

EXAMINING THE DAILY OPERATIONS AND WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS  
WITHIN A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FOR INDIVIDUALS LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS  
IN ONTARIO, CANADA

EXAMINING THE DAILY OPERATIONS AND WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS  
WITHIN A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FOR INDIVIDUALS LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS  
IN ONTARIO, CANADA

BY MONICA PERSKI, B.A.

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

McMaster University © Copyright by Monica Perski, September 2014

MASTER OF ARTS (2014)

McMaster University (School of Geography and Earth Sciences)

TITLE: Examining the Daily Operations and Workplace Accommodations within a Social Enterprise for Individuals Living with Mental Illness in Ontario, Canada

AUTHOR: Monica Perski, B.A. Hons (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Robert Wilton

NUMBER OF PAGES: x, 182

## **Abstract**

In contemporary societies, such as Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, an emphasis has been placed on moving individuals with mental illness into mainstream paid employment. Although mainstream employment may offer an inclusive environment, existing scholars argue that various problems can arise with this transition to paid work. For example, employers often report a minimal understanding regarding accommodations for someone with mental health issues and workers may be reluctant to disclose mental health issues for fear of workplace discrimination and/or discharge. Social enterprises have been created to address these problems and the available literature illustrates that these organizations are beneficial for individuals with mental illness because they offer necessary workplace accommodations that are often not found in mainstream jobs, allow for engagement in meaningful activity and provide the opportunity to earn a wage. However, scholars have primarily relied on secondary sources and/or surveys of these organizations and, as a result, there is a limited understanding of how social enterprise organizations work in practice. This thesis research seeks to address this gap by using participant observation, along with semi-structured interviews and focus group data, to produce an in-depth analysis that examines the daily operations of a social enterprise in Ontario, Canada, and the experiences of the workers within it. Key themes of analysis pertain to the nature of the work and the labour process; workers' wages; the organization as a place for meaningful activity and social interaction; and the provision of workplace accommodations. The findings that have emerged from this project have empirical, methodological and conceptual contributions to the existing work on social enterprises for individuals with mental illness.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my deepest thanks to the following people for their help and support during these past two years of graduate school.

To the staff members and clients who participated in this project- thank you for being so welcoming and taking the time to share your experiences in detail with me. I very much appreciated the assistance you provided to help me navigate the daily operations of your place of work. This project would not have been possible without all of you.

To my supervisor, Dr. Robert Wilton- thank you for your constant guidance and encouragement, especially during the many moments when I doubted that I would finish my degree on time. Your knowledge in this field of study and the detailed comments you included on the drafts of this thesis were invaluable during the writing process.

To my committee members, Dr. Gavin Andrews and Dr. Joshua Evans- thank you for showing such interest in my work and taking the time to be part of the defense process.

To my fellow SGES students in BSB 338, especially Amy and Pearl- thank you for ‘showing me the ropes’ during my first year. I am grateful for your advice and friendship. Our time in the office together made for an enjoyable, and much needed, break from school work.

To my fellow SGES students in BSB 339, Stine, Nicole, Katie, Huyen and Kevin- thank you for your company and conversation during my second year. Although I was not in the office often, I am appreciative for the opportunity I had to get to know all of you.

To my Mom and Dad, Irma and Reiner- thank you for your unwavering support and love. You demonstrated a great deal of patience and understanding while I completed my degree, even when I may not have been the most pleasant person to be around.

To my extended family members- thank you for your prayers and phone calls to check-in on the progress of my work. Your words of encouragement gave me strength when I needed it most.

To my friends, especially Stephanie, Natalie, Kaitlyn, Miranda, Sarah, Megan, Heather and Julie- thank you for the coffee breaks, dinner dates, movie outings and road trips, all of which were great stress relievers. Whether near or far, we have always picked up right where we left off and for that I am truly grateful.

---

The research for this thesis project was funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) graduate scholarship.

## Table of Contents

---

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Tables and Illustrations .....	ix
List of Abbreviations .....	x
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Research Problem and Rationale .....	1
1.2 Central Research Question and Objectives.....	2
1.3 Definition of Key Terms.....	3
1.4 Organization of Thesis Chapters.....	5
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Geographies of Mental Health.....	7
2.3 Difficulties that Individuals with Mental Illness Experience in Mainstream Employment.....	8
2.3.1 Symptoms Associated with Mental Illness .....	8
2.3.2 Disclosure of a Mental Health Issue to Employers and/or Co-Workers.....	11
2.3.3 Lack of Accommodations in the Workplace .....	13
2.4 The Geography of the Social Economy .....	14
2.5 Social Enterprises: A Specific Type of Organization in the Social Economy.....	18
2.6 Social Enterprises for Individuals with Mental Health Issues .....	19
2.7 The Benefits of Working at Social Enterprises.....	21
2.7.1 Workplace Accommodations.....	21
2.7.2 Engagement in Meaningful Activity.....	23
2.7.3 Earning a Wage.....	24
2.7.4 Connection to the Broader Scholarship on Enabling Places.....	26
2.8 The Challenges of Managing Social Enterprises .....	27
2.8.1 Tensions between the ‘Social’ and the ‘Economic’ .....	27
2.8.2 Funding Issues .....	29
2.9 Conclusion .....	30
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology</b>	<b>33</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	33
3.2 Selection of the Case Study Site .....	33
3.3 Data Collection .....	34

3.3.1 Stage One: Semi-Structure Interview with the Executive Director .....	34
3.3.2 Stage Two: Focus Group with Clients .....	35
3.3.3 Stage Three: Semi-Structured Interviews with Supervisory Staff Members.....	36
3.3.4 Stage Four: Participant Observation .....	36
3.3.5 Stage Five: Semi-Structured Interview with the Manager.....	38
3.4 Ethical Concerns .....	39
3.5 Ensuring Rigour .....	42
3.6 Analysis of the Collected Data .....	43

**Chapter Four: Organizational Overview and Demography of the Worksite Clients 45**

4.1 Introduction.....	45
4.2 What is New Day Employment?.....	45
4.2.1 Physical Location.....	46
4.2.2 Social Mission.....	46
4.2.3 Training Program .....	47
4.2.4 Community Employment Programs .....	50
4.2.5 Transitional Employment Program.....	51
4.2.6 Changes to the Organization’s Social Mission Over Time.....	52
4.2.7 Sources of Funding .....	53
4.2.8 Customer Base .....	54
4.3 Demography of the Worksite Clients: Who Are They?.....	55

**Chapter Five: Analyzing the Nature of the Work and the Labour Process 60**

5.1 Introduction.....	60
5.2 The ‘What’, ‘Where’ and ‘How’ of the Work Performed at New Day Employment.....	60
5.2.1 Clothes Hangers .....	62
5.2.2 Liquid Medicine Bottles .....	63
5.2.3 Anti-Bacterial Hand Wipes.....	63
5.2.4 Hair Conditioner Bottles .....	64
5.2.5 Bags of Candy.....	65
5.2.6 Toothbrushes.....	65
5.3 Assigning Worksite Tasks: Staff Authority versus Client Agency .....	66
5.4 One Task, Multiple Techniques for Completion .....	73
5.5 Ensuring Consistency: The Practice of Quality Control.....	75
5.6 The Physical Impacts of the Work.....	81

**Chapter Six: Analyzing Clients’ Wages, the Pricing of Worksite Jobs and the Organization as a Place of Meaningful Activity and Social Interaction 85**

6.1 Introduction.....	85
6.2 The Rates of Pay for Worksite Tasks .....	85
6.3 The Reality of How Much Clients Earned.....	88

6.4 “Slave Labour”: Clients’ Dissatisfaction with Their Earnings .....	92
6.5 Maintaining a Balance Between Social Mission and Financial Sustainability .....	95
6.6 A Place of Meaningful Activity for Clients .....	98
6.7 The Range of Social Interactions in the Worksite and Beyond .....	99
6.7.1 Conversing with Others At and Outside of the Workplace .....	100
6.7.2 Being ‘Social’ by Being With? .....	101

**Chapter Seven: Analyzing the Provision of Accommodations in the Workplace 104**

7.1 Introduction .....	104
7.2 Mental Health Accommodations .....	104
7.2.1 Flexibility in the Number of Hours and Days Worked .....	104
7.2.2 The Pace of Work .....	106
7.2.3 Being Shown and Reminded How to Perform Worksite Tasks .....	109
7.2.4 Listening to Music While Working .....	111
7.2.5 Working Alone in the Worksite .....	113
7.2.6 Taking Additional Breaks During the Work Day .....	114
7.2.7 Short- and Long-Term Absence Policies .....	116
7.2.8 Talking Openly with Staff Members about Mental Health Issues .....	117
7.3 Physical Disability Accommodations .....	119
7.4 Transportation Accommodation .....	120

**Chapter Eight: Discussion and Conclusion 123**

8.1 Introduction .....	123
8.2 Summary of Key Findings .....	123
8.3 Study Contributions .....	129
8.3.1 Empirical Contributions .....	129
8.3.2 Methodological Contribution .....	131
8.3.3 Conceptual Contribution .....	131
8.4 Limitations of the Research Study .....	133
8.5 Directions for Future Research .....	134

Works Cited .....	136
-------------------	-----

Appendix A: Ethics Approval .....	143
-----------------------------------	-----

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Executive Director .....	144
--	-----

Appendix C: Interview Guide for Client Focus Group .....	147
--	-----

Appendix D: Interview Guide for Supervisory Staff Members .....	150
---	-----

Appendix E: Tasks Completed as an Employment Facilitator .....	152
--	-----

Appendix F: Interview Guide for Manager .....	155
---	-----



Appendix G: Letter of Information/Consent for Executive Director Interview .....	158
Appendix H: Letter of Information/Consent for Client Focus Group .....	162
Appendix I: Letter of Information/Consent for Supervisory Staff Interviews .....	166
Appendix J: Letter of Information/Consent for Manager Interview.....	171
Appendix K: Letter of Information/Consent for Participant Observation .....	175
Appendix L: Informational Poster for Participant Observation.....	179
Appendix M: Verbal Message for Participant Observation.....	180
Appendix N: NVivo Coding Structure .....	181

## List of Tables

---

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 4.1: Summary of Staff Member Roles and Responsibilities in the Training Program .....	49
Table 4.2: The Types of Mental Health Diagnoses among the Training Program Client Population (Enrolled and Pre-enrollment) between March 2012 and March 2013 .....	56
Table 4.3: The Highest Level of Formal Education Attained by Training Program Clients (Enrolled and Pre-enrollment) from March 2012 to March 2013 .....	57
Table 4.4: The Primary Source of Income Received by Clients Enrolled in the Training Program between March 2012 and March 2013 .....	58
Table 4.5: The Types of Living Arrangements for Clients Enrolled in the Training Program between March 2012 and March 2013 .....	58
Table 6.1: Piece Rates for Specific Worksite Tasks .....	85

## List of Illustrations

Figure 4.1: Organizational Hierarchy for Training Program Staff Members .....	48
Figure 5.1: Layout of New Day Employment: Wednesday August 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2013 .....	61

## **List of Abbreviations**

CEP: Community Employment Program

GTA: Greater Toronto Area

OCD: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

ODSP: Ontario Disability Support Program

TEP: Transitional Employment Program

VSW: Vocational Support Worker

## **Chapter One**

---

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Research Problem and Rationale**

Paid employment plays a central role in many people's lives (Boardman, Grove, Perkins & Shepherd, 2003). Not only does this work offer economic benefits in the form of an income, but it also provides individuals with a daily routine, sense of personal achievement and social identity (Boardman et al., 2003; Stuart, 2006). In contemporary societies, such as Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, an emphasis has been placed on moving individuals with disabilities into mainstream paid employment (Hall, 2004; Thornton, 2009; Wilton, 2004). Although mainstream employment may offer an inclusive environment for individuals with disabilities, existing scholars argue that various problems can arise with this transition to paid work, including difficulties finding jobs and earning a living wage (Galarneau & Radulescu, 2009; Thornton, 2009), as well as a lack of accommodation in the workplace (Hall, 2005; Shier, Graham & Jones, 2009; Wilton, 2004).

Individuals with mental illness, more specifically, have experienced difficulties in relation to mainstream paid employment. For example, employers often report a minimal understanding regarding accommodations for someone with mental health issues (Bricout & Bentley, 2000; Stuart, 2006; Unger & Kregel, 2003). In addition, workers may be reluctant to disclose mental health issues for fear of workplace discrimination and/or discharge (Ellison, Russinova, MacDonald-Wilson & Lyass, 2003; Goldberg, Killeen & O'Day, 2005; Wilton, 2006). Social enterprises have been created to address these problems and are defined as non-profit organizations that aim to foster social capacity through the training and employment of disadvantaged groups and, in turn, create alternative forms of work (Amin, Cameron & Hudson, 2002).

The existing body of literature illustrates that work at social enterprises is beneficial for individuals with mental illness because they are afforded workplace accommodations that are often not found in mainstream jobs and necessary to carry out their jobs effectively (Borzaga & Depedri, 2009; Kirsh, Krupa, Cockburn & Gewurtz, 2006; Krupa, 1998). These accommodations may include flexible work hours, extended leaves of absence for mental health reasons and additional training time (Kirsh et al., 2006). Engagement in meaningful activity (Borzaga & Depedri, 2009; Krupa, Lagarde & Carmichael, 2003; Lanctôt, Durand & Corbière, 2012) and the opportunity to earn a wage (Krupa, 1998; Krupa et al., 2003; Vittala, 1999) have also been cited as advantages of work at social enterprises. However, scholars have primarily relied on secondary sources and/or surveys of these organizations (Baron & Salzer, 2002; Borzaga & Depedri, 2009; Kirsh et al., 2006; Krupa, 1998; Vittala, 1999; Villotti, Corbière, Zaniboni & Fraccaroli, 2012). As a result, there is a limited understanding of how social enterprise organizations work *in practice*.

## 1.2 Central Research Question and Objectives

This thesis<sup>1</sup> seeks to address this gap in the literature by using participant observation, along with semi-structured interviews and focus group data, to produce an in-depth analysis that examines the daily operations of a social enterprise and the experiences of the workers within it. Based on the abovementioned research problem and rationale, the central research question guiding this project is: **How do social enterprises attempt to create accommodating work**

---

<sup>1</sup> This Master's thesis research is part of a larger research project currently being conducted by Dr. Robert Wilton (McMaster University) and Dr. Josh Evans (Athabasca University). The project aims to: compile a national list of social enterprises; explore the ways in which social enterprises attempt to create accommodating workplaces for individuals with mental illness; examine the experiences of individuals who work at social enterprises in Ontario and Alberta; and conceptualize how these experiences may influence approaches to the accommodation of individuals with mental health issues in mainstream workplaces.

**environments for individuals with mental illness in Ontario, Canada?** As well, the objectives of this study are:

- (1) To develop an understanding of the day-to-day operations that exist within a social enterprise organization.
- (2) To investigate the ways in which a social enterprise creates alternative employment for individuals living with mental illness, and how these efforts affect organizational practices, workplaces and employee experiences.

Case study research took place at New Day Employment<sup>2</sup>, a non-profit social enterprise organization located in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) of Ontario, Canada, that specializes in the packaging and assembly of goods for various companies in southern Ontario.

## 1.2 Definition of Terms

This thesis uses multiple terms that must be defined prior to subsequent chapters, including mainstream employment, disability, mental illness, social enterprises, accommodation and client. Each of these terms is defined as follows:

*Mainstream employment* refers to jobs that exist within the private and public sectors of the competitive labour market (Pearce, 2009).

*Disability* is defined as:

...an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations (World Health Organization, 2014, p.1).

---

<sup>2</sup> The organization of study was granted full anonymity and, therefore, a pseudonym was assigned in place of its true name.

While the term takes into account both physical and mental disabilities, it will most often be used in this research project to refer to the latter form (World Health Organization, 2014).

*Mental illness* refers to a range of psychiatric disorders that alter mood, thinking and behaviour and lead to distress and/or impairment of cognitive and/or emotional functioning (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2012). Some examples of mental illness are depression, schizophrenia and anxiety disorders (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2012). The psychiatric symptoms associated with these disorders vary from mild to severe and those living with mental illness may experience fluctuations in the severity of their symptoms after onset (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2012; Rutman, 1994). For the purposes of this thesis, the term *mental health issues* will be employed as a synonym to mental illness to mitigate repetition.

As noted above, *social enterprises* are characterized as non-profit or private organizations where the primary goal is to foster social capacity through the training and employment of socially disadvantaged groups and, in turn, create new forms of work (Amin et al., 2002). Although social enterprise organizations have economic aims of providing products or services to the community, their chief interest is not situated in profit-maximization (Amin et al., 2002; Lanctôt et al., 2012). Instead, their social mission of employing individuals with disabilities is paramount (Amin et al., 2002; Lanctôt et al., 2012).

*Accommodation* is defined as a modification made to a workplace environment or in the ways daily operations are conducted at a place of work in order to make it possible for a disabled individual to carry out a particular job (Kirsh et al., 2006).

*Client* refers to a person with mental illness who utilizes community-based mental health services, such as employment supports, community housing or psychiatric care (Wolch & Philo, 2000). New Day Employment used the term *client* to describe those living with mental illness who worked at the enterprise or accessed its community employment services. While the term ‘mental health consumer’ is also appropriate here and has been widely documented in the literature (Hartl, 1992; Kirsh et al., 2006; Villotti et al., 2012; Vittala, 1999; Williams, Fossey & Harvey, 2012), *client* has also been employed in various published works dealing with mental health and work (Amin, Cameron & Hudson, 1999; Anthony, Rogers, Cohen & Davies, 1995; Kirsh, 2000; Rutman, 1994; Trainor & Tremblay, 1992; Wilton, 2006) and will be used in this thesis when discussing the organization of study to reflect the organization’s terminology.

#### **1.4 Organization of Thesis Chapters**

This thesis is comprised of eight chapters. Following this chapter, Chapter Two offers a review of the existing body of literature relevant to the research topic. Several subjects are explored within the review, including: the geographies of mental health, the difficulties that individuals with mental illness experience in mainstream employment; the geography of the social economy; social enterprises for people with mental health issues; and the benefits and challenges associated with social enterprise organizations. Chapter Three outlines the qualitative methods that were employed to investigate the central research question and objectives associated with this study. Specifically, the selection of the case study site, methods of data collection, ethical concerns associated with the collection of data, rigour and coding process will be discussed. Chapter Four contains an overview of the social enterprise organization of study and the demography of the clients that work there in order to establish context for the subsequent chapters. Chapters Five, Six and Seven provide an in-depth analysis of the themes and findings



that emerged from the research project. In particular, Chapter Five examines the nature of the work and the labour process within the organization of study. Chapter Six focuses on clients' wages, the pricing of jobs and the organization as a place of meaningful activity and social interaction for clients. Chapter Seven analyzes the provision of mental health, physical and transportation accommodations within the study site. Chapter Eight concludes this thesis with a summary of the key findings detailed in Chapters Five through Seven, the empirical and methodological contributions to the scholarship on social enterprises for individuals living with mental illness, the limitations of the study and directions for future research.

## **Chapter Two**

---

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will present a review of the current body of literature relevant to the research topic introduced in Chapter One. The purpose of the review is to outline the work that has been published by scholars in this field of study and to identify gaps in the literature that exist with regards to social enterprises for people with mental health issues in order to situate the rationale for this thesis project. Several subjects will be highlighted here, including: the geographies of mental health; the difficulties that individuals with mental illness experience in mainstream employment; the geography of the social economy; social enterprises for people with mental health issues; and the benefits and challenges associated with social enterprise organizations.

#### **2.2 Geographies of Mental Health**

For decades, Geographers have been interested in the study of mental health. Initially, in the mid-1970s through to the early 1990s, scholars concentrated on the deinstitutionalization of individuals with mental health issues from asylums and hospital facilities into community-based treatment centers (Wolch & Philo, 2000). Studies investigated a variety of trends, such as patient access to mental health-care services (Shannon & Dever, 1974; Sixsmith, 1988), how the closure of institutions impacted communities where treatment centers were situated (Boeckh, Dear & Taylor, 1980; Dear, 1977; Wolpert, 1976), the ways in which former patients attempted to cope with the shift brought about by deinstitutionalization (Kearns, 1990; Laws & Dear, 1988) and the increase in urban homelessness that resulted when many individuals living with mental illness failed to be supported by the welfare system (Dear & Wolch, 1987; Morrissey & Gounis, 1988; Segal & Baumohl, 1988).

In more recent years, there has been a shift towards smaller scales of analysis, as scholars have focused most of their attention on the experiences of those living with mental health issues (Wolch & Philo, 2000). Some specific areas of study have encompassed the struggles individuals face with finding and maintaining paid employment (Baron & Salzer, 2002; Bricout & Bentley, 2005; Galarneau & Radulescu, 2009; Rutman, 1994; Stuart, 2006), the impacts of stigma on self-esteem and self-identity (Corrigan & Watson, 2002; Markowitz, 1998; Rüschi, Angermeyer & Corrigan, 2005) and enabling and therapeutic places that promote recovery (Duff, 2012; Parr, 2006; Philo, Parr & Burns, 2005; Pinfold, 2000; Tucker, 2010). The work presented here will engage with one aspect of the more current strand of mental health geographies, namely spaces of alternative employment for individuals with mental illness.

### **2.3 Difficulties that Individuals with Mental Illness Experience in Mainstream Employment**

The literature pertaining to mental illness illustrates that while many individuals living with mental health issues are willing and able to work, they often experience difficulties in mainstream employment as a result of their disability (Mechanic, Bilder & McAlpine, 2002). In particular, the psychiatric symptoms related to mental illness, the disclosure of a mental health issue to employers and/or co-workers and a lack of workplace accommodations are all key themes in the body of scholarship that affect paid employment. Each of these themes will now be examined below.

#### **2.3.1 Symptoms Associated with Mental Illness**

First, the psychiatric symptoms associated with mental illness, such as depressive mood, hearing voices, obsessive compulsive actions and paranoia, can be a significant barrier to successful mainstream employment (Anthony, 1994; Baron & Salzer, 2002; Marwaha et al., 2007; Rutman, 1994). As Rutman (1994) explains, these symptoms affect the areas of thought

and functioning, which are both critical determinants of finding and maintaining a job in the competitive labour market. For example, the illness itself has been found to result in functional deficits that negatively impact punctuality, task performance, problem solving skills, concentration and the ability to follow directions (Baron & Salzer, 2002; MacDonald-Wilson, Rogers & Massaro, 2003; Rutman, 1994). Interpersonal skill deficits have also been reported and often lead to poor social communication and disrupted working relationships with co-workers, employers and/or customers (Baron & Salzer, 2002; MacDonald-Wilson et al., 2003). Baron and Salzer (2002) argue that interpersonal skills in particular play a major role in employment rates for individuals with mental health issues because they impact job interview skills when seeking employment and influence the quality of interactions in the workplace if they are hired.

Additionally, symptoms stemming from a mental illness can indirectly affect the likelihood of securing mainstream employment due to the fact that the onset of most mental health issues is early in life, during adolescence and young adulthood, when many individuals are still enrolled in some type of formal education (Baron & Salzer, 2002; Kessler, Foster, Saunders & Stang, 1995; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2012). Kessler and colleagues (1995) report that when individuals experience the early onset of mental illness, they are less likely to obtain a high school or post-secondary diploma because the nature of their symptoms causes them to end their studies prior to completion. Not only does this result in lower educational attainment levels for those with mental illness, but it also puts these individuals at a great educational disadvantage when they attempt to enter the labour market (Baron & Salzer, 2002).

The severity of psychiatric symptoms must also be taken into account when examining employment, as they can range from mild to severe (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2014; Marwaha et al., 2007). Generally, more severe symptoms contribute to more adverse impacts of

employment (Marwaha et al., 2007). Thus, the research on the influence of mental illness on work performance largely pertains to cases of schizophrenia because it has been linked to some of the most devastating symptoms, such as hallucinations, disorganized behaviour, hostility, paranoia, delusions and a lack of motivation (Baron & Salzer, 2002; Rosenheck et al., 2006). Consequently, individuals with schizophrenia are the least likely to be employed in mainstream paid work when compared to individuals with other forms of mental illness (Marwaha et al., 2007; Mechanic et al., 2002). When individuals with schizophrenia are able to work they mostly occupy unskilled and low-paying jobs, which are often characterized as having high turnover rates and few work-related benefits (Marwaha et al., 2007; Stuart, 2006).

Yet, the degree to which the illness itself affects successful employment has been debated in the literature. In previous decades, medications prescribed to individuals with mental health issues did little to relieve their symptoms and often resulted in further struggles that made work difficult, such as blurred vision, tremors and loss of coordination (Rutman, 1994). However, significant advances in medicine have given way to the development of more advanced medications that diminish psychiatric symptoms and help promote functional and cognitive ability for many people suffering from mental illness (Baron & Salzer, 2002). Therefore, some scholars (Anthony et al., 1995; Baron & Salzer, 2002; Henry & Lucca, 2004; Kirsh, 2000; Marwaha et al., 2007) argue that, while the nature of mental illness is an important aspect influencing mainstream employment, greater contextual factors, such as problems surrounding disclosure and a lack of workplace accommodations, are also significant and must be included in examinations of the difficulties that individuals face in competitive work in order to fully understand the breadth of this matter. This literature review will now explore these broader topics.

### **2.3.2 Disclosure of a Mental Health Issue to Employers and/or Co-Workers**

Aside from the illness itself, disclosing a mental health issue to employers and/or co-workers has proved to be an issue of concern in mainstream employment. Here, disclosure is defined as “...the deliberate informing of someone in the workplace about one’s disability” (Ellison et al., 2003, p. 3). Deciding to disclose a mental illness appears to have both benefits and risks for disabled employees. In terms of benefits, employees can request and obtain workplace accommodations that are necessary to effectively carry out their job-related tasks when they are able to speak openly with employers about their conditions (Ellison et al., 2003; Goldberg et al., 2005; Wilton, 2006). Additionally, Goldberg and colleagues (2005) have found that some employees find disclosure beneficial because it avoids having to betray their employers and co-workers by lying about the state of their mental health.

In contrast, the risks associated with disclosure mainly focus on the possibility of workplace stigma and discrimination (Boardman et al., 2003; Ellison et al., 2003; Granger, Baron & Robinson, 1997; Rutman, 1994; Stuart, 2006; Wilton, 2006). Workers with mental health issues fear that disclosure will jeopardize their prospects for career advancement within the company (Goldberg et al., 2005; Stuart, 2006), will warrant unwanted or negative attention from supervisors or co-workers (Goldberg et al., 2005; Granger et al., 1997) and will result in their dismissal from work or prevent them from being hired altogether (Ellison et al., 2003; Stuart, 2006; Wilton, 2006). The literature illustrates that these fears are not always unsubstantiated. For example, Stuart (2006) has found that when some employees reveal a mental illness in the workplace they become targets for negative or mean-spirited comments from co-workers who were friendly prior to disclosure. Bricout and Bentley (2000), as well as Rutman (1994), also report that employers are less willing to hire qualified job applicants with

psychiatric disabilities than non-disabled applicants due to the stigma surrounding mental illness. Concerns surrounding violent behaviour, a lack of tolerance for work-related pressures or the chance of illness reoccurrence preclude employers from hiring when a mental illness is disclosed (Rutman, 1994). Consequently, some individuals believe that the risks of disclosure overshadow its benefits and feel that non-disclosure is their best option (Ellison et al., 2003; Goldberg et al., 2005; Wilton, 2006).

Still, non-disclosure can pose problems for employees with mental health issues. Not only are these individuals unable to request much needed work-related accommodations, but they often have to use a variety of strategies to hide their illness from supervisors and co-workers (Goldberg et al., 2005; Stuart, 2006; Wilton, 2006). Semi-structured interviews conducted in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada by Wilton (2006) have uncovered that some workers with mental illness put cotton batting in their pill boxes in order to prevent their anti-psychotic medications from rattling, as the noise may make their colleagues suspicious. Other workers fabricate stories to conceal the true reason for being absent at work, such as saying they had a dentist appointment rather than a doctor's appointment (Wilton, 2006). Utilizing these tactics is a significant cost of non-disclosure because employees have to expend extra time and effort during the workday to continuously conceal their conditions (Wilton, 2006).

The dilemma of disclosure has prompted Irvine (2011) to outline a number of questions that individuals with mental illness must consider, including: whether to disclose at all; when (and how) to disclose; what (and how much) to disclose; and to whom disclosure will be made. Although Goldberg and colleagues (2005) argue that those in the earlier stages of recovery are more likely to disclose a mental health issue due to the fact that their symptoms are often more severe and, thus, more difficult to hide, Stuart's (2006) review of literature concludes that there

is no consensus in the existing body of scholarship as to how these questions of disclosure should be ideally approached in order to obtain workplace accommodations or to avoid stigma from colleagues.

### **2.3.3 Lack of Accommodations in the Workplace**

Even when employees disclose a mental health issue to their employers, they may not be able to receive adequate workplace accommodations. Hall and Wilton (2011) explain that many Western governments, such as Canada and the United Kingdom, have focused their attention on improving the employability of disabled workers and, in turn, have dedicated less time to establishing ways in which mainstream workplaces can become more accommodating. As a result, employers often report a minimal understanding regarding accommodations for individuals with mental health issues and lack the skills to effectively handle their employees' mental health needs (Bricout & Bentley, 2000; Stuart, 2006; Unger & Kregel, 2003). In addition, accommodations tend to be more ambiguous to employers because the episodic, intermittent and sometimes invisible nature of mental illness makes it difficult to discern a clear course of action (MacDonald-Wilson et al., 2003).

The perceived monetary cost of implementing mental health-related accommodations also appears to have an impact here. Many employers who are aware of such accommodations believe that modifications to the labour process will be costly when, in actuality, most changes, such as flexible scheduling, additional breaks during the work day and gradual task introduction are very inexpensive or cost nothing at all (Granger et al., 1997; Wilton, 2006). However, there are some indirect costs associated with these workplace accommodations (Granger et al., 1997; MacDonald-Wilson, Rogers, Massaro, Lyass & Crean, 2002; Wilton, 2004). For example, supervisors have to budget more of their time for gradually introducing and teaching various



tasks to disabled workers, especially when workers' mental health issues are individualized and, therefore, accommodations cannot be generalized (MacDonald-Wilson et al., 2002).

Furthermore, allowing employees to have flexible schedules where they work fewer hours and can easily change days when necessary to attend doctor's appointments requires extra time on the part of managers and also may involve changes to non-disabled workers' schedules in order to implement these accommodations (Granger et al., 1997). Granger and colleagues (1997) contend that scheduling accommodations are often the most difficult for employers because these modifications have the greatest potential to cause some dissent from non-disabled employees who have requested changes to their schedules, but have failed to receive them.

#### **2.4 The Geography of the Social Economy**

Employment in the social economy offers individuals with disabilities and mental health issues, more specifically, an alternative and more accommodating space to work. The social economy is defined as "...commercial and non-commercial activity largely in the hands of third sector or community organizations that gives priority to meeting social (and environmental) needs before profit maximization" (Amin, 2009b, p. 4). It includes an extensive range of organizations, such as worker co-operative movements, voluntary organizations and charities, social enterprises, neighbourhood groups and community organizations (Pearce, 2009). These organizations cover many diverse services, including job and entrepreneurial experience, training to aid individuals with transitioning back into the mainstream labour market, environmental upgrading, welfare and housing (Amin et al., 2002).

As its definition suggests, the social economy is characterized as the 'third sector' of the economy (Amin, 2009b; Amin et al., 1999; Pearce, 2009). Pearce (2009) argues that three sectors of the economy exist: the private sector, the public sector and the third sector. The private

sector, or market, focuses on the capitalization of private profits and is exclusively maintained by commercial trade (Pearce, 2009). In contrast, the public sector, also known as the state, deals with non-trade activities and the planned provision of public services to its citizens (Pearce, 2009). The third, or alternative, sector encompasses aspects of both the private and public sectors because some of its features are market-driven while others focus on community or public service (Pearce, 2009). More specifically, the third sector works for the common good and strives to impact disadvantaged individuals in positive ways (Pearce, 2009). While it may engage in market-driven or commercial practices in order to fund its organizations, the third sector does not distribute its profits for private gain (Pearce, 2009). Instead, financial assets are retained by organizations in order to carry out their social goals (Pearce, 2009).

Interestingly, the concept of the social economy as it is defined today did not take shape in English-speaking academic and policy discourse until the 1990s (Amin, 2009b; Amin et al., 2002). Amin and colleagues (1999) explain that from the mid-1950s to the late-1970s, Fordism was the dominant form of capitalist organization in North America and parts of Europe, including the United Kingdom. This economic model provided full employment, consumer and welfare security and political institutions to meet social needs (Amin, 2009b; Amin et al., 1999). Developed economies purported that economic prosperity and social well-being were the responsibilities of the market and the state (Amin, 2009b). Consequently, the social economy was believed to have a residual role when compared to the major economic actors of market and state (Amin, 2009b; Borzaga & Depedri, 2009). In other words, it was seen as an activity that took place on the margins of the mainstream economy and functioned primarily as a source of welfare for the disadvantaged (Amin, 2009b; Amin et al., 1999).

However, by the mid-1970s, Fordism became vulnerable due to several systematic pressures, such as increasing global energy costs, rising imports from low-wage countries and the growth of new technologies that were no longer reliant on economies of scale (Amin et al., 1999). The crisis facing Fordism restored interest in the social economy and generated a large market for the third sector to deliver goods and services to meet the unsatisfied needs of the excluded (Amin et al., 1999). Since the late-1970s, mainstream opinion has begun to view the social economy as an important sector that has the potential to build social capacity, generate jobs and create wealth through social participation and an ethic of caring for the needs of others (Amin, 2009b). This shift in opinion is akin to the notion of ‘reframing’ presented by Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy (2013), who suggest that, in order to effectively address both the material and social needs of a community, the economy must move beyond the capitalist model of production, consumption and economic growth and take notice of the social well-being of others.

While there is consensus among scholars regarding the definition of the social economy, its relationship to the mainstream economy has been highly debated in the existing literature. One perspective claims that the social economy is a distinct and alternative system that satisfies a specific function beyond the mainstream economy (Pearce, 2009). For example, Pearce (2009) argues that while the social economy is engaged in trading and non-trading activities that may be similar to those found in the market and the state, these jobs are unique because they are characterized as community-based and focus on social ownership. Additionally, Pearce (2009) states that the social economy has a commitment to principles of mutual obligation and social relevance that is not present in the mainstream.

In contrast, some authors (Amin, 2009a; Amin, 2009b; Hudson, 2009) contend that the social economy cannot be independent from the mainstream because the aims of this third sector are misguided and exceedingly ambitious. Amin (2009a) argues that individuals who have complex histories of hardship and disadvantage are not likely to transition back into the mainstream economy by first working in the social economy because they will always require long-term support from the state. In other words, the expectation that individuals can be returned to the mainstream is unrealistic because the social economy is not a cure for disadvantage (Amin, 2009a; Hudson, 2009). Therefore, within this perspective, the social economy acts as a ‘safety net’ for vulnerable groups that aids in validating the prevailing inequalities in the market without producing radical social change (Amin, 2009a; Amin, 2009b; Hudson, 2009).

A third perspective has also emerged in this debate, which asserts that the social economy plays an intermediary role to the mainstream economy (Amin et al., 1999; Amin et al., 2002). Here, scholars (Amin et al., 1999; Amin et al., 2002) argue that very few organizations within the social economy are able to develop and become economically sustainable without the use of public funding and grant income. Thus, the social economy cannot be fully independent from the mainstream because it relies on its financial support to survive (Amin et al., 1999; Amin et al., 2002). Yet, at the same time, the social economy has some markedly different features from the mainstream economy, including the provision of socially useful goods and services to the community and the practice of ethical values (Amin et al., 1999; Amin et al., 2002). While this view holds no possibility for complete autonomy, it suggests that the social economy can still possess a unique role apart from the mainstream economy (Amin et al., 1999; Amin et al., 2002). Therefore, the true relationship between the social and mainstream economies is unclear, as this topic has been contested in the existing body of scholarship.

## **2.5 Social Enterprises: A Specific Type of Organization in the Social Economy**

Social enterprises are one type of organization that exists in the social economy. As previously noted, they are characterized as non-profit or private organizations where the primary goal is to foster social capacity through the training and employment of socially disadvantaged groups and, in turn, create new forms of work (Amin et al., 2002). Their focus is often to train and/or employ groups who are usually excluded from the labour market, such as those with disabilities (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). Sometimes referred to as community enterprises, social enterprise organizations take a share of mainstream markets by either developing new areas of business or producing goods and services that directly compete with capitalist corporations and, therefore, impose on the mainstream (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Hudson, 2009).

Amin and colleagues (1999) state that social enterprises are defined by four distinct features. First, these organizations are private in nature despite the fact that they may have some public sector involvement (Amin et al., 1999). Second, social enterprises have a significant degree of managerial independence from other private and public sector groups (Amin et al., 1999). Third, these organizations produce and sell goods and services that are of collective interest (Amin et al., 1999). Fourth, social enterprises can take any legal form, but should include the following: non-profit status; user, worker and community participation in management; and a democratic management structure (Amin et al., 1999). While these features are key elements of social enterprises, Amin and colleagues (2002) argue there is no model of best practice that can be standardized and implemented by organizations in order to be successful because each social enterprise defines success differently based on its specific objectives or goals.

## **2.6 Social Enterprises for Individuals with Mental Health Issues**

The current body of literature pertaining to social enterprises that provide employment opportunities to individuals with mental health issues is limited and, as a result, only certain characteristics of these organizations have been documented. Specifically, Kirsh and colleagues' (2006) study on work initiatives for people with severe mental illnesses in Canada has uncovered three types of social enterprise organizations that are exclusive to mental health and employment: agency-operated businesses, consumer/survivor businesses and affirmative businesses. First, agency-operated businesses (also known as agency-sponsored businesses) are owned, and primarily funded, by non-profit agencies (Kirsh et al., 2006). Their aim is to create alternative, paid employment positions for people who have been marginalized from the mainstream labour force (Kirsh et al., 2006). These organizations employ two groups of workers to operate: a small number of non-disabled supervisory and managerial staff members and a larger number of workers with mental health issues (Kirsh et al., 2006).

Second, consumer/survivor businesses are wholly managed and run by individuals who suffer from mental illnesses and consume mental health services as part of their recovery (Kirsh et al., 2006). In this context, staff members work as entrepreneurs, who build businesses that are parallel to the mainstream labour market they have been excluded from and supply the public with various goods and services (Kirsh et al., 2006; Vittala, 1999). Since these organizations are comprised completely of mental health consumers, Kirsh and colleagues (2006) and Krupa (1998) argue that they are important for building leadership skills because disabled employees are given the opportunity to hold managerial roles in the workplace. Consumer/survivor businesses also have the potential to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness and replace

negative perceptions with positive notions of what individuals with mental illness are capable of achieving (Kirsh et al., 2006; Vittala, 1999).

Third, affirmative businesses are organizations that have developed through partnerships between mental health consumers, people who work in the business sector, mental health practitioners and community members (Kirsh et al., 2006; Krupa et al., 2003). Krupa and colleagues (2003) explain that rather than attempting to situate individuals with mental health issues in the mainstream labour market, affirmative businesses attempt to mitigate labour force conditions, such as profit, individualism and capitalism, that have created systematic employment hardships for this disadvantaged group. These aims are achieved by harnessing the capabilities of mental health consumers as a collective group and, in turn, creating job opportunities with sustainable commercial companies (Kirsh et al., 2006; Krupa et al., 2003). It is important to note that while Kirsh and colleagues' (2006) research constructs a useful overview of social enterprises, published materials from organizations were used to gather this information and, as a result, primary and in-depth data are lacking here.

Although each type of organization is distinct in terms of ownership and operation, Baron and Salzer (2002), as well as Church (1999), claim that, as a whole, social enterprises offer a limited variety of work opportunities to individuals with mental health issues. These choices have been referred to as '4F jobs', as they typically focus on food, filth, filing and flowers (Baron & Salzer, 2002; Church, 1999). Additionally, these authors state that jobs in social enterprises are often low-status, entry-level positions that can constrain employees by restricting their advancement into higher-skilled jobs. However, debate exists in the literature regarding this issue. Kirsh and colleagues (2006) argue that the range of goods and services offered by social enterprises has increased significantly in recent years. For example, second-hand clothing stores,

furniture refurnishing, courier work and pet supply stores are cited by these authors as just some of the new work opportunities that have emerged recently in Canada (Kirsh et al., 2006). Still, Kirsh and colleagues (2006) state that while a wider range of opportunities is present, few of these options are higher than entry-level positions and many are low-status, thus reinforcing the latter portion of the arguments put forth by Baron and Salzer (2002) and Church (1999).

## **2.7 The Benefits of Working at Social Enterprises**

The current body of research reveals that there are multiple benefits for individuals with mental health issues who work at social enterprises, including the provision of workplace accommodations, the engagement in meaningful activity and the opportunity to earn a paid wage. Each of these benefits will be discussed below. It is important to note that the literature here primarily focuses on consumer/survivor and affirmative businesses and, as a result, an agency-operated business perspective is lacking in published research.

### **2.7.1 Workplace Accommodations**

First, social enterprises address their employees' mental health needs by providing them with an array of workplace accommodations that are typically not offered in mainstream places of employment (Borzaga & Depedri, 2009; Kirsh et al., 2006; Krupa, 1998). Consumer/survivor and affirmative businesses have been found to make changes to the ways in which work is performed in order for those with mental health issues to carry out their jobs successfully (Kirsh et al., 2006; Krupa, 1998). Specifically, these accommodations consist of flexible work schedules where employees can create their own hours (Hartl, 1999; Kirsh et al., 2006; Krupa et al., 2003; Vittala, 1999; Williams et al., 2012), fewer hours per shift, working at one's own pace, unscheduled breaks during the work day, extended leaves of absence without penalty, enhanced coaching to learn new tasks and greater leniency for job-related errors (Krupa et al., 2003). Since



social enterprises tend to be comprised of workers with a variety of mental health issues, workplace accommodations are often individualized to address and support workers' personal needs (Krupa, 1998). By doing so, employees can gain valuable job skills rather than be limited or discouraged by their psychiatric symptoms (Krupa, 1998).

Not only do accommodations create a supportive environment for employees, but these changes to the workplace also appear to have an impact on job satisfaction. Survey research completed by Villotti and colleagues (2012) on social enterprises for people with severe mental illness in northern Italy has revealed that the implementation of workplace accommodations increases the likelihood that employees will be highly satisfied with their jobs. In this regard, job satisfaction is influenced by the fact that the provision of mental health-related accommodations allows employees to feel confident in their abilities to meet the demands of their jobs which, in turn, positively impacts their satisfaction rates (Villotti et al., 2012). Employees of social enterprises are also more satisfied with their jobs when they feel respected and valued in the workplace because previous employment experiences in the mainstream economy have been devoid of such accommodations (Krupa et al., 2003).

It appears that in the social economy, more generally, a relationship exists between job satisfaction and the length of time disabled workers would like to spend working in the third sector (Amin, 2009; Borzaga & Depedri, 2009). For example, ethnographic research conducted in Bristol, United Kingdom, by Amin (2009) has found that workers are in no rush to leave the social economy because working at their own pace and having flexible schedules creates a less demanding environment when compared to the mainstream economy. Conversely, Borzaga and Depedri (2009) argue that length of employment in the social economy is also influenced by age. Specifically, the older the employee, the more likely they are to express a desire to stay in the

social economy for as long as possible (Borzaga & Depedri, 2009). However, several gaps exist in the scholarship when examining workplace accommodations at social enterprises.

Specifically, the research fails to illustrate how job satisfaction may impact the length of employment at social enterprises for people with mental illness. Also, it is unclear how these organizations implement the accommodations discussed above and if any tensions or challenges may exist when attempting to support employees' specific needs.

### **2.7.2 Engagement in Meaningful Activity**

In addition to workplace accommodations, being employed at social enterprises offers people with mental health issues the opportunity to engage in meaningful activity (Borzaga & Depedri, 2009; Krupa et al., 2003; Lanctôt et al., 2012). Characterized as an intrinsic benefit by Borzaga and Depedri (2009), this aspect of social enterprises has been found to positively influence the ways in which workers feel about themselves. For example, semi-structured interviews conducted with 14 members of social enterprises suffering from severe mental illness in Quebec, Canada, reveal that these organizations promote the development of social relationships with their coworkers and supervisors, leading to a strong sense of belonging (Lanctôt et al., 2012). Interestingly, workers may even liken these social relationships to being part of a family unit (Lanctôt et al., 2012). This is particularly important for individuals who live alone and have been unemployed for a prolonged period of time, as they may not have established social relationships with others or developed critical social skills that are necessary for communication in the workplace (Krupa et al., 2003; Lanctôt et al., 2012). Feelings of pride and accomplishment can also result from employment at social enterprises and stem from the fact that, with the aid of workplace accommodations, these individuals can meet the labour

requirements of their jobs and see themselves as productive members of society (Kirsh et al., 2006; Krupa, 1999; Lanctôt et al., 2012).

Moreover, engaging in this type of meaningful activity can help alleviate the symptoms of mental illness (Hartl, 1992; Krupa et al., 2003). Hartl's (1992) case study of A-Way Express Courier Service, a consumer/survivor business in Toronto, Ontario, shows that the rate of re-hospitalization due to mental illness once employees begin working at the social enterprise are extremely low, measuring at less than one percent for the business' total worker population. Likewise, Krupa and colleagues (2003) argue that employment in affirmative businesses reduces depressive symptoms and alleviates the intensity of symptoms caused by mental illness. This affect on well-being appears to be the result of participating in meaningful activity that gives individuals structure and direction in their daily lives while minimizing experiences of boredom, inactivity and isolation that often occur during times of unemployment (Hartl, 1992; Krupa et al., 2003).

### **2.7.3 Earning a Wage**

Furthermore, working at social enterprises gives otherwise unemployable individuals the ability to earn a wage (Borzaga & Depedri, 2009; Krupa, 1998; Krupa et al., 2003; Vittala, 1999). In contrast to the intrinsic incentives discussed above, this benefit of alternative employment is extrinsic in nature (Borzaga & Depedri, 2009). However, little is known about the amount of money employees can earn for the work they perform at these organizations. For individuals with mental health issues in particular, Krupa (1998) explains that consumer/survivor businesses strive to provide their employees with a "...reasonable rate of pay..." (p. 6) through individualized wages that are based on a minimum wage or through profit-sharing among members of the organization. Yet, in-depth information is not available due to the use of

secondary data in this published work. A study of affirmative businesses in Ontario, Canada by Krupa and colleagues (2003) provides further details regarding the amount in which employees are paid. Using a combination of secondary literature sources, survey data and focus groups, these authors indicate that affirmative businesses which implement profit-sharing programs pay workers with mental health issues between \$2.66 and \$9.89 per hour, depending on the type of job, while other affirmative businesses pay the Ontario minimum wage or higher (Krupa et al., 2003). The authors stress that while earning a wage is one of the benefits of working at an affirmative business, managerial staff members consider this money to be an economic supplement to employees' disability support payments rather than their primary source of income (Krupa et al., 2003). Still, earning a wage promotes economic self-sufficiency and allows employees with mental health issues to meet their basic needs (Krupa et al., 2003).

Aside from social enterprises for individuals with mental illness, broader scholarship on wages put forth by Borzaga and Depedri (2009) seems to dispute the argument that employees are able to meet their basic needs based on the income received from working at social enterprises. Findings from survey research conducted with 310 social enterprise organizations in Italy reveal that workers are dissatisfied with their earnings and believe that the amount of money they are paid is insufficient in comparison to the cost of living (Borzaga & Depedri, 2009). The results also show that workers who are attracted to social enterprises because of its extrinsic features alone tend to be less satisfied with their earnings, and with their jobs more generally, than those who value both the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of the work (Borzaga & Depedri, 2009). Since the literature pertaining to social enterprises that deal with mental illness does not take into account the ways in which workers perceive their wages, more research is

needed in this area of study to determine whether or not these individuals are satisfied with the amount of money they earn and the factors that may influence their perceptions.

#### **2.7.4 Connection to the Broader Scholarship on Enabling Places**

It is interesting to note that the aforementioned benefits of working at social enterprises are reflected in the broader literature pertaining to enabling spaces for individuals with mental health issues (Duff, 2012; Parr, 2006; Philo et al., 2005; Tucker, 2010). While a detailed review of these works is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to briefly outline Duff's (2012) work on promoting recovery from mental illness, as his research in the field of mental health helps to shed light on the extent to which the space created by social enterprises can be understood as enabling to people who are living with mental illness. After employing mapping, interview and photo-journal methods with 24 adults living with mental health issues in Melbourne, Australia, his study reveals that various local places support recovery by easing access to social, material and/or affective resources (Duff, 2012). First, social resources are characterized as the "...varied processes and interactions- the relational, affective, emotional and cognitive skills and assets- which support the creation and maintenance of social networks" (Duff, 2012, p. 1389). Duff (2012) argues that social resources are the most important because places create opportunities for interaction with family, friends, peers or strangers, thereby mitigating feelings of social disconnect brought about by mental illness and nourishing a sense of wellbeing. These resources may be akin to the sense of meaningful activity experienced by employees in social enterprises.

Second, material resources are described as "...the diverse objects, assets and benefits that circulate in and through local economic and social networks, as well as the material affordances that local community settings make possible" (Duff, 2012, p. 1389). For example,

paid employment can offer individuals with monetary security, while objects in the home, such as a radio or DVD player, provide therapeutic sounds and images that promote well-being (Duff, 2012). Similarly, the opportunity to earn a wage while working at a social enterprise is also a material resource. Third, affective resources are associated with the ‘feeling’ of particular places that help to exude notions of place attachment, community belonging, hope and optimism (Duff, 2012). For many individuals with mental illness, familiar places help to elevate mood, manage stress and produce calm (Duff, 2012). Again, these resources may be similar to the intrinsic benefits found in social enterprises. Duff (2012) concludes that enabling places and the resources that define them are significant aspects of recovery for those with mental illness, but may differ between individuals. In other words, a place that is enabling for one person may not be enabling for someone else (Duff, 2012). Although not used as a framework for this project, Duff’s (2012) work and other sources cited in this chapter will be drawn on in Chapter Eight to explain the significance of the research that has emerged from this thesis.

## **2.8 The Challenges of Managing Social Enterprises**

As previously noted, disabled individuals can benefit in multiple ways from employment in social enterprises. However, the existing scholarship also illustrates that there are several ongoing challenges faced by these organizations, all of which appear to be operational in nature. It is noteworthy to mention that the literature here centers on social enterprises more generally, rather than on organizations that employ individuals with mental illnesses. Consequently, a mental health perspective is absent in this area of research.

### **2.8.1 Tensions between the ‘Social’ and the ‘Economic’**

One of the major challenges facing social enterprises is the tensions that exist between their social and economic aims. Multiple authors (Cameron, 2009; Hudson, 2009; Spear,

Cornforth & Aiken, 2009) have claimed that these organizations are constantly attempting to find an effective balance between their social and economic goals due to the fact that social enterprises primarily have a social purpose, but also must compete economically with mainstream businesses that produce similar goods and services for the community. Hudson (2009) argues that these tensions are somewhat unique to social enterprises because, unlike their mainstream counterparts, they intend to achieve social good, which places additional pressures on their operations. Cameron (2009), as well as Spear and colleagues (2009), add that the tensions of balancing market or profit demands and social ambitions are of significant concern and require constant vigilance and active supervision on the part of managerial staff members. This type of dynamic management is needed to ensure that business aims are not favoured over social goals or that social goals are not carried out at the expense of creating a viable business (Cameron, 2009; Spear et al., 2009). Focusing more attentively on either the social or the economic is more likely to occur if managerial staff members or organizational policies, more broadly, lack a clear understanding of an enterprise's social purpose and business ambitions (Hudson, 2009).

Cameron's (2009) study of two social enterprises in Australia illustrates these tensions in more detail. After conducting observation and interviews with key informants, it was established that Sustainable Gardening Services, one of the enterprises of study, had a particularly difficult time balancing their social and economic goals due to a change in its social mission. While the enterprise had previously employed only Australian citizens, a recent influx of refugees to the country caused the organization to alter its admission policies and accept these marginalized individuals who were seeking alternative employment (Cameron, 2009). Sustainable Gardening Services paired a native Australian citizen with a refugee to train the latter individual in

performing garden maintenance and landscaping (Cameron, 2009). However, the enterprise was not accustomed to having their employees work in pairs and, as a result, more ‘dead time’ was created during the work day because each pair was spending more time travelling between an increased number of smaller jobs (Cameron, 2009). The dead time was non-productive from an economic perspective and led to a decrease in the amount of profit the organization was generating (Cameron, 2009). Thus, the organization had to sacrifice its economic profitability in order to uphold its new social goal (Cameron, 2009).

Although the literature pertaining to social enterprises acknowledges the tensions that are present between the social and the economic, some gaps are evident. For example, it is unclear how the managers of these organizations negotiate this on-going challenge and whether they have been successful in creating or implementing organizational policies to strike an effective balance between social mission and economic sustainability. More importantly, an in-depth perspective regarding the extent to which these tensions put pressure on the daily operations of social enterprises and the work of its members is not known. Therefore, further qualitative research is needed to develop a greater understanding of how these tensions impact social enterprises.

### **2.8.2 Funding Issues**

Obtaining funding to realize their social and economic aims is an additional challenge facing social enterprises. Studies performed in the United Kingdom by Amin and colleagues (1999) and Seanor and Meaton (2007) have found that social enterprises often encounter numerous issues when attempting to receive monetary support. In particular, funding tends to be available exclusively on an annual basis, the eligibility criteria for funding is strict and changes repeatedly and there are difficult administrative and supervision requirements that must be met



before funding can be acquired (Amin et al., 1999; Seanor & Meaton, 2007). Consequently, the establishment of long-term financial planning goals and organizational business plans is nearly impossible (Amin et al., 1999; Seanor & Meaton, 2007). Amin and colleagues (1999) argue that these constraints on funding have created ‘ghetto economies’, which “...do little more than ensure the short-term recirculation of grant funding and the limited disposable income available to local people” (p. 2043). These authors conclude that without improvements to the current ways in which funding is made available to social enterprises, organizational expansion and diversification into new areas of goods and services will be hindered considerably (Amin et al., 1999). Moreover, these enterprises will not have the monetary resources that are necessary to improve the social and economic lives of disadvantaged individuals, thus negating their inherent purpose (Amin et al., 1999).

## **2.9 Conclusion**

Taking all points into consideration, the available literature illustrates that individuals living with mental health issues often experience difficulties with finding and maintaining mainstream paid employment. These struggles include the psychiatric symptoms related to mental illness, the dilemma of disclosing a mental health issue to employers and/or co-workers and a lack of accommodations in the workplace. While the social economy’s relationship to the mainstream has been debated in the literature, there is consensus among scholars regarding the fact that it offers alternative and potentially more accommodating spaces for work when compared to competitive employment. Social enterprises are one specific type of organization within the social economy and are characterized as non-profit or private organizations where the primary goal is to foster social capacity through the training and employment of socially disadvantaged groups and, in turn, create new forms of work. For those with mental illness, three

types of social enterprises exist: agency-operated businesses, consumer/survivor businesses and affirmative businesses. The body of scholarship outlines multiple benefits for individuals with mental health issues who work at social enterprises, such as the provision of workplace accommodations, engagement in meaningful activity and the opportunity to earn a wage. However, challenges have also been reported with managing these organizations. In particular, effectively balancing their social and economic goals, as well as obtaining funding to realize these goals, are issues of constant concern.

After reviewing the available literature, it is evident that much of the existing work, while valuable, has primarily relied on secondary sources and/or surveys of social enterprise organizations (Baron & Salzer, 2002; Borzaga & Depedri, 2009; Kirsh et al., 2006; Krupa, 1998; Vittala, 1999; Villotti et al., 2012). Consequently, these methods have left gaps in the scholarship. Namely, it is unclear how social enterprises implement workplace accommodations and if any tensions or challenges are present when attempting to support workers' specific mental health needs. In addition, how workers perceive their wages is not well understood. It is unknown if they are satisfied with the amount of money they earn at these organizations and the factors that may influence their perceptions regarding this issue. Furthermore, it is unknown how managers negotiate the tensions between the social and the economic goals that are inherent aspects of social enterprises. Moreover, the extent to which these tensions put pressure on the daily operations of organizations and the work of its members has not been addressed. While not a methodological issue, an agency-operated business perspective is also lacking, as most of the research focuses on consumer/survivor and affirmative businesses instead. Therefore, based on these abovementioned gaps, it is evident that the existing scholarship has not effectively explored how social enterprise organizations work *in practice*. This thesis seeks to address this issue by

using participant observation to produce an in-depth analysis that examines the daily operations of an agency-operated social enterprise and the experiences of the workers within it.

## **Chapter Three**

---

### **Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the qualitative methods employed to investigate the central research question of this study will be discussed. As previously noted, the central research question is:

**How do social enterprises attempt to create accommodating work environments for individuals with mental illness in Ontario, Canada?** As well, the objectives of this project are:

- (3) To develop an understanding of the day-to-day operations that exist within a social enterprise organization.
- (4) To investigate the ways in which a social enterprise creates alternative employment for individuals with mental health issues, and how these efforts affect organizational practices, workplaces and employee experiences.

#### **3.2 Selection of the Case Study Site**

To gather the research for this project, a case study was conducted at one social enterprise in the GTA. Since case study research is depth-oriented and used to explore the practical aspects of a particular social issue, it was the most appropriate type of methodology for the aims of this study (Baxter, 2010). The organization was selected from a database created by Dr. Wilton's larger research project, where a telephone survey was employed with numerous social enterprises across Canada to compile a national list of social enterprise organizations. During each survey, organizations were asked if they would be willing to participate in a qualitative follow-up study that would be conducted on-site by a researcher affiliated with the project. The case study site, called New Day Employment, was one of the organizations that agreed to the follow-up piece. Due to the time allotted to complete this project, New Day Employment was the

most geographically accessible in terms of travel time and was chosen over other organizations that were also part of the qualitative follow-up, but located farther away in southern Ontario.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

A qualitative research approach was used for this study because the methods associated with qualitative research facilitate a detailed understanding of the experiences of individuals and the social structures in which their experiences operate (Winchester & Rofe, 2010). Participant observation was the primary method of data collection. Semi-structured interviews and a focus group were also conducted to gather supplementary data. The data collection period encompassed multiple stages, each of which will be discussed below. It is important to note that ethics approval was granted by the McMaster University Ethics Board in October, 2012, prior to the commencement of this project<sup>3</sup> (refer to **Appendix A**).

#### **3.3.1 Stage One: Semi-Structured Interview with the Executive Director**

The first stage of data collection occurred in October, 2011. Here, a semi-structured interview was conducted by telephone with the executive director of New Day Employment<sup>4</sup>. The semi-structured interview method was chosen for this stage, as well as for stages three and five, because it allowed each interview to proceed in a conversational and flexible manner with the participants, while producing in-depth responses (Dunn, 2010). An interview guide was constructed for each of these interviews and questions were organized using a pyramid structure, whereby simple questions pertaining to the participants' involvement with the organization were discussed first to build rapport before more abstract or analytical questions were presented further on (Dunn, 2010). However, the flexible nature of the semi-structured interview meant

---

<sup>3</sup> The ethics application approved by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board covered both the larger research study in which this Master's thesis is associated with and the Master's thesis research itself. Thus, an ethics application specific to this Master's research was not necessary.

<sup>4</sup> This interview was conducted by other members of the research team. The interview transcript was obtained for this project for the purpose of analysis.

that the participants' responses directed the discussion and, as a result, some questions in the interview guide were not necessarily asked in the intended order or wording (Dunn, 2010). Still, it was ensured that all areas of interest were covered by the end of each interview (Dunn, 2010). The interview with the executive director in this stage focused on the daily operations of the social enterprise, the respondent's own role in the organization, the types of employment available at the social enterprise and its suitability for people living with mental health issues (refer to **Appendix B**).

### **3.3.2 Stage Two: Focus Group with Clients**

The second stage of data collection took place in April, 2013, and consisted of a focus group that Dr. Wilton and I completed with six clients who worked at New Day Employment. The focus group method was employed here, rather than individual semi-structured interviews, because a group setting is often more effective when carrying out research with individuals living with mental health issues (Hall, 2004). This is due to the fact that a focus group provides a supportive environment for participants where they are not pressured to individually talk at length and tend to feel more comfortable discussing their experiences in the presence of others who may share similar experiences (Hall, 2004). Therefore, a semi-structured interview between each participant with mental illness and the researcher(s) was not considered a useful method, as it may have created an intimidating environment (Hall, 2004).

Participants were recruited with assistance from the organization's manager, who verbally informed clients about the nature of the study and noted that any interested client could take part on a particular date and time. Thus, a specific number of clients for the focus group was not sought after. Similar to stages one, three and five, an interview guide with questions arranged in a pyramid structure was used to direct the discussion (Dunn, 2010). The focus group covered

issues such as the clients' daily experiences at work, accommodation, social relationships with other clients and past experiences in mainstream workplaces (refer to **Appendix C**). It was held in a mezzanine space that overlooked the main work area at New Day Employment. This area was chosen with the help of the organization's manager because it was a secluded space away from the rest of the clients and staff members and provided ample seating for all of the participants. The focus group lasted approximately 80 minutes in duration and was digitally recorded in full for transcription and data analysis purposes.

### **3.3.3 Stage Three: Semi-Structured Interviews with Supervisory Staff Members**

The third stage of data collection also occurred in April, 2013. During this stage, Dr. Wilton and I conducted semi-structured interviews with two supervisory staff members at New Day Employment. These participants were also recruited with assistance from the manager, who notified staff members of the study and noted that interested members could take part on a specified date and time. In this case, it was suggested to the manager that two staff members or more would be favorable. This was done to obtain a variety of staff member experiences. The subjects discussed during these interviews included the staff members' roles at New Day Employment, the organization's workforce, workplace accommodations, the social atmosphere of the organization and the challenges and opportunities facing New Day Employment (refer to **Appendix D**). Similar to the focus group, these interviews took place at the enterprise in the mezzanine space. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was digitally recorded in full for the purposes of transcription and data analysis.

### **3.3.4 Stage Four: Participant Observation**

As previously mentioned, participant observation was the primary method of data collection. Kearns (2010) explains that participant observation is crucial for acquiring knowledge

of the everyday experiences of individuals in a particular social setting. Although interviews can uncover in-depth data pertaining to a specific social phenomenon, the structured nature in which they are carried out removes the researcher and participants from the ‘flow’ of daily life (Kearns, 2010). Consequently, the spontaneity and intricacies associated with everyday activities often remain unstudied (Kearns, 2010). Therefore, participant observation was well-suited to the objectives of this study.

As Kearns (2010) explains, gaining access to the study setting where participant observation will take place is more easily accomplished when the researcher has a known role within that setting. This happened to be the case for this project. After the focus group stage, the manager inquired if I would be interested in a summer position at the organization. As I was interested in conducting participant observation as part of this thesis, I asked the manager if it would be feasible to combine the summer position and my research project. He consented enthusiastically and thus began the fourth stage of data collection. Participant observation was undertaken for 10 weeks<sup>5</sup> between June and August of 2013. During this time I was employed as an employment facilitator, which was a paid student position funded by the Federal Government as part of Canada Summer Jobs, a country-wide initiative that aims to create job opportunities for full-time students who will be returning to school after the summer break. The organization is allotted one student position each summer as part of this initiative.

Several responsibilities were associated with my paid student role at the organization, such as overseeing the production of finished goods to ensure quality, providing job training for workers who were hired by mainstream employers and maintaining records of daily production and inventory. Additionally, a significant part of my role consisted of administering a job

---

<sup>5</sup> The number of weeks worked at the organization was determined by the amount of Federal Government funding afforded to the organization as part of the Canada Summer Jobs initiative.



satisfaction survey to all clients. Moreover, the nature of the employment facilitator role allowed me to observe the daily practices and routines of clients and non-disabled staff members. I was also able to attend various staff meetings, which allowed me to gain insight into the issues faced by the organization. Furthermore, I performed some of the jobs assigned to clients in the worksite when additional assistance was needed. A full list of the tasks I completed as an employment facilitator can be found in **Appendix E**. Using Gold's (1958) classification of observational research roles, my dual role as an employee of New Day Employment and a researcher simultaneously can be characterized as a participant-as-observer role, whereby I was primarily a participant within the study setting, but was able to maintain sufficient distance to observe the social interactions that occurred within the organization.

Detailed field notes were taken throughout this stage of data collection. Specifically, my observations were documented in two parts. First, I carried a small notepad and pen each work day to record (by hand) noteworthy points of interest, such as the ways in which worksite tasks were performed, the types of accommodations provided to clients and the details of conversations I engaged in with members of the organization. These notes became the basis for longer and more comprehensive field notes that were typed electronically at the end of each work day once I had returned home. The use of a notepad helped to facilitate the recall of significant observations that occurred and, in turn, minimized the possibility of overlooking important facets of New Day Employment when more detailed field notes were created.

### **3.3.5 Stage Five: Semi-Structured Interview with the Manager**

Lastly, I conducted a one-on-one, semi-structured interview with the manager of New Day Employment in October 2013. The purpose of the interview was to obtain further clarification regarding certain aspects of the organization that were witnessed or discussed with

staff members or clients during the participant observation period. The topics discussed during this interview included issues surrounding clients' wages, the provision of mental health accommodations in the worksite, the sources of funding received by the organization and the future opportunities and challenges facing the social enterprise (**refer to Appendix F**). The interview was approximately 70 minutes in length and took place in the manager's office, which offered a quiet, private space away from potential distractions. The full interview was digitally recorded for transcription and data analysis purposes. It is important to note that I was also given access by managerial staff members to quantitative organizational data that was used for analysis in conjunction with the qualitative data collected in stages one through five.

### **3.4 Ethical Concerns**

Several ethical concerns were associated with this project. For the semi-structured interviews and focus group, a letter of information and a consent form were provided to each participant to explain the study and interview process. These documents differed for the executive director (refer to **Appendix G**), the clients (refer to **Appendix H**), the supervisory staff members (refer to **Appendix I**) and the manager (refer to **Appendix J**) who were interviewed in order to ensure that the nature of the study was explained in a manner that best suited the method, or stage, of data collection. The consent forms were required to be signed before each of the interviews and the focus group took place<sup>6</sup>. Participation in the study was voluntary and each participant was given the opportunity to withdraw at any time. Individuals who chose to participate were also reminded of this verbally. The participants granted permission for the interviews and focus group to be digitally recorded for the purposes of transcription and analysis.

Regarding the participant observation stage of the study, the manager of the organization

---

<sup>6</sup> Since the interview with the executive director was conducted via telephone, consent was obtained verbally, rather than by signature, prior to the start of the interview.

was provided with a letter of information and consent form to explain the study and participant observation process (refer to **Appendix K**). The consent form was signed by the manager on the first day of observation and he was verbally reminded of the option to withdraw consent at any time. The clients were informed of the observation period in several ways: (1) posters were displayed within the premises of the organization that included a picture of myself, a brief description of the study and how the workers could contact me if they had additional questions or concerns (refer to **Appendix L**); (2) a verbal statement was made in the worksite several times during the first week of observation to inform the clients and staff members of my role in the organization and the nature of my thesis study (refer to **Appendix M**); and (3) during the first several weeks of observation, clients were verbally reminded of the research study at the conclusion of our conversations to make them aware that, with their consent, the information would be documented in that day's field notes. In both verbal statements, clients were reminded that their participation in the study was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time.

Initially, the manager suggested that each client should also provide written consent by adding their signature to an information sheet that briefly outlined the nature of this study. The sheet would have been posted in the main work area so that all clients could access it. However, there were several limitations associated with this method of consent. For example, the majority of the clients worked part-time and, therefore, collecting signatures from the entire client population would have taken several weeks, if not longer. Also, additional verbal announcements to the clients would have been required to ensure that all of them had signed the information sheet. These announcements would have been made by myself or by supervisory staff members. It was anticipated that more than one announcement would have been required, thus interrupting the work of both the clients and the supervisors repeatedly. To mitigate these issues, the verbal

announcement found in **Appendix M** was viewed by the manager and myself as a more appropriate method to inform the clients of the research. The announcement was made on different days and at varying times (morning or afternoon) throughout the first week of observation to ensure that as many clients as possible heard it, as some worked several morning shifts while others worked multiple afternoon shifts each week. Verbally reminding clients of the research during one-on-one conversations with them was employed as a supplementary measure to guarantee that every client knew of the study taking place at the organization even if they were not present for the formal announcement.

For all stages of data collection, anonymity was granted to each participant and to the organization, more generally. Participants' names and the name of the organization were not published in the research and pseudonyms were assigned instead. Furthermore, all digital audio files, as well as the electronic copies of interview transcripts and field notes, were kept on a password-protected computer at all times. Field notes written on paper and other hard copy documents pertaining to the organization of study were stored in a locked desk drawer. Once the papers/reports associated with this research project have been published, all digital audio files, electronic files and paper field notes will be destroyed.

Lastly, a plain language lay report that summarizes the main research findings will be created and sent to the organization following the successful completion and defense of this thesis. Since a relationship was created between the members of New Day Employment and myself, it is ethically imperative that the knowledge generated from the experiences of this place of study is transferred, or returned (Kearns, 2010). While a presentation of a project's main findings to the organization is also ethically important, especially when researching a disadvantaged group (Chouinard, 2000), it will be contingent upon New Day Employment's

preferences. One feasible option is a presentation at a regular staff meeting held within the premises of the organization. The specific options for this form of knowledge transfer will be negotiated directly with the manager of New Day Employment.

### **3.5 Ensuring Rigour**

Ensuring rigour was crucial throughout this project in order to illustrate that its findings were trustworthy (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). Therefore, multiple strategies were used during the research process to satisfy the criteria put forth by Baxter and Eyles (1997) for evaluating qualitative research, which include: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. First, credibility refers to the extent to which the participants can recognize their experience after it is interpreted by the researcher and that those excluded from the experience can comprehend it (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Prolonged engagement in the field was undertaken to build rapport with the members of the organization (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Spending 10 weeks at New Day Employment allowed me to learn the complexities of how the enterprise operated and create depth in the data collected. It also provided ample time to resolve any misinformation that myself, staff members or clients introduced into the research (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). Complimentary to prolonged engagement, persistent observation was also implemented and created scope in the research by ensuring that diversity was represented in members' responses during interviews and informal conversations at the organization (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). In other words, client and staff member responses that were different from the majority were considered significant and not omitted in order to represent a range of experiences.

Transferability, or the extent to which the results can be applied to contexts beyond the study site, is difficult to achieve in qualitative case study research because the results are often specific to the environment of study (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). However, the detailed

methodological descriptions in this chapter and the thick description of the study setting in Chapter Four increase the likelihood that the findings from this research will be useful for researchers who wish to investigate similar issues pertaining to social enterprises in the future (Baxter & Eyles, 1997).

Dependability, which is characterized by the degree to which variability in the interpretation of the findings can be minimized, was satisfied by comparing, or cross-checking, the data collected in this study with findings produced by the larger research project in which this thesis is affiliated (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). The results presented here were similar to those collected by other members of the research project, thus strengthening dependability.

Lastly, confirmability, or the degree to which the findings are formed by participants' experiences and not the researcher's biases, was established through the creation of a research diary (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). The diary was kept throughout the participant observation period to be aware of, and critically reflect on, how my role as a non-disabled researcher had the potential to impact the data collection and the ways in which the findings were interpreted and displayed (Dowling, 2010). My entries dealt with issues that arose before, during and after data collection, such as the style of clothing I was wearing to work, how I reacted to conversations with various clients and how my dual role (researcher/employee) may have been perceived by the members of the organization (Dowling, 2010). Also, I created a codebook during data analysis, where I electronically documented how and why each code was created and the meaning, or definition, of each code to account for these decisions (Hruschka et al., 2004).

### **3.6 Analysis of the Collected Data**

To analyze the data, the field notes made during participant observation and the audio recordings of each interview were transcribed in full. Since a large amount of text was generated

during this process, NVivo was used as a tool to assist in managing and digitally coding the data (Cope, 2010). A thematic coding approach was employed for this project. First, the transcriptions of the data were read to develop initial codes from words that were obvious and repeated throughout the texts (Cope, 2010). These codes tended to reflect the topics outlined in the interview guides, such as ‘accommodation’, ‘social relationships’ and ‘wages and pricing’. Reading the transcripts also ensured that codes were made for unexpected themes that emerged in the data. All of the initial codes were manually documented first and the used to create a coding structure, or meaningful categorization of themes, in NVivo (Cope, 2010). Next, NVivo was used to create more detailed and analytic codes that represented the experiences of the participants (Cope, 2010). For example, ‘lack of pricing knowledge’ became an analytic code because the observations and participants’ responses reflected this experience. The analytic codes were then organized with the initial codes according to their similarities to produce a coding structure that became the basis for the results of the research project (refer to **Appendix N**). This thematic coding approach proved to be iterative in nature (Cope, 2010). In other words, some of the initial and/or analytic codes in the coding structure were deleted in NVivo during the coding process when they did not contain a significant amount of data or merged together when they comprised similar responses or observations. Therefore, the set of initial codes created in NVivo was not the definitive and final list that appeared in the coding structure.

## **Chapter Four**

---

### **Organizational Overview and Demography of the Worksite Clients**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter will provide an overview of the social enterprise of study, New Day Employment, and summarize the demographic characteristics of its clients in order to establish context prior to examining the themes that emerged from this research project. Regarding the organization, its physical location, social mission, the types of employment programs offered to individuals with mental health issues, sources of funding and customer base will be described. With respect to the demography of the clients at the organization, the types of mental health conditions, other illnesses in addition to mental health issues, the highest level of formal education attained, the primary source of income received, the types of living arrangements and the average length of time worked among the client population will be outlined.

#### **4.2 What is New Day Employment?**

New Day Employment is a non-profit social enterprise organization that specializes in the packaging and assembly of goods for various companies, or customers, in southern Ontario. It also provides employment training services and aids in finding mainstream employment opportunities for individuals with mental health issues. Consequently, the building which houses these operations is separated into two distinct areas: (1) front end offices where staff members conduct their work and meet with individuals who are seeking mainstream employment and (2) a large warehouse-style worksite where workers clients package and assemble various products. The organization can be categorized as an agency-operated business, as it is an enterprise operated by a larger non-profit organization (Kirsh et al., 2006). Within the organization there is an important division of labour between a small number of non-disabled managerial and supervisory staff members and a larger number of workers living with mental health issues



(Kirsh et al., 2006). There are also several staff positions at New Day Employment held by individuals with mental illness (refer to **Table 4.1**). This organizational model can be contrasted with consumer/survivor businesses that are both run by and for people with mental illness themselves (Kirsh et al., 2006). At the time of data collection, New Day Employment was comprised of 15 staff members, 3 of whom worked as supervisors in the worksite area, and 68 clients employed in the worksite.

#### **4.2.1 Physical Location**

New Day Employment is located in the GTA of Ontario, in a light industrial/commercial district that is comprised of a variety of businesses, such as automotive repair shops, car dealerships and head offices for numerous manufacturing companies. The building in which the enterprise operates is situated in close proximity to a highway and several modes of public transportation. Specifically, a city bus line stops directly in front of the organization and a commuter train line has a station stop that is within a 5-minute walk to the organization. Both of these modes of public transit are relied on heavily by the people with mental health issues who work at the enterprise, as the majority of them take the bus or commuter train to and from the site each day. In contrast, a small number of disabled workers use a personal vehicle to travel to and from the organization.

#### **4.2.2 Social Mission**

New Day Employment was established in 1983 and celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary when the research for this project took place. Its goal is to create opportunities for individuals with serious mental health issues to obtain and maintain paid employment. The manager, George, a male in his sixties who has worked at the organization for almost 15 years, explains that the enterprise defines individuals with ‘serious’ mental health issues as:

[People who] are on medication and it's not someone with just a touch of depression or a little bit of anxiety, this is pretty serious depression, serious anxiety, schizophrenia, bi-polar, personality disorders. People, um, with a very high unemployment rate, 85 percent or over, because of the nature of their disability.

To realize its goal, the organization operates programs that focus on both alternative and mainstream employment.

### **4.2.3 Training Program**

Firstly, the organization operates a Training Program<sup>7</sup> for individuals with mental health issues who are 25 years of age or older. This program aims to provide alternative employment for those who are not able to work in competitive employment due to the nature of their mental illness. More specifically, George explains that the purpose of the program is "...to give people something to do, let them make a little bit of money, get them, uh, their confidence up so hopefully they'll go into [competitive employment]". In addition, the executive director, Susan, a female in her fifties who has worked at the organization for more than 15 years, adds that the Training Program "...[is a] rehabilitation worksite where clients develop...skills, work skills, in a structured environment, from there...they can go into competitive employment". Therefore, the Training Program's intended aim is to be a temporary place of work for individuals with mental health issues, where they can gain work-related skills in an environment that will aid in their mental health recovery, so that they can eventually seek mainstream employment.

Based on the central research question and objectives of this study, the research focused on the Training Program. Thus, an in-depth analysis of this component of the enterprise will be carried out in Chapters Five through Seven. However, it is essential to note several key aspects of the program in order to ensure context. As previously mentioned, the work is performed in a large, ten thousand square foot warehouse-style worksite within the premises of the organization.

---

<sup>7</sup> Names of the programs run by New Day Employment have been altered in order to maintain anonymity.

This work focuses on the packaging and assembly of products for various companies in southern Ontario. The jobs are primarily characterized by piece work, whereby clients are paid for each piece, or unit, they complete.

In addition to the manager, who oversees the Training Program and all other programs at the organization, there are 7 staff members employed in the worksite. Three of these members are Vocational Support Workers (VSWs), two are lead hands and two are team leaders. The roles and responsibilities associated with each of these positions dictate their level of authority within the worksite. **Figure 4.1** below illustrates the organizational hierarchy for Training Program staff members, while **Table 4.1** below details their job responsibilities.



**Figure 4.1:** The organizational hierarchy of authority for Training Program staff members, based on their responsibilities in the worksite.

**Table 4.1:** Summary of Staff Member Roles and Responsibilities in the Training Program

<p><b>Manager:</b> The manager oversees the operations of the entire organization. The chief responsibilities associated with this position are supervising all staff members, soliciting business and quoting contracts for the packaging and assembly component of the organization and ensuring that both staff members and clients have all of the materials they need to do their jobs effectively. This position is full-time, salaried and held by a non-disabled individual.</p>
<p><b>Vocational Support Worker (VSW):</b> A VSW has multiple responsibilities at the organization. Primarily, they supervise a caseload of 25 clients or less. This supervision consists of assigning their clients to worksite tasks each day; ensuring that their clients are capable of carrying out their assigned tasks; providing their clients with proper workplace accommodations; keeping track of their clients' schedules and working with them to determine how many hours they are willing and able to work; and connecting their clients to other mental health services in the community when necessary.</p> <p>Additionally, a VSW is in charge of managing certain jobs in the worksite. For each job, a VSW must ensure that all of the necessary pieces have been shipped to the worksite; set up a work station where clients can package and assemble the product; ensure that the job is completed on time; help package and assemble the product when there are not enough clients to do so or when a job may not be finished on time; fill out any required shipping labels and documentation for the finished product; and communicate with the customers throughout the assembly process to update them on the status of their jobs. A VSW also calculate clients' daily wages for the jobs they are responsible for managing. This position is full-time, salaried and held by a non-disabled individual.</p>
<p><b>Lead Hand:</b> A lead hand assists a VSW in supervising various worksite jobs and may engage in one or more of the responsibilities associated with managing a worksite job, as outlined in the box above. While they may also assist clients in completing worksite tasks, a lead hand does not have a client caseload and, therefore, does not get involved in any other employment issues regarding clients. In addition, a lead hand loads and unloads shipping trucks with boxes of product and completes monthly health and safety inspections in the worksite. This position is full-time and held by an individual living with mental illness. It pays approximately 17 dollars per hour.</p>
<p><b>Team Leader:</b> A team leader is mainly responsible for quality control of finished products in the worksite. Other responsibilities associated with this role include loading and unloading shipping trucks. Similar to a lead hand, a team leader may demonstrate to clients how a particular task is performed, but they do not have a client caseload.</p> <p>The team leader role is unique from the rest of the worksite staff position. It is designed to be a temporary, six-month arrangement where an individual living with mental illness is hired either from the worksite client base or through the Community Employment Program in order to gain work-related skills and experience. At the end of the six-month period, a team leader is given the option to re-enter the Training Program or move into the Community Employment Program to find a job in competitive employment. This position is full-time and pays approximately 13 dollars per hour.</p>

In terms of admission into the Training Program, prospective clients either need a referral from a doctor, a family member or friend, the criminal justice system or a mental health service agency, such as the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). In addition, individuals can be self-referred. In all referral cases, they must disclose the nature of their mental health diagnosis, yet a doctor's note is not required. Once they have been referred, prospective clients meet with a VSW for an intake assessment to determine whether they are deemed appropriate for the Program. During this process, a history of the individual is compiled, including their previous employment, number of hospitalizations, types of medications taken for their mental health issues or otherwise, type of current residence, primary source(s) of income and highest level of education attained.

Once admitted, clients are required to work a minimum of 10 to 12 hours per week, with the intention that they will increase their hours over time. Since the work is organized by shifts, this minimum requirement is equivalent to 2 full days (5.75 hours each day), 3 morning shifts (3.25 hours each day) or 4 afternoon shifts (2.5 hours each day). A maximum of 35 clients are allowed to work at the site on any given day, due to safety regulations, and the Program can manage a total of 75 enrolled clients. During the data collection period, 68 clients were employed in the worksite. Each VSW had an average caseload of 23 clients. Although the organization had not reached its maximum worker limit during the research period, there was a wait list of approximately 3 to 4 months for new admissions to the Program.

#### **4.2.4 Community Employment Programs**

In addition to the Training Program, the enterprise has two Community Employment Programs (CEPs), one that focuses on the employment needs of youth, aged 16 to 24 years, and one that centers on the employment needs of adults, aged 25 years and above. These programs

aid in finding mainstream employment for clients by pairing them with an employment specialist who may assist them in résumé creation or in searching for available job positions that are suited to their skills. An employment specialist may also coach clients in relation to communicating with potential employers, such as within the context of a job interview. Once a client has been hired by an employer, an employment specialist periodically meets with them to discuss their employment and assess any changes that may be occurring in their mental health condition, which may subsequently affect their job status. It is noteworthy to mention that clients in the youth CEP usually begin with a 4- to 6-week training period in the worksite to assess their work-related strengths and weaknesses prior to finding them a job in competitive employment, as these individuals are less likely to have previous work experience. In contrast, clients in the adult CEP begin with either no previous involvement at the organization or with past involvement in the CEP or the Training Program.

Admission to both of these employment programs is similar to that of the Training Program, whereby prospective clients are referred by various institutions or by self-referral and undergo an intake assessment prior to acceptance into the programs. During data collection, the organization employed 3 youth employment specialists and 2 adult employment specialists, all of whom were female. It was unclear how many clients were part of each youth employment specialist's caseload. However, each adult employment specialist had a caseload of approximately 23 clients, with the allowable maximum being 30 clients per caseload.

#### **4.2.5 Transitional Employment Program**

New Day Employment also operates a Transitional Employment Program (TEP). This program is designed to aid worksite clients in moving into mainstream paid employment by allowing them to work outside of the organization's premises and gain experience in forms of

work aside from packaging and assembly. It is called ‘transitional’ because the clients are still working at New Day Employment and are supervised by one of the organization’s staff members, usually a VSW. This differs from the CEPs where there is no organizational supervision at the place of employment. Thus, this program is a middle ground between working solely in the worksite and transitioning directly from the worksite to mainstream employment. There is no specific admissions process for the TEP. However, it is only open to worksite clients who are mentally able and willing to gain new work-related skills in preparation for a transition into mainstream employment. At the time of the research, only two male clients were part of the TEP. The program comprised property maintenance and lawn care work for two nearby companies. Clients performed tasks such as mowing grass, picking up litter and trimming trees and bushes.

#### **4.2.6 Changes to the Organization’s Social Mission Over Time**

It is important to note that while New Day Employment’s social purpose is very basic, it has been modified over time and is reflected in the rationale for the programs that the enterprise offers. As George explains:

30 years ago, in 1983, the main purpose was to provide something for people to do who had just been discharged with the psych hospitals, they were being closed at the time in Ontario. So, these people were out in the community, they needed something to do, so a sort of sheltered work environment was set up. And then, over time, it was realized that what they, some of them at least, are able and wanted to take on jobs in the community, so that’s when we developed, uh, what we call a [Community Employment Program], um, helping people find jobs at minimum wage or above in their local community.

Thus, initially, New Day Employment exclusively operated the Training Program as an alternative form of employment for individuals with mental health issues who were not employable in mainstream paid work. However, when the organization realized that some of its clients were interested and able to work in mainstream employment, the adult CEP was

established to meet these individuals' employment needs. This program was created in 1998, with the youth component added in 2012.

Similarly, the TEP was a more recent addition to the organization. The rationale for this further expansion of the organization's programs was explained by the manager:

A more recent change has been the realization that some of the people that are in the worksite, with assistance, could move into the competitive workplace. So, we've developed transitional training opportunities, transitional employment opportunities where they can sort of ease into it under the supervision of [New Day Employment] staff. It gets them ready for actually taking on a job, where [the organization] is not involved...

Thus, the realization that, with organizational supervision at a job outside the premises of New Day Employment, some clients would be able to transition into mainstream employment at a future point in time precipitated the establishment of the TEP and modified the organization's social mission yet again.

#### **4.2.7 Sources of Funding**

New Day Employment receives funding for its programs from multiple sources. The Training Program is primarily funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. This funding is used to pay the rent for the building and the worksite staff members' salaries. In addition, the revenue made from the packaging and assembly business is used towards the payment of wages for the worksite clients and also covers any program costs where the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funding falls short. In comparison, the CEPs are funded mainly by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services through the Employment Supports component of the Ontario Disability Support Program.

As well, the organization as a whole receives funding from four municipal chapters of the larger non-profit organization that operates New Day Employment. The enterprise also organizes



various fundraising events throughout the year. For example, during Mental Illness Awareness Week each year in October, one location of a franchised restaurant in the GTA donates a percentage of its dining room sales made during a specified time each operating day to New Day Employment. When asked how much funding is received from each of these sources discussed above, George stated: “Ministry of Health maybe 60 percent and, let’s say 65 percent Ministry of Health. 15 percent Ministry of Community and Social Services and the rest...is from those other sources”. Thus, with approximately 65 percent of total financial support, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is New Day Employment’s primary source of funding. The amount of funding obtained from all sources noted above is relatively consistent from year to year.

#### **4.2.8 Customer Base**

The enterprise has a customer base of approximately 40 companies that send their products to the worksite to be packaged and assembled before being shipped to a specified destination. While many of their customers are owned and operated exclusively at the local- or regional-level, the organization also has contracts with several national companies, including Tim Hortons, M.A.D.D. Canada and Rogers Communications. The recruitment of customers is generally done by word-of-mouth, whereby the organization or a company who has previously done business with the organization, informs a prospective customer about the services the organization provides. In the former case, this task is primarily the responsibility of the manager, who solicits business by calling or visiting companies personally, when they are nearby the organization, to inquire about their packaging and assembly needs and provide them with information about the enterprise’s services.

During my time at the organization, I gained first-hand experience of this recruitment process when the manager gave me the task of visiting the commercial businesses surrounding

New Day Employment one afternoon in an attempt to secure additional property maintenance contracts for the organization's TEP. Since the program is very small in terms of how many clients are involved, I was asked to find only one prospective customer at that point in time. My recruiting experience was highlighted in my field notes:

[George] told me to go [to] businesses that stand alone and are not part of a complex because the latter are more likely to have an external company to do this job. He said that I should introduce myself and...ask them if they hire a company to do their lawn maintenance, and if they have employees that do the work I should give them a brochure from [New Day Employment] and tell them that [the organization] offer[s] lawn care services. (Field note excerpt, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013)

The first company I went to, which specialized in the selling and maintenance of tanker trucks, was not interested in the property maintenance services, as they preferred to hire their own employees. However, the second company I visited, a car dealership, was very interested. Therefore, I left an informational brochure about the organization and a flyer outlining their property maintenance services with the manager of the business. Several days later, George informed me that he had received a call from the manager of the car dealership and a contract had been secured. Interestingly, New Day Employment has tried to promote their business through the use of paid advertisements in the past, but found that many companies did not clearly understand the organization's mission or its available services and, thus, word-of-mouth has been a more effective recruitment strategy.

#### **4.3 The Demography of Training Program Clients: Who Are They?**

As previously noted, there were 68 clients in the Training Program during the research period. Both men and women were employed at the enterprise. However, men outnumbered women by a considerable margin. Specifically, there were 43 males and 25 females in the worksite. The average age of these workers was 45 years, with the youngest client being 24 years

of age<sup>8</sup> and the eldest client being 64 years of age. While further aggregate statistics pertaining to the client population, such as the types of mental health issues diagnosed, could not be acquired for the period of study, data was obtained from New Day Employment for the year of March 2012 to March 2013. The data is suitable for the purposes of this project, as the research began in June, 2013, and the majority of the clients at the organization were enrolled in the Training Program prior to or beginning in March, 2013, through to the end of the data collection period.

The data for the period of March 2012 to March 2013 indicates that there were a total of 100 clients who had been enrolled in the Program throughout the year and 27 clients who had completed an intake assessment and were waiting to be admitted. For this group of 127 clients, the average age of onset of a mental illness was 25 years. These individuals experienced a variety of mental health diagnoses. **Table 4.2** below illustrates the types of mental health conditions present among the client population. In particular, schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders were the most prevalent types of mental illness, with 73 clients diagnosed. An anxiety disorder was also a significant mental health issue, as 34 clients experienced this condition.

**Table 4.2:** The Types of Mental Health Diagnoses among the Training Program Client Population (Enrolled and Pre-Enrollment) between March 2012 and March 2013

<b>Type of Mental Health Diagnosis</b>	<b>Number of Clients Diagnosed</b>
Adjustment Disorders	1
Anxiety Disorder	34
Delirium, Dementia and Amnestic and Cognitive Disorders	1
Mood Disorder	13
Personality Disorders	1
Schizophrenia and other Psychotic Disorders	73
Sleep Disorders	1
Substance Related Disorders	1
Unknown	2
<b>Total:</b>	<b>127</b>

<sup>8</sup> The Training Program is designated for individuals with mental health issues who are 25 years of age or older. However, in certain circumstances, clients may be admitted earlier based on their employment needs and goals.

Aside from their mental health issues, the 127 clients associated with the Training Program had attained various levels of education. **Table 4.3** below outlines the highest level of formal education achieved. A secondary or high school diploma was the most significant among the client population (47 clients). Some secondary or high school education was the second-most common (31 clients). In contrast, a very small portion of clients had achieved an elementary or junior high school diploma as their highest level of education (4 clients) and only one client had no formal schooling.

**Table 4.3:** The Highest Level of Formal Education Attained by Training Program Clients (Enrolled and Pre-Enrollment) from March 2012 to March 2013

Highest Level for Education Attained	Number of Clients
No Formal Schooling	1
Some Elementary/Junior High School	3
Elementary/Junior High School	4
Some Secondary/High School	31
Secondary/High School	47
Some College/University	18
College/University	22
Unknown	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>127</b>

Furthermore, the 100 clients who were enrolled in the Training Program between March 2012 and March 2013 had a variety of primary income sources. **Table 4.4** below displays these types of primary income. Overwhelmingly, the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) was the most common primary income source, as 75 of the 100 clients received this form of income. Pension plans, social assistance and family members were also frequently reported as primary income sources, yet these were far less common than ODSP.

**Table 4.4:** The Primary Source of Income Received by Clients Enrolled in the Training Program between March 2012 and March 2013

<b>Primary Income Source</b>	<b>Number of Clients Receiving Primary Income Source</b>
Employment	1
Pension	8
ODSP	75
Social Assistance	7
Disability Assistance	1
Family	6
Other	2
<b>Total:</b>	100

Additionally, the current type of residential living arrangement for the 100 clients enrolled in the program was varied. **Table 4.5** below illustrates that living alone or living with non-relatives, such as in a group home setting with other individuals with mental health issues, were the most prevalent types of residential arrangements (34 clients and 30 clients, respectively). Residing with parents was also a significant type of living situation (21 clients). In comparison, the least common types of arrangements were residing with children or with relatives (4 clients and 3 clients, respectively).

**Table 4.5:** The Types of Living Arrangements for Clients Enrolled in the Training Program between March 2012 and March 2013

<b>Current Type of Living Arrangement</b>	<b>Number of Clients</b>
Self	34
Spouse/Partner	6
Children	4
Parents	21
Relatives	3
Non-Relatives	30
<b>Total:</b>	100

Lastly, for the 100 clients enrolled, the average length of time worked in the Training Program was 1,549 days, or approximately 5.4 years. This figure is based on the fact that there are 288 operating days in the Program per year and may be the sum of more than one admission to the program per client, as there appeared to be a cyclical pattern of withdrawal from and re-

entry to the Training Program. In these cases, a client may exit the Program due to various reasons, such as a decline in their mental health, and apply for re-admission at a future point in time when they are healthy enough for alternative employment. This particular statistic raises questions about the temporary nature of the Program and will be explored in further chapters. It is important to mention that aggregate statistics for the clients' past employment history were not documented in the data obtained from New Day Employment and, therefore, this information is unavailable.

## **Chapter Five**

---

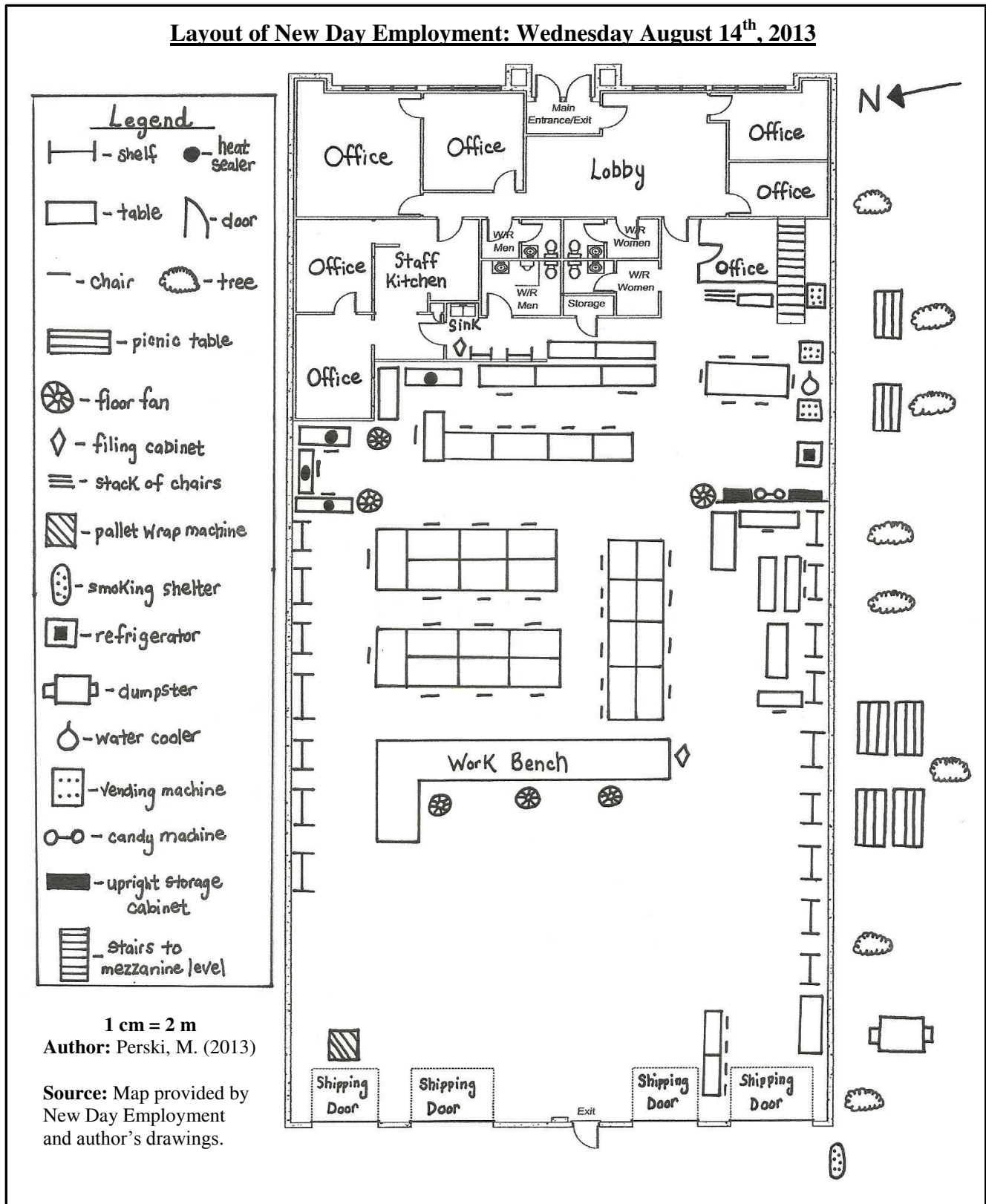
### **Analyzing the Nature of the Work and the Labour Process**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Numerous themes and findings emerged from this research project. The following analysis in this chapter, as well as in Chapters Six and Seven, will provide an in-depth examination of these themes, including: the nature of the work and the labour process, issues surrounding clients' wages, the social environment within the worksite and the types of accommodations provided to the worksite clients. In this chapter, the nature of the work and the labour process at New Day Employment will be explored, with particular attention paid to the ways in which the work was performed, the degree of choice and level of skill the clients had with respect to the jobs in the worksite, the different techniques the clients used to complete tasks, the quality control practices undertaken by worksite staff members and the physical impacts of the work.

#### **5.2 The 'What', 'Where' and 'How' of the Work Performed at New Day Employment**

As previously noted, the packaging and assembly work at New Day Employment was primarily characterized by piece work, whereby clients put together each part of a product and were subsequently paid for each piece, or unit, of product they completed. The work was often performed by hand with little assistance from machinery and required repetitive movements due to the fact that each job involved large quantities of product. All of the packaging and assembly operations at the organization took place in a large, ten thousand square-foot warehouse-style worksite that was located behind and separated from the front end offices (refer to **Figure 5.1**).



**Figure 5.1:** Sketch map illustrating the layout of the front end offices and worksite area at New Day Employment.



Clients carried out their work sitting down alongside fellow clients at long tables arranged throughout the area. The pieces required to complete each product were stored in cardboard boxes on wooden pallets and placed on the work floor near the tables or shipping doors or on the shelves that lined the walls of the worksite. Since the work was performed sitting down, the clients had to physically carry one or more of these boxes to their work stations in order to have access to the pieces that were needed to complete a particular task. Interestingly, not all of the organization's customer contracts were the same in relation to how the product was delivered to the worksite for packaging and assembly. The majority of the contracts specified that the product would be shipped to the organization when the job was set to begin. However, four of the forty contracts were known as 'fulfillment contracts', whereby each piece of a particular product was continually stored in the worksite and the customer would contact the organization via phone or e-mail when some of the product needed to be assembled and packaged. Although New Day Employment had contracts with approximately 40 local, regional and national companies, not all of their customers had work that needed to be done at the same time. Thus, a typical work day would consist of five to six different jobs with varying degrees of complexity. Here, I will discuss the most common tasks performed during the data collection period in order to illustrate the variety of jobs present in the worksite.

### **5.2.1 Clothes Hangers**

One of the simpler tasks at the enterprise was cleaning and repairing wire clothes hangers for a dry cleaning company. The hangers were stacked on metal racks approximately two feet in height and were littered with remnants of paper from dry cleaning tags and receipts. Some of the hangers were bent or broken as well. The client's task was to take each hanger off the rack, remove the bits of paper, bend it back into shape and place it back on the metal rack. If the

hanger was broken or damaged beyond repair, the client would set it aside for disposal. This job was not very complex, as it required a minimal level of skill to complete. However, it was labour intensive, as the metal racks were fairly heavy to move when full and bending the hangers into place required physical strength.

### **5.2.2 Liquid Medicine Bottles**

Another simple task in the worksite involved the assembly of liquid medicine bottles. Here, the client first obtained a large box filled with empty liquid medicine bottles and a smaller box that contained white, plastic child-proof caps. Then, their task was to screw a child-proof cap onto each bottle. Once the cap was secured, each bottle was placed into an empty cardboard box that was positioned in front of them on the table. The boxes ranged in quantity from 50-count to 75-count depending on the size of the medicine bottle, in milliliters. This job did not require a high level of skill to complete. However, it was very repetitive because the client was reaching into the cardboard boxes for the bottles and caps and securing these two pieces together in a continuous manner.

### **5.2.3 Anti-Bacterial Hand Wipes**

Assembling packets of anti-bacterial hand wipes was a recurring job in the worksite due to the high frequency with which the customer contracted the organization's services and the large amount of product that needed to be packaged. This task was different than most because it involved an assembly line, whereby multiple steps were involved and each client was designated to one specific stage of the labour process instead of being responsible for the assembly of the product from beginning to end. There were two distinct stages associated with this task. In the first stage, a client put 6 packets containing 2 hand wipes each into a plastic, zip-top bag. The

filled bags were then placed in a large, plastic bin. Once the bin was filled, it was carried by the client to a fellow client who was responsible for the second stage of the process.

The latter step involved sealing the plastic bags with the use of a heat sealer. The machine sat atop one of the work tables and was operated by a foot pedal. The client placed the plastic bag in between two rods on the machine and then stepped on the foot pedal to move the two rods together. When the rods moved together, heat was applied to the plastic bag causing it to melt together and create a seal. Once sealed, the bags were placed back into the plastic bin and given to a lead hand or team leader, who would pack them in a cardboard box for shipping.

While not highly labour intensive, this job did require some skill. In the first stage of the process, the client had to place the correct number of packets into the plastic and, thus, had to concentrate on counting each packet. In the second stage, the client had to apply enough heat to seal the bag, but not too much so that the plastic would melt entirely. Thus, knowing how long to keep the bag between the rods of the heat sealer was crucial.

#### **5.2.4 Hair Conditioner Bottles**

This task, which centered on bottles of hair conditioner, required a higher level of skill than the abovementioned examples due to the fact that each client had to perform multiple stages in the assembly process. First, the client had to open a cardboard box containing four plastic bottles filled with conditioner. Then:

[The client had] to unscrew the lids of [the] conditioner bottles, put a tag around the neck of the bottle that [had] information on it about the product, screw the cap back on to keep the tag in place and then put a label in the center of the cap.  
(June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

Once these steps were completed, the four bottles were placed back into the original cardboard box for shipping. Precision was important for this job because the tag had to be facing the front of the bottle and the label had to be centered and affixed to the cap horizontally in a straight line.

### **5.2.5 Bags of Candy**

Similar to the anti-bacterial hand wipes, this job involved an assembly line where each client was responsible for one stage of the labour process. The task focused on packaging salt water taffy and maple-flavoured hard candies for the Niagara Parks Commission, which operates souvenir shops in tourist areas of Niagara Falls, Ontario. The following excerpt from my field notes explains the various steps that were performed by the clients to package this candy:

There were 4 clients working at the [candy] station in the morning, 2 males and 2 females. Interestingly, the one station was divided into 2 parts. The first part consisted of 2 clients, 1 male and 1 female, who were filling plastic bags with candy [and then placing] the bags into a large plastic bin which was set on the floor beside them. Then a [third] client, a female...sitting behind them would take the full plastic bins and weigh each bag to ensure that its weight corresponded to what was printed on the label. Once the bags were weighed, [the third client] tied each bag with a gold ribbon that was pre-cut and then used scissors to curl the ends. Then [a VSW would] put a bar code on the front that showed the price. Once the bags were complete, [the VSW] would put 12 bags into a cardboard box, tape up the box and put a shipping label on the outside. (June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

A moderate level of skill was needed to perform each stage of this job, as the clients had to estimate the appropriate amount of candy that was needed for each bag prior to it being weighed and weighing the bags involved the operation of a digital scale to determine if the bags were filled correctly.

### **5.2.6 Toothbrushes**

Lastly, the assembly of plastic toothbrushes with a built-in toothpaste dispenser appeared to be one of the most complex jobs in the worksite. It was one of the four fulfillment contracts at the organization, which meant that the pieces were always available in the worksite and could be assembled as soon as a new order was placed by the customer. The customer sold the toothbrushes to multiple businesses, which meant that the quantity of each order was often in the hundreds or thousands. Since the toothbrushes were made in several colours, the number of

toothbrushes needed for each order was differentiated by colour. There were multiple stages in the assembly process of the toothbrushes. First, the handle of the toothbrush, which was hollow, was fitted with a plastic tube of toothpaste. Next, a small, round dial was hammered with a mallet into the base of the handle. When used, the dial would be turned in order to move the paste into the brush. After the bottom part of the toothbrush was complete, the brush was attached to the handle. The last step in the process was the placement of another plastic, hollow tube that covered the brush in order to keep it clean. All of the stages in this assembly process were performed by one client. The complexity of this job came from the fact that there were multiple pieces to assemble and some of the pieces were fairly small in size. Additionally, hammering the dial into the base of the toothbrush had to be done carefully. If the client applied too much force when using the mallet, the plastic base of toothbrush would shatter. Therefore, the job required a higher level of skill than most other tasks performed in the worksite.

### **5.3 Assigning Worksite Tasks: Staff Authority versus Client Agency**

The process of assigning worksite tasks to the clients was primarily the responsibility of the VSWs, who spent the beginning of the morning and afternoon shifts organizing the materials for the various jobs that needed to be worked on and then delegating the jobs to the clients once they arrived to work. Since the three VSWs were outnumbered by the more than 20 clients in the worksite during a typical shift, it took a great deal of time and effort on the part of these staff members to allocate the jobs to the clients. Often times, several clients would be standing around the work area at the beginning of their shifts waiting for direction from a VSW who was busy helping another client get situated with a job. In other words, the clients essentially had to ‘wait their turn’ to speak with a VSW when they needed to be assigned a task. This was especially the case when the worksite was short-staffed due to one or more of the VSWs being absent for the

work day. When this occurred, the lead hands would assist in task delegation. Tom, a male in his forties who had worked as a lead hand at New Day Employment for more than 5 years, explained that the staff members matched clients to particular tasks based on their physical and mental capabilities. He noted: “Some people you just can’t put on certain jobs ‘cause, you know, it just isn’t gonna work out”. Purposefully placing clients with particular tasks was important for both the client and the organization, as it allowed the client to work on a task that they were capable of doing and, in turn, kept the business operations of the social enterprise running efficiently. Allocating jobs based on capability was also an important issue pertaining to the mental health accommodations present at the organization, which will be examined in Chapter Seven.

Although the VSWs, and occasionally the lead hands, delegated the tasks, the clients often had a choice in what they worked on. There appeared to be two aspects of the work that influenced their choices: the wage associated with the job and the clients’ comfort level with the task. For some clients, like Jason, the amount of money the job paid was a key factor. Jason was a client in his thirties. He had worked at the organization for less than one year and lived with an undisclosed mental illness. Earning a significant sum of money at New Day Employment was important to Jason. He stated that “... if you’ve been working here a while you tend to know what jobs are, pay the most, so I usually go to those (laughs), you know”.

Choosing a job based solely on the amount of pay associated with it occasionally posed problems in the worksite. Joe, a VSW who was in his forties and had worked at New Day Employment for more than 15 years, explained that:

Well, some [clients] will come in and they’ll just shoot to one job, you know, like Tim Hortons is here, right, and we’ll try and rotate it a little bit because we do some catalogues and we put stickers in and everybody loves doin’ those, right. And sometimes then when we have other jobs they’re not well paying, everybody will come in and they’ll just grab these books, right. So...we just try and stagger

them, kinda thing right. People get upset, right, but it's just making sure you treat everybody the same.

Here, Joe was referring to various Tim Hortons jobs and a Mary Kay catalogue task, which were some of the better paying jobs in the worksite. Most of the clients knew that these jobs paid well and wanted to work on them. However, there were other jobs that needed to be completed, so the VSWs had to intervene by placing some of the clients on the higher paying tasks one day and then giving other clients the opportunity to work on them the next day. As Joe noted, this made some of the clients upset because they did not get to work on the higher paying jobs every day. However, from Joe's point of view, it was the only way to be fair to all of the clients.

For other clients, their choice was not motivated by pay but by how comfortable they felt performing a particular task and whether they liked the type of work they were doing. Using the anti-bacterial hand wipes as an example, Tom explained that some of the clients' choices were based on personal preference:

...they just prefer a certain job, like the wipes. There's some people that really like doing the...wipes, um, it usually pays about, maybe \$3.50 an hour, roughly, but some people really enjoy doing it. They'd much rather do that than make a higher wage doing somethin' else.

Jordan added that his mental health issues affected his enjoyment of particular tasks. Jordan was in his forties and had been employed at the organization for more than 5 years. He suffered from depression and described his rationale for picking certain jobs:

It's like sometimes I come in and [someone tells] me, well this job pays better and it's like, well I prefer this job because I can, like, before it's like, I can lose myself in it and I don't care if it's...if I don't get the extra money. It's...I prefer over the other. So, sometimes like, I'll take the lesser paying job... even though I might, like, lose whatever 10 bucks, 20 bucks a day on it.

'Losing himself' in the work meant that Jordan could focus on the task at hand rather than on the depressive symptoms associated with his mental health condition. He liked jobs that had the

ability to do this and therefore chose them over jobs that paid a higher wage. Again, this type of flexibility was an important mental health accommodation for many of the clients at New Day Employment and will be explored in Chapter Seven.

When clients were not motivated by the amount a job paid, enjoyment seemed to play a significant role in their choices. Yet, sometimes they wanted to choose jobs that they were not physically or mentally capable of completing successfully. Tom described how the worksite staff would handle this type of scenario:

...sometimes you just have to tell them, well you're not...not that you're not appropriate for the job, but that you'd be better off doing this job than this job and you just kind of have to work around it without, you know, hurting their feelings.

I observed this situation in the worksite between Samantha and one of the VSWs. Samantha was a client in her fifties. One morning, she was assigned to work on a task that involved packaging individually-wrapped bandages into 50- and 100-count boxes. However, she found the job to be “boring” and wanted to work on a task for Bell Canada, which entailed labeling internet modems and telephone accessories. From her perspective, this job looked more interesting than the one she was originally allocated. Samantha told Grace, a VSW in her fifties who had been a part of New Day Employment for more than 10 years, that she wanted to work on the Bell Canada job rather than the bandages. However, Grace noted that the boxes of product would be too heavy for her to carry. So, Grace placed Samantha on the clothes hangers task because it better suited her physical capabilities. When I spoke to Samantha later that day, she mentioned that she was much happier working on the hangers because this task involved more work, which allowed her to be more engaged with the job than she had been while performing the bandages task.

Allowing the clients the ability to exercise some degree of agency over the types of tasks they performed in the worksite appeared to be a source of frustration for the VSWs. Grace said



she thought the clients were “spoiled” because they were given a greater amount of choice at New Day Employment than what would be permissible in most mainstream workplaces.

Additionally, she noticed a difference between the clients who began their shifts in the morning and those that started their work day in the afternoon. Grace thought that the morning clients were more “spoiled” because they were the first clients to arrive at the worksite for the day and always wanted to choose their task since none of the jobs were occupied. By contrast, afternoon clients often asked a VSW what they could work on when they arrived because they were not sure which jobs had already been assigned to the clients that began work in the morning and stayed throughout the afternoon. Ann, a worksite client who had been employed at New Day Employment for more than 3 years, confirmed Grace’s observations regarding this issue. Ann was in her fifties and lived with depression. While I was working on a task alongside her:

[Ann]...noted that the clients who work in the morning have a better choice of jobs to work on. This is...because the morning clients may stay on the same job all day and when afternoon clients come in they have less choice, as most of the jobs they want to work on are taken. (July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

For Grace, this degree of choice afforded to clients, and especially to those who started their shifts in the morning, was problematic not least because they did not respect the authority of the worksite staff when they were told they could not work on a particular task. In other words, Grace felt that the clients had too much agency, or control, over the delegation of the tasks, undermining the VSWs’ supervisory roles.

Consequently, the VSWs had to negotiate an effective balance between allowing the clients to choose their tasks some of the time and assigning tasks without giving them a choice when there was pressure to meet a scheduled customer contract deadline. Andrea, a VSW who was in her twenties and had been part of the organization for less than 2 years, talked about managing this balance:

[Andrea] said that...[the clients] cannot choose what they want to do all the time. Sometimes there are things that need to get done and the clients have to do them whether they like the job or not. She said that if the clients went to work at Wal-Mart they would not be able to choose what tasks they worked on because certain things need to get done and someone has to do it. (August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

While assigning tasks to clients without giving them the ability to choose was crucial to keep the packaging and assembly operations running smoothly, it was not without some complaints. The clothes hangers contract illustrated these complaints best. It was one of the dirtiest jobs in the worksite because the hangers were not cleaned prior to arriving at the worksite and would often leave dark marks on the clients' hands and clothes. Consequently, clients frequently complained about this lack of cleanliness when working on this task. For example, Shannon was a client in her forties who had worked in the Training Program for more than two years. She suffered from body dysmorphia, a mental illness characterized by having persistently negative thoughts about her body image. While working on the clothes hangers task one afternoon, Shannon shouted, "I hate this! I hate this!". I went over to ask her why she 'hated' the job and she proceeded to tell me that the hangers were "dirty" and that she did not like that her hands were getting dirty as well. Shannon was wearing latex gloves to prevent this, as were most of the clients working on the task, but she noted that the gloves became black with dirt quickly and needed to be changed before the job was completed.

In addition, the clothes hangers task was viewed as being undignified. Luke had worked at the organization for more than 10 years and was in his fifties. He had lived with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) for several decades. Luke disliked the fact that the job involved bending and cleaning metal. He explained that the task was "demeaning" due to the rudimentary nature in which it was performed. In other words, he felt as if the work degraded the clients' abilities because they were capable of higher skilled labour. Luke also stated that the low wage

in which the clients were paid to complete the task made it a “bad job”. I will address this latter issue and the topic of wages, more generally, in Chapter Six. Still, the clients were the most outspoken about this job, which appeared to make it one of the most disliked jobs in the worksite among the client population. In fact, when the clothes hangers was one of the only tasks in the worksite over the course of several days, some of the clients stated that they did not want to come to work if that was the task they would be assigned. This prompted the manager of the organization to announce during a monthly Worksite Client Focus Meeting<sup>9</sup> that every client scheduled to work on a particular day should be attending the Training Program regardless of the tasks they would be designated to perform. It was unclear what the penalty would be, if any, for those that did not report to work or if any clients actually stayed home during this time.

However, it was evident that the VSWs had established firm rules in the event that a client who was present in the worksite refused to work on a specific task because he or she disliked it. I observed this situation during one of the morning shifts when Grace saw that Harry, who had been assigned to work on the Bell Canada job, was sitting at one of the work tables with his arm crossed, not doing any work. Harry was in his thirties and had worked at New Day Employment for more than 15 years. The nature of his mental illness was unknown. Grace asked Harry why he was not engaging with the task and he noted that he did not want to work on that particular job but, instead, wanted to work on the Mary Kay catalogues. Grace would not let him switch jobs because the Bell Canada job needed to be finished on time. She told Harry that he either needed to work on the task he was assigned to or would have to be sent home. Since he still refused to work, Grace sent Harry home. Therefore, tensions existed in the worksite

---

<sup>9</sup> Every month, a Worksite Client Focus Meeting was held in the worksite and led by the manager and VSWs. The meetings gave the clients the opportunity to express any questions or concerns they had regarding their work or the organization, more generally. The manager and supervisors also used these meetings to discuss any changes that had been made to organizational policies and procedures which impacted the ways in which the clients carried out the work day.

regarding task assignment. While the clients were often given flexibility in the jobs they wanted to perform, the VSWs had to use their authority to decide what was best for the business operations of the enterprise, which meant that clients occasionally had to work on tasks they disliked and could be sent home if they refused to comply with the rules.

#### **5.4 One Task, Multiple Techniques for Completion**

An unexpected finding that emerged from this research project was that the clients often used different techniques, or strategies, to complete a particular task. Although the worksite staff members demonstrated how each step in the labour process was done to arrive at the finished product, the clients performed the same steps in diverse ways. This trend was evident with the hair conditioner bottles task. Some of the clients would take out one bottle at a time from the cardboard box, put a tag and label on it and then put it back into the box before taking out the next bottle that needed to be worked on. In contrast, other clients working on this same job would take out all four bottles from the cardboard box at the start, tag and label each one and then put all four bottles back into the box. The clients were not changing the physical form of the completed product, but instead altering the way in which they arrived at the finished product.

Ann provided some insight into the rationale for these varying techniques. While working on a gift card assembly job for Tim Hortons, whereby gift cards had to be placed in paper holders and the denomination of the card had to be written on the inside of each holder, Ann mentioned that she liked to find ways to perform tasks at a faster pace in order to complete more of the product and, in turn, earn more money. I was also working on this task, writing the value of each gift card on the inside flat of the holder. To illustrate her point, Ann showed me how the strategy she employed allowed her to finish more pieces than the technique I was using. While I scattered the finished holders around the table in order to let the ink dry, Ann simply stacked the

holders on top of one another immediately after she wrote the denomination inside. She noted that the ink did not take very long to dry, so it was not likely that it would smudge after the holder was closed. By stacking the completed holders in a pile, Ann could finish a larger quantity of product, and therefore earn more money, because she did not have the added work of picking up the scattered holders on the table and stacking them.

While the majority of the tasks in the worksite paid the clients based on a piece rate, several of the tasks paid an hourly wage, meaning that each client earned the same amount of money per hour regardless of the quantity of product they assembled and packaged. Surprisingly, the clients still employed a variety of techniques when working on hourly wage jobs, such as the anti-bacterial hand wipes:

I noticed at the hand wipes station that the clients have come up with different strategies for putting the individual packages of wipes into each bag. In total, 6 individual packages are required to be in each bag. Some clients take out 6 packages from the large cardboard box they are shipped in (everyone has a box at their work space) and put them into the bags one at a time. This is the way the majority of the clients work. Other clients...[make] piles of the wipes in stacks of 6 on the table and then [bag] each pile. (July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

Due to the dual role I had within the organization, I did not have the opportunity to speak with the clients regarding this observation and, therefore, their rationale for these techniques was unclear. However, it can be inferred, based on the abovementioned findings pertaining to the relationship between choice and comfort, that the clients employed these strategies for hourly wage jobs because it allowed them to work comfortably at a pace and skill level that best suited their individual employment needs. It is important to mention that with both piece and hourly rate jobs, the strategies used by the clients were not deemed improper by the worksite staff. In other words, the staff members did not prohibit the clients from performing the same task in

various ways, as long as the finished product was not compromised in any way. This illustrates that there was not a high level of labour process discipline in regards to this issue.

The clients' mental health issues also played a role in the techniques they used to perform the work. This was most evident when observing Daniel, a client in his fifties who had worked at New Day Employment for more than 10 years. Daniel lived with OCD and always sat alone at a table away from the other clients in the worksite because he did not like to be distracted while he worked. For Daniel, his obsessive compulsive symptoms were characterized by a strong need to keep order in his life and were reflected in the ways in which he performed tasks. For example, when assembling and packaging the liquid medicine bottles, Daniel would first line up several dozen bottles in straight rows on the table. Then, he would secure a plastic cap to each bottle. Once all of the bottles were assembled, Daniel would then place all of them into an empty cardboard box for shipping. Completing the task this way often took much longer than it did for the clients who placed each bottle into the box directly after it had been assembled. However, the nature of Daniel's mental health condition influenced the strategy he employed for accomplishing his assigned task. This example illustrates an intersection between mental health and work, whereby the organization allowed for flexibility in how clients performed tasks as a result of their psychiatric symptoms. The flexibility afforded to the clients in this regard can also be characterized as a workplace accommodation, which is an issue that will be explored in more detail in Chapter Seven.

### **5.5 Ensuring Consistency: The Practice of Quality Control**

Aside from the ways in which the jobs were assigned to, and performed by, the clients, a central stage in the packaging and assembly process at New Day Employment was the practice of quality control. This stage was mainly the responsibility of the team leaders, although the

leads hands and VSWs also took on this task occasionally, especially if the products were associated with one of the jobs that the VSWs were in charge of overseeing.

There were two ways in which quality control was carried out in the worksite. For some tasks, the clients would put their boxes of completed product on the work bench (refer to **Figure 5.1**) where the team leaders would inspect each box prior to sealing it. They would be looking to make sure that each box contained the proper quantity of product and that each piece of the product had been assembled correctly. For example, in the case of the liquid medicine bottles, the team leaders would count the number of bottles in each box and make certain that each bottle had a plastic cap attached to it. If one or more bottles or caps were missing, the team leaders would have to add the correct amount to the box. It was often difficult to determine which clients had packaged and assembled the product incorrectly because the boxes tended to pile up quickly if multiple clients were working on the same task. However, if the team leaders knew which client completed a particular box, they would bring it back to the client and show them what they had done incorrectly. The client would be asked to correct the error before bringing the box back to the work bench. It seemed that the team leaders used this method, as opposed to correcting the issue themselves, in an attempt to prevent the client from the making the same mistake again.

The second way in which quality control was implemented was by supervising the jobs as they were taking place. This was mainly done by the VSWs, who would verify the progress of the jobs that they were responsible for managing. The following observation from the worksite illustrates how quality control was practiced in this regard:

I noticed that [Joe], the VSW in charge of [the hair conditioner bottle] station, was walking around periodically to do quality control. Some clients did not have the [tag] hanging on the side of the bottle, but had it hanging in the center, so he would tell the client that it needed to be fixed and show them how to do this. He would also check to make sure that each bottle had a label on it. If it did not have a label on it, he would take it out of the box, show the client and ask that they put

one on the bottle. Then the finished boxes would be put on a work bench behind the station, where a [team leader]...would tape them up and put them on the skid for shipping. (June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

By inspecting the clients' work prior to the boxes being placed on the workbench, the VSWs could identify any issues pertaining to the quality of the finished product and attempt to reduce the number of errors by showing the clients how to fix their mistakes directly at their work station.

It became clear from speaking with several of the worksite staff members that quality control was not only essential for ensuring that the product was assembled and packaged correctly, but was also necessary for the social enterprise due to the repetitive nature of the work performed by the clients and, more broadly, the impacts that their mental health issues had on the work. Using the example of the hair conditioner bottles, Joe explained that the repetitive manner in which the clients carried out tasks affected the finished product:

Uh, like with these bottles, you gotta put the tag on in one spot, you gotta put the sticker right in the middle of the cap. When you're doin' the same thing over and over, and it just gets a little sloppy. So I find with this, it's like...a lot more work because, yeah, you gotta watch 'em and you gotta just remind them over and over...

Here, Joe felt that the constant repetition required to complete a task affected the outcome of the finished product the longer the client performed the task and, consequently, often resulted in a product that was aesthetically untidy. When this occurred, it then created more work for Joe and the other VSWs because they had to supervise the task with increased vigilance and continuously remind the clients to be aware of how they were putting the product together.

Also, Tom raised a broader topic of concern, which focused on the impact that the clients' mental health issues had on the quality of the work: "...you really have to watch the quality control, just because a lot of [the clients] are medicated, so that's something you have to



worry about”. Specifically, the prescription medication taken by the clients to manage their mental health issues sometimes influenced their daily functioning, making it difficult for them to concentrate, process information or keep up a steady pace of work for an extended period of time. Consequently, their completed products did not always meet the required standard of quality. Kevin was one of the clients who dealt with these side effects on a daily basis. He was in his forties and had worked at the organization for less than one year. Kevin was diagnosed with schizophrenia and explained that taking his antipsychotic medication made him feel “stupid” because it was difficult to remember instructions and properly repeat the multiple steps that were often involved with many of the tasks in the worksite. Tom noted further that because of these side effects: “...there’s a lot more checking that you have to do than if you were in, like, the regular sector”. In other words, places of alternative employment, like New Day Employment, had to carry out quality inspections with greater frequency than workplaces in the competitive, or “regular”, sector because clients in the latter environment may not be faced with the same types of challenges that are experienced by those in the former work environment.

Interestingly, the standard of quality demanded in the worksite seemed to vary between the different products based on their retail price. While Joe was supervising the hair conditioner bottles task one day, he explained that he was checking the bottles closely and spending more time than he normally would on some of the other tasks to show the clients how to correctly place the tag and label on each bottle. Joe noted that the bottles were sold for approximately ten dollars each in retail stores, so he wanted them to look “neat”. About one week later, while I was working on the candy bags job, Joe came over to the work station and indicated that the ribbon used to hold the bags together should be placed closer to the top of the bags. He explained that when the ribbon was tied towards the middle of the bag, it made it look like it contained only a

small amount of candy. By placing the ribbon higher, it created an illusion that the bags were full. Since each bag sold at retail stores for nine dollars, Joe wanted to ensure that the bags appeared to be worth their retail price.

In contrast, a more relaxed approach to quality control was practiced when a product did not have a high retail price. For example, one of the tasks performed in the worksite on occasion was packaging two colours of bath beads into small glass jars and attaching plastic lids to the top of the jars. Once these steps were completed, a label was placed across the top of the lid and bent down the sides of each jar, where it was adhered to flat, raised sections of the glass. It took a great deal of precision to accurately attach the label. While inspecting the quality of the completed jars:

... I would sometimes find a jar that had the label on the sides that were not flat, a jar with a crooked label or a jar with no label. [Joe] briefly checked some of the boxes with me and commented on these errors. He said that he was happy the bath beads were only being sold in dollar stores because he didn't think the labels looked very good in terms of how they were being placed on the jars. (July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

Joe still checked each box before sealing it to make sure that there was a label applied to each jar, but he was less meticulous with this task than he had been with the hair conditioner bottles and bags of candy. It was unclear whether the varying standard of appearance, and therefore quality, was agreed upon with the customers who had contracted the jobs to New Day Employment or if it was a decision made exclusively by the VSWs based on the retail price of the products. Yet, these practices reinforced the fact that the standard of quality implemented in the worksite was not uniform between the different types of products produced.

Apart from the abovementioned measures of quality control, issues sometimes arose at the beginning of a task or throughout the packaging and assembly process that had the potential to affect the outcome of the finished product. For instance, several minutes after the start of

assembling 75-count boxes of liquid medicine bottles one morning, one of the clients noticed that an additional five bottles could fit comfortably into each box. The client brought this issue to the attention of Grace, who inspected the boxes and concluded that they must have been made larger than they needed to be. Grace and one of the team leaders, Bob, alerted the clients working on this task about the additional space and to be aware of how many bottles they were actually putting into each box. However, the boxes still needed to be inspected before they could be sealed, so Grace and Bob had to carefully count the number of bottles in each box by hand. This task took about one week to complete and several days after it began, it seemed as if checking the boxes manually was taking longer than anticipated. Thus, Grace and Bob decided to use a digital scale to weigh each box. Since the scale could be programmed to identify the number of bottles in each box based on its weight, it became a less time consuming solution to the problem the staff members faced with the boxes of liquid medicine bottles.

In fact, the staff members relied on digital scales frequently to resolve packaging and assembly issues. Every month or so, the aforementioned Tim Hortons gift card assembly job would be sent to the worksite. The end result of the task did not always go according to plan:

When the job was completed, there were several left over gift cards, but this should not have been the case. So, [Tom] decided to weigh the bundles in order to find the empty gift card holders. He was able to find all of them in a short amount of time. He noted...that the best way to check that a job [was] done correctly or to find missing product [was] to weigh them. (August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

Thus, a digital scale was not only used for solving problems with excess product, like the medicine bottles, but it was also employed to find missing pieces related to a particular job, especially when there were hundreds of pieces to search through, which was true for the Tim Hortons gift card task. These situations exemplify the importance of problem-solving and adaptation on the staff members' behalf, as they had to promptly resolve any issues that arose

with the products in order to maintain the efficiency and quality of the organization's business operations.

For Tom, dealing with the issues that surfaced during various tasks was the aspect of his job position that he disliked the most. Being a lead hand meant that he communicated with the organization's corporate customers regularly to update them on the status of the jobs they had sent to the worksite. However, it was also Tom's responsibility to contact the customers when jobs were not progressing as planned. He mentioned that "... today with, you know, you got an owner that's not real happy 'cause his stickers aren't sticking, so then you gotta go back and check...". Tom was referring to a problem with labels that were not sticking properly onto plastic pieces of a product. The customer who had contracted the job to New Day Employment was upset because this issue would extend the time needed to complete the job, as new labels would have to be shipped to the worksite. Due to his responsibilities with this particular task, Tom took the brunt of the customer's frustration. Therefore, whether these problems stemmed from a manufacturing error that was out of the social enterprise's control or were the result of how the clients were performing the tasks, Tom seemed to experience an increased level of stress that accompanied product issues, since they could delay the scheduled completion date of a job and, in turn, upset the organization's customers.

## **5.6 The Physical Impacts of the Work**

The work performed at New Day Employment appeared to have a negative impact on some clients' physical well-being. In particular, several clients complained that they experienced shoulder soreness or arm pain as a result of the repetitive and hands-on nature of the jobs. For example, during one of our conversations in the worksite, Kevin explained that he often felt shoulder pain throughout the work day:

[Kevin] also mentioned that his shoulders were hurting him today because the [medicine bottles] job...was very repetitive. I asked him if he tended to have this problem after working at [New Day Employment] each day and he said yes and that the pain usually starts before he finishes his shift. (June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

Additionally, Lindsay was a client in her forties who had worked at New Day Employment for more than 2 years. While working on the clothes hangers task one morning, Lindsay stated that her arms were “sore”. Unlike the medicine bottles task, a moderate amount of physical labour was needed to bend the hangers back into their original shape. Thus, repetitive tasks with both low and moderate levels of labour intensity, such as the medicine bottles and clothes hangers, respectively, had the potential to negatively impact some clients’ physical health.

In contrast to the shoulder and arm pain felt by some clients, Christine noticed that the muscle mass in her arms had increased since her most recent admission into the Training Program. Christine was in her forties and had been employed in the Program intermittently for over 10 years. She explained that she was surprised to see that her arms had become toned and muscular, as if she had been exercising at the gym. The types of jobs Christine performed in the worksite seemed to explain this effect. Specifically, she carried out higher-skilled tasks, many of which involved moving heavy boxes of product, such as internet modems and various telephone parts for Bell Canada. Therefore, the increased muscle mass in Christine’s arms was the result of constantly lifting the pieces of product that she needed for her assigned tasks. It was unclear, however, whether she viewed this physical impact of the work positively or negatively.

The work not only affected the clients’ current physical well-being, but it also exacerbated pre-existing physical health conditions. Since the work was conducted sitting down, clients with back issues or chronic pain sometimes found it difficult to engage in their jobs. In order to manage their pain and work more comfortably, they often attached a supportive back

cushion to their chairs. In other cases, when a particular task was worsening a pre-existing physical issue, a VSW usually allowed the client to move to a different job. For example, Henry had worked at New Day Employment for more than 5 years and lived with depression. He was in his fifties and also had problems with shoulder pain. Working at the hair conditioner bottles job exacerbated this issue:

[Henry] started the morning by working on the conditioner bottles. However, about 10 minutes after he started, he was moved to the bolt station to label plastic bags. When I talked to him later I mentioned this and he said that he asked to be moved to [the bolt] station because his shoulder was bothering him (hurting) and the conditioner bottle station was aggravating the pain. (June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

Here, labeling plastic bags for a job that focused on the packaging of metal bolts and screws was more appropriate for Henry and placed less physical stress on his shoulder than the hair conditioner bottles job. This issue also relates to the way in which jobs were assigned to clients, as discussed above, because the VSWs would sometimes be faced with a situation like Henry's, prompting them to assess the problem and potentially move the client to a different job. Furthermore, this issue can be viewed as a form of physical accommodation for the clients at New Day Employment, a theme that will be examined in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Many of the physical impacts described by the clients mirrored my own experiences in the worksite. For example, like Kevin, I also felt shoulder pain while engaging in various tasks. The pain was most evident when I took part in the Mary Kay catalogues job for the first time:

Working on the catalogues allowed me to gain first-hand experience of what the clients feel like while doing them...I noticed that my shoulders started to hurt about an hour into working on the task. I believe this was from the repetitive motion of opening the catalogue, peeling the sample off of the plastic strip, sticking the sample on Page 6, closing the catalogue and repeating these steps. (July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

Similar to Lindsay’s experiences, I also was physically impacted by the clothes hangers task. However, unlike Lindsay, it was my hands rather than my arms that became sore: “...my hand was a bit red and sore from bending the hook and I found I had to be careful when I did this because the end of the hook was [sharp] and would dig into my hand if I wasn’t careful” (July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt). Lastly, I noticed that my hands became dry and rough a mere two days after I began carrying out tasks in the worksite. Since I frequently engaged in various worksite jobs, this was a problem that continued throughout my time at the organization. Yet, despite the fact that all of the jobs at New Day Employment were hands-on, this issue was not raised by any of the clients. Instead, back pain and shoulder and arm soreness were their main concerns.

## Chapter Six

### Analyzing Clients’ Wages, the Pricing of Worksite Jobs and the Organization as a Place of Meaningful Activity and Social Interaction

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of clients’ wages and the pricing of worksite jobs. Several issues pertaining to this topic are important here, including: the types of pricing implemented in the worksite and the amount the jobs paid to the clients, the amount of money the clients typically earned, the dissatisfaction that many of the clients expressed with respect to their earnings and the balance that New Day Employment attempted to maintain between its social mission and its finances. Additionally, this chapter will analyze the organization as a place of meaningful activity and social interaction among the client population.

#### 6.2 The Rates of Pay for Worksite Tasks

As previously noted, the work at New Day Employment was primarily characterized by piece work, where clients were paid for each piece, or unit, of product they completed. The type of pricing for this work was called a piece rate and it varied depending on the product. Specifically, the piece rate was as low as approximately 8 cents per piece or, very rarely, as high as approximately 7 dollars per piece. The majority of tasks observed during the research period were worth less than 2 dollars per piece. **Table 6.1** below illustrates the range of piece rates for some of the tasks that have been discussed throughout this analysis:

**Table 6.1:** Piece Rates for Specific Worksite Tasks

Worksite Task	Piece Rate
Toothbrushes	7.5 cents per brush
Hair conditioner bottles	23 cents per 4-count box
Liquid medicine bottles	87 cents per 50-count box
Clothes hangers	\$1.59 per rack
Mary Kay catalogues	\$7.00 per 320-count box



Interestingly, it appeared that there was a negative relationship between the piece rate and the level of skill required to complete a particular job, as the toothbrushes and hair conditioner bottles required a higher level of skill than the liquid medicine bottles and clothes hangers, yet the piece rate was lower for the higher-skilled tasks than for the lower-skilled ones.

However, a piece rate was not the only type of pricing implemented at the social enterprise. An hourly rate and a team hourly rate were also ways in which clients were paid for their work. In the former type, clients were paid by the hour for performing a particular job. For example, packaging bags of candy for the Niagara Parks Commission was an hourly rate task and the clients earned \$2.85 per hour. In the latter type, clients were also paid by the hour for performing a task, but the rate was determined by how many units were completed by all of the clients working on the same task over the course of one day. To calculate the team hourly rate, the number of pieces completed in one day was divided by the total number of hours worked on the task by all of the clients at that work station during the same day. Thus, the team hourly rate for a particular job could fluctuate from one day to the next depending on how many units and hours of work were completed.

One of the only team hourly rate tasks at the enterprise was the anti-bacterial hand wipes. Clients who packaged the hand wipes into plastic bags were paid, on average, between \$2.43 and \$2.88 per hour. In contrast, clients who sealed the bags using a heat sealing machine earned approximately between \$3.50 and \$3.75 per hour. Unlike the jobs that paid a piece rate, the level of skill required to complete the hand wipes task seemed to have a positive relationship with the amount the clients were paid. Joe explained that the clients who worked on the heat sealing stage of the job often completed more work than those who bagged the hand wipes and therefore should be compensated by receiving a higher rate of pay. Additionally, using the heat sealer was

a higher skilled aspect of the job and required a certain level of knowledge to operate this type of light machinery correctly. Therefore, the higher rate of pay reflected these aspects of the work.

The clients were responsible for recording the number of pieces or hours of work they completed each day. For the piece rate jobs, each client would typically keep a piece of paper and a pen next to them on the work tables so they could keep track of how many pieces of product they had finished. Once they were done working on a particular task, they would write the number of pieces they completed, along with their names, on a paper work form located at the end of each work table. Each task had a separate work form in order to ensure that the clients would be paid according to the specific piece rate that corresponded with the task they performed. For hourly and team hourly jobs, the clients also filled out a work form. Here, they wrote down their name, the time they began working on the task ('Time In') and the time they finished the job ('Time Out').

Due to the fact that there were three different types of pricing for worksite jobs and each job paid a different amount to the clients, the process of calculating the clients' earnings was tedious and time consuming for the VSWs. At the end of the clients' work day, each VSW collected the work forms for the tasks they managed and used a calculator to determine each client's earnings. While this was a relatively straightforward process for the piece rate tasks, it was more complex for the hourly and team hourly rate jobs. Since the clients only wrote their 'time in' and 'time out' for each task, the VSWs had to first deduct the time taken for the morning and/or afternoon breaks, as well as the lunch break, if applicable, in order to determine the total number of hours worked by each client. Once this step was accomplished, the clients' earnings could then be calculated.

All of these calculations were done directly on the work forms and usually took each VSW approximately 30 minutes to complete every day. Grace, in particular, spent much more of her time working on the clients' pay because she was in charge of payroll. This meant that she was given all of the completed work forms and had to input each of the client's daily earnings into the organization's computer system so that they could be paid on a bi-weekly basis. Andrea noted that Grace entered the clients' earnings each Friday and often had to stay at work up to one hour later than the rest of the staff members to finish this job on time. Although it was unclear how Grace felt about having to stay late at the end of each week to complete payroll, it was evident that the multiple rates of pay and the unique amount in which each job paid caused the VSWs to spend a great deal of time calculating the clients' earnings.

### **6.3 The Reality of How Much Clients Earned**

New Day Employment imposed a limit on the amount of money the clients could earn per hour of work regardless of whether they engaged in tasks that paid a piece, hourly or team hourly rate. Specifically, the clients were allowed to earn a maximum of 10 dollars per hour, which was below Ontario's minimum wage of 11 dollars per hour (Ministry of Labour, 2014). Since a full day of work at the organization totaled 5.75 hours, the maximum that a client could earn for one full day shift was \$57.50. If a client completed enough work to earn them more than the daily maximum, those additional earnings could not be collected or applied to another day's work when they may not make as much money. Instead, the organization used the money to raise the price of a job that paid very little, such as the clothes hangers.

In reality, few clients earned anything close to 10 dollars per hour. Instead, the average client made approximately 3 to 4 dollars per hour. These low earnings seemed to be the result of several factors. First, many of the jobs in the worksite paid very little, as noted above, and

therefore it was difficult to earn a considerable amount of money even if a large quantity of product was completed. Additionally, the organization allowed the clients to work at their own pace in order to accommodate their mental health needs, which is an issue that will be examined in Chapter Seven. Consequently, those who worked at a slower pace did not complete as many pieces of product and, in turn, earned less money. Even when a client made a larger sum of money one day working on a task with a higher piece rate, it did not necessarily mean that they would sustain that level of earnings throughout the work week due to the variety of jobs, and corresponding piece rates, that came in and out of the worksite on a regular basis. When asked about his earnings, Jason illustrated this trend: “Like, I made 60 dollars the other day, but today I might only make thirty”. Christopher had a similar experience with fluctuation in his wages and explained that working on a variety of tasks throughout the week was reflected in his bi-weekly pay cheque. He was in his twenties and had worked at New Day Employment for less than one year. He explained: “Your pay cheque can turn out different than the way it was last [time] when you were doing these different kinds of jobs, you know, so...”. Christopher went on to say:

I make like a hundred and some dollars, but uh, it basically matters, like, exactly what you're on, like you never know what you're gonna get 'cause...the jobs are so random, right. Like one day you'll be on this job, the next day you're on that job, so...

Although Christopher earned, on average, over one hundred dollars every two weeks, he rarely knew what the exact amount of his pay cheque would be due to the fact that each job he worked on paid a different wage. For clients who worked on higher paying jobs for a certain length of time and then switched to much lower paying jobs afterwards, the fluctuation in their earnings was even more pronounced. Jordan explained that when he worked on the Mary Kay catalogues for several weeks, his bi-weekly pay cheque could be as high as three hundred and fifty dollars. In contrast, when he did not perform the catalogue task, he would earn, on average,

approximately one hundred and fifty dollars every two weeks. It is important to mention that for clients receiving financial support through ODSP, 50 percent of their net income from each pay cheque was deducted. However, it was unclear if the specific earnings noted here reflected this deduction. Nonetheless, variations in earnings were still experienced by some of the clients and were both small and large in scale.

Additionally, it was apparent that some clients' daily earnings could effectively be zero if they were working on a job with a low piece rate and used public transportation to get to and from the organization. This issue was not openly discussed by the clients, but was illustrated in my field notes, where I observed Shannon and Gail, a client in her forties who had worked at New Day Employment intermittently for more than 8 years, discussing the amount of pieces they had completed one afternoon:

[Shannon]...told [Gail] she had completed 3 [clothes hanger] racks so far, to which [Gail] told [Shannon] that she would only need to finish one more [rack] in order to pay...her bus fare for the day, which is [7 dollars]. (August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

In this particular instance, Gail was commenting on the number of pieces Shannon had finished so far. If Shannon completed one more rack of clothes hangers, her earnings from that day's work would have covered the cost of her bus fare. However, this example also implies that Shannon would have been left with no earnings to take home that day. Clients who received financial support through ODSP were eligible to receive a 'work-related benefit' in a monthly amount of one hundred dollars to pay for work-related expenses, such as clothing and transportation and some clients mentioned that they were receiving this benefit. Still, this issue raises questions regarding the economic advantages of the work for clients.

Surprisingly, a client's earnings for a particular job could also be adjusted at the discretion of a VSW if they believed the client's efforts did not reflect the amount of money earned. During a conversation with Andrea she explained that when a client was seen walking around the worksite or talking with other clients when he or she should be performing their assigned task, VSWs might adjust that client's earnings for the day by lowering the amount of money he or she should have received. Andrea noted that this was done for both hourly and team hourly rate jobs and that the usual deduction was approximately two dollars in total. For a team hourly rate job, the deducted money was usually given to another client doing the same job who the VSWs observed to be working very hard and, thus, "deserved" the extra money. As the conversation continued:

I asked [Andrea] if the clients complain about getting money deducted from their pay due to these circumstances. She said that it happens once [in a while], but most of the time the clients do not know how much they are being paid anyways, so they have nothing to complain about since they do not know what their total pay should be. For the clients who do complain, the staff tells them that they were not working hard enough and that is why the pay was deducted...[Andrea] said she would prefer all of the jobs to be piece rate rather than hourly or team rate because it would be more fair to the client, as they would be paid for what they earned (i.e. the product they actually completed) and so that the staff could have a better idea of how fast/slow each client works and the amount of product they actually complete. (August 15th, 2013, field note excerpt)

These adjustments made the issue of clients' wages more complex than initially anticipated. Even though altering the clients' earnings was not done regularly, the fact that most of the clients did not know this practice occurred and were not knowledgeable about the value of the piece rates for various tasks was concerning. This latter issue will be addressed in the next sub-section directly below.

#### **6.4 “Slave Labour”: Clients’ Dissatisfaction with Their Earnings**

Many of the clients enrolled in the Training Program expressed their dissatisfaction with the amount of money they earned at New Day Employment. Their frustration was directed at the low piece rates that were typical in the worksite, the imposed limit on earnings and the absence of a minimum wage. First, several of the clients equated the low value of the piece rates with ‘slave labour’. For example, after Grace distributed the clients’ pay cheques in the worksite one afternoon, Ann looked at her cheque and stated that her earnings were “a joke”. She did not disclose the amount she earned, but explained that her bi-weekly earnings would pay for a haircut and not much else. She believed that the work she performed at the organization was “slave labour” due to her low earnings. Ann continued by saying that she received 800 dollars per month from ODSP, and although she did not like the fact that she made very little at New Day Employment, she still needed the money she made at the enterprise to put towards some of her expenses, like her monthly cable and telephone bills.

Brian was also upset with the low piece rates and his subsequent low earnings. He was in his fifties and lived with schizophrenia. Brian had previously been employed for nearly 20 years at a factory in the competitive labour market. Due to his mental health condition he had to leave his mainstream job and had been unemployed for more than 10 years before entering the Training Program less than one year ago. Like Ann, Brian was not happy with the amount of money he earned. During one of the bi-weekly pay days, he received a mere 16 dollars for three days of work. He felt that he was engaging in “slave labour” at the enterprise when compared to his job at the paint factory, where he earned 20 dollars per hour. Brian added that he wanted to leave the organization for a job in competitive employment in order to earn a higher wage, but could not do so at the present time due to his mental health issues.

Additionally, for Jordan, the limits imposed on earnings caused him to feel frustrated with his wages. He believed that the organization should allow its clients to keep the amount of money they earned even when it exceeded the maximum of \$57.50 for a full day of work. Jordan stated: "...if we're able to do more than like 10 boxes of whatever and it comes out to 70 dollars a day, we should be able to get paid [that amount] for that day". Thus, Jordan did not believe the organization was being fair to the clients in this regard. Also, the absence of a minimum wage paid to all clients regardless of their speed or the number of pieces they completed was a topic of concern. Jason explained:

[The organization] should pay the minimum wage to everybody...some people are slower and it's not their fault, it's just the way they are. And it's not fair if I'm sittin' beside him doin' the same job and I make 60 dollars and he only makes 25...

Similar to Jordan, fairness was important to Jason, who believed that a client's pace of work should not determine their earnings and that all of the clients deserved to be treated equally by being paid a minimum wage.

It was evident that part of the clients' dissatisfaction regarding their wages stemmed from the fact that the piece rates for jobs were not often communicated to the clients, as discussed above. When clients were asked if they knew how much they were earning, Jordan responded: "...[the VSWs] don't even tell you, they don't tell us how much we're making. You just kinda learn as you go, like after you've been here for a while you know". While this information was not withheld from clients, it was also not readily disclosed. Consequently, clients had to acquire piece rates by either directly asking a VSW or by asking other clients who were performing the same job and had previously obtained the rate information. When the manager, George, was asked about this issue, he made no mention of making the prices available to all clients regardless of whether they inquired about the piece rates or not. Instead, he explained that the



clients could obtain the piece rates “...if they want to know...” them. In other words, they had to ask one of the supervisory staff members in order to acquire this information. Jason noted that the lack of knowledge regarding the piece rates was problematic for clients who needed to plan their financial expenditures in advance:

...if you have to budget money and you need to know how much you're making, how much your cheque's gonna be, then you're not being told, then you can't really plan, you know, to pay bills and stuff like that, like you know. If you're budgeting and stuff. So that's another, that's a negative, you know.

Not only then was the lack of communication pertaining to the piece rates concerning for the clients while they were working at the organization because they did not know how much they were earning that particular day, but it also had broader ramifications because they could not accurately budget their finances and plan their expenses according to their earnings.

Yet, other clients had a differing perspective on their earnings. Instead of feeling frustration about the aforementioned issues regarding pay, these clients were simply satisfied to have a job where they were earning a wage. In particular, Julia explained that it had been difficult for her to find a job due to a mental illness. She was in her fifties and had worked at the organization for more than 3 years. Julia was previously employed at a mainstream workplace for over 15 years, but had to leave because she was not mentally capable of managing the pressure and demands associated with her job. When speaking about her earnings, Julia stated: “...the days that I make less money don't upset me and when I make more money I'm surprised and happy. And I'm just happy to accept whatever they give me”. Jacob had a similar perspective as Julia. He had worked at New Day Employment for more than 10 years and was in his fifties. Jacob added: “...whatever I'm making I receive with gratitude”. Both of these clients agreed that it was nice to be making money because it helped them pay for some of their financial expenses. However, the amount of money they were making was not a significant

concern for Julia and Jacob. Instead, merely being employed and earning a wage made them happy because it gave them a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment.

### **6.5 Maintaining a Healthy Balance between Social Mission and Financial Sustainability**

Although the staff members of the organization recognized that clients made considerably less than the maximum of 10 dollars per hour and were often dissatisfied with their wages, the manager and executive director argued that this situation was determined in large part by the need to maintain a healthy balance between New Day Employment's social mission and its finances. Specifically, they argued that the organization could not feasibly establish a minimum wage due to its current financial status and the logistics of implementing such a wage. George explained that if New Day Employment started to pay a minimum wage, it would become bankrupt because clients would essentially be paid a salary rather than a piece rate for the amount of work they completed. Since the social enterprise did not have the monetary resources to pay its client population a salaried wage, it would no longer be able to function as a business. Coupled with this issue was the rationale that the slow pace at which most of the clients performed jobs did not justify paying them a minimum wage. George stressed that:

...some of the clients, because of their disability, are so slow. They're here to have something to do, not to make a lot of money, and we just couldn't justify paying them minimum wage... 'cause the thing would collapse [laughs]. That's the objective, yeah, it's to be able to, but then you'd be turning some people away and saying, "no, since you can't work minimum wage speed, we can't afford to have you here".

Therefore, the manager viewed the organization as a place of alternative employment where individuals with mental health issues could have 'something to do' rather than a place where they could earn an income.

The views of the executive director were similar to that of the manager in relation to this issue. Susan argued that the money paid to clients was a 'training allowance' rather than an

income and, therefore, the worksite was not a place for them to make a reasonable amount of money. As previously noted, the worksite was defined as a training program that assisted individuals with mental illness to gain the skills required to transition into mainstream employment. Thus, low rates of pay were justified in part by the fact that the Training Program was viewed as a temporary place of work. However, as previously stated, clients stayed in the Program for an average of 5 years, with some staying more than 15 years. Both the executive director and the manager acknowledged this trend and had engaged in extensive discussions about whether or not to make the worksite a true training program. If this was done, the organization would need to establish a maximum length of time that clients could stay in the Program. Susan feared that future clients would be less interested in entering the Program if they had to leave after a certain date. This would result in a smaller client population, which in turn would lead to a decrease in the amount of product that could be completed for the customers they served. Consequently, the organization might lose customers if they could not complete various orders on time. Furthermore, clients who had been in the Program for many years would have to leave, which could have negative implications on their mental health, as their daily work routine would no longer exist. The complexity of this matter and the possible implications that the establishment of a true training program would have for both the clients and the organization had stalled the decision-making process and it was unclear whether the enterprise planned to eventually implement a maximum length of stay for its clients.

The topic of wages and the challenge of maintaining a balance between the organization's social mission and its finances were also related to how customer contracts were priced at New Day Employment. Throughout the research period, the manager stressed that, from a business perspective, the goal of the social enterprise was to have a constant flow of jobs

in order to avoid a period of time where there was no work. In order to accomplish this, prices for contracts were often quoted below the competitive market rate. Regarding this issue, George stated:

...when we price the jobs, they are priced lower than what the private sector would charge because we want to make sure we have work. We could go as high as the private sector, but we wouldn't get as many jobs.

Thus, ensuring that the organization continued to support itself financially by securing a constant flow of jobs was vital. Interestingly, a paradox existed here, as the social enterprise was a business that offered similar services to what was available in the private sector and, therefore, had to offer an appealing price to its customers even though it was not a place that provided competitive employment to the clients who were involved in the worksite.

Also, it appeared that the pricing of customer contracts was a broader issue which, in part, helped to explain why clients were paid a significantly small amount for the jobs they performed. Specifically, the lower the negotiated price of a customer contract, the lower the job would pay to the clients who were completing it. Moreover, the clients were only paid a percentage of the revenue made from each customer contract, as the organization retained some of the revenue to maintain its operations. At the time of data collection, the clients were paid 58 percent of what New Day Employment received from each contract, while the remaining 42 percent made from each piece was used to cover various organizational costs, such as the building rent and staff members' salaries. Depending on the enterprise's financial situation, the percentage paid to clients could fluctuate over time. George noted the specific variation in this percentage over the organization's 30 year history: "It has been as high as clients getting 65 percent or as low as them getting, like, 40...I think 50 percent is the lowest it's ever been...and now it's 58 [percent]". Hence, when New Day Employment required a higher proportion of the

revenue from customer contracts to cover its costs, it resulted in a lower percentage of that revenue being paid to the clients and, in turn, a lower piece rate. Therefore, the low wages paid to the clients, the imposed limit on earnings and the lack of a minimum wage stemmed from the healthy balance that New Day Employment was attempting to maintain between its social mission and financial sustainability.

## **6.6 A Place of Meaningful Activity for Clients**

In contrast to the negative views expressed by many clients regarding their earnings, they also noted that working at New Day Employment had personal benefits. Foremost, occupying a job at the organization allowed the clients to spend time outside the home. During a conversation with Brian in the worksite, he mentioned that he liked working at the enterprise because it gave him the opportunity to leave his house several times per week. Brian was one of the clients who equated the work to ‘slave labour’. However, he did not mind performing various tasks in the worksite because the work was “...better than sitting at home smoking cigarettes all day”. Being able to get out of the house and spend time in a different environment was important for Jordan as well. He explained that working provided him with a daily routine that he would not have otherwise established if he was unemployed. Jason concurred with Jordan, stating: “...that’s mainly the one reason why I come to [New Day Employment] is to get out of the apartment. You know, feel like you’re productive, you know...”. Jason concluded that even though he was not working 40 hours per week, which would be typical of a full-time employee in a mainstream workplace, his three morning shifts each week provided him with structure and a steady routine in his daily life.

More significantly, the feelings of productiveness that resulted from engaging in the worksite jobs and having a daily work routine had a positive impact on clients’ self-esteem.

Jacob described that "...[the work] makes me feel good about myself that...I've accomplished something at the end of the day". He clarified that the principal reason why he experienced a sense of accomplishment at the end of each work day was due to the fact that he was physically and mentally capable of carrying out the worksite tasks. Thus, the tasks matched Jacob's skill level well which, in turn, raised his confidence level because he was able to complete the jobs successfully. For Julia, working at New Day Employment not only increased her confidence in her work abilities, but it also altered her way of living, more generally:

...[the work] rehabilitates you. I, I see that I've benefitted from coming to work because I was getting very withdrawn and it sort of brought me out of my shell and helped me to get back into life again and living and interacting with people and I'm not as, uh, withdrawn as I used to be. It rehabilitates you, it does help. It's therapeutical. It helps you, helps you mental[ly] and it helps you to do, um, have a more positive outlook on life.

Therefore, the organization was a place of meaningful activity for many of the clients, as it provided them with a daily routine that made them feel as though they were productive and contributing members of society. Not only did working give them more confidence and self-esteem in their daily lives, but for some clients, like Julia, it gave them a more positive perspective on life as a whole.

## **6.7 The Range of Social Interactions in the Worksite and Beyond**

In addition to engaging in meaningful activity at the organization, spending time outside the home allowed clients to have social interactions with other individuals that they may not have been able to experience otherwise. The executive director commented on this issue:

For our clients, the social skills are a key concern...[the clients] isolate themselves in their home, their residence, you know, [so] with 40 other people...there is [an] opportunity...to interact with their supervisor, with co-clients and people that visit the worksite...

Consequently, conversing during works hours was not prohibited, provided that clients were performing their jobs simultaneously. However, based on my observations, only a handful of clients engaged in conversations while they worked or during scheduled breaks, and a larger proportion had minimal or no social contact with others at the organization. This division often resulted in a fairly quiet worksite environment, where few clients talked to each other while many others simply kept to themselves.

### **6.7.1 Conversing with Others At and Outside of the Workplace**

For a small proportion of clients who conversed with one another, their topics of conversation tended to focus on their personal lives or interests rather than on their mental health issues or work-related matters. For example, Jeremy and Ryan often talked to each other when they worked the same shift. Jeremy was in his thirties, while Ryan was in his twenties. They had both worked at New Day Employment for more than one year and the nature of their mental health issues were unknown. Jeremy and Ryan usually conversed about sports. They would discuss their favourite football and basketball teams, as well as the various sporting events they had watched on television since their last conversation. When Ryan was asked what he liked about working at the organization, he noted that he enjoyed the fact that he was able to socialize with other clients. Ryan went on to explain that when he first began working at New Day Employment, his primary focus was to make money rather than to socialize. However, over time, he began to take pleasure in the social interactions he had experienced with other clients, like Jeremy, and felt that earning a wage and having the opportunity to socialize with others were both important aspects of working at the organization for him now.

It is interesting to note that while most of the clients who talked with one another tended to do so only within the boundaries of the worksite, several clients had developed social

relationships that continued outside of the workplace. In particular, Brandon and Henry would meet at a local restaurant for dinner every so often. They used these occasions to talk about their favourite music groups and the places they had visited recently. Brandon, who was in his sixties and had worked at New Day Employment for more than 3 years, stated that he liked spending time with Henry because they shared similar interests and experience a good deal of laughter together. Brandon also expressed a desire to socially interact with other clients outside of the worksite as well, but found that he did not have common interests with any of them. This was a problem that Fred faced in the worksite. He was in his forties and had worked at the organization for less than one year. He noted: “I just find that, um, you just find you socialize here...and that’s it. Like once you’re outside you don’t really hang out...”. Fred was asked if the short length of time he had spent working at New Day Employment may have influenced his development of social relationships outside the worksite. He stated that he did not think time was an important factor and continued by saying: “If you just meet somebody who cares about the same thing you’ll be talking more, you’ll go far, but if you don’t, you don’t. You know, and some people just, just don’t...get along”. Thus, having similar interests seemed to be an important factor for Brandon and Fred when it came to social interactions with others outside of the organization.

### **6.7.2 Being ‘Social’ by Being With?**

As previously mentioned, it was observed that the majority of clients had minimal or no social interaction with each other during work hours or while they were taking their scheduled breaks. There were multiple times when I observed clients sitting quietly together at the table in the worksite kitchen or at the picnic tables outside during their breaks (refer to **Figure 5.1**). The two field note excerpts below exemplify these observations:



At the [kitchen] table on the [worksite] floor, I noticed [Amber] and [Lucy] sitting quietly across from each other. They were each eating a snack, but did not converse with each other. They sat there for the entire break period and when the bell went, they went back to work without talking... (July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

...I saw [Lindsay], [Jackson], [Kim], [Rodney] and [Connor] sitting at picnic tables, but no one was talking to [one another]. They were quietly smoking or eating their lunch[es]. Once they were done, most of them went back inside or just sat outside enjoying the sunny day. (August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

However, some of the clients who kept to themselves still considered their time at the organization to be social in nature. In particular, I observed that Ann did not usually talk very much with other clients, but she explained to me that she liked attending the Training Program because it was her only opportunity to have “social time” each week. On a particularly hot and humid day, Ann was given permission by the manager to sit in the front end of the building during her breaks to manage a respiratory issue. I also took my breaks in this area and observed the following situation:

[Ann] ate lunch at the table in the front end to keep cool. Interestingly, she brought another client with her, [Lucy]. [Ann] told me that she saw [Lucy] sitting by herself eating lunch in the worksite and thought she would bring [Lucy] into the front to eat lunch with her. However, they did not talk very much, as I don't think they socialize very often in the worksite together. Instead, they made small talk (i.e. what tasks they were working on today and what they had brought for lunch) and quietly ate their lunches. (July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

Lucy was in her thirties and had worked at New Day Employment for less than one year. It was possible that Ann was showing kindness towards Lucy by inviting her to lunch since Lucy was fairly new to the enterprise. Yet, Ann and Lucy barely talked while they ate their lunches, reinforcing the fact that Ann's definition of ‘social time’ did not necessarily mean engaging in conversation, but instead meant that she could be surrounded by other people rather than being alone.

Simply being with others appeared to be an integral aspect of the social enterprise for several other clients as well. Specifically, Luke discussed that when his ODSP case worker suggested he apply to the Training Program at New Day Employment, he was not initially interested because he had been deemed unemployable due to the severity of his OCD. But, after he began working at the organization, Luke found that he was very happy to be there because he enjoyed being around other people during the day. Jacob shared a similar perspective, noting that the social aspect was one of main benefits of coming to the organization. He stated: “...part of why it’s good to come here is to be with other people”. Therefore, these clients challenged the pre-conceived norm that social interaction meant conversing with others. Instead, for this group of clients, merely being around others during the work day was considered to be a valid form of social interaction.

## **Chapter Seven**

---

### **Analyzing the Provision of Accommodations in the Workplace**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

Here, in the last of the analysis chapters, the types of accommodations provided to clients at New Day Employment will be explored. Specifically, three types of accommodations were evident. Mental health accommodations were the most prevalent in the workplace and manifested in the clients' work schedules, the nature of the work and the manner in which staff members addressed mental illness. Physical disability and transportation accommodations were also present at the organization and, while important, these forms benefitted fewer clients than the accommodations that focused on mental health.

#### **7.2 Mental Health Accommodations**

As noted above, the most prevailing type of accommodations at New Day Employment focused on the clients' mental health issues. The following eight mental health accommodations were present.

##### **7.2.1 Flexibility in the Number of Hours and Days Worked**

First, clients were afforded flexibility in the number of hours and days they worked each week. While the organization stipulated that clients had to work a minimum of 10 to 12 hours per week, they could choose how these hours were distributed over the course of the week. Specifically, clients had the option to work 2 full days (5.75 hours each day), 3 morning shifts (3.25 hours each day) or 4 afternoon shifts (2.5 hours each day) each week. Clients with the most severe mental health conditions tended to choose one of the two latter options because working a full day was more than they could manage. The weekly schedule each client started out with at the organization could also be adjusted for various reasons. For example, if clients wanted to change the number of days they worked to avoid missing doctor's appointments or weekly

meetings with their case worker, they could alter their schedule accordingly. Also, clients who felt they were capable of working more hours than the organization's minimum requirement could increase the total number of hours they worked each week over a period of time, at the discretion of their assigned VSW. Susan described the flexibility afforded to clients regarding their weekly work schedules:

They choose how many days and hours they are able to work. So we have some people that work 5 hours, 5 days a week. So they would be full-time, that would be 20 hours a week and we have some clients that are not able to do that. They would work less hours...we are trying to be supportive to the fact that they have a mental illness. So, you know, if they can't work a full day, or they can't work 5 days a week, we are understanding of that.

It is important to note that while it was obvious that the organization was flexible when clients wanted to increase the number of hours they worked each week, it was unclear if clients were offered similar flexibility when they that wanted to decrease the number of hours or days worked if their psychiatric symptoms became more severe over time.

For some clients, solely working the minimum number of hours imposed by the organization was more than they could cope with each week. This was not a common problem, but it did arise every so often and usually became apparent to VSWs shortly after a new client began working at New Day Employment. Susan described why this issue occurred and how these staff members dealt with it:

There [are] some that aren't able to, you know, to maintain the consistency and get up in the morning because of mental illness, you know, because of the side effects of the medication, to maintain that consistency. You know, we'll find them, we'll connect them to other agencies in the community that are more appropriate, that are good for them.

VSWs typically connected these clients with community organizations that had available volunteer positions because this type of work required fewer hours of involvement and could aid these individuals in establishing a consistent work routine to prepare them for alternative

employment at a later point in time. Thus, allowing clients to choose the number of days and hours they worked each week was helpful for accommodating their mental health and work capabilities, yet requiring them to work a minimum of 10 to 12 hours per week meant that it was not an appropriate workplace for some individuals with mental illness who were interested in an alternative form of paid employment.

### **7.2.2 The Pace of Work**

In addition, clients were allowed to work at a pace that best suited their mental and physical capabilities. Most days, those who operated at a faster pace performed the same tasks as others who worked more slowly. However, when a job needed to be completed quickly, VSWs usually assigned faster clients to that task or replaced slower clients with faster ones if the job was already in progress. These staff members did not penalize the slower clients for not being able to complete the job in a short period of time and ensured that these individuals would have another task to perform so that they would not be without work. Also, there were no enforced quotas regarding how much finished product needed to be completed by the end of their shifts. The lack of such a policy resulted in a varied completion rate between clients per day. Susan elaborated on this trend: "...they can work at their own pace, you know, 'cause some might work exceedingly fast, you know, and do 300 units at their own pace and some might do 30 units a day". While faster individuals typically earned more money, due to their higher productivity level, allowing clients to work at a pace that was comfortable for them was important because it meant that their speed did not determine their eligibility for, or employability in, the Training Program.

Many clients noted that this accommodation created a less pressured work environment when compared to previous jobs they had held in mainstream workplaces. Jason explained that

he often felt stressed at his previous places of competitive employment because there were certain deadlines imposed on him that were difficult to attain due to the speed at which he worked. When he compared his previous jobs to the work he performed at New Day Employment, he said: "...there's not a whole lot of stress. There's no deadlines...You're not killing yourself to try to get something done, you know". Similarly, for Henry, keeping up with the pace of work expected by his previous employer at a mainstream workplace was difficult for him to manage. He liked this job because it paid approximately 14 dollars per hour, but it also frustrated and upset him because he worked at a much slower pace than his colleagues. Henry's manager would often ask another employee of the company to help Henry complete various tasks in order to stay on schedule, which further added to his frustration. Henry knew he was not capable of working as fast as his colleagues, yet he did not want to leave his position because it was one of the better paying jobs he had held. However, after an undisclosed period of time, he was fired by his manager because he could not keep up the same pace of work as the other employees at the company. Henry believed that the staff members at New Day Employment treated him more fairly when compared to his manager in the competitive sector because he was not looked down upon for working slowly.

Being part of a low-stress work environment at the organization also made the clients feel comfortable performing their assigned tasks because there was less pressure placed on them by the supervisory staff members to work at a speed they were incapable of achieving. Julia made a striking comparison between the demands of her previous mainstream job and her current position at the enterprise:

When I worked at [my previous job], I worked from, at first it was 8:30 to 4:30, 5 days a week and then they gave me the option, you could work that 8:30 to 4:30 or 9 to 5, 5 days a week. But I had so much work to do that sometimes I had to go in a Saturday or Sunday and work on weekends too, just to get everything done.

And then by the time I was leaving the job...I had so much work they had to be giving me someone to assist me, so I think I left at the right time and I really would have needed an assistant, you know. And so it was a lot of work and I didn't have the best of health, but I did the best I could. And this job is so much more relaxing, so much easier, so much less pressure, so comfortable...It's like a family here and they understand that you have a mental illness and at times you will do better than other times, sometimes you'll feel better than other times.

Maintaining an accommodating and comfortable workplace for clients was one of the organization's social goals. Yet, some staff members believed that, to some extent, it was at a detriment to the temporary nature of the Training Program that New Day Employment sought to achieve. Tom stated: "[The worksite is] supposed to be comfortable for them and not stressful and whatnot, but sometimes that's not a good thing 'cause then they get too comfortable here and then moving them on is pretty difficult". Joe added that the clients appeared to view the worksite as a "safe-zone" because it was much more accommodating to their mental health needs than their previous jobs in mainstream employment. Consequently, he thought that the organization may be "too" accommodating by allowing clients to work at their own pace because it did not reflect the realities of the competitive sector, making it harder for clients to eventually transition out of the worksite. Consequently, Joe found it difficult to strike an effective balance between letting clients stay in the worksite until they felt ready to leave and encouraging them to move on to mainstream employment when it was clear they could handle the demands of this type of paid work. He said: "... you don't want to push someone too far...right. Otherwise they'll just go backwards". Thus, Joe felt that persuading clients to transition into competitive employment could be more harmful than helpful because the changes to their daily work routine and added stress of a new job could potentially worsen their psychiatric symptoms if they did not feel ready to leave. This issue helps to explain, in part, why clients worked at the organization for an

average of 5.4 years, with some working as long as 15 years or more, even though the Training Program was intended to be a temporary place of alternative employment.

### **7.2.3 Being Shown and Reminded How to Perform Worksite Tasks**

Furthermore, many clients had difficulty comprehending instructions due to the nature of their mental health issues or experienced forgetfulness as a side effect of their prescribed medication. To accommodate these clients, worksite staff members were always willing to show or remind them what steps needed to be performed in order to complete a particular job successfully. Isaac was one client in particular who required this assistance. He was in his forties and suffered from schizophrenia, which began during his teenage years. Isaac had worked at the organization for more than 2 years and one morning I observed the following exchange between him and Grace, his VSW:

...I noticed that when [Isaac] came in this morning he asked [Grace] if he could do the hand wipes task. However, when she said yes he said he could only do it if she showed him how because he did not remember what he had to do. Once [Isaac] found a spot to do his work [Grace] went over and explained the job to him again and the steps he would need to [perform]. [Isaac] worked all day today and throughout the day I saw him working quietly at his station and it seemed like he was able to follow the instructions, as he was successfully putting the wipes into each bag as [Grace] had [shown] him to do. (June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

Although Isaac relied on this accommodation in the worksite, it was unclear how useful he found it to be in his daily work routine.

Other clients noted that this type of accommodation was one aspect of the organization they liked best. For example, Fred explained that he respected the VSWs for taking the time to explain how the worksite tasks needed to be carried out: “You know...at least if you don’t understand, just ask them. They’re really approachable for that, at least you can ask them for, say okay, you know, “how do you do this job?””. He stressed that verbal instructions were not



always helpful to him because he could not remember them clearly or write down the details of a task quickly. Instead, he found that seeing a step-by-step demonstration of how a task needed to be performed, like Grace had done with Isaac, or an example of what the completed product should look like was more useful. Jacob agreed with Fred, saying that he liked being shown the steps of a task before he began working on it. He stated: “The staff are willing to help to make sure you can do it [and] show you how to do the job”. Providing the finished product to use as a template, as Fred discussed, was not feasible for every task in the worksite, but it was used for some jobs that involved weighted materials so that clients could estimate how many pieces of product were needed to fill each bag. For example, clients were often given a finished bag of candy for the Niagara Parks Commission task to visualize how much candy should be placed in each bag prior to it being weighed for accuracy. I often observed clients at this station holding up the finished bag next to the bag they were filling in order to determine whether or not they had placed enough candy in their bag.

Demonstrating how a particular job needed to be done was not always accomplished by staff members in overt ways. Sometimes, a subtle visual reminder was used to remind clients about certain aspects of a task. This was especially evident with the bath beads job, where clients had to place a specific number of coloured beads into glass jars:

During my time in the worksite this morning, I was asked by [Lucy] how many green and blue bath beads to put into each glass container... When I confirmed with [Joe] that it was 11 green beads and 10 blue beads, [Lucy] wrote it down on a piece of paper to keep beside her. Then [Joe] decided to write the number on the box of each colour of bead (an 11 on the box filled with green beads and a 10 on the box filled with blue beads). I also noticed this on the [metal] screw task earlier in the week, where a number 4 was written on each box of screws [to indicate how many] needed to be placed into the plastic bags. (June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

Having numbers written clearly on each box seemed to be an effective reminder for clients because they could see the numbers directly in front of them and associate each colour with how many pieces of that particular product needed to be packaged.

Showing and reminding clients how worksite tasks needed to be done appeared to consume a significant portion of the supervisory staff members' time each day, as it was an ongoing issue in the worksite. Yet, none of the supervisory staff discussed this accommodation at length or how it may have affected their role at the organization, although George noted that:

...you've got people that are coming in, a lot of people, most are coming in either for a morning or an afternoon [shift]. So, you get a job going very nicely with a morning group and the afternoon group, you got to train everybody in the afternoon, so it puts a strain on staff.

George's statement gave some insight into this issue by indicating that accommodating the clients in this manner put a certain degree of pressure on the supervisory staff members who had multiple responsibilities in the worksite. However, George spent the majority of his time each work day in his office, managing customer contracts and the business operations of the organization and, therefore, more research needs to be gathered from the perspective of the worksite staff to determine the extent of the strain they faced when accommodating clients here.

#### **7.2.4 Listening to Music While Working**

Listening to music during the work day, in the form of a radio playing in the worksite, was another type of mental health accommodation, as it had a more significant purpose than simply helping clients pass the time while they worked. Tom explained that playing music each day was helpful for some of the clients because "...it drowns out their thoughts in their head[s]...". This was especially important for those with schizophrenia, who sometimes found it difficult to concentrate on the task at hand when they were constantly hearing voices due to the nature of their mental health condition. When clients were experiencing particularly difficult

days, the staff members would turn the volume up louder than normal to help these individuals cope with their symptoms more effectively. However, since the radio was played throughout the worksite for everyone to hear, Tom acknowledged that not all of the clients benefitted from the increased radio volume. He stated: “...some of them like it up loud and some of them don’t like it.”

Charlotte was one of the clients in this latter group. She was in her sixties and had worked at New Day Employment intermittently for more than 3 years. Charlotte suffered from an anxiety disorder and was very vocal about her dislike of loud music in the worksite because it seemed to affect her anxiety level. Andrea illustrated one instance where Charlotte complained about this issue:

This afternoon [Andrea] told me that while she was in the worksite [Charlotte] got mad at her because [Andrea] wouldn’t turn down the radio...[Andrea] said that [Charlotte] often asks for the radio to be turned down because it is too loud and this makes her anxious. [Andrea] said she usually turns down the radio when [Charlotte] asks, but today she refused to...because approx[imately] 5 of her clients were not having a good mental health day and they needed the radio on at that volume in order to drown out the voices in their heads. [Andrea] explained this to [Charlotte] and told her that if she was feeling anxious she could leave work for the day...[Andrea] did not turn down the radio. (July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2013, field note excerpt)

This case demonstrates that although loud music managed some clients’ mental health symptoms, it could also have an adverse affect on other clients’ symptoms. In the example above, tensions arose between Charlotte and Andrea because Charlotte did not view the loud music as an advantageous mental health accommodation. Andrea had to discern what was best for the clients in her caseload. Since five of them were experiencing a poor mental health day, Andrea decided that leaving the radio at a higher than average volume was necessary in order to help those clients cope with the constant voices they were hearing. It did not appear that Andrea was minimizing the seriousness of Charlotte’s mental health condition and work-related needs,

as she had turned the volume down on the radio for her in the past. Instead, Andrea had to determine the course of action that would accommodate the most clients.

A more individualized form of this accommodation was also implemented in the worksite. Clients who had a difficult time concentrating each day as a result of their psychiatric symptoms were permitted, with the presentation of a doctor's note, to wear headphones and listen to music on a personal music player that they brought from home. Approximately 5 clients wore headphones in the worksite. Fred was one of them and noted that he liked this accommodation because it gave him the opportunity to listen to his favourite genres of music and, as a result, focus more clearly on his work. He explained that being able to choose the style of music he enjoyed, rather than having to listen to the genre being played in the worksite was not afforded to him at previous mainstream workplaces where he had been employed. Consequently, Fred found that he disliked those jobs because of this lack of choice. Thus, for Fred, being able to bring a personal music player to work was important because it individualized his needs by giving him the freedom to listen to the genres of music he enjoyed, which in turn improved his concentration level while performing various tasks.

### **7.2.5 Working Alone in the Worksite**

Allowing clients to work alone was another form of accommodation that focused on maintaining the clients' concentration in the worksite. Unlike listening to music, which benefitted a large portion of the client population, few clients required this alternative and, consequently, only a small amount of data was collected regarding this issue. Daniel was one client in particular who worked alone in the worksite. When asked about this situation, Tom explained that throughout the time Daniel had worked at the organization "...he's always had his own, his own little area off to the side...". This area was located directly behind the worksite

kitchen and consisted of a work table and chair. Here, Daniel was not completely isolated from other clients, but was distant from them nonetheless. As previously noted, Daniel lived with OCD. His symptoms were characterized by a constant need to have order in all aspects of his life. It took him longer than others to carry out tasks because his mental illness influenced the ways he packaged and assembled the pieces of various products. Therefore, allowing Daniel to work alone accommodated his mental health issues, as he was able to control his need for order with minimal distraction from others.

#### **7.2.6 Taking Additional Breaks During the Work Day**

In addition to the scheduled morning, lunch and afternoon breaks each work day, clients were allowed to take extra breaks during the work day, provided that they first obtained permission from one of the supervisory staff members. George explained that due to their mental health conditions, some clients required additional rest periods: "...if they needed to take a rest, they can leave the worksite floor and go over and sit at the kitchen table or they can go off to a quiet spot. They might go for a walk outside or whatever". For example, one particular day I observed Andrea allowing Kim to take additional breaks. Kim was in her fifties and had worked at New Day Employment sporadically for more than 3 years. Kim suffered from schizophrenia and forgot to take her antipsychotic medication that day. As a result, she kept hearing voices telling her that she was fat and ugly. Kim was part of Andrea's caseload and came into the office where Andrea and I were working. She was visibly upset and told Andrea that the voices were bothering her and interfering with her ability to work. Since Andrea knew that Kim had not taken her medication that day and was clearly distressed due to her symptoms, Andrea told Kim that she could take breaks throughout the day when she felt unwell. If additional breaks did not aid clients' psychiatric symptoms, the VSWs would have to re-evaluate the situation. Often times,

these staff members allowed clients to leave work for the remainder of the day because they were unfit to work. This was the case with Kim. Although taking several extra breaks initially accommodated her needs, Kim was too ill to work the full day and asked Andrea if she could go home to rest and take her medication. Andrea thought this would be best option for Kim and agreed that she could leave.

Accommodating clients in this regard was not always easy for worksite staff members. Tom acknowledged that completing jobs on schedule while tending to clients' mental health needs was challenging at times:

...when [the organization is] busy it's very difficult to do that, but you kinda have to. Just, again, it's the nature of their illness, right? So, if you don't, it could create more problems (laughs) then if you say, "no, you have to stay sitting down, you have to work"

Some of the staff members also felt that some clients also attempted to take advantage of this accommodation by asking for extra breaks that were unnecessary. Getting to know each client's symptoms then became imperative for worksite staff members in order to navigate this issue.

Tom indicated:

...well you kind of get to know people. Sometimes they...they really do need the break, sometimes they're saying they need a break when they don't really need a break, they just want to go out and have a smoke. So, you kind of get to know.

It was clear that additional breaks during the work day were an important accommodation for clients because it provided them with an extra period of rest when they were in a poor state of mental health that compromised their ability to complete various worksite tasks effectively. Since the business operations at the organization could only run smoothly if clients were continuously working on the various jobs, worksite staff members recognized that giving clients additional breaks when necessary was not only beneficial for the clients' mental health, but for their productivity level as well. Yet, providing extra breaks was sometimes made difficult when

clients tried to take advantage of this accommodation and, therefore, staff members had to pay close attention to the clients' individual behaviours over time in order to discern which clients were being truthful about their psychiatric symptoms.

### **7.2.7 Short- and Long-Term Absence Policies**

New Day Employment had several accommodation policies in place when clients were not feeling well due to their mental health issues and required either a short- or long-term absence from work. First, the organization afforded clients a great deal of leniency for short-term absences that ranged from several days to several weeks. If a client was ill, they simply had to call the organization prior to the start of their shift, notify their assigned VSW that they were not well enough to come to work and indicate the length of time they would be absent. George explained that there was no maximum number of 'sick days' each client could take each month. This was partly because the clients were not salaried employees of the organization. Perhaps more significantly, it was also due to the fact that the clients could unexpectedly experience severe psychiatric symptoms that left them unable to function at work for days or weeks at a time. Thus, George stated that: "If [clients] need to be off for a few weeks, we'll keep their position for them". Implementing this policy meant that clients did not have to worry about being asked to leave the Training Program because of an absence lasting several weeks. Once they were feeling well enough, they could return to work with no penalty.

There were different organizational procedures put in place when clients were absent from the Training Program for one month or longer, defined as a long-term absence. George outlined the course of action regarding this issue:

If they're gonna be off for more than a month or so, uh, we would ask, we would discharge them from the program and when they want to come back, if they do want to come back at some point, we would fast-track them in.

Although clients would no longer be able to keep their position at the organization, they would be able to ‘fast-track’ back into the Training Program if they chose to return in the future. In other words, they could bypass prospective clients who were on the waiting list to be admitted to the Program. George explained that clients’ background information and mental health histories were stored on the organization’s computer database after they were discharged. VSWs also used the database to document whether or not these particular clients were capable of working the minimum number of hours, or more, prior to their absence. With this information, another intake assessment was not necessary to determine the clients’ eligibility for the Program. Susan added that the organization dealt with this issue frequently:

...we do have a lot of people that leave and then that come back to the Program. Whether it is a couple of months or a year later, we've, we've seen a lot of people come back, you know, based on their health.

When compared to the policy implemented for short-term absences, the organizational procedures for long-term absences were less lenient. Yet, New Day Employment still accommodated clients who wished to return to the Training Program once they were well enough to do so, as they could directly re-enter without being placed on the wait list. The frequency with which clients appeared to leave and re-enter the worksite helps to explain the seemingly cyclical nature of admission and discharge noted in in Chapter Four.

### **7.2.8 Talking Openly with Staff Members about Mental Health Issues**

Lastly, some of the clients noted that they liked working at the organization because they were able to speak openly with staff members about their mental health issues. Jacob, for example, stated that the VSWs understood that clients were living with mental illness. This made it easier to talk to them about how his illness affected him at work instead of having to keep his



health condition confidential for fear that he would be judged or possibly even fired from his job.

He explained:

Well...they, they know and they understand that you're, you're trying to cope with a mental illness, so they're sort of supporting you in that. Whereas if you just went out into the regular working world, you would, sort a, keep it confidential and, and, it wouldn't part of the understanding.

Jason had a similar experience regarding the way his mental illness was treated by staff members. He elaborated on Jacob's statement by providing a broader perspective about how society, more generally, viewed mental illness and how, in turn, it affected the level of openness clients could have with their previous employers in mainstream workplaces. Jason said:

Like, I mean the public's, the public's view on mental illness is starting to, they're starting to open their eyes about it, but it's still hush-hush. So when you're at a, another employment and you're goin' through this, you know, you really can't talk about it and, you know what I mean? Like here you can...they understand, you know, what you're goin' through.

Having staff members understand the clients' experiences and symptoms was important for Jacob and Jason because they could be provided with the appropriate mental health accommodations they needed to work effectively in the worksite.

Luke also felt that the staff members were 'understanding' at the organization, yet his definition of this word appeared to be rather different from Jacob and Jason. When speaking with him one afternoon, Luke mentioned that the VSWs were "very understanding". When he was asked to clarify how he defined that statement, Luke explained that he did not think the staff members could relate to how clients were mentally suffering each day because they were not mental health consumers themselves. Instead, he believed staff members were aware that clients were mentally ill and, as a result, they did not judge clients negatively when they were experiencing a "bad" mental health day and wanted to talk about how they were feeling. From

Luke's perspective, staff members were aware of clients' struggles, but could not directly relate to them.

Whether staff members could identify with the lived experiences associated with mental illness or were simply aware of the symptoms associated with clients' mental health issues, it was clear that they had an obligation to pay attention to clients' needs because the organization aimed to be a place of accommodation. However, this responsibility could also be a source of enjoyment for staff members. In particular, Andrea indicated that talking openly with clients about their mental health was the aspect of the VSW role that gave her the most joy. She explained that being able to listen to clients' issues, accommodate their work-related needs and provide them with comforting words, especially when they were experiencing a poor mental health day, was the highlight of her job. She contrasted this part of her position at the organization to the large amount of paperwork she had to complete on a weekly basis by saying that performing tasks at her desk was much less interesting. Thus, being able to interact openly about mental illness was an important feature of the work environment for both clients and worksite staff members.

### **7.3 Physical Disability Accommodations**

Aside from mental health accommodations, New Day Employment also implemented several physical disability accommodations for clients who required adjustments to the built environment of the worksite. For example, the organization had a paved ramp at the back entrance of the worksite to accommodate clients who could not manage a flight of stairs. Additionally, wide aisles were maintained between work tables and kept clear of cardboard boxes of product and any debris, such as pieces of product that had fallen to the ground. Not only did this facilitate ease of movement for clients who required the use of a cane or a walker, but it

was also an important safety precaution to avoid injury among the entire client and staff population. Furthermore, the worksite did not have air conditioning and relied on floor fans to keep the area cool. During extremely hot days throughout the summer months, clients with respiratory issues were permitted to work at a table in the front end of the organization because the heat exacerbated their conditions. These clients were also able to take their breaks in the front end rather than at the worksite kitchen table, at the sitting area located in the mezzanine level of the worksite or outside at the picnic tables (refer to **Figure 5.1**) where the rest of the clients took their breaks. Although there were few clients who required physical disability accommodations, these modifications were necessary to meet their specific needs.

#### **7.4 Transportation Accommodation**

Finally, New Day Employment operated a van service to transport certain clients to and from the worksite each day. The organization had one van in operation during the research period and employed one male driver. Clients were only eligible for this service if they met certain criteria put in place by the enterprise. Primarily, clients had to reside in the city adjacent to where New Day Employment was located. George explained that clients living in the same city as the enterprise had access to several forms of public transportation, including the city bus and commuter rail train, which could transport them to work efficiently. In other words, clients would only have to take one bus or train route to access the worksite in a timely manner. However, clients who resided in the neighbouring city often had to make several bus and/or train connections to get to the organization because they lived farther away. From the manager's perspective, it would take too much time and effort for these clients to travel to work this way. New Day Employment would make exceptions, however, for clients who lived in the same city as the enterprise if their mental health issues made it difficult for them to take public

transportation. George explained this matter by saying: "...there are people that just, um, because of their illness have extreme anxiety, anxiety taking public transit, so the van's it or they wouldn't be here". Interestingly, George also noted that the organization had previously provided some of these clients with transit training in an attempt to quell their anxiety. The clients seemed to respond well when they were in the presence of the trainers, but when it was time for them to navigate the transit system independently their anxiety levels increased again, making it too difficult for them to get to work.

Additionally, clients were only eligible for this service if they were scheduled to work a full-day shift because there was no afternoon van service. Instead, the driver made two separate trips to New Day Employment each morning, picking clients up at their place of residence and bringing them to the worksite. At the end of the day, the driver would pick-up the same clients that had used the service in the morning and bring them back home. The van could carry up to 5 clients each trip, resulting in a maximum of 10 clients that could be accommodated each day. Clients who were picked up during the second morning trip were the first to return home at the end of the day. George described the rationale for this schedule: "[The] second run tends to be the, um, people with the most serious disabilities and even though they get in later than the others and they go home earlier it's a long day for them". Therefore, the organization had to take into account the nature of the clients' mental health issues when creating the van schedule.

It is important to note that this service was not complimentary. Clients were charged 4 dollars per day for round-trip transportation and this amount was deducted from their bi-weekly pay cheques. The majority of clients using this service did not disclose their feelings about any aspect of this service. However, Ryan mentioned that he liked the van because it was significantly less expensive than the seven dollars it cost to take the city bus to and from work

each day. At the time of data collection, approximately 19 clients used the van service and there was a waiting list of 2 months for clients requiring transportation accommodation. Since this service was the only option some individuals had to attend work, prospective clients could not begin working at New Day Employment until a space was available for them on the van.

## **Chapter Eight**

---

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

This final chapter will provide a summary of the key themes and findings that emerged from this research project. Additionally, the empirical, methodological and conceptual contributions the study makes to the existing knowledge pertaining to social enterprises for individuals with mental illness will be examined. Furthermore, the limitations associated with this research will be addressed. Based on the study findings and limitations, this chapter will conclude by outlining potential directions for future research.

#### **8.2 Summary of Key Findings**

This thesis research sought to produce an in-depth analysis that examined the daily operations of a non-profit, agency-operated social enterprise in Ontario, Canada, and the experiences of the workers within it. Participant observation, semi-structured interviews and a focus group were conducted at New Day Employment in the GTA. While the organization offered several programs, its Training Program was the focus of investigation. This Program was intended to be a temporary place of employment, where individuals with mental illness could gain work-related skills in an accommodating environment before transitioning into mainstream work. After analyzing the collected data, multiple themes emerged from the case study, including: the nature of the work and the labour process; the clients' wages and the pricing of jobs; the organization as a place of meaningful activity and social interaction; and the provision of workplace accommodations.

Regarding the nature of the work and the labour process, which was examined in Chapter Five, the packaging and assembly work at New Day Employment was very repetitive and hands-on. Some of the jobs were not very clean, like the clothes hangers, and the repetitiveness of the

work caused some clients to experience physical soreness. These issues are probably no different from those experienced by individuals who engage in similar types of packaging and assembly work in the competitive sector. Additionally, there was a variety of jobs that clients could work on each day and the skill level required to successfully complete each job varied. Offering a variety of jobs in the worksite was important for both the clients and the organization, as it allowed clients to work on tasks that they were mentally and physically capable of performing which, in turn, kept the business operations of the social enterprise running efficiently. However, due to the fact that all of the clients were living with a mental illness and some of them experienced side effects from their prescription medications, the organization had to be particularly vigilant regarding quality control of the finished products.

Furthermore, clients were permitted a great deal of flexibility in the ways in which they carried out each step of the packaging and assembly process and, while they were sometimes assigned specific tasks, they were typically afforded some degree of choice in the jobs they performed. It was evident that two aspects of the work influenced their choices: the wage associated with the job and the clients' comfort level in performing a task. However, giving the clients the ability to exercise some degree of agency over the types of tasks they performed in the worksite was a source of frustration for some of the VSWs, who believed the clients were "spoiled" and feared that if clients continued to have the ability to choose their jobs, it would undermine their authority as supervisors. Consequently, the VSWs had to negotiate an effective balance between allowing the clients to choose their tasks some of the time and assigning tasks without giving them a choice when there was pressure to meet a contract deadline or when the only tasks present in the worksite were ones that clients disliked. The tensions created between staff authority and client agency is a significant finding, as it raises questions about whether the

enterprise is a workplace where clients are managed and disciplined or if it truly is a ‘training program’ where the clients do not have the same degree of managerial control. From the perspective of the VSWs, the Training Program is a worksite where they can assert their authority and manage the clients. However, when the clients are given a great deal of choice, and the enterprise more broadly tries to be both a training program and a place of business, these tensions arise between the VSWs and clients.

Clients’ wages, the pricing of jobs and the enterprise as a place of meaningful activity were explored in Chapter Six. In terms of wages, three rates of pay were used at the organization: a piece rate, an hourly rate and a team hourly rate. The piece rate was the most common and paid the client for each piece, or unit, or product they completed. It was discovered that a negative relationship existed between the piece rate and the degree of skill required to complete a particular task. In other words, the piece rate was lower for higher-skilled tasks. In contrast, a positive relationship was found between the hourly rate and the level of skill required to complete a certain job. Here, higher-skilled jobs paid a higher rate to the clients. Still, the majority of jobs paid very little and clients, on average, earned far less than the 10 dollar per hour maximum imposed by New Day Employment. Many clients were dissatisfied with these wages and equated their earnings to “slave labour”. This issue was multifaceted, as clients’ frustration stemmed from the low piece rates that were typical in the worksite, the imposed limit on earnings, the absence of a minimum wage and a lack of knowledge regarding the amount that various jobs paid. In contrast, other clients were not concerned about the amount of money they earned and were simply happy to have a job where they could earn a wage.

While the staff members of the organization recognized that the clients made considerably less than the maximum of 10 dollars per hour and were often dissatisfied with their



wages, the manager and executive director stressed that there were several reasons why the organizational policies pertaining to the clients' earnings had been implemented. Here, it was evident that the enterprise was attempting to maintain a healthy balance between its social mission and its finances. Implications of this finding existed at both the levels of the organization and the client. At an organizational level, there was acknowledgement of the low wages paid to workers, but there was also a counter-argument that implementing higher wages was financially unsustainable for the enterprise. The fact that it was not feasible to pay a higher wage was shaped, in part, by the relationship that the organization had with its customers, or private sector companies. Quoting and securing contracts at a less than competitive price allowed New Day Employment to secure work and continue their operations, but it directly affected the amount in which they could compensate clients. Consequently, for clients, the economic benefits of the work were unclear. While clients earned a wage for the jobs they performed, it was well below the hourly minimum wage in Ontario. Moreover, many of the clients took public transit to get to and from the organization and, therefore, when transportation costs were accounted for, the net economic effect for some clients was almost zero. These findings raise questions as to whether the balance between the social and economic goals of the organization is a 'healthy' one.

Although the economic advantages were unclear, it was obvious that the work at the organization was significant because it had personal benefits for many clients. Specifically, it gave them the opportunity to get out of the house, provided them with structure and a daily routine, created a sense of accomplishment and productivity and increased their confidence. An unanticipated discovery was that while the work gave clients a chance to interact with others, the majority of these individuals kept to themselves. Yet, some of these clients still regarded their time at the organization as social in nature. This finding suggests that perhaps being social

at enterprises like New Day Employment simply entails being with others rather than verbally conversing.

Lastly, Chapter Seven investigated the provision of workplace accommodations at New Day Employment. Mental health accommodations were found to be the most prevalent, which was anticipated based on the social aims of the enterprise. These accommodations included: flexibility in the number of hours and days worked; the pace of work; being shown and reminded by staff members how to perform worksite tasks; listening to music while working; working alone; taking additional breaks during the work day; no-penalty short-term absences and the ability to fast-track back into the Training Program after a long-term leave; and being able to talk openly to staff members about mental health issues. Several key findings pertaining to these accommodations are of particular importance. In terms of work hours, clients were given flexibility in the days and numbers of hours worked, yet they had to work a minimum of 10 to 12 hours per week. This was useful for the clients because they could tailor their schedules to avoid missing appointments and only worked as many hours as they could manage. Yet, at the same time, this policy created a work environment that was not appropriate for individuals who could not cope with the imposed minimum. It was not clear what the rationale was for this imposed minimum. Yet, it can be inferred that it was implemented to help guarantee that the organization would have an adequate amount of labour for its business operations and was also used to aid clients in establishing a consistent work routine to make transitioning into mainstream employment more manageable.

In addition, being able to work at one's own pace was found to create a less pressured and more comfortable environment for clients, especially when compared to their experiences in previous mainstream jobs. While this was one of the goals of the organization, some staff

members felt that, to some extent, it was a detriment to the intended temporary nature of the Training Program. These members believed that clients did not want to leave the Program because they would not be afforded similar mental health accommodations in competitive employment. This may help to explain why the average length of time worked by clients at the organization was 5.4 years, with some staying as long as 15 years or more. Furthermore, having staff members demonstrate and remind clients how to perform various worksite tasks was important for clients' success in the worksite. Both overt visual demonstrations, such as giving clients a finished product to use as a template, and subtle reminders, such as writing numbers on boxes of product to remind clients about how many pieces needed to be packaged, appeared to be more useful than verbal instructions, especially for clients who had difficulty remembering this information.

Also, it was clear that additional breaks during the work day were an important accommodation for clients because it provided them with an extra period of rest when they were in a poor state of mental health that compromised their ability to complete various worksite tasks effectively. Yet, providing extra breaks was sometimes made difficult when clients tried to take advantage of this accommodation. Similar to the tensions of staff authority versus client agency in Chapter Five, this issue illustrates the somewhat blurred boundary between workplace and training program. Specifically, there is a need for staff members to manage or control clients because the organization is a place of business, yet these members also need to be supportive of clients' mental health needs because the clients are working in the Program to receive forms of accommodations they cannot obtain elsewhere. Despite the tensions that exist when implementing mental health accommodations at the organization, it is clear that these

modifications to the labour process are necessary for clients to carry out their jobs effectively and important to create a supportive work environment.

Physical disability accommodations were also present in the worksite and included a paved ramp at the back entrance of the worksite for individuals who could not navigate stairs, wide aisles for those using walkers and canes and the ability to work in the front end of the building on excessively warm days to manage respiratory issues. For clients who did not live close to public transit routes or could not navigate the transit system due to anxiety, transportation accommodation in the form of a van service was also available. While the service was not complimentary, it was the only option some individuals had to attend work.

### **8.3 Study Contributions**

The findings that emerged from this study have empirical, methodological and conceptual contributions to the existing scholarship. Each area of contribution will be discussed below.

#### **8.3.1 Empirical Contributions**

As explained in Chapters One and Two, the available literature lacks an in-depth understanding of how social enterprises for individuals with mental illness work *in practice*. This thesis research contributes empirically to the existing scholarship by presenting a detailed analysis of how a social enterprise functions on a daily basis and the ways in which it implements necessary workplace accommodations for its clients. While specific to this case study, the findings demonstrate that operating of a social enterprise for individuals with mental health issues is complex and that there are ongoing challenges associated with its day-to-day functioning and management.

The tensions between the organization's social mission and its financial sustainability are a major issue here, as they impact the rationale for clients' wages, the ways in which customer

contracts are negotiated and the amount in which clients are actually paid. This situation is not unique to New Day Employment, as the literature shows that many social enterprises struggle to maintain this balance between social mission and financial sustainability (Cameron, 2009; Hudson, 2009; Spear et al, 2009). However, the present study contributes a deeper understanding regarding the ways in which managers negotiate these tensions and how the struggle to maintain a healthy balance between social mission and financial sustainability has an impact on the clients and organizational policies, more broadly. This research also makes an empirical contribution by illustrating the experiences of the workers within a social enterprise. In particular, it presents the clients' likes and dislikes of the tasks they perform at the enterprise, the variations in clients' perceptions regarding their wages and how supervisory staff members perceive their roles within the organization.

Furthermore, the available literature pertaining to the benefits of working at a social enterprise for individuals with mental illness has primarily focused on consumer/survivor and affirmative businesses. Therefore, this research contributes an agency-operated social enterprise perspective on these benefits that is lacking in the scholarship. The findings illustrate that similar to these other types of social enterprises, an agency-operated business can also be a place of meaningful activity for individuals with mental health issues (Borzaga & Depedri, 2009; Krupa et al., 2003; Lanctôt et al., 2012). Also, an agency-operated organization provides many of the same types of mental health accommodations present in the literature for both consumer/survivor and affirmative businesses, such as flexible work schedules (Hartl, 1999; Kirsh et al., 2006; Krupa et al., 2003; Vittala, 1999; Williams et al., 2012), working at one's own pace, enhanced coaching to learn new tasks by way of staff members demonstrating and reminding clients how to perform particular jobs, the ability to take additional breaks during the work day and absences

from work without penalty (Krupa et al., 2003). At the same time, the findings from this case study present additional mental health accommodations not widely found in the literature, such as listening to music while working, the ability to work alone, being able to talk openly about mental health issues with staff members and transportation accommodations that are necessary for individuals who cannot navigate the public transit system due to anxiety. While the opportunity to earn a wage is also cited in the scholarship as a benefit associated with work at both consumer/survivor and affirmative businesses (Borzaga & Depedri, 2009; Krupa, 1998; Krupa et al., 2003; Vittala, 1999), the economic advantage of work in the agency-operated organization of study is less clear due to the low wages paid to clients.

### **8.3.2 Methodological Contribution**

This thesis research also offers a methodological contribution to the existing work that focuses on social enterprises for individuals with mental illness. While valuable, the available scholarship in this field of study has primarily relied on secondary sources and/or surveys of social enterprise organizations (Baron & Salzer, 2002; Borzaga & Depedri, 2009; Kirsh et al., 2006; Krupa, 1998; Vittala, 1999; Villotti et al., 2012). In contrast, this case study employs a participant observation method, which has not been widely used in the literature. The in-depth analysis presented in this thesis illustrates the benefits of participant observation for collecting rich, in-depth data that examines the complexities of the daily activities and experiences within a particular setting or community (Kearns, 2010). It also highlights the importance of this method for scholars who intend to conduct in-depth research on social enterprises in the future.

### **8.3.3 Conceptual Contribution**

Lastly, the findings presented here help to conceptualize the ways in which the social enterprise of study can be understood as an enabling place for individuals with mental illness. In

Chapter Two, Duff's (2012) work on enabling places of recovery from mental illness was briefly outlined to illustrate the connections between the benefits of working at social enterprise organizations and the broader scholarship on enabling places in the field of mental health. As previously noted, Duff (2012) argues that enabling places are ones that ease access to social, material and affective resources. Based on the analysis presented in Chapters Five through Seven, it is evident that the clients at New Day Employment have the opportunity to gain both social and affective resources by working in the Training Program. In terms of social resources, the organization is a place where some clients can engage in social interaction with staff members and/or other clients. Yet, for the majority of clients, simply being with others seems to be an important aspect of the work experience. While this latter form of social interaction challenges the definition of social resources put forth by Duff (2012), it illustrates that for the clients at the organization of study, merely being around other people is also an enabling feature of the workplace.

New Day Employment can also be conceptualized as an enabling place because it offers affective resources to its clients (Duff, 2012). Engaging in work at the organization has resulted in feelings of productivity, accomplishment and confidence for many clients. For one client, in particular, the work has also led to a more positive outlook on life as a whole. While material resources are a significant aspect of enablement for Duff (2012), access to these resources at New Day Employment is less clear. While it provides monetary compensation for the work that clients perform, the amount earned is relatively low and many clients have expressed dissatisfaction with their wages. Still, the social and affective resources outlined here are significant and help to conceptualize the organization of study as an enabling place for individuals living with mental illness.

#### **8.4 Limitations of the Research Study**

Several limitations are associated with this research study. First, occupying a dual role at the organization, as both an employee and a researcher, limited the degree to which I could investigate certain aspects of the enterprise. For example, I was not able to gain access to the picnic table area outside the worksite where many of the clients ate their lunches and took their scheduled breaks. Gaining access was difficult here because most staff members spent the lunch break in their offices or at cafés or restaurants during this time. As a result, clients were not accustomed to sharing their break spaces with staff members. Since I was not a client, it is possible that those who were would have felt uncomfortable if I had decided to sit with them at the picnic tables, which in turn could have diminished the rapport that had been established between us. Also, there were days when I was not present at the organization during the lunch break because the manager would assign me tasks that needed to be carried out during this time, such as soliciting business for the TEP and delivering informational pamphlets about the organization to local community centers and mental health service agencies. This helps to explain why the social interaction section of the analysis in Chapter Six is fairly brief. Hence, it is unclear if the picnic table area is an important space for clients, where they can spend time getting to know each other, conversing about various issues and perhaps discussing their likes and dislikes about the organization.

In addition, the types of tasks I was assigned as an employment facilitator resulted in varying degrees of interaction with the organizational staff. For example, I had daily contact with the manager and the VSWs, but very little interaction with the team leaders. Moreover, one of the two team leaders employed at the organization had to take an extended leave of absence during the participant observation period due to non-mental health-related issue, which further



limited the small degree of interaction I already had with the team leaders. Therefore, the information outlined in this thesis regarding the team leader role was mainly gathered from the manager and fails to provide an in-depth illustration of how the team leaders carry out their jobs and the challenges they may face in their day-to-day work.

Furthermore, the order in which the stages of data collection were structured meant that questions which arose during the participant observation stage regarding various client experiences could not be asked to this population outright, as it would seem artificial in the worksite setting, especially after a good deal of rapport had been established through informal conversations. Time was a factor here as well, since the duration of participant observation was determined by the amount of funding given to New Day Employment by the Federal Government as part of the Canada Summer Jobs initiative. While inquiries regarding organizational policies and procedures were investigated during the final stage of data collection, when a semi-structured interview was conducted with the manager, it is still unclear how clients felt about the van service. Additionally, the reasons why clients employed multiple techniques for hourly rate jobs to complete these jobs faster when they were being paid the same wage regardless of how much they produced is still unknown. Additional time in the field may have allowed for the opportunity to conduct another focus group with some of the clients to examine these experiences further.

## **8.5 Directions for Future Research**

Based on this study's aforementioned findings and limitations, there are multiple directions for future research. In particular, a gap remains in this study in regards to how the provision of certain mental health accommodations puts pressure and strain on the daily routines of supervisory staff members. For example, while the manager of New Day Employment noted

that showing and reminding clients how to perform tasks consumed a significant portion of these members' time in the worksite, staff members did not discuss this issue. Further in-depth research is needed from the perspective of the staff members in agency-operated social enterprises to determine the extent to which demonstrating tasks to clients puts pressure on these supervisory members.

Also, if other agency-operated social enterprises that focus on training individuals for mainstream employment have a staff position similar to that of a team leader, it would be useful to explore this role in more detail. This position is an important one, as it gives individuals living with mental illness the opportunity to gain work-related skills, earn a steady income and build a full-time work routine. Since it is designed to be a form of transitional employment, the team leader role may be a valuable model of alternative work for those who are not yet ready for the competitive labour market, but wish to find a mainstream job in the near future.

Lastly, it would be interesting for scholars to carry out research in the future that compares the wages paid to clients at New Day Employment with the wages paid to clients at other agency-operated social enterprises in Ontario, Canada to determine if a trend in earnings exists between organizations. If other agency-operated social enterprises are found to pay a minimum wage or higher, it would be beneficial to examine how organizations that do not have such a wage in place, like New Day Employment, may be able to feasibly implement one. Not only is this economically important for social enterprise clients, but it could also help to reduce some of the time spent by staff members calculating clients' wages when they are not determined by a minimum wage payment system.

### Works Cited

- Amin, A. (2009a). Extraordinarily ordinary: working in the social economy. *Social Enterprise Journal*, 5(1), 30-49.
- Amin, A. (2009b). Locating the social economy. In A. Amin (Ed.), *The Social Economy: International Perspectives on Economic Solidarity* (pp. 3-21). New York, NY: Zed Books.
- Amin, A., Cameron, A. & Hudson, R. (1999). Welfare as work? The potential of the UK social economy. *Environment and Planning A*, 31, 2033-2051.
- Amin, A., Cameron, A. & Hudson, R. (2002). *Placing the Social Economy*. London, England: Routledge.
- Anthony, W.A. (1994). Characteristics Of People With Psychiatric Disabilities That Are Predictive Of Entry Into The Rehabilitation Process And Successful Employment. *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal*, 17(3), 3-13.
- Anthony, W.A., Rogers, E.S., Cohen, M. & Davies, R.R. (1995). Relationships Between Psychiatric Symptomatology, Work Skills and Future Vocational Performance. *Psychiatric Services*, 46(4), 353-358.
- Baron, R.C. & Salzer, M.S. (2002). Accounting for unemployment among people with mental illness. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 20(6), 585-599.
- Baxter, J. (2010). Case Studies in Qualitative Research. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography: Third Edition* (pp. 81-98). Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.
- Baxter, J. & Eyles, J. (1997). Evaluating qualitative research in social geography: establishing 'rigour' in interview analysis. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 22(4), 505-525.
- Boardman, J., Grove, B., Perkins, R. & Shepherd, G. (2003). Work and employment for people with psychiatric disabilities. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 182, 467-468.
- Boeckh, J., Dear, M. & Taylor, S.M. (1980). Property values and mental health facilities in Metropolitan Toronto. *Canadian Geographer*, 24, 270-285.
- Borzaga, C. & Depedri, S. (2009). Working for social enterprises: does it make a difference? In A. Amin (Ed.), *The Social Economy: International Perspectives on Economic Solidarity* (pp. 66-91). New York, NY: Zed Books.

- Bradshaw, M. & Stratford, E. (2010). Qualitative Research Design and Rigour. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography: Third Edition* (pp. 69-80). Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.
- Bricout, J.C. & Bentley, K.J. (2000). Disability status and perceptions of employability by employers. *Social Work Research*, 24(2), 87-95.
- Cameron, J. (2009). Experimenting with economic possibilities: ethical economic decision-making in two Australian community enterprises. In A. Amin (Ed.), *The Social Economy: International Perspectives on Economic Solidarity* (pp. 92-115). New York, NY: Zed Books.
- Canadian Mental Health Association (2014). *Mental Health Conditions*. Retrieved from <http://ontario.cmha.ca/mental-health/mental-health-conditions/>.
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (2012). *Statistics on Mental Illness and Addictions*. Retrieved from <http://www.camh.ca/>.
- Chouinard, V. (2000). Getting Ethical: For Inclusive and Engaged Geographies of Disability. *Disability, Geography and Ethics*, 3(1), 70-80.
- Church, K. (1999). *Appropriating evaluation at A-Way Express Couriers*. Toronto, ON: A-Way Express Couriers.
- Cope, M. (2010). Coding Qualitative Data. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography: Third Edition* (pp. 281-294). Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.
- Corrigan P.W. & Watson, A.C. (2002). The Paradox of Self-Stigma and Mental Illness. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 9(1), 35-53.
- Dear, M. (1977). Impact of mental health facilities on property values. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 13, 150-157.
- Dear, M. & Wolch, J. (1987). *Landscapes of Despair: From Deinstitutionalisation to Homelessness*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Dowling, R. (2010). Power, Subjectivity, and Ethics in Qualitative Research. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography: Third Edition* (pp. 26-39). Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.
- Duff, C. (2012). Exploring the role of ‘enabling places’ in promoting recovery from mental illness: A qualitative test of a relational model. *Health and Place*, 18, 1388-1395.
- Dunn, K. (2010). Interviewing. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography: Third Edition* (pp. 101-137). Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.

- Ellison, M.L., Russinova, Z., MacDonald-Wilson, K.L. & Lyass, A. (2003). Patterns and correlates of workplace disclosure among professionals and managers with psychiatric conditions. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 18*, 3-13.
- Galarneau, D. and Radulescu, M. (2009). Employment among the disabled. Statistics Canada: *Perspectives*, (May), 5-15.
- Gibson-Graham, J.K., Cameron, J. & Healy, S. (2013). *Take Back the Economy: An Ethical Guide for Transforming Our Communities*. Minneapolis, MN: The Regents of the University of Minnesota.
- Gold, R.L. (1958). Roles in sociological field observation. *Social Forces, 36*, 219-225.
- Goldberg, S.G., Killeen, M.B. & O'Day, B. (2005). The Disclosure Conundrum: How People With Psychiatric Disabilities Navigate Employment. *Psychology, Public Policy and Law, 11*(3), 463-500.
- Granger, B., Baron, R. & Robinson, S. (1997). Findings from a national survey of job coaches and job developers about job accommodations arranged between employers and people with psychiatric disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 9*, 235-251.
- Hall, E. (2004). Social Geographies of Learning Disability: Narratives of Exclusion and Inclusion. *Area, 36*(3), 289-306.
- Hall, E. (2005). The Entangled Geographies of Social Exclusion/Inclusion for People with Learning Disabilities. *Health and Place, 11*, 107-115.
- Hall, E. & Wilton, R. (2011). Alternative spaces of 'work' and inclusion for disabled people. *Disability and Society, 26*(7), 867-880.
- Hartl, K. (1992). A-Way Express: A way to empowerment through competitive employment. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health, 11*(2), 73-76.
- Henry, A.D. & Lucca, A.M. (2004). Facilitators and barriers to employment: The perspectives of people with psychiatric disabilities and employment service providers. *Work, 22*, 169-182.
- Hruschka, D.J., Schwartz, D., St. John, D.C., Picone-Decaro, E., Jenkins, R.A. & Carey, J.W. (2004). Reliability in Coding Open-Ended Data: Lessons Learned from HIV Behavioral Research. *Field Methods, 16*(3), 307-331.
- Hudson, R. (2009). Life on the edge: navigating the competitive tensions between the 'social' and the 'economic' in the social economy and its relation to the mainstream. *Journal of Economic Geography, 1*-18.
- Irvine, A. (2011). Something to declare? The disclosure of common mental health problems at work. *Disability and Society, 26*(2), 179-192.

- Kearns, R.A. (1990). Satisfaction with community life among chronically mentally disabled persons in Auckland. *Community Mental Health in New Zealand*, 5, 47-63.
- Kearns, R.A. (2010). Seeing with Clarity: Undertaking Observational Research. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography: Third Edition* (pp. 241-258). Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.
- Kessler, R.C., Foster, C.L., Saunders, W.B. & Stang, P.E. (1995). Social Consequences of Psychiatric Disorders, I: Educational Attainment. *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, 152(7), 1026-1032.
- Kirsh, B. (2000). Factors Associated with Employment for Mental Health Consumers. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 24(1), 13-21.
- Kirsh, B., Krupa, T., Cockburn, L. & Gewurtz, R. (2006). Work Initiatives for Persons with Severe Mental Illnesses in Canada: A Decade of Development. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 25(2), 173-191.
- Krupa, T. (1998). The consumer-run business: people with psychiatric disabilities as entrepreneurs. *Work: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment and Rehabilitation*, 11, 3-10.
- Krupa, T., Lagarde, M. & Carmichael, K. (2003). Transforming sheltered workshops into affirmative businesses: An outcome evaluation. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 26(4), 359-367.
- Lanctôt, N., Durand, M.J. & Corbière, M. (2012). The quality of work life of people with severe mental disorders working in social enterprises: a qualitative study. *Quality of Life Research: An International Journal of Quality of Life Aspects of Treatment, Care and Rehabilitation*, 21, 1415-1423.
- Laws, G. & Dear, M. (1988). Coping in the community: a review of factors influencing the lives of deinstitutionalised ex-psychiatric patients. In C.J. Smith & J.A. Giggis, (Eds.), *Location and Stigma: Contemporary Perspectives on Mental Health and Mental Health Care*. (pp. 83-102). London: Unwin Hyman.
- MacDonald-Wilson, K.L., Rogers, E.S. & Massaro, J. (2003). Identifying relationships between limitations, job accommodations, and demographic characteristics of persons with psychiatric disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 18, 15-24.
- MacDonald-Wilson, K.L., Rogers, E.S., Massaro, J.M., Lyass, A. & Crean, T. (2002). An Investigation of Reasonable Workplace Accommodations for People with Psychiatric Disabilities: Quantitative Findings from a Multi-Site Study. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 38(1), 35-50.


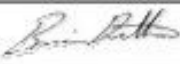
- Markowitz, F.E. (1998). The Effects of Stigma on the Psychological Well-Being and Life Satisfaction of Persons with Mental Illness. *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, 39(4), 335-347.
- Marwaha, S., Johnson, S., Bebbington, P., Stafford, M., Angermeyer, M.C., Brugha, T., Azorin, J.M., Kilian, R., Hansen, K. & Toumi, M. (2007). Rates and correlates of employment in people with schizophrenia in the U.K., France and Germany. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 191, 30-37.
- Mechanic, B., Bilder, S. & McAlpine, D.D. (2002). Employing Persons With Serious Mental Illness. *Health Affairs*, 21(5), 242-253.
- Morrissey, J.P. & Gounis, K. (1988). Homelessness and mental illness in America: emerging issues in the construction of a social problem. In C.J. Smith & J.A. Giggs (Eds.), *Location and Stigma: Contemporary Perspectives on Mental Health and Mental Health Care*. (pp. 285-303). London: Unwin Hyman.
- Ontario Ministry of Labour (2014). *Minimum Wage*. Retrieved from <http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pubs/guide/minwage.php>.
- Parr, H. (2006). Mental health, the arts and belongings. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers NS*, 31, 150-166.
- Pearce, J. (2009). Social economy: engaging as a third system? In A. Amin (Ed.), *The Social Economy: International Perspectives on Economic Solidarity* (pp. 22-33). New York, NY: Zed Books.
- Philo, C., Parr, H. & Burns, N. (2005). “An oasis for us”: ‘in-between’ spaces of training for people with mental health problems in the Scottish Highlands. *Geoforum*, 36, 778-791.
- Pinfold, V. (2000). ‘Building up safe havens...all around the world’: users’ experiences of living in the community with mental health problems. *Health and Place*, 6, 201-212.
- Public Health Agency of Canada (2012). *A Report on Mental Illnesses in Canada*. Retrieved from [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/miic-mmacc/chap\\_1-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/miic-mmacc/chap_1-eng.php).
- Rosenheck, R., Leslie, D., Keefe, R., McEvoy, J., Swartz, M., Perkins, D., Stroup, S., Hsiao, J.K. & Lieberman, J. (2006). Barriers to Employment for People with Schizophrenia. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 163(3), 411-417.
- Rüsch, N., Angermeyer, M.C. & Corrigan, P.W. (2005). Mental illness stigma: Concepts, consequences and initiatives to reduce stigma. *European Psychiatry*, 20, 529-539.
- Rutman, I. (1994). How Psychiatric Disability Expresses Itself as a Barrier to Employment. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 17(3), 15-35.

- Seanor, P. & Meaton, J. (2007). Making Sense of Social Enterprise. *Social Enterprise Journal*, 3(1), 90-100.
- Segal, S.P. & Baumohl, J. (1988). No place like home: reflections on sheltering a diverse population. In C.J. Smith & J.A. Giggs (Eds.), *Location and Stigma: Contemporary Perspectives on Mental Health and Mental Health Care*. (pp. 249-263). London: Unwin Hyman.
- Shannon, G.W. & Dever, G.E.A. (1974). *Health Care Delivery: Spatial Perspectives*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Shier, M., Graham, J. & Jones, M. (2009). Barriers to Employment as Experienced by Disabled People: A Qualitative Analysis in Calgary and Regina, Canada. *Disability and Society*, 24(1), 63-75.
- Sixsmith, A.J. (1988). Locating mental health facilities: a case study. In: C.J. Smith & J.A. Giggs (Eds.), *Location and Stigma: Contemporary Perspectives on Mental Health and Mental Health Care*. (pp. 175-202). London: Unwin Hyman.
- Spear, R., Cornforth, C. & Aiken, M. (2009). The governance challenges of social enterprises: evidence from a UK empirical study. *Annals of Public and Cooperate Economics*, 80(2), 247-273.
- Statistics Canada (2012). *Mental Illnesses*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/>.
- Stuart, H. (2006). Mental illness and employment discrimination. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 19, 522-526.
- Thornton, P. (2009). Disabled People, Employment and Social Justice. *Social Policy and Society*, 4(1), 65-73.
- Trainor, J. & Tremblay, J. (1992). Consumer/survivor businesses in Ontario: Challenging the rehabilitation model. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 11(2), 65-71.
- Tucker, I. (2010). Mental health service user territories: Enacting 'safe spaces' in the community. *Health*, 14(4), 434-448.
- Unger, D. & Kregel, J. (2003). Employers' knowledge and utilization of accommodations. *Work*, 21, 5-15.
- Villotti, P., Corbière, M., Zaniboni, S. & Fraccaroli, F. (2012). Individual and environmental factors related to job satisfaction in people with severe mental illness employed in social enterprises. *Work*, 43, 33-41.
- Vittala, K. (1999). Evaluating alternative business. *The Journal of Addiction and Mental Health*, 2(2), 11.



- Williams, A., Fossey, E. & Harvey, C. (2012). Social firms: Sustainable employment for people with mental illness. *Work*, 43, 53-62.
- Wilton, R. (2004). From Flexibility to Accommodation: Workers with Disabilities and the Reinvention of Paid Work. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, NS29, 420-432.
- Wilton, R.D. (2006). Disability Disclosure in the Workplace. *Just Labour*, 8, 24-39.
- Winchester, H.P.M. & Rofo, M.W. (2010). Qualitative Research and Its Place in Human Geography. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography: Third Edition* (pp. 3-24). Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.
- Wolch, J. & Philo, C. (2000). From distributions of deviance to definitions of difference: past and future mental health geographies. *Health and Place*, 6, 137-157.
- Wolpert, J. (1976). Opening closed spaces. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 66, 1-13.
- World Health Organization (2014). *Disabilities*. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/topics/disabilities/en/>.

## APPENDIX A ETHICS APPROVAL

 <small>Supporting Innovation and Discovery</small>	<b>McMaster University Research Ethics Board (MREB)</b> <small>c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support, MREB                  Secretariat, GH-305/H, e-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca</small> <b>CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS CLEARANCE TO                  INVOLVE HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN                  RESEARCH</b>		
Application Status: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Addendum   Project Number: <input type="text" value="2012 163"/>			
TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; min-height: 40px;">                     A study about the role of social purpose enterprises in creating employment for people with mental illness                 </div>			
Faculty Investigator(s)/ Supervisor(s)	Dept./Address	Phone	E-Mail
R. Wilton	Geography	24536	wiltonr@mcmaster.ca
Co-Investigator(s):			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">                 J. Evans, M. Perski             </div>			
Student Investigator(s)	Dept./Address	Phone	E-Mail
Co-Investigator			
(s): <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>			
The application in support of the above research project has been reviewed by the MREB to ensure compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the McMaster University Policies and Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants. The following ethics certification is provided by the MREB: <input type="checkbox"/> The application protocol is cleared as presented without questions or requests for modification. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The application protocol is cleared as revised without questions or requests for modification. <input type="checkbox"/> The application protocol is cleared subject to clarification and/or modification as appended or identified below:			
COMMENTS AND CONDITIONS: Ongoing clearance is contingent on completing the annual completed/status report. A "Change Request" or amendment must be made and cleared before any alterations are made to the research.			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; min-height: 100px;"></div>			
Reporting Frequency:		Annual: <input type="text" value="Oct-30-2013"/>	Other:
Date: <input type="text" value="Oct-30-2012"/>		Chair, Dr. B. Detlor / Vice Chair, C. Anderson: 	

## **APPENDIX B INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

### **Introductory Questions**

1. Can you describe your position within the organization?
2. How long have you been at [organization name]?

### **Organizational Background**

3. Can you give me an overall sense of the organization – its main programs, operations?
4. Thinking specifically about the social purpose enterprise, when was it established?
5. What were the main motivations behind its creation?
6. Why did you decide to focus on [activity]?
7. How was the business funded initially?
8. Does the enterprise have a specific social purpose mandate or mission?
  - (If yes) Can you tell me what it is?
9. Has that mandate stayed the same since the beginning?
  - (If no) How has it changed? What were the reasons for the change?
10. How many sites does the enterprise currently occupy?
  - Has that changed over time?
11. Does the social enterprise operate as a not-for-profit, a cooperative, a for-profit organization or something else (*some may have more than one status*)?
  - Has that status changed over time? Why?
12. Do you have a board that oversees the operation of the social enterprise?
13. Do individual workers/members have input into the way the business operates?
  - (If yes) How is that input solicited/acted upon?

### **Workers and Conditions**

14. How many people currently work at the business/businesses?
15. Based on your experience, what attracts people to work here?
16. The people who work in the social enterprise – are they workers, members, clients?
17. Can you describe the structure of the business (i.e. the number of workers, supervisors, management, etc.)?
  - Has that number changed much over time?
18. Of the current staff, how many would be people with mental illness/psychiatric survivors?
19. Do they work at all levels of the business (supervisory, management)?
20. On average, how many of the people with mental illness working here would be women?
  - What would be their age range?
  - And how many would be considered visible minority?
21. Among the people with mental illness, how many of them would be considered full-time employees (vs. part-time employees or casual)?
22. Is there a minimum number of hours people have to work in a given period?
23. How are workers paid (i.e. hourly wage, weekly or daily rate, piece rate, etc.)?
24. Can you tell me the wage range for people with mental illness who work here?
25. How is the wage rate determined?
26. Have the rates changed much over time?

### **Workplace Accommodations**

27. Can you talk about how the jobs you offer here are well suited to people living with mental illness?
  - Can you give me specific examples of how they work for people?
28. What types of accommodations are you able to offer to people who work in the business?

- Which ones are most commonly used by people?

### **Employment in the Organization**

29. How long do people work here? What's the range and the average length of time?
30. Why do people leave?
31. Do you see your role as transitional (i.e. people move into 'competitive' employment) or as something longer term?
32. When you're interviewing/hiring people, how do you determine the type of position/ hours that may work best for them?
33. From your perspective, what qualities do people bring to their work here?
34. What do you think are the main benefits of working here?
35. Are there any disadvantages they encounter in working in an organization like this?

### **Organizational Budget and Challenges**

36. Can you give me a sense of the current operating budget of the business?
37. What are the main sources of revenue for the business (e.g., government grants, service contracts, sale of goods/services, donations, membership dues)?
  - Has that changed much over time? What are the main reasons for the change?
  - How have these changes affected the organization's day-to-day operations?
38. How do you promote your business to potential customers or the community at large?
39. To what extent do you emphasize the social purpose mission to potential customers?
  - Why is that?
40. What do you see as the biggest challenges currently facing the organization?
41. What do you see as the biggest opportunities for the organization?

## **APPENDIX C**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CLIENT FOCUS GROUP**

Thanks for meeting with me today. I have a few questions I'd like to ask you. I'd like to hear from all of you, but feel free to say as much or as little as you'd like. There are no wrong answers.

Maybe to start we can just go around and you could tell me your first name and how long you've worked for [organization name].

As I said before, the conversation is confidential. I won't use your names in my report but it's useful to know them here so I can remember who said what.

#### **The Nature of the Work**

1. What made you want to work at [organization name]?
2. Can you tell me what a typical workday looks like?
  - For example, what was today like? Where did you go, what did you do?
3. What kinds of jobs have you done within the business?
  - Which is your favourite/least favourite? Why?
4. How long is a regular/daily shift?
5. About how many days/hours a week do you work?
  - Is that a regular schedule for you?
6. Would you like to be working more/less?
  - What prevents you from doing that?
7. Why is working important you?

#### **Wages**

8. Would you mind telling me how much you earn at your current job?
  - Prompt for hours and weekly totals
9. What difference does that money make to you?
10. Do you have other sources of income (i.e. disability supports)?

- If yes, how do your wages impact your disability support payments?

### **Likes and Dislikes about Working at [organization name]**

11. What do you like best about your current job? (prompt for examples)

- What do you like least about it? (prompt for examples)

12. Are there things about your job here that you would change if you could? What things?

### **Workplace Accommodations**

Okay, so one of the things we're interested in is how social enterprises like [organization name] are different from other places you might have worked.

13. Are there things about [organization name] and the jobs here that make them well suited for you?

- Can you explain why?

14. How does your job here compare with other jobs you may have had before you came to [organization name]?

15. Do you have flexibility here if you need time off or help on the job?

- How does that work? Who do you ask?

16. Is that flexibility important to you?

17. What other things are important to you?

### **Social Interaction**

18. Do you know how many people work at [organization name] altogether?

19. Do folks get along well?

20. Do you hang out with other people outside of work?

- Can you give me an example? What things have you done?

### **Transitioning to Mainstream Employment**

21. How long can you work here? (Is there a limit?)

22. How long would you like to work here?

23. What would be your ideal job after that?

24. Do you think you'll be able to find a job like that? (Why/Why not?)



**APPENDIX D**  
**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SUPERVISORY STAFF MEMBERS**

**Experience with Current Organization**

1. How long have you worked at [organization name]?
2. What is current job/position here at [organization name]?
3. What are the main responsibilities of your current position here?
4. What appealed to you about working here?
5. Can you tell me about the objectives of [organization name]?

**Workforce**

6. How many clients currently work at the organization?
7. Has that changed much over time?
8. How are clients recruited into [organization name]? How would they find out?
9. Do you have a waiting list?
10. How many clients work here on a typical day?
11. And how many staff work here?
12. Can you give me a sense of the hours that clients work?
  - What's the range of hours?
  - What's the average?
13. Is there a minimum number of hours that clients have to work in a given period?
14. How are clients paid (wage/stipend)?
  - Can you explain how that works?
  - Is the wage/stipend dependent on the hours worked or no?
15. Are most people here also receiving ODSP?
16. What difference does the wage/stipend make to people? (i.e. in terms of income, status)

**Work/Accommodation**

17. Can you talk about the range of jobs provided in the packaging business?
18. From your perspective, how are these jobs well suited to people with mental illness?
19. What kind of training process do people normally go through when they start?
20. What types of accommodation do you use most frequently for people who work here?

21. From an organizational perspective, are there challenges involved in providing those accommodations?
  - What are they?
22. How have you responded to those challenges?
23. Are there ways in which the needs of individual clients sometimes conflict with the needs of the organization/business (e.g. pressure to complete orders)?
24. How do you strike a balance?
25. Can you talk about retention (i.e. how long do people work here)?
26. Why do people leave?
27. Do you see the organization's role as transitional (i.e. people move into 'competitive' employment) or as something longer term?
28. Based on your experience, what are the main benefits of working here for clients?
29. Are there any disadvantages to working in an organization like this?

### **Social Atmosphere**

30. Can you describe the social atmosphere here?
31. How important is that atmosphere to people's experiences here?
32. The organization is explicitly focused on work for people with mental health problems.  
Is disclosure the norm here?
  - How does that work?
33. Based on your experience, to what extent is mental health a topic of discussion in the workplace?
  - Why is that, do you think?

### **Final Questions**

34. What do you like most about your job here? (prompt for explanation/examples)
35. What do you like least about it? (prompt for explanation/examples)
36. Based on your experience, what are the biggest challenges currently facing [organization name]?
37. What do you see as the biggest opportunities for the organization?

## **APPENDIX E**

### **TASKS COMPLETED AS AN EMPLOYMENT FACILITATOR**

Throughout the summer I was involved in a variety of roles, responsibilities and projects at [REDACTED]. The following report outlines my activities while employed at [REDACTED] for a period of 10 weeks, beginning June 3<sup>rd</sup> and concluding August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

- Administering the Annual Agency Client Survey to clients in the worksite (in person) and to clients registered in the [adult Community Employment] Program (via e-mail)
- Administering the Annual Psychosocial Rehabilitation Outcomes Survey to clients in the worksite (in person) and to clients registered in the [adult Community Employment] Program (via e-mail)
- Entering the data from each client's paper PSR survey into their electronic [REDACTED] file
- Performing quality control checks of products being packaged by clients in the worksite
- Photocopying various documents for the manager and employment specialists
- Organizing and labeling [adult Community Employment Program] clients' file folders for ease of use
- Conducting the Client Record Audits for 2013-2014 and meeting with staff individually to discuss any issues with particular client files
- Searching for job postings for [adult Community Employment] Program clients using various online resources (Job Bank, Monster, Kijiji, [REDACTED], etc.)
- Assembling empty cardboard boxes in the worksite, as well as stacking filled cardboard boxes onto skids for shipping
- Inputting client data into [REDACTED], for both new and existing clients
- Soliciting businesses in the area surrounding [REDACTED] in an attempt to acquire lawn maintenance business for [REDACTED] Transitional Employment Program
- Calling clients to document their monthly hours of work for their pay verification forms
- Assisting with various jobs in the worksite, such as packaging zipper repair kits and putting labels onto bags of candy
- Distributing [REDACTED] brochures to various community agencies in [REDACTED]
- Assigning tasks to clients at the beginning of the morning and afternoon shifts

- Helping clients set up their workspaces to begin a particular task and demonstrating how to complete various tasks for clients needing assistance
- Assisting [adult Community Employment Program] clients in completing various workplace and health and safety modules in preparation for the commencement of new jobs in the community
- Taking inventory of supplies in the worksite, such as pallet wrap, paper towels, toilet paper and garbage bags
- Updating and colour-coding the [REDACTED] Customer List in Excel
- Attending the Annual General Meeting in [REDACTED] in June 2013
- Attending a meeting at [REDACTED] in July 2013 pertaining to job development for [Community Employment] Program staff members
- Attending a staff meeting at [REDACTED] in July 2013 that focused on the topics discussed at a manager's meeting held earlier that particular week
- Supervising clients while they performed various worksite tasks
- Calculating clients' daily earnings for both piece work and hourly work
- Performing a quarterly inventory audit throughout the premises of [REDACTED] and updating the inventory list to reflect changes to various items
- Attaching 5F checklist sheets to all [adult Community Employment Program] client files
- Preparing piece work and hourly wage work sheets for various worksite jobs by writing the name of the job and the date on each sheet at the beginning of the day and placing the sheets at the appropriate work stations
- Answering in-coming phone calls and directing each call to the appropriate staff member
- Making announcements in the worksite when needed, such as the acknowledgement of clients' birthdays for the month of July
- Putting out snacks in the worksite for clients during the morning and afternoon breaks
- Assisting clients in using the fax machine to send their pay stubs to ODSP
- Creating a handout and distributed it to worksite clients to inform them of a Worksite Client Focus Meeting on August 6<sup>th</sup>

- Recording the minutes of the Worksite Client Focus Meeting held on August 6<sup>th</sup>, sending them to staff members via e-mail and making hard copies for clients
- Creating and posting sheets in the worksite for clients to write down discussion items for the August and upcoming September Worksite Client Focus Meetings
- Moving files pertaining to discharged clients into storage
- Making labels for skids of Mary Kay catalogues
- Designing a chart for the Vocational Support Workers to document the dates of completed Client Performance Reviews for worksite clients
- Accompanying [George] and [Susan] on a visit to a social enterprise, named [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]
- Making shipping labels using the computer for boxes of Rogers Communications products
- Writing out FedEx shipping labels for a job from Rogers Communications
- Calling FedEx to schedule a pick-up for the Rogers Communications products

## **APPENDIX F INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MANAGER**

### **General Background and Experience with the Organization**

1. How long have you worked at [organization name]?
2. What are your main responsibilities as the manager at this organization?
3. Can you tell me about the objectives of this organization?
4. To your knowledge, have these objectives changed significantly over time? How?/Why?

### **Funding**

5. What is [organization name's] primary source of funding?
6. What other sources of funding are important for [organization name] to maintain its operations?
7. During the summer, you mentioned that the government no longer gives subsidies or funding to social enterprises. Can you elaborate on this issue?
8. You also noted that after a client has worked for 13 weeks, the organization receives a \$250.00 subsidy. Can you provide some more detail about this subsidy? (i.e. What is the source? What is the money used for?)

### **Intake of Worksite Clients**

9. Do clients need to be diagnosed by a medical professional in order to be accepted into the [Training Program]?
10. Is there still a waiting list to be accepted into the [Training Program]?
  - If so, approximately how long is the wait?
11. To your knowledge, has the length of time a client waits to be accepted into the [Training Program] changed significantly over time? How/Why?

### **Workplace Accommodations**

12. In addition to flexible hours and the pace of work, what other types of workplace accommodations does [organization name] provide for its clients?
13. Are there any challenges to providing clients with those accommodations?

- If so, how has the organization managed these challenges?
14. What are the requirements for clients who need the van service to get to and from work?
  15. Approximately how many clients are currently using the van service?
  16. Is there a waiting list for the van?
    - If so, approximately how long is the wait?
  17. What is the timing for each van pick-up and how does it affect the time at which the clients arrive at [organization name]?

### **The Nature of the Team Leader Role**

18. What are the main responsibilities of the team leader in the worksite?
19. How is a team leader hired at the organization?
20. Is this position usually held by a mental health consumer?
  - If so, is this the only staff position held by a mental health consumer?
21. Is this position salaried or is it an hourly wage?
22. Is this a full-time or part-time position?
23. What is the approximate salary per year/hourly wage of this position?

### **Pricing, Customers and Workers' Wages**

24. What is the rationale for paying the clients 58% of what the organization charges the customer for each piece or hour of work?
25. Has the percentage paid to the client remained the same over time? Why? Why not?
26. The clients can make a maximum of \$10.00 per hour. Would it be feasible to pay them minimum wage? Why?/Why not?
27. What steps would need to be taken in order to implement minimum wage?
28. What is the average time frame for completing a customer's order?
29. How often does a rush order take place?

30. Within the organization, where is the money spent from funding versus the money earned from customer contracts?

### **Expanding the Organization's Range of Businesses**

31. Towards the end of the summer, you mentioned that [organization name] was looking into starting a café in the mezzanine of the worksite. What is the status of this plan?
32. Are there any other types of businesses, aside from packaging and assembly, that [organization name] is looking to expand into?
33. From an organizational perspective, how important is it for [organization name] to expand its business ventures into multiple areas?
34. Regarding the lawn maintenance business, how is the \$12.00 per hour paid by the customer divided between the client and the organization?

### **Future of the Organization**

35. Thinking about the future of the organization, what do you think are [organization name's] biggest opportunities?
36. What do you think are the organization's biggest challenges moving forward?



**APPENDIX G**  
**LETTER OF INFORMATION/CONSENT FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INTERVIEW**



**Letter of Information**

**A study about the role of social purpose enterprises in creating employment for people living with mental illness**

**Investigators:**

**Principal Investigator:**

Dr. Robert Wilton  
School of Geography & Earth Sciences  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario  
(905) 525-9140 ext. 24536  
E-mail: wiltonr@mcmaster.ca

**Co-Investigator:**

Dr. Joshua Evans  
Centre for Global & Social Analysis  
Athabasca University  
Athabasca, Alberta  
(877) 848-6905  
Email: jevans@athabascau.ca

**Research Sponsor:** The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

**What are we trying to discover?**

We are conducting a study on the role of social purpose enterprises (or alternative businesses) in creating employment opportunities for people living with mental illness.

We are interested in learning about (1) the kinds of organizations that exist, (2) the strategies they use to create jobs for people with mental illness, and (3) the challenges and opportunities they face in their day-to-day operations.

We have asked to interview you because as the executive director/manager/owner/member of such an organization, you have an in-depth understanding of these issues and your input would be valuable to our project.

**What will happen during the study?**

We are asking you to participate in an interview to tell us about your organization. The interview should last about one hour. The interview can be conducted at a time and location of your choosing.

We will ask you a range of questions about your organization. These will cover a variety of topics including the organization's mission, history, size, daily operation, number of employees/members, rates of pay, and external funding sources. We will also ask a few questions about you (your position within the organization, how long you've worked there, etc.). Last, we will ask if you/your organization would consider participating in a second stage of the research project.

This would involve a member of the research team visiting the organization to learn more about its day-to-day operation.

**Are there any risks to doing the study?**

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. You do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. You can also withdraw from the research at any time. We describe below the steps we are taking to protect your privacy.

**Are there any benefits to doing this study?**

The research will not benefit you directly. However, we hope to learn more about the types of social purpose enterprises creating employment opportunities for people with mental illness through this research, as well as the opportunities and challenges that they confront. This will help to raise awareness of the important role these organizations play. Findings from the research will be sent to advocacy organizations and policymakers.

**Who will know what I said in the study?**

Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy. We will not use your name or the name of your organization in any written reports or publications. Only members of the research team will know that you participated in the research project.

However, there are a limited number of social purpose enterprises working with people with mental illness. For this reason, others in the field may be able to identify you based on information you provide about your organization. Please keep this in mind when deciding what to tell us in the interview.

The audio-recording of the interview will be kept on a password-protected computer in our research office. Transcripts of the interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the same office. Both audio-files and transcripts will be assigned a code number and will have identifying information removed. Only members of the research team will have access to the data. Once the study has been completed, interviews and transcripts will be destroyed.

**What if I change my mind about being in the study?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to be part of the study, you can decide to stop at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. If you choose to withdraw, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. However, once the research is complete and the results of the study made public (e.g., in a final report), you will not be able to withdraw.

**Information about the Study Results**

We expect to have this research completed by approximately July 2012. If you would like a brief report summarizing the results, please let us know how you would like it sent.

**Questions about the Study**

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact either Robert Wilton (wiltonr@mcmaster.ca, 905 525-9140, ext.24536).

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat  
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142  
c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support  
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

---

**CONSENT**

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Robert Wilton of McMaster University.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time.

I have been given a copy of this form.

1. I agree to participate in the study.

... Yes.

... No.

2. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.

... Yes.

... No.

3. I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

... Yes, please send them to this email address: \_\_\_\_\_

or to this mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

... No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX H**  
**LETTER OF INFORMATION/CONSENT FOR CLIENT FOCUS GROUP**



**Letter of Information**

**A study about the role of social purpose enterprises in creating  
employment for people living with mental illness**

**Principal Investigator:**

Dr. Robert Wilton  
School of Geography/Earth Sciences  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario  
(905) 525-9140 ext. 24536  
E-mail: wiltonr@mcmaster.ca

**Co-Investigator**

Dr. Joshua Evans  
Centre for Global & Social Analysis  
Athabasca University  
Athabasca, Alberta  
(877) 848-6905  
Email: jevans@athabascau.ca

**Research Assistant:**

Monica Perski  
School of Geography/Earth Sciences  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario  
(905) 525-9140 ext. 24536  
E-mail: perskim@mcmaster.ca

**Research Sponsor:** The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

**What are we trying to discover?**

We are conducting a study on the role of social enterprises in creating employment opportunities for psychiatric survivors/people living with mental illness. The research is guided by four questions:

1. How do social enterprises create employment opportunities and workplaces that are accommodating for people with mental illness?
2. What challenges do they face in their efforts to create and sustain such opportunities?
3. How do these challenges shape the work experiences of their employees?
4. What lessons can we learn from these organizations that might improve the accommodation of people with mental illness in mainstream employment settings?

We are really interested in learning about the kinds of organizations that exist, the jobs they provide, and people's daily experiences of those jobs. We have asked to speak with you because as someone who has worked at a social enterprise, your experiences would be very valuable to our project.

**What will happen during the study?**

We are asking you to take part in a focus group to tell us about your experiences of working at [organization]. The focus group should last between 60 and 90 minutes. With your permission, we will audio record the focus group so that we have an accurate record of what was said.

In the focus group we will ask you a series of questions. The questions will cover six different topics: (1) your work experience at [organization]; (2) your social life at [organization]; (3) any

accommodations you need to work at [organization]; (4) jobs you had before you worked here; (5) your plans for the future; and (6) some information about yourself (age, education, mental health).

Here are some of the questions we'd like to ask you:

1. How long have you worked here?
2. Why did you want to work here?
3. What does a typical workday/shift look like?
4. What do you like best about your current job?
5. How does this job compare to other jobs you've had?
6. Do you get along well with the other workers?

If you'd like to see all of the questions before you decide whether to participate, please let us know.

### **Are there any risks to doing the study?**

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal.

Psychological risk - Because we will be asking you some questions about current and previous jobs and work experiences, one risk of participating is that you may find the focus group upsetting or uncomfortable. For this reason, it is important for you to know that you have the right not to answer any of the questions posed in the focus group. And if you'd like to stop the focus group at any point, please let us know. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any point during and after the focus group.

If you do become upset or uncomfortable during the focus group and would like support from someone (a friend, co-worker, support staff), please let us know and I will contact them immediately. Social risk – because the focus group involves multiple participants, other people within the organization will know that you participated and will know what you said. For this reason, it is important for you to know that participating is entirely voluntary. You don't have to participate if you're concerned that other people will know what you said. If you would prefer, we can arrange to conduct a private interview at another location of your choosing. Please let us know if this is something you would like.

Your decision to participate or not participate will have no impact on your relationship with [organization name]. We explain below the steps we are taking to protect your privacy.

### **Are there any benefits to doing this study?**

The research will not benefit you directly. However, we hope to learn more about how social enterprises create job opportunities for psychiatric survivors/people living with mental illness through the study. We hope this will raise awareness of the important role these organizations play.

### **Payment**

In appreciation for your time, you will receive \$20.

### **Who will know what I said in the study?**

You are participating in this study confidentially. That means that we will not use your name or the name of your organization in any written reports or publications. It also means that only members of the research team and other participants in the focus group will know what you said in the interview.

The audio-recording of the focus group will be kept on a password-protected computer in our research office. Transcripts of the focus group will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the same office. Both audio-files and transcripts will be given a code number and will have any identifying information removed. Only members of the research team will have access to what you said. Once the study has been completed, audio files and transcripts will be destroyed.

### **What if I change my mind about being in the study?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to take part, you can decide to stop at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. Your decision to withdraw will have no impact on your job. If you decide to withdraw during or after the focus group, you will still keep the \$20. If you choose to withdraw, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. However, once the research is complete and the results of the study made public (e.g., in a final report), you will not be able to withdraw.

### **Information about the Study Results**

We expect to have this research completed by approximately December 2013. If you would like a brief report summarizing the results, please let us know how you would like it sent.

### **Questions about the Study**

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact Rob Wilton (wiltonr@mcmaster.ca, 905 525-9140, ext.24536). This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat  
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142  
c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support  
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

---

**CONSENT**

I have read/been read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Robert Wilton, Joshua Evans and Monica Perski of McMaster University.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time.

I have been given a copy of this form.

1. I agree to participate in this research project.

... Yes.

... No.

2. I agree that the focus group can be audio recorded.

... Yes.

... No.

3. I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

... Yes, please send them to this email address: \_\_\_\_\_

or to this mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

... No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**APPENDIX I**  
**LETTER OF INFORMATION/CONSENT FOR SUPERVISORY STAFF INTERVIEWS**



**Letter of Information**

**A study about the role of social purpose enterprises in creating  
employment for people living with mental illness**

**Investigators:**

**Principal Investigator:**

Dr. Robert Wilton  
School of Geography/Earth Sciences  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario  
(905) 525-9140 ext. 24536  
E-mail: wiltonr@mcmaster.ca

**Co-Investigator**

Dr. Joshua Evans  
Centre for Global & Social Analysis  
Athabasca University  
Athabasca, Alberta  
(877) 848-6905  
Email: jevans@athabascau.ca

**Research Assistant:**

Monica Perski  
School of Geography/Earth Sciences  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario  
(905) 525-9140 ext. 24536  
E-mail: perskim@mcmaster.ca

**Research Sponsor:** The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

**What am I trying to learn?**

We are conducting a study on the role of social enterprises like [organization name] in creating employment opportunities for psychiatric survivors/people living with mental illness. The research is guided by four questions:

5. How do social enterprises create employment opportunities and workplaces that are accommodating for people with mental illness?
6. What challenges do they face in their efforts to create and sustain such opportunities?
7. How do these challenges shape the work experiences of their employees?
8. What lessons can we learn from these organizations that might improve the accommodation of people with mental illness in mainstream employment settings?

We are really interested in learning about the kinds of organizations that exist, the jobs they provide, and people's daily experiences of those jobs.

We have asked to interview you because as someone who works at [organization name], your experiences would be very valuable to our project.

### **What will happen during the study?**

We are asking you to take part in face-to-face interview to tell us about your experiences of working at [organization]. The interview should last approximately 60 minutes. The interview can be conducted at a time and location of your choosing. With your permission, we will audio record your interview so that we have an accurate record of what was said.

In the interview we will ask you a series of questions. The questions will cover six different topics: (1) your work experience at [organization]; (2) the nature of the workforce at [organization]; (3) the provision of accommodations; (4) the social atmosphere at [organization]; (5) current challenges and opportunities facing the organization.

Here are some of the questions we'd like to ask you:

1. How long have you worked at NAME?
2. What interested you about working here?
3. How many people are currently employed by the organization?
4. Can you tell me the wage range for people with mental illness who work here?
5. What types of accommodation do you use most frequently for people who work here?
6. Do you see the organization's role as transitional (i.e., people move into 'competitive' employment) or as something longer term?

If you'd like to see all of the questions before you decide whether to participate, please let us know.

### **Are there any risks to doing the study?**

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal.

Psychological risk - During the interview, you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable or upset. If you'd like to stop the interview at any point, please let us know. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any point during and after the interview.

If you do become upset or uncomfortable during the interview and would like support from someone (a friend, co-worker, support staff), please let us know and we will contact them immediately.

Social risk – The interview will take place in a private location and no-one will know what you said. However, because the interview will take place at [organization name] other people within the organization may know that you participated in an interview. For this reason, it is important for you to know that participating in an interview is entirely voluntary. You don't have to participate if you're concerned that other people will know.

If you would prefer, we can arrange to conduct the interview at another location of your choosing. Please let us know if this is something you would like.

Your decision to participate or not participate will have no impact on your job here at [organization name].

We explain below the steps we are taking to protect your privacy.

**Are there any benefits to doing this study?**

The research will not benefit you directly. However, we hope to learn more about how social enterprises create job opportunities for psychiatric survivors/people living with mental illness through the study. We hope this will raise awareness of the important role these organizations play.

**Payment**

In appreciation for your time, you will receive \$20.

**Who will know what I said in the study?**

You are participating in this study confidentially. That means that we will not use your name or the name of your organization in any written reports or publications. It also means that only members of the research team will know what you said in the interview. Other members of the organization (your co-workers and supervisors) may be aware that you participated in an interview for the research project but they will not know what you said.

The audio-recording of the interview will be kept on a password-protected computer in our research office. Transcripts of the interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the same office. Both audio-files and transcripts will be given a code number and will have any identifying information removed. Only members of the research team will have access to what you said. Once the study has been completed, audio files and transcripts will be destroyed.

**What if I change my mind about being in the study?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to take part in the interview, you can decide to stop at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. Your decision will have no impact on your job here at [organization name]. If you decide to withdraw during or after the interview, you will still keep the \$20.

If you choose to withdraw, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise. However, once the research is complete and the results of the study made public (e.g., in a final report), you will not be able to withdraw.

**Information about the Study Results**

We expect to have this research completed by approximately December 2013. If you would like a brief report summarizing the results, please let us know how you would like it sent.

**Questions about the Study**

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact Rob Wilton (wiltonr@mcmaster.ca, 905 525-9140, ext.24536).

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat  
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142  
c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support  
E-mail: [ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca](mailto:ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca)

---

**CONSENT**

I have read /been read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Robert Wilton, Joshua Evans and Monica Perski of McMaster University and Athabasca University.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time.

I have been given a copy of this form.

1. I agree to participate in this research project.

... Yes.

... No.

2. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.

... Yes.

... No.

3. I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

... Yes, please send them to this email address: \_\_\_\_\_

or to this mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

... No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX J**  
**LETTER OF INFORMATION/CONSENT FOR MANAGER INTERVIEW**



**Letter of Information**

**A study about the role of social enterprises in creating  
employment for people living with mental illness**

**Student Researcher:**

Monica Perski  
School of Geography and Earth Sciences  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario  
(905) 525-9140 ext. 20441  
Email: perskim@mcmaster.ca

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Robert Wilton  
School of Geography and Earth Sciences  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario  
(905) 525-9140 ext. 24536  
Email: wiltonr@mcmaster.ca

**Research Sponsor:** The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

**What am I trying to discover?**

I am conducting a study for a Master's thesis on the role of social enterprises in creating accommodating work spaces for people living with mental health issues.

I am interested in learning about: (1) the kinds of organizations that exist; (2) the strategies organizations use to create jobs for people with mental illness; and (3) people's daily experiences of those jobs.

I have asked to interview you because, as someone who works at a social enterprise, your experiences would be very valuable to my project.

**What will happen during the study?**

I am asking you to take part in a face-to-face interview to tell me about your experiences of working at [organization name]. The interview should last about 90 minutes. The interview can be conducted at a time and location of your choosing. With your permission, I will record your interview and take notes, so that I have an accurate record of what was said.

In the interview I will ask you a series of questions. The questions will cover eight different topics: (1) your work experience at [organization name]; (2) funding for the organization; (3) intake procedures for the worksite clients; (4) work accommodations for clients in the worksite; (5) the nature of the team leader role at [organization name]; (6) issues surrounding the pricing of

jobs, customers and workers' wages; (7) expanding the organization's range of businesses; and (8) the future of [organization name].

**Are there any risks to doing this study?**

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. During the interview, you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable.

You can also decide not to be part of the research at any time. Your decision to participate or not to participate will have no impact on your job.

I explain below the steps I am taking to protect your privacy.

**Are there any benefits to doing this study?**

The research will not benefit you directly. However, I hope to learn more about how social enterprises create accommodating work spaces for people living with mental health issues through the study. I hope this will raise awareness of the important role these organizations play. Findings from the research will be sent to advocacy organizations and policymakers.

**Who will know what I said or did in the study?**

You are participating in this study confidentially. That means that I will not use your name or the name of your organization in any written reports or publications. Only myself and my supervisor will know that you took part in the research project. A pseudonym, or alternate name, will be assigned to the information you tell me.

However, there are a limited number of social purpose enterprises working with people with mental illness. For this reason, others in the field may be able to identify your organization based on information gathered during the interview. Please keep this in mind when deciding whether you wish to participate.

The audio-recording of the interview will be kept on a password-protected computer. Transcripts of the interview will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office. Both audio-files and transcripts will be given a code number and will have any identifying information, such as your name, removed. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to what you said. Once the project has been completed, audio files and transcripts will be destroyed.

**What if I change my mind about being in the study?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to take part in the interview, you can decide to stop at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through the study. If you do not want to answer some of the questions you do not have to, but you can still be in the study.

If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. Your decision to withdraw will have no impact on your job.

If you choose to withdraw, any data you have provided will be destroyed, unless you indicate otherwise. However, once the research is complete and the results of the study made public (e.g., in a final report), you will not be able to withdraw.

**How do I find out what was learned in this study?**

I expect to have this research completed by approximately May 2014. If you would like a brief summary of the results, in the form of a report, please let us know how you would like it sent to you.

**Questions about the Study**

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact myself or my supervisor, Dr. Robert Wilton (wiltonr@mcmaster.ca, 905 525-9140, ext. 24536).

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat  
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142  
c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support  
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca



---

**CONSENT**

I have read /been read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted Monica Perski of McMaster University.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time.

I have been given a copy of this form.

I agree to participate in the study.

1. I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.

Yes [  ]

No [  ]

2. Yes, I would like to receive a summary of the study's results. [  ]

Please send them to this email address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Or to this mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results. [  ]

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX K**  
**LETTER OF INFORMATION/CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION**



**Letter of Information**

**A study about the role of social enterprises in creating  
employment for people living with mental illness**

**Student Researcher:**

Monica Perski  
School of Geography & Earth Sciences  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario  
(905) 525-9140 ext. 24536  
E-mail: perskim@mcmaster.ca

**Supervisor:**

Robert Wilton  
School of Geography & Earth Sciences  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario  
(905) 525-9140 ext. 24536  
E-mail: wiltonr@mcmaster.ca

**Research Sponsor:** The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

**What am I trying to discover?**

My supervisor and I are conducting a study on the role of social enterprises in creating employment opportunities for people living with mental illness. We are interested in learning about (1) the kinds of organizations that exist, (2) the strategies organizations use to create jobs for people with mental illness, and (3) people's daily experiences of those jobs.

**What will happen during the study?**

As you know, we have already completed a series of key informant interviews with representatives from social enterprises across the country. In the second stage of our study, I would like to learn more about the day-to-day operations of [organization name] through an extended period of participant observation at the organization.

With your permission, the observation will take place over the 10-week period of my placement at [organization name]. While I am here I would like to observe and participate in the day-to-day operation of the organization and develop an understanding of the different tasks and activities engaged in by members of the organization. During my time here, I would like to engage members of the organization in informal conversations. I will document what I learn about the organization in field notes. These notes will typically be written each day after leaving the organization.

It is important to emphasize that these field notes will be completely confidential. Pseudonyms will be assigned to individuals appearing in the field notes, and any identifying details will be omitted. Completed field notes will be kept on a secure, password-protected computer. After all analysis and writing from this project is completed, all of my field notes will be destroyed.

To make people aware of my research, I will work in collaboration with you to explain the purpose of the study to members of the organization, and to address any questions and concerns. If individuals wish to be excluded from the research process, I can guarantee that field notes will make no reference to them. I will also work with you to ensure that any concerns and questions that arise during the period of observation are addressed appropriately.

**Are there any risks to doing the study?**

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. During participant observation, I will work with you to address any concerns raised by members of the organization. In the event that I cannot address these concerns, participant observation can be halted.

**Are there any benefits to doing this study?**

The research will not benefit your organization or your membership directly. However, we hope to learn more about the ways in which social enterprises create job opportunities for people with mental illness and to document people's experiences of working in these organizations. In this way, we hope that the research will raise awareness of the important role these organizations play. Findings from the research will be sent to advocacy organizations and policymakers.

**Who will know what people at our organization said in the study?**

Every effort will be made to protect confidentiality and privacy. I will not use the name of your organization in any written reports or publications. Only myself and my supervisor will know that your organization participated in the research project.

However, there are a limited number of social purpose enterprises working with people with mental illness. For this reason, others in the field may be able to identify your organization based on information gathered during the participant observation. Please keep this in mind when deciding whether you wish to participate as a case study site.

With respect to individual workers/members of the organization, the participant observation will be confidential. Field notes will be kept on a password-protected computer. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the data. Once the study has been completed, all field notes relating to the organization will be destroyed.

**What if I change my mind about including my organization as a case study?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to allow me to conduct participant observation at [organization name], you can change your mind at any time, even after signing the consent form or part-way through my placement with the organization. If you decide to withdraw from the research, you can request that I destroy all previously collected data.

If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you or the organization. If you choose to withdraw, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise.

However, once the research is complete and the results of the study made public (e.g., in a final report), you will not be able to withdraw.

**Information about the Study Results**

We expect to have this research completed by approximately May 2014. If you would like a brief report summarizing the results, please let us know how you would like it sent.

**Questions about the Study**

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact myself or my supervisor, Dr. Robert Wilton (wiltonr@mcmaster.ca, 905 525-9140, ext.24536).

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat  
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142  
c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support  
E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

---

**CONSENT**

I have read /been read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Monica Perski and supervised by Dr. Robert Wilton of McMaster University.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement of my organization in this study and to receive additional details I requested.

I understand that if I agree to allow my organization to participate in this study, I may withdraw the organization from the study at any time.

I have been given a copy of this form.

1. I agree to allow my organization to serve as a case study in this research project.

Yes. [  ]

No. [  ]

2. I would like to receive a summary of the study's results.

Yes, please send them to this email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Or to this mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

No, I do not want to receive a summary of the study's results. [  ]

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX L**  
**INFORMATIONAL POSTER FOR PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION**  
**RESEARCH PROJECT ON SOCIAL ENTERPRISES**

Hello, my name is Monica Perski. I am a student from McMaster University. I am working at [REDACTED] this summer. I am also conducting research for my Master's degree looking at how social enterprises create jobs for people living with mental illness.



I will be working at [REDACTED] between June and August 2013. During this time, I want to learn about the different programs and opportunities it provides.

I hope to spend time in different areas of the organization, learning about what jobs people do and chatting informally with people about their experiences.

As part of the study, I'll be taking some written notes during my visit. The final project will not include anyone's name or any information that might be used to identify you.

If you would like to learn more about my study, or if you have questions or concerns, please speak with me in person or you can contact me by e-mail or telephone:

*Monica Perski*

Phone: [REDACTED]

or E-mail: perskim@mcmaster.ca

**This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance from, the  
McMaster Research Ethics Board.**

**APPENDIX M**  
**VERBAL MESSAGE FOR PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION**

Good morning/afternoon,

My name is Monica Perski and I am a student who will be working at [organization name] this summer. Although I will primarily be in the front-end for the first few weeks, you will be seeing me around the worksite more often as time goes on. While I am here, I will also be conducting a research project as part of my Master's degree at McMaster University. For this project, I am interested in how social enterprises create accommodating work spaces for people with mental illness. My research will be based on my observations here over the next 10 weeks, which includes my experiences at the organization and the conversations that I have with you and with the staff members. I will be making notes about these observations at the end of each work day.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. As well, you will be granted anonymity, which means I will not be using your name or the name of the organization when I write my research report. If you do not want to be involved in this research, you can speak to me in person or through the contact information printed on the posters that have been placed around the worksite (hold up poster to show clients what poster looks like). Also, you can withdraw from this project at any time. This means that if you choose to participate in the study and then decide later on that you do not want me to use any information you previously told me, I will remove that information from my notes and you no longer have to be involved in the research. However, once the research is complete and the results of the study have been made public in my final report, you will not be able to withdraw.

If you have any questions, please come talk to me in person or contact me by phone or e-mail.

Thank you!

## **APPENDIX N NVIVO CODING STRUCTURE**

- Accommodation
  - Mental Health Accommodations
    - Additional Breaks During the Work Day
    - Being Open about Mental Health Issues at Work
    - Clients Not Able to Handle the Nature of Work
    - Flexible Work Days and Hours
    - Listening to Music During Work Hours
    - Pace of Work
    - Staff Showing and Reminding Clients How to Perform Tasks
    - Taking Days Off From Work
    - Working Alone in the Worksite
  - Physical Accommodations
  - Transportation Accommodations (Van Service)
- Challenges for the Organization into the Future
- Client Profiles
  - (Sub-codes deleted here to maintain anonymity)
- Customers
  - Communication with Customers Regarding Various Jobs
  - Detailed Descriptions of Various Contracts
  - Fulfillment Contracts
  - Pressure for Timely Order Completion
  - Recruitment
  - Turning Down Contracts
- Descriptive Information about the Organization
  - Close Proximity to Public Transportation
  - Funding for the Organization
  - Organization Protocol
  - Organizational Purpose and Objectives
  - Site Descriptions
- Ethics and Client Consent
- Expanding the Organization
- Finding Mainstream Employment
- Future Opportunities for the Organization
- Nature of the Work and Labour Process
  - Atypical Work Day
  - Comfort Level in the Training Program
  - Degree of Choice Afforded to Clients in Relation to Tasks Performed
  - How Tasks are Performed
    - How Clients' Skill Levels Impact the Tasks Performed
    - Strategies Used While Performing Tasks
  - Issues Related to How Tasks are Performed



- Labour Process Discipline
- Lack of Work in the Worksite
- Physical Effects of Performing Tasks in the Worksite
- Quality Control Measures
- The 'Training' Aspect of the Worksite
- Types of Tasks Performed
- Typical Work Day
- Researcher Acceptance and Rapport
- Social Relationships
  - Interactions Outside of the Workplace
  - Lunch and Break Interactions
  - Social Interactions During Work Hours
- Staff Member Profiles
  - (Sub-codes deleted here to maintain anonymity)
- Structure of the Organization
  - Adult Community Employment Program Descriptions
    - Employment Specialist Role
    - ODSP Employment Supports Program
  - Managerial Positions
  - Training Program Descriptions
    - Lead Hand Role
    - Length of Time Clients Spend in the Program
    - Team Leader Role
    - Vocational Support Worker Role
    - Worksite Client Training
  - Transitional Employment Program
    - Cafe in the Worksite
  - Youth Community Employment Descriptions
- Wages and Pricing
  - Clients that ARE Concerned about How Much They Earn
  - Clients that ARE NOT Concerned about How Much They Earn
  - Dissatisfaction with Earnings
  - Earnings Adjustments
  - How Much Jobs Pay
  - Issues Surrounding Minimum Wage
  - Lack of Pricing Knowledge
  - Types of Pricing
- What Clients Dislike about the Training Program
- What Clients Like about the Training Program