices to ensure that only those clients who are most likely to close to employment are opened as case files in CaMS. This is mediated by the employment counselor through referrals, which include recommendations to MTCU funded training programs for funding grants such as SC, YEF, or TIOW.

The pressure of these funding targets means that there is little room for flexibility in categorizing as “assisted” clients who do not demonstrate high probability of employment success (FN 3/10). In this sense the employment counselor is responsible and accountable for their recommendations, and by extension for the success or failure of their assisted clients in either completing training or procuring employment. This is the locus in which the ‘Job Direct’ MRD and *Bridges Out of Poverty* frameworks fit as justifications for filtering decisions that restrict or grant access to Branch A resources.

The filtering process at Branch A begins with assessing client eligibility and suitability for becoming assisted, which are identified and defined in the employment services guidelines. As previously discussed, suitability carries the most weight in

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determining access and is assessed in relation to a client's barriers, resources, as well as whether the client possesses the habitus of a motivated job-seeker (EOPG, 2011). As mentioned, guidelines for determining client eligibility and suitability delineate qualities or attributes that parallel the habitus of a neoliberal citizen, those of self-responsibilization and flexibility (Breitkreuz and Williamson, 2012). In particular, the EOPG funding guidelines set out a framework for identifying suitable candidates that delineates the habitus of a neoliberal job-seeker, that of a willing and flexible economic actor who demonstrates an internalized self-responsibilization. In this context, the concept motivation is used to identify the dual concept of flexibility and willingness.

Staff at Branch A use the Job Direct MRD framework to filter whether clients are suitable for receiving the provincially funded services and resources offered at Branch A. Reliability and dependability are viewed as attributes that can be cultivated through coaching, rather than as determinants of success or failure. In contrast, motivation is conceptualized as an internal psychological and emotional resource and the extent to which a client appears to possess motivation is used as the primary indicator for predicting client success. Here, motivation is identified in relation to whether clients demonstrate a positive attitude towards job searching, willingness to engage in job-seeking activities, and flexibility in terms of the kinds of employment opportunities the client is willing to engage in. However, the actual measurement and interpretation of motivation by Branch A employment counselors is slippery. In practice, interpretation is a synthesis of evidence gathering and intuition, in order to fit the qualitative attributes and needs of clients into the quantitative suitability grids of CaMS.

While clients are designated as suitable for levels of support according to the extent of visible barriers to obtaining employment, motivation is precluded as the qualifying

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factor. In deciding on the level of support clients need, resources that are taken into account include “interpersonal skills, work history and educational attainments” (EOPG, 2011: 3.1-2). Limitations in any of the above resources are deemed legitimate barriers to employment. Yet, legitimate barriers are perceived as only limiting clients in being self-directed. Providing clients with support in overcoming such barriers is couched in wording that indicates moldability (as evidenced in both Agency A training models which suggest that with effective coaching, any client can become employable). Further, Branch A staff are taught that effective outcomes-focused services will account for and mediate client barriers when matching employment candidates with employers. Levels of ability and corresponding support requirements are classified in accordance with Job Direct categories and are outlined as follows: self-directed clients are those without visible barriers, such as mobility or developmental barriers, visible physical differences, limited work or interpersonal skills. Levels one and two are designated for clients who demonstrate barriers significant enough that they may not be able to find employment on their own. In each of these categories motivation is a necessary qualification, but, as I will demonstrate, the interpretation of motivation hinges on the slippery construction of motivation as an internal willingness, rather than as a response to internal and external pressure or enticements for action.

Motivation is interpreted by employment counselors in a variety of contexts: in an initial appointment, then a motivational interview, and continuing through observations of clients’ follow-up actions, which are monitored in subsequent appointments or email communications. I observed the filtering practices of Branch A employment counselors in order to delineate what indicators were used to interpret whether clients were motivated. For these observations I attended first appointments and motivational

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interviews with six of the eight employment counselors, as well as several follow up appointments (not necessarily with the same clients). After each appointment I debriefed with the employment counselors, asking them to explain whether they thought the clients were motivated, how they identified whether the client was motivated, and how they defined motivation. From these observations, I uncovered a pattern indicating several variables through which the employment counselors interpret motivation. I have split these variables into four categories: evidence of job-seeking actions, attitude towards work, source of motivation and intuition.

The most straightforward aspect of assessing client motivation is in the evidence a client provides which proves they are serious in their intention for obtaining employment. Evidence indicates the existence and extent of actions the client takes prior to and during the counseling period. Employment counselors locate evidence in three ways: first in the way clients describe previous job-seeking activities; second, in whether clients expectations for work are immediate and realistic; and finally in the extent to which clients enact follow up home work. It is important to note that evidence indicators are used in tandem with each other, rather than in isolation.

During first appointments, the employment counselor interviews the prospective client while filling in a suitability grid, either for a specific funding program or in Branch A's internal system. Clients who are assessed as highly motivated cite examples of specific companies to which they have applied or sent resumes, companies they have "cold-called", or interviews they have attended but not successfully been hired from. A highly motivated client may be entered as assisted immediately following the first appointment if they provide enough specific evidence of previous job-seeking actions.

In three first appointments, I observed that highly motivated clients provided

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specific examples of job-seeking actions. This included specific examples of the names and number of places they had applied to (FN 1/10; FN 16/10) and knowledge of exactly what job-seeking skills they were struggling with (FN 1/10; FN 8/10). The following excerpt from field notes taken following an observation of one of these appointments delineates the conditions under which the extent of previous job-seeking is enough evidence for assessing a client as highly motivated:

The female client has been job searching since finishing her degree one month ago. She is very organized and has a portfolio recording all of the businesses she has applied to in the previous month. The employment counselor asked specific questions about previous job-seeking and what the client hoped for in the coaching relationship. Then the employment counselor explained the Youth Employment Fund for which the client qualified, and entered the client as assisted immediately. Following the appointment, the employment counselor mentioned that the client is obviously motivated. "How can you tell?" I asked. The employment counselor explained that they could sense it in the client's answers to questions about job searching. She had evidence of specific jobs she had applied for and she knew the areas she wanted assistance with: in editing her resume and cover letter and with interview skills. In addition she had been searching for a job since she finished her degree: she sends out one resume per day, has had two interviews and has several reference letters in her portfolio. The employment counselor said that many of the client's job search skills were 'right on' but that what she lacked was confidence and experience, which could be learned and enhanced in a job placement. (FN 8/10)

In this same debriefing interview, the employment counselor noted that if clients do not provide extensive and specific examples of previous job-seeking, they will shift to assessing whether clients employment goals are realistic and immediate. This means that employment counselors determine if the client is willing to work entry level wages, is willing to travel to work, is willing to learn new skills, and is willing to work any hours that are common in that field (FN 24/10). In this sense, realistic means that clients' wage expectations are reasonable given the wages in that field and given their level of experience and qualifications. Clients who indicate that their employment goals are within their skill or training background, who do not have 'inflated' wage expectations and who are willing to be available for the hours of work common in the

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industries to which they are applying, are considered motivated.

If a client demonstrates evidence of job-seeking actions but mentions unrealistic employment goals, they are not necessarily disqualified from assisted services. Each individual employment counselor makes decisions regarding whether different evidence indicators are enough in terms of determining client motivation. The factor determining whether a client is motivated is their willingness to obtain immediate employment. In this context, immediacy refers to readiness to alter their wage expectations, to take a pay cut, or to obtain employment in a field either equal to or below their credentials, skill level, or qualifications (FN 3/10; FN 8/10). In contrast, clients may be assessed as unmotivated if they “put up barriers or make excuses for not looking for work or not accepting job offers” (FN 8/10).

At the same time, evidence indicators may be used to assess clients as needing assistance. This was apparent when observing an appointment with a recently unemployed male client in his mid-twenties. The employment counselor in this case explained to me that the client would be considered an independent job-seeker, meaning that he would not require assistance, had he not had unrealistic wage expectations. The employment counselor suggested that while his wage expectations of fourteen dollars an hour were high for that field, his expectations would become more realistic the longer he was unemployed (FN 8/10). In this case, the client’s motivation was visible in the evidence he provided of job-seeking actions, which demonstrated his willingness to obtain employment. His unrealistic employment goals were not assessed as hindering his job-seeking motivation, but rather as an indicator that he needed assistance to adjust his labour market expectations.

If an employment counselor is not convinced of a client’s level of motivation they

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will extend the assessment into an intermediary follow-up period before entering the client into CaMS. This step is particularly pertinent for assessing the motivation of clients who do not provide specific examples of job-seeking actions, who do not have realistic employment goals or who have only recently become unemployed. In preparing a follow up assessment employment counselors and clients set an agenda for a job-seeking action plan. This plan provides employment counselors with the opportunity to gather evidence of job-seeking actions and to analyze the extent to which clients are motivated and committed to obtaining employment (FN 15/10). Assessment in this context involves establishing a job-seeking action plan, requesting a written a resume from the client, or recommending workshops to attend. Specific tasks may include attending all EC follow up appointments, conducting cold calls for job market research, compiling a list of potential employers in their field, applying to a specified number of these employers in a one week period and / or providing a completed draft of a resume or cover letter with revisions for the employment counselor to evaluate.

Clients who are assessed as motivated complete at least some of the tasks in the job-seeking action plan and show indications of being committed to completing the steps necessary for becoming hireable. Indeed, employment counselors noted that the extent to which clients follow through with these goals reveals their level of commitment to becoming employed which “helps determine the extent of the client’s MRD, which they must support with evidence before JDs will put the client on the job matching list” (FN 8/10). This assessment is used for two reasons: so that employment counselors do not enter clients who are “saying the right things” but do not possess enough motivation to complete the counseling process, and so that employment counselors do not disqualify clients who are motivated but who are unable to express themselves in a satisfactory

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manner. Following one informal debriefing, I recorded the employment counselor's justification for the role of follow up in the filtering process as, "absolutely necessary in order to see what the client wants [from EC], how they have been job searching, what motivates them to find the job, and whether there are specific things the employment counselor can do to help" (FN 3/10).

In addition to evidence of commitment to becoming employable, employment counselors note that the less tangible positive attitude is a significant indicator of whether a client will be able to secure employment within the required eight-week time frame. Fostering a positive attitude towards job-seeking and employment opportunities was mentioned frequently as integral to being employable. This occurred in workshops, in first appointments and informal interviews with staff, as well as in interviews with assisted interview participants. A participant's attitude is observable in their descriptions of the job search, their skills and previous work experience, as well as in their body language, self-presentation and demeanor (FN 19/9).

While a positive attitude is noted as an asset to becoming employable, it is not in itself an indicator of motivation. Instead, attitude is taken in tandem with willingness. Attitude is positioned as a moldable attribute as long as clients exhibit willingness to participate in job-seeking activities and motivational coaching. In this context, motivational coaching encompasses activities and exercises that promote a positive attitude, proper hygiene and self-presentation, and improve "people skills". In workshops, clients of Branch A are taught that cultivating a positive attitude towards unemployment is about becoming an agent, by viewing unemployment as an opportunity for personal growth and development (FN 25/9, TIOW Creating Success workshop; FN 18/9, Benefits of the Older Worker workshop). In the "Creating Success" workshop I

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attended, participants were taught the mantra, “I am the driver of my own life” and encouraged that a positive attitude leads to success (FN 25/9). Echoing this sentiment, interview participants “Julie” and “Andy” both suggested that a positive attitude must be intentionally cultivated. Julie described her perspective of cultivating a positive attitude as follows:

I've been really fortunate, but then again I think I've done some good self-programming. I always want to improve on how I present myself, how intuitive and helpful and friendly and how genuine [I am]. [...] 'Cause I tell myself, if I didn't get the job I can console myself later, right now I want to make myself transfer to the front. I want to think of myself as being a success, there's no other candidate in my mind. Why should I think about any other candidate? There's just me and the job, and I'm trying to align myself up with that job.

Andy reiterated this sentiment saying:

I do a lot of self-talk, so again to get back to your question, I'm really trying hard to stay focused. What do I do to stay motivated? I do self-talk. If I'm having a bad day I'll say, "You know what? You're just having a bad day, it will be better later, tomorrow. Just give yourself a break". Another thing I do is I pray, I'm a big believer in prayer it's just part of my personal life and I will send a prayer to my guardian angel and to Jesus and another thing I do is I meditate and I will spend a half an hour to an hour a day meditating. It calms my mind; it calms my whole sense of being.

The concept of a positive attitude is so significant in the way motivation cultivation is packaged at Branch A that, in one workshop I observed, when a participant expressed cynicism and negative self-perception of skills and employability, the other participants in the workshop actively encouraged this participant to describe his positive attributes, and promoted the importance of having a positive attitude (FN 18/9).

Not all clients accept a positive attitude and employer-centered job-seeking uncritically. Such is the case with interview participant, “Cal”, who described the positive attitude focused job-seeking doctrine as “a game, you've got to play the game. In other words the information that's being presented is the information that employers want [from employees]. [A] change of perspective on what they're looking for, that type of

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thing”. Despite cynicism, Cal has maintained active job-seeking activities and related to me that he had been, “applying for at least one job a day. [But] responses are very low, not even one response [in] six weeks, [maybe] seven weeks? [...] I've done both [types of searching], email and cold calls [...]” as well as personally delivering applications to potential employers in different cities. At the time Cal was being assisted in an EC relationship and was regularly attending workshops and counseling appointments. Thus, a job-seeker who exhibits cynicism or discouragement towards job-seeking may still be assessed as motivated if they demonstrate willingness to participate in job-seeking activities.

Finally, the extent to which a client is motivated is evaluated in relation to whether the source of motivation is legitimate enough for assuring employment success. Source of motivation is assessed with three indicators, reasons for seeking employment, employment readiness, and intuition. Firstly, Branch A staff use the term “employment readiness” to indicate that clients have access to necessities of life, such as enough food, clothing, and stable shelter. I was informed that if clients do not have access to the necessities of life they will focus more of their energy on finding avenues for satisfying these needs than on job-seeking (FN 9/10). However, Job Direct training and employment service guidelines both suggest that if a client is motivated enough, they are employment ready, regardless of such barriers (EOPG, 2011; FN 24/9). The stipulation in the interpretation of employment readiness is that clients must express greater desire or reasons for obtaining employment than hindrances. In my observations of appointments, it was only when clients admitted that barriers were deterring them from engaging in active job-seeking that they were assessed as not motivated enough.

Next, clients who are interpreted as motivated to find work tend to express their

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reasons for seeking employment in terms of a combination of internal desire and external need. Through my observations I found that interpretations of the ‘right’ reasons for seeking work include the desire to contribute to a household income, to be a good citizen, or to find self-fulfillment. When external pressures, such as financial need, are given as secondary in relation to the ‘right’ internal motivations, external motivations are acceptable sources (FN 1/10). This may be articulated in terms of the both financial need and the desire to be independent, as was expressed by interview participant, Elizabeth, an international university student. Of her reasons for seeking paid employment, Elizabeth said:

My parents are the ones supporting me. When I left my parents I didn't even need to work, they [would] be like, “Oh, we can help with whatever it is you're doing.” But I just have that sense of responsibility, I'm not a twelve year old, I'm not eighteen either. So I just have that [drive], I need to do something. I'm here, as much as I'm here to study, I need to have that sense of responsibility like an adult. I am accountable for my actions.

While Elizabeth would be identified as motivated and suitable for being opened as an assisted case file in CaMS, she does not have permanent resident status. Therefore, according to the employment services guidelines, Elizabeth is not eligible to receive employment support resources (EOPG, 2011).³⁸

In contrast, in debriefing interviews with an employment counselor and a VRS, I found that external sources of motivation, such as financial or material need, social pressures to be a contributing citizen, and / or the pending conclusion of social services financial support, are considered insufficient if they are the only reasons given and if they are not accompanied by enough evidence of job-seeking (FN 15/10; FN 22/10). Financial need is only considered enough when accompanied by evidence of the intrinsic

³⁸ Elizabeth’s position in the labour market as a non-permanent resident and visible minority, and also as a woman, subjects her to structural inequalities in terms of the kinds of work available to her and the types of publicly funded resources she may access. Structural inequalities of racialization in Canadian employment standards have been explored by Thomas (2010).

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willingness to be flexible. Flexibility here is visible in wage and job expectations, presentation of the self, attitude towards job-seeking, and willingness to participate in training. On the other hand, clients who provide enough evidence of willingness to participate in job-seeking actions, but articulate only external reasons for motivation, are interpreted as motivated enough. One such instance is evident in the following excerpt from an observation of a first appointment:

In this appointment the client qualified for assistance and for almost all funding subsidized programs. This was because the client has been laid off and because they are over fifty-five and do not have post-secondary education. The client, when asked what they wanted [from the counseling relationship] responded by saying they wanted to work. They then explained specific job search actions and places they had applied to, as well as experiences of calling back [to follow up with employers]. When asked why the client wanted to work, the response, that they needed the money, was sufficient. This is because they had demonstrated that they really did want to work [with evidence of job-seeking] and were willing to take steps to look for work. In this case the client felt frustrated because the job search had not resulted in callbacks [from employers] and they felt age was a barrier. The employment counselor, after explaining training options, had the client sign a release of information form so that they could conference with a JD and put client forward as candidate for job matching. (Observation of First Appointment FN 1/10)

This demonstrates that while the client was extrinsically motivated, they provided enough evidence of job-seeking to be interpreted as motivated enough. In this sense, willingness indicates intrinsic motivation, whereas extrinsic factors such as material and financial need are motivators in terms of immediacy. Further, while a positive attitude is positioned as important in being perceived as desirable by employers, is not in itself an indicator of motivation. Rather, the internal attitude, or willingness, to become employable is linked to intrinsic motivation.

Finally, intuition is the intangible feeling, or sense, that a client will succeed. Intuition is never given as the only reason for interpreting whether a client is motivated, but employment counselors may cite intuition as the reason for assisting clients who do not demonstrate enough evidence of willingness. Conversely, intuition may be given as a

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reason for prolonging the follow up period with clients who ‘seem’ motivated. For example, if a client is “saying the right things”, yet the employment counselor has an intuitive sense that they are unmotivated, the employment counselor will schedule several follow up appointments and wait to see how the client responds over time. Contrastingly, clients, such as Cal, may appear unmotivated in terms of his attitude, but his employment counselor used intuition to justify the allocation of agency resources, such as motivational coaching, to assist him.

While the most abstract of these four indicators, intuition has significant weight in interpreting the source of motivation, and in assessing the legitimacy of barriers to job-seeking and reasons for wanting employment. I became aware of the significance of the role of intuition when observing a suitability assessment for SC. In this appointment, the employment counselor used intuition to fit the qualitative life circumstances of a prospective client into the program’s quantitative suitability index (FN 25/9). After completing the list of questions and awarding a numerical value to each answer, the client was given a score of fourteen, two points short of the requisite sixteen points. Following the appointment, the employment counselor indicated that the client demonstrated unwillingness for participating in job-seeking. The illegitimate barrier cited was unwillingness to participate in a career that did not provide hours that would accommodate her care-giving responsibilities. Instead the client indicated that providing childcare for her special needs child was a barrier to actively applying for jobs and for attending interviews. Following the appointment, the employment counselor echoed the prescription cited in EI “Refusal of Suitable Employment” guidelines (Service Canada, 2014: 9.4.1), in which “claimants are expected to make arrangements for the care of family members, that will allow them to accept the hours of work that are available in the

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labour market”, explaining that:

Second Career is not [designed] to help with family needs. I asked the employment counselor what makes the client not job ready? The employment counselor explained that this client did not indicate that she is not actively job searching: she did not mention specific job search activities, but just said she was researching and looking in news papers, and she has not been job searching for more than two months. (FN 25/9)

Here the employment counselor’s use of intuition demonstrates that they had internalized of the neoliberal individual responsabilization doxa. This is because intuition was used to interpret whether the client’s self-professed barrier was legitimate or not in relation to her willingness to be flexible. The use of intuition in this assessment mirrors the outlook propounded in provincial employment service guidelines, in which willingness or unwillingness are positioned as indicators of motivation and legitimate barriers.

JDs however do not always appreciate the use of intuition in the filtering process. Instead, in describing how motivation is interpreted, the JDs at Branch A critiqued the muddiness with which intuition was used for interpreting motivation in the filtering process. Instead, they suggested that interpretation of client motivation is at times subject to the degree to which specific employment counselors are too emotionally invested in the success of their clients (FN 3/10). Unlike employment counselors who invest in relationships with clients and who interpret MRD in order to filter for funding target success, JDs emphasize that clients must be employment ready before they are entered as assisted.

For JDs, then, employment ready is a less flexible concept, meaning a client who embodies a self-responsibilization in which they “show up” to a job placement consistently and are willing to complete the tasks indicated in the job description. This term, when used by JD, refers specifically to concrete evidence that JM candidates are

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motivated, reliable and dependable. This is because if clients fail to enact responsible employee practices and are unable to maintain a positive employment relationship with an employer, this failure undermines the reputation of Branch A as a viable resource for employers. Ensuring that a client is employment ready and MRD is imperative for establishing and maintaining lasting relationships with employers. In the same way that employment counselors are held responsible for their case files in CaMS, clients are responsible for providing proof that they have sufficient motivation to successfully complete a job-seeking cycle.

When justifying the filtering process, employment counselors at Branch A indicated that, in order to overcome poverty (read: social assistance dependency) and unemployment, clients must learn the necessity of being willing to work in any job, even if working will be a reduction in financial and material wellbeing (FN 25/9, FN 3/10). The unifying thread used to identify whether clients are motivated is the internal willingness to become employable. Willingness in this sense is identified in relation to the extent of concrete evidence of job-seeking actions, whether a client is flexible in accepting realistic and immediate employment goals, and whether clients' attitudes are moldable. Willingness is then a synonym for the individual flexibility and responsibility to become the right kind of job-seeker. Through this understanding, Branch A resources are positioned as accessible for those job-seekers who, despite actively seeking employment, have been unable to procure employment on their own.

For both JDs and employment counselors, identifying motivated clients through the filtering process is viewed as necessary because assisted services are positioned as a resource for those with legitimate barriers to employment. After one debriefing conversation with an employment counselor, I observed of that role that "employment

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counselors are here to help those who are facing barriers and those who are having difficulty obtaining work and who have been actively job searching” (FN 3/10). What this means is that while legitimate barriers may be obstacles to employability, they do not inhibit job-seeking or willingness to engage in activities to become employable.

Likewise, interpretation of legitimate barriers spills into the way in which access to JM is justified. Similarly to EC, the JM service is articulated as a means of establishing a more equitable job-seeking process for those who are limited in their capacity to obtain work through their own efforts. Here, legitimate barriers to being a self-reliant job-seeker (read: ‘responsible citizen’) are sociocultural barriers such as age, criminal record, social skills, mental or emotional anxiety and insecurity, or employability barriers such as lack of skills and experience, and “patchy” work history. Clients demonstrating legitimate barriers are those whose resumes or social skills inhibit their appeal to employers, or who do not usually pass the interview stage. As the above examples demonstrate, while legitimate barriers to employment are viewed as surmountable obstacles, given appropriate assistance, illegitimate barriers are those that inhibit willingness to engage in job-seeking.

CONCLUSION

As demonstrated in the above filtering practices, legitimate barriers are those that do not conflict with the client’s willingness to seek employment. Yet, the preoccupation with harnessing intrinsic motivation to be the right kind of citizen in policy documents, in Agency A training models, and in Branch A filtering practices leads to exclusionary practices which restrict access to employment service resources on the basis of how the job-seeker articulates barriers. The political construction of motivation as an intrinsic willingness, or resource, that unemployed job-seekers must prove, positions the

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unemployed person as responsible for proving the legitimacy of their needs for access to employment service resources. This then reinforces a kind of neoliberal agency in which people are positioned as individually self-regulating and flexible economic agents who are responsible for becoming employable (Gershon, 2011). The caveat of proving motivation as evidence of being ‘deserving’ then reinforces, and is reinforced by, the neoliberalization of Ontarian employment policies.

Thus the conceptualization of motivation as an internal and self-sustaining resource bolsters the neoliberal doxa of a flexible and responsible citizenry of employment oriented agents. As evidenced in Branch A filtering practices, the way motivation has been constructed and defined, in policy documents and in employment services industry theories, undermines equitable service delivery to unemployed Ontarians.

Those demonstrating motivation as an intrinsic resource fit with the neoliberal concept of the autonomous, self-regulating and self-sufficient agent. “Fit” then justifies publicly funded resources as a means of assisting ‘deserving’ Ontarians with reentering the labour market. This kind of agency then entitles the legitimately barriered individual to resources that assist them in becoming employable, thereby using self-sufficiency as the legitimation for being reliant on government funded resources (FN 19/9).

In contrast, the delegitimization of certain barriers, as evidence that unemployed job-seekers are not self-motivated enough, places the blame, or responsibility, for unemployment on the unemployed person, while simultaneously restricting access to resources that promote employment. Embodiment of neoliberal agency becomes a means of entitlement and disentitlement that legitimates access to government funded resources. As such, the construction of motivation as an intrinsic quality or characteristic delegitimizes barriers to employment by positioning them as excuses for being unwilling

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to enact the right kind of neoliberal agency.

CHAPTER SIX: DEMOTIVATION, DISINCENTIVES, COMPETING COMMITMENTS AND RELATIONAL SUPPORT

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I demonstrate the way in which the current focus on motivation, as an internal quality, in fact undermines job-seeking motivation by restricting access to resources based on evidence of a neoliberal habitus. This is because, in the neoliberal economic context, responsible citizenship is depicted as commitment to obtaining and maintaining paid employment by enacting flexibility (Lightman et al, 2007; Siltanen et al, 2009). In this paradigm, unemployment should be a temporary state of work change that the worker willingly adapts to, seeking other forms of employment or changing their skills to match those desired by employers.

The research findings to follow reveal that despite the negative conditions of unemployment, commitment to employment can be outweighed by a variety of disincentives that perpetuate unemployment. In addition to this, motivation hinges on the ‘exogenous’ factors of prospective quality of life, as well as avenues for social status and significance in a community of relational support. When disincentives to job-seeking flexibility are not taken into account as demotivating factors, individuals who are in need of relational support or resources from employment services may be filtered out.

In this chapter I expand on the consequences of the accountability requirements of outcomes based funding and the subsequent filtering processes that restrict access to employment services resources. I demonstrate that the delegitimization of barriers and disincentives to employment exacerbates demotivation among job-seekers. The very job-seekers who would benefit most from the concrete relational support of employment services are filtered out because they do not embody the ‘right kind’ of neoliberal

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employability habitus. First, I present demotivating factors and link them to the current neoliberal turn in employment discourse. I then define commitment, positioning this concept in relation to the internal-external spectrum of employment motivation. After that, I identify various disincentives to motivation, and demonstrate how such disincentives become demotivating factors. Following that I examine how some interview participants enacted alternative means for obtaining the social rewards of employment. In the next section I draw the connection between alternatively rewarding activities and disincentives, and show how these competing commitments become demotivating factors for obtaining employment. Finally, in addition to disincentives and competing commitments, I found that the extent of relational support job-seekers have access to is significant in whether they exhibit internal motivation for job-seeking. Lack of access to relational support can exacerbate demotivation. Because of this, relational support is a lynchpin upon which hinges both motivation and access to the (provincially funded) relational supports and resources that promote job-seeking motivation.

DEMOTIVATING FACTORS

I suggest the term “demotivating factors” to account for disincentives, whether positive or negative, which undermine motivation for job-seeking. These closely resemble SDT’s externalizing factors of lack of autonomy, lack of relatedness, and lack of competence, yet the demotivating factors I discuss are social, rather than psychological, in their construction and in their consequences. These may be positive disincentives, such as commitments to activities that compete with job-seeking. Disincentives may also be negative, in that they are a consequence of lack of relational support for job-seeking. At the same time, disincentives could be barriers that are deemed illegitimate. This is particularly so in the construction of the neoliberal motivated job-

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seeker as flexible and willing to accept any and all employment prospects. Yet, flexibility is actually a limitation in terms of occupational choice that can become a disincentive for job-seeking when factors such as standard or quality of living, or relational, care-giving or unpaid work commitments are not taken into account as legitimate barriers.

Unfortunately, delegitimization of such factors undermines job-seeking motivation, which in turn has consequences for the extent to which unemployed job-seekers may access resources for navigating unemployment. In the practice of service provision, this demotivation is exacerbated because assistance is granted on the basis of proof of internal motivation, rather than as a means for cultivating motivation through relational supports. Continued invisibility of disincentives and competing commitments exacerbates demotivation. The consequence of this is that those unemployed individuals who most need access to job-seeking assistance and resources are interpreted as not motivated enough to access them. This is then a cycle in which the job-seekers who most need access to employment services resources are not able to access them.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITMENT AS MOTIVATION

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate barriers to employment is a means for filtering whether job-seekers embody the right kind of habitus and are thus ‘deserving’ of provincially funded resources and services. Unfortunately, the delegitimization of barriers that are regarded as exogenous to economic participation can aggravate demotivation for job-seekers who need more concrete assistance for obtaining employment. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, rather than examining the factors that underlie this lack of commitment, the lack of commitment itself becomes the justification for delegitimizing job-seeking barriers or disincentives. However, demotivating factors for obtaining employment may be

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intrinsically motivated activities that compete for time and energy, or alternatively, commitment may be undermined by disincentives that outweigh the benefits of paid employment. Job-seeking motivation is not simply subject to the extent of one's commitment to obtaining employment, but is rather enmeshed in a web of other commitments, social relations and priorities. This means that job-seeking demotivation is exacerbated when disincentives are delegitimized or ignored.

I use the term commitment specifically, to refer to a social contract, either with the self or with another person, which becomes a mechanism for maintaining a course or type of action regardless of how the individual feels or relates to the action. Commitment motivates the individual to continue with this action when it is inconvenient, difficult or unpleasant to do so. In this sense, commitment is simultaneously intrinsically and extrinsically motivated, in that there may be external pressure or benefits for doing so, but ultimately in order to participate in these benefits the individual must choose to consistently undertake a particular type of action. While the committed person chooses to be so, social relations that may include obligation, social status, or remuneration, largely define this choice. Choice is integral to commitment in that once the choice to become committed has been made, the commitment to action then becomes a contract to complete or maintain a course of action. This is then a social contract between parties, in which the benefits of the contract require the commitment of each to consistently engage in particular actions, regardless of the desire or identification with the goal. An example of this kind of commitment is in the requirement for OW recipients to participate in employment-seeking activities in order to maintain the terms of support (Lightman et al, 2007; MCSS, 2012b). While the OW recipient is committed to the goal of maintaining support, this is quite blatantly extrinsically motivated by the condition that failure to do

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so is linked to the loss of, or reduced access to, financial benefits.

Conversely, similarly to Gagne and Deci's (2005) discussion of internalized extrinsic motivation, the committed person may identify with a goal as beneficial to either the current or future self, social relationships, or goals (Gagne and Deci, 2005). The participant chooses to commit because it benefits them, or those in their close social relationships, to do so. Or, in the case of more internal commitment, the committed person identifies with potential outcomes on a personal or professional level. While SDT promotes the concept competence as an internalizing factor for promoting work motivation, I use the concept of competing commitments (Gagne and Deci, 2005). This is because while competence is defined by SDT as a psychological need, the factors I my interview participants mentioned as motivations for commitment were the social relations involved in cultivating social status or social significance, rather than a need for competence itself. These commitments were packaged in various ways, but the common denominator was in the capacity of these other activities to provide a more substantial social reward (such as relational support, social status, or social significance), when compared with paid employment.

DISINCENTIVES AND EMPLOYMENT ALTERNATIVES

In the context of unemployment, disincentives may be aspects of the job search, prospective employment opportunities, or associated costs of employment, that conflict with, or have the potential to negatively impact, the job-seeker's life style, emotional or material wellbeing or goals. These are extrinsic factors that negatively intersect with a job-seeker's motivation. Yet, because of the way that MTCU and MCSS funding policies associate motivation with flexibility and willingness, such barriers are interpreted as exogenous to the job search. This then delegitimizes the disincentives and instead places

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the blame for demotivation on job-seekers themselves.

Disincentives that interview participants in this study mentioned are: reduction or loss of social services benefits that outweighed potential earnings; the fact that available jobs provide lower wages than those job-seekers were accustomed to earning in previous occupations; financial costs of childcare or time spent away from children were not sufficiently compensated for in available jobs. For example, after working for several years in the minimum wage service sector, single parent “Eric” was laid off and has become part of an extensive pool of labour seeking minimum and low wage labour in Region A. To survive this extended period of unemployment, Eric has had to seek social services assistance from OW. Eric expressed the desire to be involved in the workforce for his own mental and emotional wellbeing. Despite being unemployed, Eric continues his daily routine of rising early, spending his days seeking employment and reading university textbooks to independently further his education. While his job-seeking motivation has been rewarded with several interviews, Eric admitted that he faces disincentives to obtaining employment. Firstly, he indicated that while he could potentially find well paying work in the construction industry, he chose to leave that field because the extensive hours of work were preventing him from spending time with his children. Additionally, Eric mentioned that an insufficient public transportation service prevents him from being flexible and available in terms of hours of work and employment locations. Moreover, he cited this barrier as a disincentive for becoming independent of social services assistance, saying:

It really causes issues because how are you supposed to get somewhere unless you're on the bus. I can't take a cab, I'll be working to pay the cab. It's almost, at this point in time, it's almost cheaper to stay on social services, with the services they provide.... and scraping by, because not only do you have the money to pay your rent and stuff like that, and have a bit of food, but you have your benefits too.

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Such disincentives are not unfounded, indeed, Lightman et al (2007) demonstrate in their study of welfare recidivism, that transitioning from social services to work does not mean a reduction in poverty. On the contrary, in addition to a potential drop in income, such individuals must also contend with increased costs such as loss of medical benefits (covering the costs of medications) and childcare.

Eric is not alone in his admission that a disincentive to obtaining work is the reduced standard of living that accompanies the transition off of social service assistance. In a similar statement, interview participant “Doug” corroborated this, noting that the prospect of transitioning off of ODSP or OW prevents him from being willing to seek employment. As Doug described, income is not the only thing he would lose, rather, the loss of other fringe benefits can make the transition to employment exceedingly challenging:

Because you're actually making less and you're doing worse by working, you're the working poor, which our society doesn't accept. [...] [When] you go to the food bank, unless you've got an ODSP or OW [benefit card] you can't get food, but actually you may be in a worse financial place than the person [receiving social service assistance], because they're getting discretionary benefits [...] I think the working poor are worse off.

Further, in their study Lightman et al. (2007) demonstrate a link between quality of life and successful long-term employment. They indicate that when quality of life does not improve, there is an increased likelihood of reapplication for social service assistance. This point was corroborated by several interview participants who indicated that financial disincentives, such as a reduction in OW or ODSP benefits or the cost of child care coupled with low wage expectations, significantly impede their motivation for seeking paid employment. As Doug mentioned,

Once you get in the loop of the social services it can be unmotivating [...] there isn't incentive on Ontario Works 'cause it's [...] so limited [in terms of available] funds, that you can't even live. Almost every cent [of benefits goes] to your housing. But they take

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too much away [from you] to get you off [social assistance dependence]. And then [after you are off social assistance] once you lose your job again you're back on it.

Nonetheless, the negative consequences of such disincentives are rendered invisible by rhetoric that responsible citizenship is being a contributing (read paid and employed) member of society. This is not to say that Eric, Doug, or others in these circumstances are living well, or even receiving benefits that support more than a basic existence. In fact, in his interview Eric described his struggle to ensure that his children have enough to eat as one that he solves by skipping meals. He indicated that this strategy is necessary because his OW benefits are insufficient to meet both food and shelter needs. What this example demonstrates is that when the disincentives to obtaining employment are viewed as greater than the costs of remaining on social services, demotivating factors become tangible obstacles that prevent job-seekers from enacting motivation.

Next, when disincentives are demotivating factors, job-seekers may seek the social rewards of employment through other avenues such as unpaid labour. For example, two of my interview participants, both unemployed for several years, indicated that they contribute through an alternative means of citizen activism. For these participants, involvement in civic activism and social services advocacy are means of achieving the social status and significance of being contributing members of society. To take one case, “Ron” has been unemployed for several years due to a job-induced illness that prevents him from working. Because of this, Ron returned to college for retraining, following the stipulations of responsible citizenship by becoming employable in a different field of work. Several times during his interview, however, Ron indicated that low wages in his new field of work are abhorrent to him. He expressed unwillingness to engage in employment that he deems as low paying:

When the doctor told me I can't work [in previous industry] any more I went back to

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school, graduated [...] and found out that they want me to work for less money than when I was [employed in previous field]. So most of the companies between here and [neighboring urban center] told me, "we'd pay you between twelve to fourteen dollars an hour" which I realize is the starting wage. I was making nineteen [dollars] an hour in the mid-eighties as a [starting worker in previous field] and if I was still in that same union I'd be making thirty. So I'm a little bit disappointed about what my education did for me.

Because of this Ron has been unemployed for several years, during which time he has become informally involved in community activism, critiquing policies and decisions that he deems as detrimental to the local economy, and for the local workers.

While this form of activity is not the reason Ron has stopped job-seeking, he expressed a sense of social significance in standing up for marginalized people in the community. This is a way of enacting a responsible citizenship that he could not otherwise fulfill as an unemployed person. Likewise, in Doug's case, his experience as both a recipient of social services and his skills as a former social service worker are used to assist and advocate for friends and acquaintances who are perplexed by the legal and bureaucratic aspects of social services. As mentioned above, Doug has not been actively seeking employment due to the financial disincentives of transitioning off of social services. So this unpaid labour provides an alternative avenue for cultivating social status and contributing to society. In this context, his contributions and interactions are with members of the social services field, both recipients and professionals.

Unlike competing commitments (which I describe below), alternative forms of work are not in themselves barriers to seeking employment. Instead, such unpaid labour is a means for supplementing the loss of status and relational networks that result from prolonged unemployment and dependence on social services. As evidenced by Ron and Doug, when these factors are not satisfied by paid employment, people will cultivate them through another avenue, be it through relationships or unpaid work such as volunteer work, community service, or political or social activism.

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A neoliberal hegemony in economic and political policies has created a context in which paid employment has been constructed as the primary means for expressing a responsible citizenship. As the data above reveals, however, the neoliberal construction of citizenship and social status are not available to all strata of the working population. Paid employment does not necessarily offer social or even financial incentives to the working poor strata of Ontarians, a reality that can be demotivating for pursuing employment.

COMPETING COMMITMENTS

Activities that I classify as competing commitments become so when other forms of social engagement or unpaid labour are prioritized above employment. Competing commitments can become demotivating factors when the financial benefits of employment are outweighed by the benefits of engaging in these other activities. The following examples demonstrate a variety of commitments that are identified by interview participants as barriers to maintaining job-seeking activities, as well as the types of disincentives that supported these other commitments.

In interviews, various forms of unpaid labour are cited as reasons for unwillingness to seek employment in occupations that are not worth the sacrifice of time or energy. Volunteer work, care-giving or reproductive labour, and civic activism are identified as barriers to obtaining employment. For example, interview participant “Kim” has been unemployed since moving to the Region A, several years prior to my research. She suggests that her commitment to volunteer work prevents her from committing her time and energy to obtaining employment. The disincentive she identifies is the requirement for employees to be flexible and willing to prioritize paid work above other time commitments:

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That's where it's kind of put me into a real hard position because I feel like I'm being pulled so many different ways. And then in looking for a job I also have made a lot of commitments to help in [the] future. Even just within the next four weeks leading up to the [event], where I have to be out of town, and I think, "how can I have a job [...] I can't refuse going to work, and then after, how do you pick between [the two]?" And so I think that's where I haven't been so 'gung-ho' about the job approach because it could in turn undo everything I've planned for the next [while] up until [the event]. That makes it hard too, because I know [...] when I get a position, especially this time of year, [I] will get the four hour [shifts], [I] will get the evenings, [I] will get the weekends. And I guess that scares the 'bejeebes' out of me, that [If I get a job] I can't follow through on what I obviously am most passionate about.

Additionally, in her interview, Kim indicated that she is unimpressed with the type of employment available to her, preferring instead to discuss her volunteer experience. Each time I asked an employment related question, her answers were brief and used as segues for discussing her volunteer involvement. For example, when asked to describe her previous work experience, Kim briefly listed occupations and industries, with the qualifying statement, "but that's not what I'm most proud of, it's my volunteer work". While Kim admits that paid employment would ease the financial strain on her family, the stronger social relations, higher social status, and personal enjoyment found in her volunteer work are "far deeper than monetary [gain], because anybody can do a job and be miserable doing it, but when you volunteer, I'm never miserable doing it". In this sense, volunteer work and the rewards of social status and relational support compete for her time, energy and commitment and outweigh the need for financial gains from employed work.

A similar case is made by interview participant "Tiff", a young mother who is responsible for parenting, not only her own two young children, but also the child of a relative. While Tiff has been applying for job positions in the region she displayed inflexibility in terms of the type of work she is willing to seek because of her desire to cultivate a family environment for her children. Commitment to caring for her children includes the desire for paid employment, with the caveat of a wage that is substantial

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enough to enable Tiff to save for and purchase a home. Tiff has also attempted to overcome a difficult upbringing by furthering her education, partially completing a university degree, and desires the social status of employment in a field related to her educational background. Given these priorities, minimum wage jobs do not provide enough financial or social incentives to entice her to work:

For myself personally, it's just not worth it to spend my time [working for minimum wage] because it's [...] the same amount of money plus what I have to pay for daycare. [That] would mean exactly what I'm getting now [through Ontario Works], [...] maybe even less because of expenses of travel and the day care and things like that. So for me it's not worth [...] the time that I [would] spend doing something like that. I know a lot of people would say, "just find any job", but I really want to be employed in my field of studies too, [...] that would allow me to learn more and develop new interests.

Such apprehension at pursuing employment in low paying and minimum wage sectors is not unreasonable given that, as Thomas (2010) suggests, minimum wage is insufficient to support the needs of a single individual, let alone cover the caregiving costs for supporting dependents. However, Tiff faces a setback in her job search because the field in which she desires employment is saturated, while her previous work experience is in low paying service sector occupations. Another setback is that the longer Tiff is unemployed, the more difficult it becomes to secure employment because of the growing time gap since her last experience of paid employment. While the financial support she receives through social services is not enough to save for a home of her own, when faced with the prospect of low paying work she cited her commitment to providing her children with the relational atmosphere of a family as a disincentive to obtaining employment. Thus, the prospect of low wages, when coupled the costs of child-care, is not viewed as enough of an incentive to outweigh a commitment to reproductive labour.

Similarly, in defining motivation for work, one staff member at Branch A explained that paid employment does not always offer the promised social rewards of status and

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significance that it is supposed to. This is particularly so for individuals with special needs or who are transitioning off of social service dependence, whose employment opportunities are limited. In noting this, the staff member clarified that income is not the strongest incentive for people to obtain work. Rather this staff member suggested that they have observed that the social relations of dignity and self-respect, which are achieved through social status and significance in the eyes of others, are primary motivators for social action (FN 17/10). This staff member related an anecdote regarding a former acquaintance whose disability limited employment opportunities, which I recorded in my field notes as an alternative definition of motivation:

[The staff member recalled that] the client was very articulate, presented well, was active on several community committees, was involved in civic activism and so was very respected in the city. But they did not seem motivated to find work. The [staff member] discovered that this lack of motivation to find work was because the client's employment [opportunities] would be in low skilled and low status occupations, [the client] would actually lose status by [being employed]. Because the client's status was derived from contributions in the community [...] working in wage labour would reduce the time [budget] to be active in these current commitments, the very ones from which they derived status and dignity. [...] [The staff member clarified that] people who have something to live for, who feel they are contributing [to society] will work, but the definition of work needs to be re-evaluated to include civic and community activities, rather than just wage labour. (FN 17/10)

In this way, when disincentives and competing commitments intersect they become demotivating factors. Yet, such factors are not recognized or legitimated as barriers, in employment services or social services funding guidelines. This reality then carries into the filtering practices of service provision, in which demotivation is interpreted by service providers as evidence that a client is not ready or willing enough to receive the resources that would assist them in obtaining employment. Indeed, because Tiff demonstrates lack of flexibility in terms of her employment expectations, the EC she met with interpreted her as not motivated enough to be entered as an "assisted service unit". Such a decision is viewed as justifiable given the structure of accountability in MTCU

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funding guidelines (as discussed in Chapter Five). However, lack of access to concrete resources and assistance is a further barrier to Tiff's life and employment goals. If the factors that demotivate Tiff were directly addressed, such as assisting her in obtaining affordable childcare, or, and this would be more effective, if Tiff's career goals were prioritized in terms of assisting her in obtaining the certifications or a job placement in a parallel field, this would neutralize the disincentives and bring these commitments into balance.

As the above examples demonstrate, funding policies focusing on keeping EI, ODSP and OW remuneration low enough to motivate people to find work will necessarily fail (Lightman et al, 2007). This is because they do not take into account the ways in which disincentives and competing commitments hijack motivation for obtaining paid employment. In the same way, as long as outcomes-based funding requires employment services to account for a quantifiable ratio of success, rather than ameliorating the complexities of unemployment and job-seeking, disincentives will remain invisible barriers. The invisibility of these barriers exacerbates the motivated / unmotivated binary as a mechanism of shame and justification for inequality in access to provincially funded resources.

MOTIVATION AND RELATIONAL SUPPORT

As previously mentioned, Gagne and Deci (2005) note that a key aspect of enhancing identification with the goal of an instrumental task is relational support for autonomy and choice. This relatedness then cultivates in-group belonging, which in turn fosters internalization of extrinsically motivating factors. In the context of job-seeking motivation, what I found in my research is not that support for decision-making autonomy fosters motivation, but rather that the extent and quality of the relational

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support itself fosters job-seeking motivation. This factor of relational support is in fact the element that most unemployed job-seekers I interviewed not only lacked in their private and personal lives, but also craved. The irony of this is that in neoliberal doxa, the private sphere and this has been accompanied by the assumption that familial or personal relationships will “pick up the pieces”, stepping in to provide care and support (Armstrong and Armstrong, 2003; Armstrong, 2010; Luxton, 2010). As I demonstrate below, such relational supports are not always available. This is a reality that has consequences for individual job-seekers’ experience of navigating unemployment and job-seeking.

The relational aspect of support is found in the interactions between individuals, which are often engaged in dyads, but may be interconnected with others in a network that extends from personal relationships to professional assistance. I use the term relational support to refer to the social connections between individuals, which provide some form of emotional, psychological, material, financial, or professional assistance. These social connections may be friends or family members, religious or recreational groups, as well as social or employment service professionals. In the context of unemployment, relational support may include: emotional or psychological encouragement for job-seeking; financial and material assistance for day-to-day living or for career specific educational upgrading; suggestions for networking with potential employers or others in the job-seeker’s employment field; direct referrals to potential employers; and job placements.

At this point I would like to differentiate between two spheres in which individuals receive or seek relational support, that of members of a social circle, such as friends or family, and that of professionals who specialize in providing support in a particular field.

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While personal relationships with friends or family members may or may not entail an expectation of reciprocation or mutual support, relationships between employment services professionals and job-seekers have a formalized and contractual form of reciprocation. This is based on assistance provided by the professional in exchange for fulfillment of specified job-seeking activities and / or behavioral changes on the part of the job-seeker. In relationships between the employment service professionals at Branch A and clients, the expectation for reciprocation is not monetary, in that services are financed through provincial funding. Rather reciprocation entails a social contract in which professionals require evidence of job-seeking motivation in exchange for providing services and supports.

As noted in Chapter Five, willingness to undertake job-seeking activities, and to accept any and all employment opportunities, is both an indicator of motivation and a prerequisite for being assessed as a suitable candidate for provincially-funded resources and services (Service Canada, 2014). The concept motivation here refers to internally driven action, that which is enacted apparently independently of external forces, a motivation that is self-driven. The invisible aspect of this filtering process, however, is that being assessed as motivated entitles a client to a network of relational support that in turn fosters job-seeking motivation. I recorded this observation in as an analytic memo in field notes:

While self-motivation is the measure by which clients are filtered into coaching relationships, the motivated individual is provided with a range of services, some of which are not immediately apparent to them or to others outside of Branch A. The individual client's quest for employment is treated as a partnership between the client and the organization. This is not simply a partnership between two people, client and coach, but this partnership also encompasses the job developers who make [contacts with] employers, workshop facilitators and resource center staff members. In this sense, the agency provides a network of support covering multiple tiers of job-seeking that enables service clients to become employable. (FN 12/9)

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This indicates that self-motivation is a qualifier for access to MTCU funded programs, as well as to assisted services, including one-on-one support from employment counselors. However, behind the MRD doctrine is a network of social relations that support the motivated individual in their job search, as well as in navigating the psychological and emotional terrain of unemployment. These social relations are rendered invisible by the neoliberal doctrine underlying the MTCU funding policy guidelines that identify deserving job-seekers as self-motivated economic agents. As I demonstrate below, this extra relational support is a critical component in cultivating and maintaining job-seeking motivation. This is so even for those people who exhibit characteristics and actions that are interpreted as evidence of internal motivation. The intersection between the external motivation of relational support and internalization of job-seeking motivation unravels the neoliberal conceptualization of a ‘right kind’ of job-seeker.

Several of the interview participants who demonstrated evidence of job-seeking motivation identified relational support as a necessary dynamic for cultivating a positive attitude towards job-seeking. In their descriptions, a positive attitude is critical for maintaining job-seeking activities as well as sustaining mental and emotional wellbeing during unemployment. Furthermore, four participants who express gratitude for strong relational support from service-providing professionals at Branch A, or other such agencies, also demonstrate evidence of ongoing job-seeking activities, as well as a positive attitude towards employment prospects. Professional relational support is identified specifically as verbal encouragement, readiness to offer advice for job-seeking activities, and concrete assistance in obtaining access to training programs or job placements.

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One such example is interview participant Julie, a TIOW-assisted job-seeker who obtained job training through a local employer after an extensive period of unemployment. In her interview, Julie expresses optimism towards successfully completing the training and securing employment. In explaining her practices for cultivating a positive outlook, Julie indicates that she enacts a practice of positive “self-talk” to maintain internal motivation. She also acknowledges the necessity of having positive relational support and encouragement. Throughout her interview, Julie credits the Branch A staff with the providing positive support and resources that have helped her to remain positive during her job search:

[Branch A’s support] is very meaningful, I know that I can come in here and feel really good about whatever it is that I need to do and be uplifted, so this is a really bright, a good investment. I wish they had a bigger place, and [could] hire more people, [like] myself, to carry on. And that [kind of support has] been a recent thing. My Ontario Works worker, even though she works with stringent measures, she’s a very lovely lady and very supportive and [...] there was a time when she was the only person [in my life], and I couldn’t just call her up to chat.

Meaningful support in this context involves an element of emotional and relational connection that seems to extend beyond professional courtesy, one that holds a personal significance. Positive encouragement is then distinguished as a critical factor for promoting emotional wellbeing, a positive attitude and job-search motivation.

Similarly, “Tim”, an assisted client with Branch A, has a seemingly endless supply of motivation for job-seeking. His willingness to attempt almost any field of employment, for the sake of remaining employed, demonstrates enactment of the neoliberal employability habitus. In describing his approach to unemployment, Tim notes that, “one thing you do [when you are unemployed] is you go through a lot of changes, [and think] “I want to do this, I want to do that, I want...” No, basically, [you have decide] “I need a job””. While this motivation seems to be self-driven, in his

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interview, Tim credits the verbal encouragement and relational support of Branch A staff and other clients as being instrumental factors in maintaining his motivation. He goes on to say:

When it really comes down to it, first and foremost, [Branch A] creates a support system which, the value of that cannot be [stated enough] [...] In my opinion anyway, that's something [Branch A staff] are probably not even aware of, but that is a huge number one [help]. And then secondly, yes somebody to look at your resume, somebody to look at your cover letter.

While Tim contends that needing a job should be the primary concern of job-seekers, rather than wanting a particular kind of employment, his statement regarding the importance of relational support highlights the aforementioned internal contradiction of the neoliberal individual responsabilization rhetoric. The requirement for proof of willingness, in funding documents and Branch A practices, emphasizes the individual agency, or capacity, to enact an internal motivation that is seemingly independent from the social interactions and relations that promote motivation. Although as both Tim and Julie demonstrate, relational support, particularly support and encouragement that is directly concerned with the process of job-seeking, is instrumental in promoting and maintaining a momentum that is seemingly self-catalyzing.

LACK OF PERSONAL RELATIONAL SUPPORT AND DEMOTIVATION

Unfortunately, as I found in observing the filtering practices of Branch A, and in interviewing job-seekers, the requirement for proof of internal, or self-motivation, can exclude those job-seekers who most need this relational support from employment service professionals. While interview participants indicate that relational support is particularly desired for emotional and psychological wellbeing, I found that relational support from family or friends is often either minimal or negligible (see Table 6.1). Certainly, just under half of my interview participants indicated that family or friends

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provide minimal or negligible job-seeking support. Of these, the participants who are not recipients of assisted services by Branch A are more likely to emphasize demotivating factors and barriers that they say prevent or conflict with job-seeking. Those participants who mentioned that they feel sufficiently supported by members of their social networks usually qualified this by noting that emotional support is provided by only the closest members of their social network. This relational support is usually provided by spouses, or when single, a specific friend with whom they feel comfortable discussing their emotional struggles regarding unemployment. In only two cases does this support extend beyond one immediate relationship to encompass other members of a social network.

Table 6.1 Personal Relational Supports and Motivation

	A: Feel emotionally supported by family/friends, recreational or spiritual group for personal life and job search, and /or have received financial support from family		B: Feel emotionally supported by family or friends for personal life only		C: Feel a peer mentoring support group would promote job-seeking motivation.		D: Do not feel emotionally or relationally supported for job search by family or friends	
	Motivated for job	Indicated Demotivation	Motivated for job search	Indicated Demotivation	Motivated for job search	Indicated Demotivation	Motivated for job search	Indicated Demotivation
Assisted by Branch A	5	2	2		2	1	2	1
Assisted by organization other than Branch A	1							
Not Assisted		1		1		1		
Assistance timed out		1						1

In addition to the absence of personal relational support, job-seekers I interviewed indicate that they do not have access to a peer network with other people experiencing unemployment, for informal, but mutually reciprocal, encouragement. This means that

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Branch A staff, as well as other employment services professionals, have a particularly meaningful and critical role, in that they are often the only form of relational support for unemployed job-seekers. As the following examples demonstrate, in as much as access to concrete relational support promotes motivation, lack of relational support for job-seeking can be a demotivating factor that inhibits not only job-seeking activities, but also desire for employment. At the same time, however, I found that job-seekers who lack the relational supports that promote motivation face the additional barrier of being interpreted as unmotivated during the filtering process at Branch A. This then prevents access to professional resources and relational support that could ameliorate this demotivation. This conundrum is evident in the experiences of the following four interview participants, Cathy, Kim, Andy and Doug.

“Cathy” is a job-seeker who recently moved to Region A, leaving an extensive relational support network. When asked whether she has people in her life that she feels support her during the current period of unemployment and job searching, Cathy responds “they’re there to support in that they are family or friends but I don’t talk to them about [unemployment] that much really. I mean, because I don’t want it to be negative or I don’t want them to worry, so [I] don’t talk about it that much with them”. While she shows evidence of motivation in that she is actively seeking work in a variety of fields and applying to several job openings per week, Cathy is not satisfied with the reduced relational support she has experienced since moving. This is because previous experiences with relational support have given her a “grid” for the significance of meeting with other people to discuss difficulties and to help motivate each other:

The group that I left in [previous home town] it was a group of women that I used to, well it was a church community, it was a support group for people who had gone through any kind of difficulty. So one of the things we did was we would share together whatever was happening in our week. So that was a weekly support group, which I don’t have here, So

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that I miss. [...] There's nothing quite like that going here that I know of [...] I remember meeting with a group, this was a couple years ago in [previous city of residence] and it was kind of like a job finders' group, [...] so that was a place you could sort of get ongoing [support], someone to talk to. I mean, I know I could, if I had a problem, I could call [my employment counselor] I guess and she would help me, but it would be nice if there was that ongoing [interaction with] people who are out looking [for work]. You know a way to connect [...] it just would be nice to have someone to talk to sometimes. Just to keep motivated. Because sometimes when you're not motivated the other person is, and you kind of help each other get back up again.

Despite this discouragement, Cathy continues to apply for several positions per week in her field of experience and qualification, as well as other parallel fields of work. When discussing discouragement that her field of work is saturated with other job-seekers, she mentioned, "I looked at, "maybe I'll clean houses" but then, again you're self employed, you're isolated alone. I like being in an office with people, and conversing back and forth with people". Thus, the desire for relational support and interaction is not only motivating but is also a mechanism that informs her employment choices.

While Cathy seems to embody a kind of internally driven self-motivation for job searching, she has only recently left her support network, moving to Region A the month prior to her interview. During this transition, Cathy benefited from the assisted services of Branch A. In contrast, Kim is a longer term resident of Region A who had been unemployed for several years at the time of her interview and who is no longer an assisted client at Branch A. Since moving she has been unable to formulate a strong social support network, and has very few to no friends. In her interview, Kim suggests that her greatest struggle in maintaining a positive attitude and the motivation for job-seeking is the prolonged lack of social network. In describing how she maintains her motivation for job searching, Kim immediately associates motivation with the extent of available relational support. As she explains:

That's the thing, the [job search] has really fallen by the wayside. And all my support units [are gone], I have none except for my husband and my children here in [Region A] and that's it. So having, not only being in a new town but totally disconnected from all

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my familiar [spaces and relationships] and all my support system [...] as far as motivation, its not there, its gone by the wayside. So, motivation, and how do I keep myself going? Like I said, very poorly. Right now I just seem to be pulling further and further away from the job search than throwing myself further into it [...] The supports are what make you, right? Like some people like my husband, he is very motivated and he does not need that [relational support] [...] But low and behold he doesn't realize, because I'm the 'wishy washy' [one], how much support I give him. And if I'm not here he really misses it, right? So even to somebody who doesn't know the value of it, I see the difference when I'm not there rooting him on. You know, because he did lose his job and I was able to [emotionally support] him, but he's not able to do that for me because it's not his personality. So it makes me feel even more alone here in this city. So the supports are immensely important and everybody has a different priority, but everybody does need support. People need to be able to recognize and see the different levels of support, and whether they have it or not, to help them move forward.

The feeling of social isolation has resulted in demotivation for pursuing paid employment.

As the above interview participants demonstrate, encouragement and support for job searching is particularly important for maintaining emotional and psychological wellbeing. This wellbeing in turn aids job-seekers in cultivating a positive outlook, a factor promoted by Branch A workshops as necessary for maintaining job-seeking momentum. As mentioned in Chapter Five, attitude is used as an indicator of motivation in the Branch A filtering process. Further, presenting a positive attitude is promoted in workshops by Branch A staff, and lauded by particularly motivated interview participants Julie, Cathy, and Nina as being critical for ensuring that job-seekers present themselves well to employers in interviews. However, the association made by interview participants between relational support and a positive attitude indicates that this aspect of motivation is not entirely internally derived, but is rather embedded in social relations that promote emotional and psychological wellbeing.

For individuals living with mental illness the financial strain and social isolation resulting from unemployment are additional stresses that can become overwhelming. Mental health can be an invisible barrier that impedes job-seekers from obtaining

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relational and professional support. For example, although Doug is a highly educated job-seeker, his credentials have been rendered useless because he is no longer able to work in the fields in which he is certified, qualified and experienced. Indeed, he suggests that the emotional and psychological strain of unemployment exacerbates his mental health struggles. At times, this struggle impedes his ability to communicate effectively with employment and disability service professionals regarding his needs. Additionally, Doug suggests that professionals in various service-providing fields, including Branch A, lack understanding and experience with mental illness. This deepens a communication barrier that leaves Doug unable to secure the kind of concrete supports he feels he needs for re-entering the labour market:

I'm not using my disability as a cop-out but you have to be real. There isn't the support there and there isn't [pause] it's minimal [...] if I want to work at Tim [Horton's] [my disability counselor will] find me a job. And they don't understand [...] It's not the [disability counselor's] fault, they don't set the policy per-se, but they do get to decide which client gets this and that [support or resource], and they help you make out the application that goes and it's read not by just the person I deal with, the disability counselor, but her supervisor. Then it goes to whoever, the provincial or federal [funding agency] [...] I don't think [service providers] really understand, not that they deal specifically with mental health, they're helping some people, but me in particular, maybe I'm a unique case, I don't know.

That said, Doug is not a unique case, rather, the problematic he describes is one that is faced by others who have invisible barriers, such as mental illness, brain injuries, or undiagnosed social or developmental ability barriers. Indeed, interview participant, Andy, corroborates Doug's frustration, identifying mental health as a significant barrier to obtaining employment and accessing concrete assistance from service providers. In her interview, Andy isolates a similar problematic to that identified by Doug, in that she feels unable to effectively engage in job-seeking activities without the concrete assistance from her Branch A employment counselor. At the same time, she feels that her struggle to

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communicate effectively with her employment counselor means that she is unable to express her needs or procure the kind of assistance she feels would help her. This lack of communication is perceived as both not hearing, and not articulating', as Andy says, "I don't feel that people really listen. You can talk, but are they hearing you? Are they really hearing what you're saying? Because sometimes we don't have the ability to articulate and really say what we need".

As both Andy and Doug mention, while relational and professional support are particularly important for helping them to navigate the job-seeking process, a general lack of understanding of mental illness is a barrier for being able to articulate their needs to professionals in the employment and disability services sectors. This then causes anxiety and frustration that undermines their capacity to maintain a positive attitude and inhibited motivation for the job search. Andy describes this process as a cycle of discouragement that is difficult to navigate without relational support:

Bottom line and then I will elaborate, is no, I do not have emotional support that I would speak about [for job searching and being unemployed] [...] When you're really down and discouraged, which is really big issue when you're looking for work, [the struggle] is not getting to that place of total discouragement. When you are putting yourself out there over and over and over again and you get nothing back, not even a, "thank you for your application we are not hiring right now." You don't even get that. You send it out and you have no idea what happens with it. It seems to go out into this, this void [...] I mean did I even come close to getting an interview? You don't know. You don't know. So [...] I think I get support from [Branch A] with the workers [in the RI center]. I do not, and I emphasize do not, feel supported by my employment counselor. Which is I think a real irony.

Thus, because mental health barriers are not immediately apparent they can be interpreted as a lack of motivation that has consequences for gaining access to service provision.

Although Andy has had some contact with a Branch A employment counselor, her experience indicates that she may not have qualified to be an officially assisted client.

This is evident in that she is not receiving the extent of services that her needs require,

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such as a job placement or job matching, or even regular appointments with an employment counselor. While she has been spending time preparing her resume, she has only applied to one or two businesses over several weeks. While this would indicate that she is unmotivated for job-seeking, Andy indicates that the job search process is overwhelming, which then slows her progress in all aspects of job-search activities.

In contrast, Doug admits, “I haven't been actively looking for work and using employment services” but he attributes this lack of motivation to being unable to secure concrete support for job-seeking. He suggests that the lack of relational support from professionals in the disability services and employment services sectors is a critical demotivating factor that exacerbates his mental health struggles. While he appears to be capable of conducting independent job searches, Doug’s mental health prevents him from searching for jobs in fields that he is qualified to work in. He is also apprehensive of working in fields that could cause potential stress and exacerbate his condition due to the difficulties of reapplying for ODSP assistance. Such limitations on willingness would seem to indicate lack of motivation, however, what Doug’s experience demonstrates is that when disincentives to obtaining employment are coupled with invisible barriers, lack of substantial relational support can be significantly demotivating.

Both Andy and Doug suggest that the lack of awareness or understanding of the complexities of mental health issues can be isolating because these issues exacerbate miscommunication with service providers. This is due in part to difficulties with self-presentation, such as exhibiting a positive attitude, as well as apprehension and anxiety regarding divulging emotional and psychological needs. In addition, both Andy and Doug indicate that they do not feel service providers, including Branch A staff, are equipped to assist them in overcoming the emotional and psychological barriers they face in their job

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searches. Andy suggests that this is because a general social stigma regarding mental health spills into service provision:

Generally speaking, mental health issues are not openly discussed. You might see advertisements on the TV about mental health, but I find when it comes to open discussions, forums, they're far and few between and it's not a topic that people readily bring up. So I have found even in accessing employment services there is [...] a complete and total lack of understanding of the issue. And that has happened to me at [Branch A].

The problem then is not just that a general misunderstanding exists, but that there are consequences in gaining access to the kinds of service that are needed.

As barriers such as mental and emotional health or brain injuries are not immediately apparent or visible, the resulting blockages and hindrances to job-seeking can be misinterpreted as a lack of motivation, or lack of willingness, to engage in all the required activities of job searching. Further, when people do not display the qualities that are necessary for obtaining assistance, namely motivation or evidence of job-seeking, they are at risk of being “filtered out” of receiving assistance. Unfortunately, what the filtering process does not account for is that motivation is not necessarily independent of relational support, rather relational support, when absent, can create a context in which demotivation for job searching is intensified.

CONCLUSION

As demonstrated through the experiences of those interviewed, as long as disincentives are delegitimized by the construction of motivation, as an always-internal quality, there will be an inequitable distribution of resources to unemployed Ontarians. This is because re-entering the labour market is not simply a matter of enacting job-seeking practices and obtaining employment, rather it also entails a spectrum of needs, desires, and commitments, each competing for attention. Exhibiting hesitation, or a lack of commitment, to the job search indicates to employment service professionals that the job-seeker is not embodying the right kind of economic agency. Delegitimization of

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demotivating factors aggravates the inequality of service provision because those who demonstrate a flexible employability habitus benefit from employment services and resources, while those who most need access to employment service resources are more likely to be deemed unsuitable. This conundrum, however, is not inconsistent with a neoliberal economic ideology in which being employable entails demonstrating a neoliberal habitus. This habitus aligns with neoliberal doxa that requires a flexible and responsible workforce to comply with the power relations of a neoliberal labour market. In this rhetoric, restriction of employment resources to those who demonstrate the right habitus is justifiable. The construction of job-seeking motivation, as an always-intrinsic quality, is integral to this dynamic. However, this same rhetoric perpetuates a cycle of delegitimization-disincentives-demotivation that in fact exacerbates chronic and long-term unemployment.

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I have elaborated on the conceptualization of motivation in employment and social services policy documents. In doing so, I have identified the ways in which the social and political construction of this concept has implications at the level of service provision and in the lived realities of unemployed job-seekers. As argued throughout, the ideological framework of neoliberalism has infused public policies mandating employment and social services resource distribution. The neoliberal responsabilization doctrine has transformed structural unemployment into an individual responsibility and has placed the blame for chronic unemployment on the individual.

The unemployed individual's economic vulnerability is positioned as his or her own responsibility to navigate. The way in which job-seeking motivation is conceptualized has implications in terms of the quality and availability of resources accessible to job-seekers. This inequity is exacerbated by the requirement that individuals must perform a habitus of motivation, willingness and flexibility in order to be identified as suitable for access to employment services and supports.

The paradox is this: while motivation is the mechanism for identifying who is suitable for receiving publicly funded resources for unemployment, these resources are pivotal in either enhancing motivation for job searching or in reinforcing demotivating factors. As demonstrated in this thesis, motivation is more complex than simply the internal desire for employment, expressed through actions that indicate flexibility and willingness. Rather, job-seeking motivation is subject to a variety of exogenous factors such as competing commitments, disincentives, and quality of relational support.

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CONVERGENCES, SILENCES, ABSENCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

By exploring the concept of motivation, my thesis research contributes to a deeper understanding of the ways in which relations of power are experienced at the individual level. Forms of capital, such as social, cultural and financial capital resources, are conventionally used as frameworks for analyzing and describing the unequal distribution of opportunities. Studies of health care and care-giving have indicated that the privatization of public services has occurred in conjunction with downloading of care-giving responsibilities to the families and relational support networks of individuals in crisis (Armstrong and Armstrong, 2003; Armstrong, 2010; Braedley, 2010; Luxton, 2010). Similarly I found that the quality of one's relational support, or social capital resources, has consequences for an unemployed person's motivation and access to resources for job-seeking.

As Siltanen et al. (2009) have demonstrated, structural inequality is visible in the quality of human capital and social capital³⁹ advantages and resources, which limit the kinds of employment opportunities available to people seeking employment. While I did find evidence supporting Siltanen et al.'s (2009) findings in my research data, I chose to explore the emergent theme of motivation. This allowed me to uncover another set of factors that contribute to the experience of inequality for unemployed job-seekers: that is the way in which neoliberal doxa is mobilized in the policies and practices of service provision to unemployed Ontarians.

Inevitably, this study has left questions unanswered and unexplained. This is a

³⁹ Pierre Bourdieu (1986) indicates that human capital comprises an individual person's set of skills, education, expertise, etc. Whereas social capital comprises social relationships and networks in which individuals interact in non-economic relations of reciprocity.

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consequence of time and spatial limitations, as well as silences and absences in the research data. An area of inquiry this research did not pursue is the almost intentional silence in funding guidelines regarding structural inequalities in labour market opportunities.

While the EOPG (2011: 3.1-3) guidelines identify demographic characteristics such as gender, age and education, these are brushed over as “indicators of client service needs [which are] relevant to linking client characteristics and barriers [with] required service responses”. Beyond this, discrimination, or the needs of job-seekers who may experience discrimination, is not mentioned. Nor are there suggestions or examples in the service provider guidelines for ensuring that clients who may face discrimination when seeking work, on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or ability, are provided with concrete supports and resources. As well, programs have not been implemented to assist clients facing barriers of racism, ethnocentrism, gender inequality and discrimination, and physiological mental and emotional health, and ableism. Consequently, such inequalities are rendered invisible or irrelevant and, at the same time, structural barriers have been depoliticized through neoliberal doxa of individual responsabilization.

What is interesting is the way in which interview participants echoed this individual responsabilization doxa in identifying the barriers they faced to job-seeking and obtaining employment. Certainly, there was a notable silence regarding barriers of race, ethnicity and gender in interviews. Most participants were reluctant to identify structural inequalities such as racism or ethnocentrism, gender discrimination or inequality, or ableism. For example, Elizabeth, when asked what types of barriers she felt she was facing in obtaining employment, replied that her opportunities for employment in Region

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A “[are] pretty much fair. I don't want to bring religion or ethnic group or whatever into it, right?” When social inequalities were mentioned, participants qualified them by indicating that their experiences with structural barriers may be individual in scope. For example, Doug sets out the challenges faced by people with mental and emotional illnesses in obtaining support for navigating social services and employment supports. Yet he qualifies this struggle by saying, “[service providers are] helping some people, but not me in particular, maybe I'm a unique case, I don't know”.

The exception to this silence is age, which is the only demographic barrier recognized in employment services funding as a legitimate barrier to employment (EOPG, 2011). Mature workers have been identified as particularly vulnerable to chronic unemployment since Shaw's 1985 study of unemployment in Canada. Similarly, ageism was the only structural inequality consistently identified by participants as a barrier to obtaining employment. Despite the drawbacks of the outcomes based provincial finding for employment services, the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers shows promise in acknowledging that age is a barrier to employment. Unfortunately the types of supports provided through the TIOW program are not sufficient, in terms of providing direct job placements and incentives to employers, to ensure that mature workers are able to overcome age discrimination when seeking employment. Instead, there is still the individual responsabilization focus of being and becoming the right kind of flexible worker that employers' desire (FN 25/9; FN 10/10).

While I did not explore social inequalities or barriers such as racism, gender discrimination, ageism or immigration status in depth, these also demand greater articulation. Racism and gender bias in public policy, and subsequently employment services provision, is a line of inquiry that would have aligned ideologically with my

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epistemology as a feminist researcher. Rumblings of such inequalities were present in my interview data, however, limitations in terms of my data set and size prevented me from exploring these themes in the depth and complexity they require. Only one interview participant was a non-permanent resident and only two were visible minorities, and the experiences of these two participants were vastly different from each other.

The silences and absences mentioned above indicate that there are still many aspects of the experience of unemployment in a neoliberalizing Ontario that need to be explored, articulated and critiqued. Exploration of motivation as a mechanism of the individual responsabilization focus of neoliberal doxa is only one aspect of a complex set of experiences known as unemployment.

CONTRIBUTIONS

This study elaborates on the intersection between the policies that mandate distribution and access to resources for unemployed Ontarians, and the enactment of these policies in employment service provision. It has aimed for a contribution to both theory and the understanding of the everyday realities of navigating work change through accessing government funded employment services. Theoretically, this study contributes to the discussion of the neoliberalization in public policies relating to work change. It does so through the sociological lens of employment and social services as a field of power in which the neoliberal doxa of flexibility, and individual responsibility are embodied in and enacted through a neoliberal habitus. In particular, this ethnography exposes the consequences of neoliberalization in employment and social services as promoting demotivation. This is because job-seekers who are most vulnerable to chronic unemployment do not enact the qualities of a neoliberal habitus. At the heart of this habitus is the individual responsabilization focus of neoliberal doxa, in which the

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individual person is positioned as responsible for his or her own situation in structural unemployment. Individual responsabilization doxa depoliticizes structural inequalities by overemphasizing the agency of individuals to overcome their circumstances, if they will only adapt and become flexible and willing enough.

In this way, the findings of this thesis research contribute to the critique of neoliberal policies by elaborating on the interpretation of such policies in the actual provision of employment services. Also, the interpretations of motivation at the level of service provision have consequences not only in determining access to employment supports and resources, but also in terms of exacerbating demotivation. Finally, the meanings and unintended consequences of these interpretations are contested by the explanations of disincentives and competing commitments that job-seekers themselves cite as demotivating factors for participating in job-seeking and paid employment.

These interpretations are not the fault of the staff or organizations providing services and supports, but rather are a consequence of the way in which outcomes based funding policies frame unemployment as an individual responsibility and failure. As I found during my involvement with Branch A, the accountability requirements for receipt of funding places a bureaucratic burden on staff that is tricky to navigate. While individual staff members responded to and interpreted suitability requirements and the “MRD” training material differently, there was a general set of practices enacted through the filtering process. This process was a consequence of the stringent service unit targets required of the organization and of each employment counselor. Delegitimization of barriers and disincentives to employment need to be addressed by policy makers, both federally and provincially, in order to begin removing the stigma of unemployment. These findings indicate a very real need to reevaluate the way in which access to

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employment services are mandated and regulated.

What this demonstrates is that neoliberal doxa is reinforced through micro level interactions, in which performance of the right kind of employability habitus is rewarded with access to resources and support. Meanwhile failure to perform the right kind of employable behavior and attitude are censured by restricted access to services, resources and supports. Yet this doxa does not account for the various demotivating factors that intersect with job-seekers' desire or need to obtain employment. In terms of the everyday experiences of unemployment, this thesis has revealed a paradox of unintended consequences that result from neoliberalization in public policies.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Employment counselor: Branch A staff members who engage in providing one-on-one counseling techniques for ‘assisted’ clients.

Employment counseling (EC): practices of one-on-one counseling provided to suitable job-seeking clients of Branch A.

Employment Insurance (EI): Provincially mandated income insurance provided to workers in the event of temporary unemployment.

Employment Ontario (EO): Provincial government organization that is responsible for overseeing employment services for unemployed Ontarians.

Employment Ontario Information System Case Management System (EOIS-CMS): The provincial ‘accountability’ tracking system for services provided through (called “CaMS” by Branch A staff)

Employment Ontario Partners Gateway (EOPG): The publishing arm of EO and the MTCU.

Field note (FN): Field note entry, cited as (FN day/month).

Job developer (JD): Branch A staff who cultivate long-term relationships with local employers for the purpose of job matching.

Job matching (JM): A service for assisting local employers in filling hiring needs. This entails matching appropriate job-seeking clients of Branch A with local employers.

Ministry of Communities and Social Services (MCSS): Provincial government organization responsible for administering OW and ODSP to eligible individuals.

Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU): Government organization that provides operational funding as well as specific target program funding to employment service providing agencies as well as post-secondary educational institutions. The MTCU operates at the provincial level as separate organizations in each province.

Motivation, Reliability, Dependability (MRD): The trio of characteristics needed to demonstrate that a job-seeker is ‘employment ready’ and ‘suitable’ for being referred to job matching services.

Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP): Provincial government organization that provides minimal income support and health benefits for Ontarians who are chronically unemployed due to chronic injury, illness, or ability.

Ontario Works (OW): Provincial government organization that provides minimal income support and health benefits for Ontarians who are chronically unemployed.

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Program manager (PM): This staff member is responsible for distributing funding and accounting for the effectiveness of Branch A programs and overseeing the implementation of new programs.

Resource and information center (RI): The ‘unassisted’ or ‘independent’ services offered to all members of the community as a job searching resource. Includes workshops, access to computers and the Internet, a job board, information pamphlets, a fax machine, photocopier, printer and telephone.

Resource and information facilitator: Branch A staff who facilitate and plan RI center workshops and provide customer service to clients of the RI center.

Reflexive journal entry (RJ): Cited as (RJ day/month).

Team leader (TL): This staff member is responsible for hiring, training and firing of staff, overseeing staff meetings and interpersonal relationships. The Branch A team leader took on the role of creating a culture of positivity and success encouraging harmony and unity within the office. This culture enhanced the morale of staff who all expressed gratitude and enjoyment in being a staff member of Branch A. Finally the team leader is accountable to Agency A for ensuring that Branch A meets its quota of serving one thousand ‘assisted’ service units for ensuring that Branch A is on target for the 69% ratio of success.

Vocational rehabilitation (VR): This service assists workers who have been out of the workforce for health or ability reasons in the process of integrating into the workforce through job trials and job placements.

Vocational rehabilitation specialist (VRS): works with clients with significant ability barriers to reintegrate into the workforce. Works with clients of ODSP, WSIB and private insurance claimants.

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB): Publicly mandated workplace injury and accident insurance company that is funded through payments from employers. This insurance is a legal requirement for all workplaces and provides industry specific insurance coverage for workers who are found to suffer from workplace injuries or illness.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Topic A) Education Background:

- 1) Could you tell me a bit about your educational background?
- 2) After leaving education did you find a job that matched your educational qualifications?

Topic B) Experiences of labour market, work history and employment status:

- 1) Could you tell me about your most recent job and how you learned it was available?

Topic C) Perceptions of labour market opportunities in relation to job searching processes and work history:

- 1) What kinds of job opportunities do you think are currently available for you in [Region A] County?
- 2) Do you think that there has as been a change in job opportunities in recent years?
- 3) What barriers have you faced to finding a job in the [Region A] area?
- 4) In your view what would help you the most in finding a job in the [Region A] area?

Topic D) Self-motivated strategies and resources for gaining skills and employment:

- 1) Have you ever used a job searching service, or skill building workshop before the one you are currently using?
- 2) Could you explain to me the events that led to your decision to use the programs offered by [Name of organization]?
- 3) What kinds of workshops and services are you currently using at [Branch A]?
- 4) What are you hoping to gain after using these services? Ex: in terms of a job, enjoyment, higher income, more stable hours, full time work, full year work, independence, etc.

Topic E) Types of strategies and resources for managing daily obligations while participating in upgrading programs and job searching:

- 1) While you are participating in education or skill building workshops, could you tell me your strategies for meeting your day to day obligations and routines, such as child or elder (parent/grandparent) care, housework, job commitments, etc?
- 2) How are you supporting yourself/family while you are upgrading and/or looking for employment?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- 3) Do you have strategies for supplementing your income (several jobs, barter/exchange of services, non-monetary support from social networks etc)?
- 4) Are you currently, or have you recently, relied on employment insurance, disability insurance, or social assistance during a period of unemployment?
- 5) Have you received, or are you receiving, emotional, financial, or other forms of support and encouragement from friends or relatives that helps you to fulfill these obligations while upgrading?

Topic F) Relational resources that enable participation in upgrading and employment:

- 1) Could you tell me what kinds of relationships that are in your life in which you and friends or relatives 'help each other out' materially, or emotionally? Ex: transportation, child or elder care, groceries or meals, somewhere to stay or live while between jobs or homes, someone who listens to troubles and provides advice for solutions.
- 2) Do you have a community group or support network that you meet with, or are involved with on a regular basis, where you could turn to for mutual support in terms of the following scenarios: helping during a move, providing meals or groceries during sickness or unemployment, volunteering to help with childcare, or transportation to appointments, a place to stay when someone is between living situations, providing a listening ear, etc?
- 3) Are there any relationships where you feel that you also "give back" or provide support?

Topic G) Strategies and resources for facing unemployment:

- 1) If you have been unemployed in the past, or are currently unemployed, what were your strategies for facing unemployment in the immediate aftermath? If you were to lose your job, what strategies would you use or what steps would you take?
- 2) During periods of time when you are facing unemployment, or greater time commitments due to pursuing education or skill upgrading, what kind of support do you value in relationships? (Emotional such as listening and advice, spiritual, meeting material needs, time and help in terms of helping with transportation, child care or other similar areas)

Topic H) Interviewee suggestions for strategies of change:

- 1) Having gone through these experiences, what kinds of solutions, or forms of support, could you suggest that would help people who are living through situations similar to yours, in terms of unemployment, immigration/moving, injury, job searching, building skills, etc?
- 2) What kind of things do you think you would change about the job searching process?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

3) If you could talk to employers or to government policy makers about the current job market, about the job searching process, or about the kinds of services that are available for people who are unemployed or struggling in this region, what would you ask them to change?

Thank you for participating in this interview, do you have final thoughts that you would like to add?

APPENDIX C: LETTERS OF INFORMED CONSENT



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Tel: (613) 520-2582
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INTERVIEW LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Title of research project: “Exploring How Adults Experience Their Use Of

Upgrading Services” Ethics clearance date: August 16, 2013

Expiration of ethics clearance: May 31, 2014

Name of interview participant: _____
(Please print your first and last name)

Date of interview: _____

ABOUT THE RESEARCH AND RESEARCHER:

My name is Rachel Prentice and I am a Master’s student at Carleton University in Ottawa, conducting research for my master’s thesis under the supervision of Dr. Janet Siltanen. This letter is to inform you of what is involved in being interviewed if you choose to participate in my independent research project, which I am conducting in order to obtain a university degree. If you choose to participate, you will be interviewed about the following: experiences that led you choose to upgrade your skills; your past and present experiences of work and education; your day to day obligations and the ways you manage these obligations, in terms of your source of income and your time; as well as the kinds of relationships in which you find support. The information you tell me in your interview will be used in my research about the ways people who use skill building workshops and job-seeking services, find support in relationships and communities, how you think about your opportunities for jobs, and the process of job searching.

BENEFITS OF CONTRIBUTING:

By telling your story, your experiences will contribute to a bigger picture of how everyday people, who use upgrading services, experience the outcomes of employment policies in Ontario. Your experiences are highly valued in giving an important view about the kinds of strategies people use to find jobs and gain skills, while juggling everyday responsibilities.

APPENDIX C: LETTERS OF INFORMED CONSENT

WHAT IS INVOLVED:

The interview will be one hour in length and will be recorded on a digital audio recording device. Questions will include topics such as your educational background, your work experience and experiences of searching for jobs, your daily obligations, your current sources of financial support, as well as questions about whether you have other people in your life, such as relatives, friends, or a community, who provide support for you while you work, search for jobs, and participate in skill building activities and workshops.

YOUR RIGHTS AS AN INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT:

I am an independent researcher working towards a university degree. Your participation in my research is not a requirement for continuing to receive government or agency assistance.

If you are uncomfortable answering any questions you may tell me that you do not wish to answer that particular question, and I will respect your right to privacy. You may also decide to end the interview at any time, and I will understand.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE STUDY:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, meaning you no longer want me to use your interview in my research findings, you may tell me so up until one month after the interview date, the date on the last page of this form. Please contact me as soon as you make this decision. If you decide to end your involvement in this study, either during or after the interview, I will erase the audio recording of the interview and delete the written transcript.

YOUR RIGHTS TO ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:

The interview will be recorded on an audio recording device, which I will later transcribe. If I quote something you say in this interview in my final transcript, I will ensure that your identity is kept anonymous by giving you a pseudonym. Also, In order to protect your confidentiality, I will store the audio copy of the interview and the transcript on separate and secure folders, and I will keep these folders in a location that only I have access to. I will not tell other people about your involvement in the interview, this information is confidential. I will also not use your real name in my final written report.

HOW YOUR INTERVIEW ANSWERS WILL BE USED:

I will use the themes that are discussed in interviews in my master's thesis, which will be examined by a university committee. If you would like to hear about my findings, you may email me and I will arrange to send you a summary of these findings after my thesis examination.

APPENDIX C: LETTERS OF INFORMED CONSENT

CONTACT INFORMATION:

You may contact me, Rachel Prentice, directly via email at RachelPrentice@cmail.carleton.ca, or you may text or telephone me at 705-930-8438.

SIGNATURE OF AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERVIEW:

I _____ (Please Print Your Name) confirm that I am over the age of 19 and have read and understood the information about what is involved in participating in being interviewed, as stated in the above letter. I give my consent to participate in this research project by being interviewed.

Signature of participant Date _____

Rachel Prentice, Researcher Date _____

Please retain a copy of this document for your records

ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION:

Researcher: Rachel Prentice RachelPrentice@cmail.carleton.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Janet Siltanen Janet.Siltanen@Carleton.ca

This project was reviewed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance to proceed. If you have any serious concerns related to your participation in the study, please contact the Carleton Research Ethics Board chair, Dr. Andy Alder or vice-chair, Dr. Louise Heslop.

Professor Andy Alder, Chair
Professor Louise Heslop, Vice-
Chair Research Ethics Board
Carleton University Research
Office Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6
Tel: 613-520-2517 E-mail: ethics@carleton.ca

APPENDIX C: LETTERS OF INFORMED CONSENT



Department of Sociology and Anthropology
B 742 Loeb, 1125 Colonel By Drive Ottawa,
Canada K1S 5B6
Tel: (613) 520-2582
Fax: (613) 520-4062

Organization Letter of Informed Consent [Branch A]

Title of research project: "Exploring How Adults Experience Their Use Of Upgrading Services"

Ethics clearance date: August 16 2013

Expiration of ethics clearance: May 31, 2014

Date: _____

Name of organization: _____

Person with signing authority: _____
(Please print first and last name)

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH PROJECT:

My name is Rachel Prentice and I am a Sociology Master's student at Carleton University in Ottawa and under the supervision of Dr. Janet Siltanen. I am conducting research for my master's thesis regarding the ways that people who participate in skill upgrading programs perceive their opportunities in the labour market, as well as their relational support networks.

STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS:

My research will be conducted in two phases. In the first phase I will conduct participant observation during the course of my volunteer activities, over a period of four weeks. In the second phase I will invite service recipients to participate in interviews, in which we will discuss the strategies and resources which enable or constrain their participation in job-seeking and skill building workshops, such as previous work experience and education, relational support networks, daily obligations, and income. I have appended the letter of invitation to participate in interviews to this document.

PHASE ONE, PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AT BRANCHA:

APPENDIX C: LETTERS OF INFORMED CONSENT

Phase one will last for a period of four weeks and will include volunteering at Branch A for the equivalent of two days each week, or as needed, during which time I will conduct “participant observation”. I will be present as both a volunteer and an observer in order to become familiar with what it means to “become employable”, and to learn about how people who use upgrading services fit these practices into their everyday lives. These observations will contribute to my understanding of how people who participate in upgrading services, particularly service recipients, perceive the upgrading process in connection with their labour market opportunities. I will consult with you as to the best mechanism through which to notify staff members, volunteers, and service clients of my presence as a researcher.

Research activities will include, jotting down observational notes about the frequencies of terms used, and the kinds of routines and practices involved in job-seeking and upgrading. Observations will then consist of the everyday routines that characterize skill building, job-seeking, and “upgrading” practices. In so doing, my jottings will record the kinds of language used in relation to “skills upgrading”, “employment” and “job-seeking”, and I may ask for clarification about what is meant by specific terminology, or specific kinds of “upgrading”, “skills” or “job-seeking” practices. I will also observe how clients’ relationships and support networks enable them to participate in the practices of skill building and job-seeking and to access services (such as the means of transportation to and from Branch A’s programs). Thus, I am recording field notes in order to discover general patterns relating to practices of job-seeking, and relationships and networks of support that enable clients to access services.

My field notes will not include any observations of confidential or private information that I may encounter in the course of my volunteer duties. I will attempt to make the practice of keeping jottings as unobtrusive as possible, making notes during breaks from my duties or in private. I will not be recording information about any individual person in my field notes. I will keep field notes on a password protected memory stick in a locked box to which I alone have access.

PHASE TWO INTERVIEWS WITH SERVICE CLIENTS:

Near the end of the participant observation phase, I will begin transitioning to the second phase of my research, in which I will interview upgrading service clients about the strategies and resources they use to find employment and to participate in upgrading practices. In order to ensure that the identities of all participants are confidential, the interviews will be conducted at another site in the community, and I will refrain from discussing the identities of interview participants with anyone I

APPENDIX C: LETTERS OF INFORMED CONSENT

encounter during the course of my volunteer work and after.

The purpose of interviews will be to identify general patterns that indicate how upgrading service clients perceive labour market opportunities, as well as how relationships and networks of support contribute to experiences of skill building and job- seeking.

I will extend letters of invitation, or verbal invitations asking service recipients to participate in interviews, during individual interactions, at the beginning of those workshops that Branch A allows me to observe, and / or during an information session. I will leave copies of the letter of invitation in an agreed upon location on the premises of Branch A. My contact information will be provided for those individuals who are interested in being interviewed, so that they may contact me directly. In accordance with my proposal to the Carleton University Research Ethics Board, I will only invite adults over the age of 19 years old to participate in interviews and I will not discuss the identities of anyone who participates in the interviews. I will continue to extend invitations to participate in interviews until I have interviewed 15 service clients.

YOUR PARTICIPATION:

If you choose to consent to participate in this research on behalf of Branch A, I will consult with you as to the best mechanism for informing staff members, volunteers and service clients as to my presence as a researcher. Your agreement to participate will allow me to be present at Branch A for a period of four weeks for the purpose of participant observation, during which time I will also volunteer with the organization, and for a further period during which I will invite service clients to participate in interviews.

Invitations will be extended verbally after workshops, individually, and through fliers that are placed around the premises. This second period will last until I have conducted interviews with 15 to 20 service clients.

ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:

I will assign Branch A with a pseudonym, which I will use in all drafts of my thesis. I will also assign Region A with a pseudonym and will disguise the distinguishing features of both the region and Branch A. In addition, all interviews with service clients will be conducted in locations offsite, the identities of interview participants will be anonymous through the use of pseudonyms in all drafts of the thesis, and their answers will be confidential. I will not disclose to any member of Branch A or to any other service clients the identities of any interview participants.

APPENDIX C: LETTERS OF INFORMED CONSENT

WITHDRAWAL:

If at any time during my research you feel that my presence as a researcher, or my research practices, are disruptive to the operation of the organization you may withdraw the organization from participation. If you choose to withdraw Branch A from this study, I will cease my research and volunteer activities at the organization. I ask that you contact me immediately if such a decision is made. You may withdraw up until one month after my final day of research and volunteer work at Branch A. If you choose to withdraw, I ask that you tell me whether you would like me to destroy the jottings and field notes I have compiled up until that point, or whether I may use them in my research findings.

HOW THE RESEARCH WILL BE USED:

I will analyze my field notes and the interviews and will synthesize these into my master's thesis, which will then be examined by my committee at Carleton University. I will provide Branch A with an executive summary of the main points of interest from my thesis after my examination. If you would like a copy of my thesis, you may email this request to me and I will provide a copy of the thesis along with the executive summary.

SIGNATURE OF AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH WITH RACHEL PRENTICE:

By signing this document, I _____ [please print name] confirm that I have read and understand what is involved in participating in this research project, as stated in the above letter. I give my consent for _____ [name of organization] to participate in the research project as stated above.

Signature of person with signing authority Job Position Date

Signature of person with signing authority Job Position Date

Rachel Prentice, researcher Date

APPENDIX C: LETTERS OF INFORMED CONSENT

ADDITIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION:

Researcher: Rachel Prentice RachelPrentice@cmail.carleton.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Janet Siltanen Janet.Siltanen@Carleton.ca

This project has been reviewed by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board and has received ethics clearance to proceed. If you have any serious concerns related to your participation in this study, please contact the Carleton Research Ethics Board chair, Dr. Andy Alder or vice-chair, Dr. Louise Heslop.

Professor Andy Alder, Chair
Professor Louise Heslop, Vice-
Chair Research Ethics Board
Carleton University Research
Office Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6
Tel: 613-520-2517 E-mail: ethics@carleton.ca

Please retain a copy of this letter for your records.



Meet Rachel: Volunteer and University Student Researcher

Who I am

My name is Rachel Prentice and I am a Master's student at Carleton University in Ottawa. I am volunteering with [Branch A] as part of my Master's thesis research. This means that I am an independent researcher working towards a university degree and I am here to learn.

Why I am here: My research is interested in what it means to become employable. This includes practices like writing resumes, and using job banks, and participating in workshops at [Branch A].

What I will be doing:

I will be helping as a volunteer in workshops or around the office, but I will also be using this as an opportunity to learn. So, I may ask you to explain a term that I am unfamiliar with, or explain different things you know about job searching. This will include the terms that are used to talk about job searching and job opportunities, and the kinds of ways that the resources at [Branch A] are used for job searching. I will keep track of the different

kinds of definitions and explanations I learn while I am here and they will be part of my research data.

How I will use my research: I am conducting research as part of my university degree program, so I will use what I learn to write a thesis.

When I will be here: I will be volunteering and researching on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in September and October.

Interviews:

I am also interviewing job-seekers about their experiences of job-seeking and unemployment. If you are interested please contact me at the email address below.

I would love to answer any questions you may have about my research.

You may ask me in person or email me:
RachelPrentice@cmail.carleton.ca

APPENDIX E: RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE



Carleton University Research Office
Research Ethics Board
1325 Dunton Tower
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6 Canada
Tel: 613-520-2517
ethics@carleton.ca

Ethics Clearance Form

This is to certify that the Carleton University Research Ethics Board has examined the application for ethical clearance. The REB found the research project to meet appropriate ethical standards as outlined in the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, 2nd edition* and, the *Carleton University Policies and Procedures for the Ethical Conduct of Research*.

New clearance

Renewal of original clearance

Original date of clearance:

Date of clearance	16 August 2013
Researcher	Rachel Prentice, Master's student
Department	Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Supervisor	Prof. Janet Siltanen, Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Project number	14-0438
Title of project	Exploring how adults experience their use of upgrading services

Clearance expires: **31 May 2014**

All researchers are governed by the following conditions:

Annual Status Report: You are required to submit an Annual Status Report to either renew clearance or close the file. Failure to submit the Annual Status Report will result in the immediate suspension of the project. Funded projects will have accounts suspended until the report is submitted and approved.

Changes to the project: Any changes to the project must be submitted to the Carleton University Research Ethics Board for approval. All changes must be approved prior to the continuance of the research.

Adverse events: Should any participant suffer adversely from their participation in the project you are required to report the matter to the Carleton University Research Ethics Board. You must submit a written record of the event and indicate what steps you have taken to resolve the situation.

Suspension or termination of clearance: Failure to conduct the research in accordance with the principles of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, 2nd edition* and the *Carleton University Policies and Procedures for the Ethical Conduct of Research* may result in the suspension or termination of the research project.


Andy Adler, Chair
Carleton University Research Ethics Board


Louise Heslop, Vice-Chair
Carleton University Research Ethics Board

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT PROFILES, ABBREVIATED

Pseudonym	Gender	Age Range	“Assisted” or “unassisted” at time of interview	Services	Employed during research
Elizabeth	F	25-30	Unassisted	RI Centre	Yes
Cal	M	50-55	Assisted	EC	No
Tiffany	F	25-30	Unassisted	RI Centre	No
Julie	F	50-55	Assisted	EC	Yes
Ronald	M	50-55	Unassisted	RI Centre	No
Eric	M	40-50	Assisted	EC and JM	No
Cheryl	F	50-55	Assisted	SC	No
Nina	F	25-30	Assisted	EC and JM	No

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT PROFILES, ABBREVIATED

Pseudonym	Gender	Age Range	“Assisted” or “unassisted” at time of interview	Services	Employed during research
Tim	M	50-55	Assisted	EC	Yes
Doug	M	50-55	Assisted	EC	No
Cathy	F	50-55	Assisted	EC	No
Dean	M	50-55	Assisted	VR	No
Greg	M	50-55	Unassisted	Assistance Timed out	No
Andy	F	50-55	Assisted	EC	No
Kim	F	50-55	Unassisted	Assistance Timed out	No
Tyler	M	25-30	Assisted	EC and JM	No
Debra	F	50-55	Assisted	EC	No

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE OF 'MOTIVATION' CODING GRID

FIELD NOTES DATA		
Theme	Excerpt: (Field Note Day/Month)	Analysis
Extrinsic motivating	<i>ODSP clients have requested to re-enter the workforce and are referred to VRCs by ODSP caseworker. These clients often are most motivated to re-enter the workforce, expressing desire to contribute to society, however, they are sometimes responding to social pressure from family or peers. Social pressure is not sufficient motivation- has to come from client's desire. WSIB clients are being forced back to work due to benefit cut off- the time period for re-entering the workforce is 10 weeks. These clients frequently are still in stages of job loss grief and express anger or bitterness. Such clients require the most coaching and navigation by VRC, as they must help the clients move through the stages of job loss grief before they are ready to re-enter the workforce. (From informal interview with VRS, FN 15/10)</i>	What is interesting about this interpretation of job-seeking motivation is that it differentiates between the 'right kind' of motivation and the 'wrong kind' of job-seeking motivation: the 'right kind' is intrinsic and internally driven, such as 'desire' to be employed, versus the 'wrong kind', which is extrinsically driven, namely social pressure or financial pressure (due to loss of social services benefits).
Intrinsic Motivating	<i>Status is what keeps people motivated to find work- not the drive for money and income- the drive to be someone, for dignity and self-respect. JD noted that people who have something to live for, who feel like they are contributing, will work- but the definition of work needs to be re-evaluated to include civic and community activities not just wage labour. Policies should not be about keeping EI, ODSP and Ontario Works low enough to motivate people to find work - the financial incentive is only one aspect- people need enough to survive with a quality of life in which their needs are met, and they can begin picking up the pieces to be active in community, to feel dignity, to feel respect. (From informal interview with JD FN 17/10)</i>	The definition of intrinsic motivation as the 'right kind' or 'true' motivation for job-seeking. Here intrinsic motivation is linked to social status and being 'contributing' citizens. However, this is also extrinsic- because they are socially motivated and the rewards are social.
Demotivating Factors	<i>Distance to jobs for clients from outlying areas-- this came up this morning when discussing trying to find a job that is within a reasonable distance for clients to travel- some are willing to travel quite a distance while others have a town that is the limit- the farthest they want to travel. I think of two examples: [one being] the woman a job developer discussed in relation to a potential job in an outlying town, and the man I spoke with. The man mentioned that sometimes employers see the area code as a deterrent to employing him, thinking that the worker will be unreliable because of the distance. While he said that he has commuted a lot and was searching further towns for jobs (because of lack of response in current area), he found that employers seemed to see distance as a deterrent. (FN 19/9)</i>	Being hesitant about seeking employment that requires travel time (the extent of travel time varies according to what each person views as 'reasonable' distance. This could be anywhere from 30 minutes to one hour depending). Yet, traveling distance also seems to interfere with motivation. This is a 'demotivating factor'. Unfortunately, this can be interpreted as evidence of being 'inflexible' or 'unwilling'.

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE OF ‘MOTIVATION’ CODING GRID

Theme	Excerpt: (Field Note Day/Month)	Analysis
Demotivating Factors (continued)	<p><i>JD spoke about the idea of a living wage, told the story of a client they worked with who was receiving ODSP for vision impairment, client was very articulate, presented well, active on several community committees, on city council and very respected in the city, but did not seem motivated to find work. JD discovered that this lack of motivation to find work was because client was unskilled he would actually lose status by working, because his status was derived from his civic contributions in the community whereas employment would be in a low skilled and low status occupation. Also working in wage labour would reduce his time to be active in his current commitments, the very ones from which he derived status and dignity. (From informal interview with JD FN 17/10)</i></p>	<p>This anecdote demonstrates a commitment to unpaid work due to the benefits of social status, dignity and being viewed as a 'contributing' member of society- a kind of 'responsible citizenship' enacted through civic duty rather than paid employment. This commitment competes with incentives of paid employment because paid employment would not provide 'enough' incentives to balance the loss of social status resulting from being employed in minimum wage labour, as well as the time constraints employment would place on civic activities.</p>
	<p><i>Notes from Second career info session with new client- Client Scored 14 but needed 16 to be eligible. EC had to try to fit qualitative problems into boxes, and score with a numerical value in order to determine eligibility for Second career. What happens when they don't score high enough but still have valid reasons they need to switch a career? This client expressed the need for a career that fits with family obligations because she has substantial child care obligations. She also said that she hasn't been job searching much because can't go to interviews because of need for childcare [...] When discussing this after the appointment the EC mentioned that the Second Career program is not meant to help with family needs. I asked the EC what makes the client not "job ready"? The EC explained that client did not indicate that she is not actively job searching: she did not mention specific job search activities but just said she was 'researching' and 'looking in news papers', and she has not been job searching for more than 2 months. This is the rationale of a one size fits all scoring system. (FN 25/9)</i></p>	<p>The client positioned childcare needs and family obligations as a barrier to obtaining employment. Yet, demonstrating 'unwillingness' to seek employment or to place conditions on the kinds of work a job-seeker is willing to take is interpreted by the EC as 'not motivated enough' or 'not suitable' for being a recipient of funded resources. This rationale echoes the EOPG guidelines, which specify that clients be expected to make child care arrangements so that they can seek employment and take any employment available. Family obligations and childcare needs are then positioned as 'illegitimate' barriers.</p>
Evidence of Job-seeking Motivation	<p><i>I find that much of the language [in Branch A] is about creating a positive self and world perception. Motivation is frequently cited as the key to "success" in employment and positive life outcomes. There is the sense in which outlook factors into body language as well as how motivated a client is. Cultivating a positive outlook is often mentioned by staff as central to their coaching strategies. Clients who do not have motivation (evidenced in body language as well as "the right words") are not enrolled as part of the service unit target number, but are referred to the service centre and to workshops instead. (FN 19/9)</i></p>	<p>'Positive attitude' towards employment and job-seeking are associated with 'motivation' the consequences of which are in whether clients are included in the target number for 'assisted' service units. Evidence of a 'positive attitude' is in 'body language' or self- presentation.</p>

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE OF 'MOTIVATION' CODING GRID

Theme	Excerpt: (Field Note Day/Month)	Analysis
Evidence of Job-seeking Motivation (continued)	<p><i>In first appointments between ECs and potential clients motivation is determined through interpretive processes, which require probing questions from ECs. The ECs determine if the client is willing to work entry level wages, are willing to travel to work, are willing to learn new skills, and are willing to work any hours that are common in that field. (FN 24/9)</i></p>	<p>Motivation is interpreted- while there is a 'definition' each EC interprets this differently. The way motivation is interpreted is a consequence of evidence- this evidence is of actual job-seeking activities as well as 'willingness' to be 'flexible' in terms of job expectations.</p>
	<p><i>Notes from Second career info session with new client- EC evaluated the client as "not job searching ready" because the client wants Second Career to fit childcare needs. These include a job that fits with school hours; she is not open to jobs that do not fall within school hours. I asked the EC what makes the client not "job ready"? EC said, because she did not indicate that she is actually job searching: did not mention specific job search activities, just researching and looking in news papers, not job searching for more than 2 months. (FN 25/9)</i></p>	<p>This demonstrates that to be identified as 'motivated' clients need to provide evidence of 'specific job-seeking activities'. Job-seeking activities include applying for jobs- 'looking' in newspapers or online without applying does not count.</p>
	<p><i>EC suggested that specific filtering is absolutely necessary in order to see what client wants [from the relationship], how they have been job searching, what motivates them to find the job, and whether there are specific things the EC can do to help. The EC said that ECs are here to help those who are facing barriers and those who are having difficulty obtaining work and who have been actively job searching. I asked, "how do you know if a client is motivated?" The EC responded that they could tell because of expectations for immediate employment goal. If you have been out of the job market for a while have to just get foot back in the door you can't expect to get a job that you don't have credentials for. You have to take steps towards employment while you train for that dream job [...] So in order to be able to ensure that clients are motivated, assistance is client motivated. Motivational interviews in which ask how motivated client is to finding job- how can we increase motivation? What do you want from this relationship?</i></p>	<p>Again, motivation is interpreted by the EC in the appointment. In addition to evidence of actual job-seeking activities, such as applying for specific jobs, a client is interpreted as 'motivated' if they demonstrate 'realistic employment goals'. Here realistic also means 'willing' to engage in employment that is available and that is within the client's skill set and credentials. This also means being willing to take employment below the desired employment goal, while training for the employment goal. Here any employment is positioned as better than no employment- and is also identified as a 'stepping stone' to better employment prospects.</p>

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE OF ‘MOTIVATION’ CODING GRID

Theme	Excerpt: (Field Note Day/Month)	Analysis
<p>Flexibility</p>	<p><i>When creating a resume think about what the employer wants. IT IS AN EMPLOYER’S MARKET. Transferrable skills: We need to identify good things about ourselves that we have acquired through life experience. These skills may transfer into other areas of work. Think about how these skills could be used in employment. Employers want to know how I learn and can I learn. Think like an employer. What would you want to see for that position? It’s a “game” subject to the conditions of the labour market, “play the game”, focus on what employers want. Gone are things like stable employment, benefits, pensions, etc. Lower your expectations-</i></p> <p>Analytic memo: The main point that was emphasized by this RI facilitator in these workshops was that it is an employer’s labour market- so we need to fit the labour market. This means promoting the self and adapting to the flexible labour market. Fit the employer’s desires and expectations for employees- be that hard working, reliable, dependable, adaptable etc. person- or present yourself as such- “play the game” it is a game. (Notes from Resume Writing Workshop FN 10/10).</p>	<p>THIS IS ABOUT TAILORING THE RESUME TO THE EMPLOYER’S DEMANDS AND DESIRES: The idea of an employers’ market means that job-seekers need to be flexible when job-seeking, cognizant of employer desires. 'Lowering expectations' is about lowering wage expectations so as to be willing to 'take any and all employment'. Here willingness and flexibility are components of 'being employable' components of the neoliberal employability habitus.</p>
	<p><i>Advice from TIOW Creating Success Workshop (experienced workers 50+): How to approach unemployment? This is a chance or opportunity to do what you have always wanted to do. This is an opportunity for 'work change'.</i></p> <p><i>Locus of control- Think about what you think- how thoughts are skewed by external circumstances, is your belief realistic or a skewed perception of your circumstances?</i></p> <p><i>Say to yourself: "I am the driver of my own life"</i></p> <p><i>Characteristics of people who do well with change are a 'positive attitude' and wiling to be a 'risktaker'."</i></p> <p>Analytic Memo: "flexibility"-- here I see the neoliberal discourse- the need to be flexible to keep up and constantly upgrade, to move with change, to respond positively to change (FN 25/9)</p>	<p>Idea of being flexible and willing are tied to being the right kind of employable worker. Here attitude is posed as evidence of this flexibility and willingness, the worker must change himself or herself to become employable. Individual responsabilization focus rather than structural focus. This is evidence of a neoliberal doxa in employment doctrine.</p>

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE OF 'MOTIVATION' CODING GRID

Theme	Excerpt: (Field Note Day/Month)	Analysis
<p>Access to Relational Support</p>	<p><i>The VRS noted that success is often enhanced for those clients who have strong support networks, however this is the minority of clients. Strong supports are family or friends who provide emotional or material supports, or professionals such as mental health counsellors, physiotherapists, etc. The best way for enacting this kind of support is for professionals to work together, to meet with client as a group and discuss how each will provide support so that there is not overlap or gaps. This happens more in a neighbouring region than in Region A. [...] When supports work together and communicate they can together address positive and negative changes in client behaviour and attitude and work towards solutions so that the client can move smoothly through the process. When professional supports are working independently- which is what usually happens, particularly in more populous regions/cosmopolitan centers, it is harder to catch these changes or to address them- because the VRS can suggest a change to the client that is not followed up on unless the client remembers/feels like it- may not be in positive mental state to ensure this happens.</i> (From informal meeting with VRS FN 15/10)</p>	<p>Here the VRS indicates that there is a connection between access to relational support and motivation. Relational support is defined as emotional and mental support as well as access to professional resources. Yet the VRS also indicated that few clients have access to strong relational supports in their personal lives. This indicates the importance of professional support- to supplement the lack of relational support. Motivation is then not only an intrinsic resource, but also can be positively promoted through extrinsic means of relational supports.</p>
<p>Motivation and Relational Support</p>	<p><i>The invisible- the partnership between clients and service providers that is about providing clients with tools to be self-reliant and independent- but is also about bridging that gap. There is so much service providers do that facilitates the job search process- clients are taught how to become employable, taught the skills necessary for the job search, this is a support network. This is evident in the multiple roles of the organization, coaches who make job search plans, facilitators who teach skills in workshops, job developers, who search for and cultivate relationships with potential employers- coaches again who then match the employers and workers. WSIB and ODSP vocational therapists (rehab) who assist people with injuries and illnesses in re-entering the workforce.</i> <i>The whole organization, while preaching about the importance of motivation and cultivating self-development and self-motivation is about motivating and facilitating, this is about teaching people how to become employable - the employable habitus, the worker habitus- some term. (Analytic memo excerpt from FN 19/9)</i></p>	<p>The connection between 'motivation' and relational support- while 'motivation' is defined as an internal quality, the relational support provided by Branch A staff promotes motivation. This is because access to tangible supports helps job-seekers overcome the disincentives and demotivating factors that can be barriers to motivation. However in order to access these supports clients need to demonstrate 'intrinsic' motivation for job-seeking. It is a cycle in some ways - one that is difficult to access if a client does not demonstrate sufficient 'intrinsic' motivation.</p>

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE OF 'MOTIVATION' CODING GRID

<p>Motivation and Relational Support (Continued)</p>	<p><i>TIOW creating Success Workshop (experienced workers 50+):</i></p> <p><i>After this workshop I spoke with the RI facilitator about how they see their role in the organizational context. The RI facilitator indicated that their role is to positively motivate clients- to provide positive feedback and to encourage them to view employment in a positive way. This was evident during the workshop when one client indicated frustration and negative expectations regarding their ability to obtain employment. The other clients and the RI facilitator all spoke up to encourage this client, asking what the client's skills were and how they could see themselves in a positive light.</i></p> <p><i>This workshop focused on steps to regaining a positive attitude- there is a lot about regaining a positive attitude and the power of self-motivation.</i></p> <p><i>Analytic memo: EC and Facilitators seem to focus most on positively motivating clients. They are in a sense motivational coaches, this role is evident in the use of the term "coaches/ coaching" in reference to the EC</i></p>	<p>In this workshop it was evident that motivation is promoted through the encouragement of other people- this is a form of relational support. *Side note: over the next several weeks I witnessed a 'change' in attitude in this client, became more positive, seemed to look forward to the workshops, became less negative and even joked with staff. Was in the RI Centre almost every day. This positive change seemed to be connected to the positive encouragement the client received from the other clients and the RI staff.</p>
	<p><i>Analytic memo: After speaking with all RI facilitators about their roles: RI facilitators see workshops less about learning how to find a job and more about helping people to overcome the insecurity or depression or hit to self-esteem suffered from job loss. Workshops are also viewed as a means for job-seekers to network with each other, as a form of emotional and relational support for those who are experiencing similar circumstances- this is particularly so with TIOW clients who attend a series of workshops as a cohort- these people tend to build relationships and friendships with each other for the time and sometimes these grow beyond the setting of Branch A. (FN 2/10)</i></p>	<p>Workshops were promoted as a means of cultivating community and relational support among job-seekers. While RI facilitators did not always link this directly with 'motivation' their emphasis on the significance of the RI centre as a place for cultivating relational support suggests that relational support is a significant part of becoming ready to be employed.</p>

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