

FROM WELFARE TO WORK

PhD Thesis: Pamela Lahey, McMaster University – Rehabilitation Science

**FROM WELFARE TO WORK FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
IN RECEIPT OF PUBLIC INCOME BENEFITS: A WICKED PROBLEM FOR
POLICY MAKERS**

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**TITLE: From Welfare to Work for People with Disabilities in Receipt of Public Income
Benefits: A Wicked Problem for Policy Makers**

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LAY ABSTRACT (150)

Employment is a key determinant of socioeconomic inclusion and health. Employment paid at a competitive wage equips a person with the social and economic resources they need to enjoy a decent quality of life. Yet, people with disabilities (PWD) are often underemployed or excluded from the mainstream labour market. This thesis sets out to explore the barriers and facilitators to meaningful employment for PWD, with a focus on people living with serious mental illness who are in receipt of income benefits from the Ontario Disability Support Program. This body of work begins with a global exploration of active labour market policies that are used to assist PWD enter or remain in employment. It then narrows its focus to explore the system level factors that prevent or facilitate people living with serious mental illness to transition from income benefits to mainstream employment. The study findings have implications for policy development in all advanced welfare states that could enhance successful transitions from welfare to work.

ABSTRACT

Employment is a key determinant of socioeconomic inclusion and health. Yet, people with disabilities (PWD) have one of the lowest employment rates in advanced welfare states. This thesis consists of three manuscripts using three distinct methodologies to examine this phenomenon. This thesis advances knowledge in the field by examining the employment outcomes of PWD who are in receipt of public income benefits, often referred to as programs of last resort. This thesis is framed by the theory of wicked problems which serves to emphasize the stubborn problem of low employment participation rates. Despite the numerous enhancements made to social assistance programming over the last two decades to facilitate positive employment outcomes, people with mental illness remain one of the most marginalized worker populations.

Manuscript one is a scoping review identifying what is known about active labour market policies within welfare to work programs for PWD. This research acts as the foundational piece upon which the other two papers build. The purpose of the review is to present the existing body of literature on this issue across all advanced welfare states and identify the gaps in the evidence base, summarize these findings and disseminate them to policy makers and other key stakeholders.

Manuscript two is a quantitative study. It takes a narrower focus and examines a subpopulation of PWD. This study uses administrative data from Ontario's Ministry of Community and Social Services to examine the system level factors associated with earnings-related exits from the Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario's public income system for PWD. The study draws on descriptive and inferential statistical procedures to provide an overview of income support recipients with mental illness who gain enough earnings to transition off social assistance. This study contributes data on the numbers behind system exits to inform program development within ODSP.

While manuscript two answers who exits ODSP for employment, manuscript three provides insight into why and how individuals succeed in exiting the system. Through a series of semi-structured interviews with three participant groups, this study explores the process of transitioning off disability income support benefits among people with mental illness. This study adds to a small but emerging literature on the economic fate of former ODSP recipients, which will help inform policy development.

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Wicked Problem for Policy Makers**

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My supervisor and each of my committee members contributed time and expertise that allowed me to design a program of study that was rich in methodological approaches, and rigorous in analysis. Their contributions allowed me, in turn, to make a valuable contribution to the literature on employment for people with disabilities who are in receipt of public income benefits.

Dr. Rebecca Gewurtz was my supervisor. To her I owe more than words can express, or at least that I have the space to express! Rebecca took a chance on me. She helped shape my program of research from day one. She was instrumental in helping me complete a funding proposal to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council that ultimately funded my program of research. Dr. Gewurtz provided consistent and valuable guidance in identifying the scope of the studies, the study design, data collection, analysis, editing and providing detailed feedback on each of the study papers in its various iterations. She was also the final check on each of the manuscripts submitted for publication. She provided me learning opportunities beyond my program of research that taught me new skills, but also afforded me the space and time to invest these four years in doctoral research. Rebecca was also an ear when I felt discouraged, disillusioned, frustrated, and stressed out. She reined me in when I needed a focused direction, reminding me often that this thesis does not have to be my life's work. It is her encouragement and guidance that helped me reach this final stage. She wore many hats beyond supervisor. I will be eternally grateful for her trust and belief in my abilities.

Dr. Emile Tompa was the primary source of quantitative expertise on study two. I was new to quantitative methodology, SAS programming and panel data analysis. I enlisted his assistance when my proposal to access MCSS administrative data was accepted. I was, in short, naïve about the skills and knowledge it would take to undertake such a mammoth task. My learning curve was steep, and I would not have been able to complete a study of this magnitude and complexity without the investment of time, support, and knowledge imparted by Dr. Tompa. He taught me how to code, helped me navigate through the varied nuances of longitudinal analysis, helped me to interpret the findings, questioned my approach to organization, challenged my thinking on techniques and approaches to problem solving; all the while, encouraging me to keep moving forward. In summary, he was a mentor to whom I owe much gratitude.

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My son, Noah, who is wise beyond his 16 years, was a constant source of support and encouragement. He often (almost daily) reminded me to stay focused and get my PhD done. “Mom, you don’t need the distraction right now; just get your PhD done!” Now, finally, I can get that puppy.

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Dedicated to my children and to (the memory of) my father
Knowledge is power; use it to do good

DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

This thesis is a sandwich thesis consisting of three studies prepared for publication. The student contribution is described below.

Pamela Lahey is the lead author on all three studies. She conceptualized the research questions, study design, and theoretical and conceptual frameworks. She was the lead investigator on data collection and data analysis. She wrote the papers, revised the drafts, and prepared and submitted the papers for publication.

Dr. Rebecca Gewurtz assisted with shaping the program of research, which has evolved quite significantly since the funding grant submitted to the Social Science and Humanities Research Council in 2014. Dr. Gewurtz assisted with shaping the methodological approach for the studies; she was also active in editing at each stage of the papers' development. She also provided guidance in the publication process.

Dr. Emile Tompa provided instrumental hours over three years teaching me how to code in SAS and helping to work through the nuances of working with panel data. He was active with each stage of data collection and provided instruction on how to present data findings in quantitative papers. He offered revisions on all five chapters.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

ALMP	Active Labour Market Policies
BU	Benefit Unit
CRWDP	Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy
CCRW	Canada Centre for Rehabilitation and Work
CMP	Conditions Management Program
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
ESA	Employment Services Assessment
EU	European Union
JSCI	Job Seekers Classification Instrument
MCSS	Ministry of Community and Social Services
MI	Mental Illness
NOC	National Occupation Classification
OCD	Obsession Compulsive Disorder
ODSP	Ontario Disability Support Program
OW	Ontario Works
PMI	Person with a mental illness
PPD	People with Disabilities
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RCT	Randomized Control Trials
RDC	Research Data Centre
RTW	Return to Work
SANE	Social Assistance in the New Economy
TTW	Ticket to Work
US	United States
UK	United Kingdom
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation

WCA Work Capacity Assessment

p Level of significance

β Beta Coefficient

Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

My Research Focus

There is a significant body of literature that addresses the employment needs of persons with mental illness and the supports they require to secure and retain employment (Kirsh, 2000; Corbière et al, 2011; Gewurtz, Cott, Rush, & Kirsh, 2015). However, despite the work in this area by researchers and government bodies over the past two decades, the unemployment rates of persons with mental illness lag behind those of their non-disabled peers and employment of this worker population remains illusive (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012; Hall et al, 2015). This may well be because there is no one solution to the employment conditions plaguing persons with mental illness. In the world of policy this seemingly stubborn condition is what is referred to as a “wicked problem” (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Mertens, 2015).

The Theory of Wicked Problems

The studies within this thesis are guided by the theory of wicked problems, itself a theory of the grand theory of planning (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Wacker 2008). Mertens (2015) advances Rittle’s theory by describing wicked problems as “those that involve multiple interacting systems, are replete with social and institutional uncertainties, and for which only imperfect knowledge about their nature and solutions exist” (p. 3). Within the realm of public policy, wicked problems can be viewed as complex policy issues that are highly resistant to resolution and for which there is no optimal solution, but rather only provide increasingly more effective answers (Mertens, 2015). This is because most social problems are characterized by “internally

conflicting goals or objectives,” among a host of other causal factors (Australian Public Service Commission, 2012). Unlike traditional policy analysis that is approached in a linear fashion (following the constrained path from problem identification to policy solution and implementation), most social policies require an iterative, multi-pronged approach (Rittle & Weber, 1973 & Mertens, 2015). Moreover, wicked problems are often messy, and resolutions can not be found in quick fixes. Instead, any meaningful resolution takes time and the adoption of innovative approaches across sectors (Australian Public Service Commission, 2012). I adopt an innovation approach to this wicked problem by using a policy implementation strategy called backward mapping (Elmore, 1979). Understanding that wicked problems have no definitive solutions just progressively better options, I approach this issue not by examining the “predetermined uniform approach” (Elmore, 1979, p. 615) set out with policy regulations at the front end, but by examining the object of policy outcomes, PWD who have exited the system. How to integrate the most marginalized citizens into mainstream employment has long been a challenge in advanced welfare states. There is a substantial body of literature that identifies PWD as a population with the highest risk of social and economic isolation. They are one of the most marginalized populations in developed nations (Benbow, Rudnick, Forchuk, & Edwards, 2014). The wicked problem addressed in these three manuscripts considers how to best (re)integrating PWD, specifically those with serious mental illness, into the mainstream labour market. The assumption (that a job reduces poverty), is set within the context of welfare programs grounded in neoliberal ideology that favours short-term solutions characterized by rapid (re)entry strategies using the least amount of resources possible (Peck, 2003). Resolving to work on wicked problems is what Roe (2016) refers to as “mess management” – an apt way to describe a policy problem that is characterized as “the darkening sky of coping, muddling through, groping along,

sub optimization, bounded rationality, garbage can processes, second-best solutions, policy churn and policy fiascos, rotten compromises, managing the unexpected, crisis management, and that deep wellspring of miserablism, implementation and policy failure” (p. 352).

My research in Context

Many people with mental illness can and want to work (Crowther, Bond, & Huxley, 2001; Kirsh, Krupa, Cockburn, & Gewurtz, 2010; Menear et al, 2011; Vick, 2014). Despite their capacity for employment, people with mental illness have among the highest rate of unemployment of all disability groups. Moreover, many recipients of social assistance who live with mental illness receive income supports; often cycling between low wage precarious employment and social assistance (Kirsh, 2000; Smith Fowler, 2011; Vick & Lightman, 2010; Dewa, 2016). This interaction between income support and mainstream employment fits within a larger field of research known as work disability policy (WDP). WDP refers to public policy related to any federal or provincial Canadian program that shapes income security and labour-market engagement for work-disabled individuals, such as Workers’ Compensation, Canada and Quebec Pension Plan Disability, and social assistance for PWD (CRWDP, 2017). The employment of persons with disabilities who are in receipt of disability pensions of “last resort” (non-contributory means tested programs) have been a key focus of government intervention in advanced welfare states for the past two decades. This attention can be attributed to the desire to include PWD in mainstream society by increasing their self-sufficiency; however, the driver behind this push is, at its heart, the growing caseloads. For example, over the last 17 years, the recipient caseload for disability pensions “of last resort” in Ontario [the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)] has almost doubled, increasing by over 217,000 individuals (MCSS, 2017). Although there is a significant interest in promoting employment among recipients, little

is known about the employment trajectory of current and former recipients (Frenette & Picott, 2003; Goss Gilroy Inc., 2007; Dewa, 2016).

Introduction of Research Problem

In Canada, social assistance programs are administered by the provincial government. In Ontario, social assistance is divided into two programs: Ontario Works (OW) for unemployed Ontarians who have exhausted all other income replacement resources and do not have a documented disability limiting their employability; and ODSP for those Ontarians who have no other form of income and who have a documented disability. Unlike OW, ODSP does not have mandatory work participation requirements; however, the ODSP program does offer employment supports for those who want to seek employment. Despite an increased focus on employment for people with disabilities (PWD) and the continuing escalation of ODSP income benefit claims, there is little evidence documenting the employment and economic trajectories of PWD who are recipients of provincial disability support programs (Vick & Lightman, 2010). Much of the literature is focused on recipients of general welfare programs. While there is some anecdotal evidence, there is no known Canadian research that provides data on who leaves disability support for paid employment in the mainstream labour market; nor is there any current data that tracks the economic well-being of recipients once they exit social assistance for employment. My thesis research will begin to address this gap in the literature, thus building on what is known about the socio-economic fate of welfare leavers with disabilities (Vick and Lightman, 2010). To this end, I conducted three studies: a scoping review on active labour market policies directed at people with disabilities on social assistance, a quantitative study on individual and system level factors associated with exits from ODSP and a qualitative study to

examine the experiences of people living with mental illness who have left ODSP for employment.

Despite the seemingly intractable issue presented by the wicked welfare problem of sustained employment for PWD (especially those receiving public disability allowances), this thesis offers up findings that suggest ways to improve disability income support programs to increase meaningful employment opportunities for persons with serious mental illness and facilitate their exit from income support programs, if this is feasible.

Brief Background of Key Issues

Historically, the provision of public income benefits has been underpinned by the principles and values of the governing state (Trattner, 2007). In the 1970s, we witnessed a passive system of supports that were guided by principles of universality and social protection. However, by the 1990s a market-based welfare scheme had taken root in many jurisdictions, including Canada. A benevolent system of support to the needy was replaced by retreating government assistance and a new emphasis on personal responsibility (Whitehead et al, 2009; Peck & Theodore, 2001). This “roll back” phase of neoliberalism provided income benefits in exchange for mandatory work participation, often referred to as workfare (Peck & Theodore, 2002, p. 384; Peck, Theodore, & Brenner, 2010). In a subsequent roll out phase, disabled citizens were viewed as more deserving of income benefits and thus were provided income that did not have any work participation requirements attached (Ferguson 2009; Parker-Harrison, 2012; Owens & Gould, 2012). In Ontario, Canada, these benefits are provided within ODSP. While the tenets of neoliberalism were softened with this new program (as they were made voluntary rather than required) if

disabled recipients wanted to work, the nature of the supports and services necessitate that they be job ready and strive toward greater independence (Chouinard & Crooks 2005; Gewurtz, 2011). Moreover, the steady increase in disability caseloads since the program's inception has necessitated a discourse centred around helping ODSP recipients gain financial independence, while providing them with the supports they need to realize this goal (Stapleton, 2004).

Recipients with mental illness are of particular interest because they represent the fastest growing segment of the ODSP caseload. In Ontario, mental illnesses represent approximately 52% of the primary conditions for applicants granted ODSP benefits (Stapleton, Tweedle, & Gibson, 2014). Despite this renewed emphasis on integrating PWD into the mainstream labour market, we have little understanding about the extent to which recipients are exiting the system for employment, what happens to recipients who have left income support programs for employment, or what system level factors facilitated that exit (Frenette & Picot, 2003).

There is a small body of literature that highlights a small proportion of social assistance recipients that report enough earnings to exit the system for work (Fletcher, Winter, & Shih, 2005; Cook, 2006). In addition, there are some Canadian studies that speak to the experience of transitioning off the general welfare program in Ontario, known as Ontario Works (OW) (Lightman, Herd, & Mitchell 2008; Lightman, 2010). The Social Assistance in the New Economy (SANE) project is perhaps the most frequently documented of these studies. SANE was a series of Ontario studies examining the employment and economic trajectory of recipients on OW. Over the course of three years in early 2000, 10 focus groups, 50 semi-structured interviews and observation of 20 employment programs in several centres across Ontario were conducted (Personal Communication with co-author). One of the salient findings in the context

of my research is that work-first employment interventions may be ineffective in preventing welfare recidivism (Lightman, Herd, & Mitchell, 2008). As valuable as these studies are in building on our knowledge of the impacts of welfare reforms in the Canadian context, these studies look solely at social assistance recipients deemed “employable” but do not address the ODSP system that was established after this study period. Thus, the fate of job seekers with disabilities who leave the disability income benefit system remains unknown. As Frenette and Picot (2003) affirm, “when a spell ends, no follow-up information is collected unless there is re-entry into the system” (p. 7).

Given this dearth of research, there is a growing acknowledgement among key stakeholders that policy and program decision makers lack the information they need related to employment outcomes and labour market attachment among PWD (Smith-Fowler, 2011). What are the individual and system level predictors that allow those who exit disability benefits to sustain employment and achieve upward mobility in the labour market after their exit? What can we learn from these individuals to make changes to the work disability benefit system to prevent ongoing cycles between low-wage work and disability benefits? Due to the complexities and conflicting values of stakeholders, these wicked problems, and traditional research methods have not been adequate to find solutions (Mertens, 2015). For this reason, mixed methods have been gaining in popularity as they are nimbler in their ability to address stubborn social problems that defy one approach (Mertens, 2015). The studies in this thesis use multiple studies and methodologies to attempt to provide missing data which can then be used to inform policy resolution that may be effective in increasing self-sufficiency among our most marginalized workers.

Indeed, wicked policy problems are typically related to other challenges making resolution even more complex (Mertens, 2015). This is because social problems are complex moving targets and require a holistic approach across a diverse stakeholder group (Camillus, 2008; Mertens, 2015). I endeavour to address this problem by examining new approaches to “tame” this wicked problem (Crowley & Head, 2017, p. 540).

Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized and presented in five chapters. I conducted a multi-phase study comprised of a scoping review (chapter 2), a quantitative study (chapter 3), and a qualitative study (chapter 4), followed by a concluding chapter (chapter 5) that brings the evidence together to examine the commonalities, gaps in programming, and the lessons that can be learned. Each of these components build on the other to ask an overarching question: what individual and system level characteristics inform the employment success for recipients of disability income benefit programs of last resort?

Research Question(s)

1. *The scoping review question:*

- a) What is known about active labour market policies for PWD; how they operate and their strengths and limitations?

2. *Quantitative study questions:*

- a) What are the individual and system level predictors associated with exit from social assistance for ODSP recipients?
- b) How many recipients with mental illness exit ODSP for employment?

3. *Qualitative study questions:*

- a) How do individual and system level factors contribute to former recipients leaving ODSP for employment in the mainstream labour market?
- b) What are the experiences of former ODSP recipients who have left ODSP for employment in the mainstream labour market?
- c) What are the supports and services used or needed by former recipients to secure and retain employment in the mainstream labour market?

Summary of the Three Studies

Study One: Scoping Review

Active Labour Market Policies for People with Disabilities in Receipt of Public Income Benefits: A Scoping Review

The purpose of study one was to conduct a scoping review examining what is known about how active labour market policies (ALMP) function within welfare to work programs for PWD. This research acts as the foundational piece upon which the other two papers build. The purpose of this review is to present the existing body of literature on this issue across all advanced welfare

states and identify the gaps in the evidence base, for summarizing these findings and disseminating them to policy makers and other key stakeholders (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Study Two: Quantitative Study

The Road from Welfare to Work for Recipients with Mental Illness: Who are They?

The second study flows from the first and examines the system and individual characteristics that are associated with earnings-related exits from ODSP. It is a quantitative study examining the individual and system level predictors that are associated with earnings-related exits of recipients, with a focus on mental illness. The study draws on descriptive and inferential statistical procedures to provide an overview of income support recipients with mental illness who gain sufficient earnings to transition off social assistance. These data may “provide the ministry with relevant research for evidence-based policy decisions” (Statistics Canada, 2014.) Microdata from Ontario social assistance files for a 10-year period from 2003 to 2013 housed at the Statistics Canada Regional Data Centres (RDCs) was used for this analysis. This dataset was made available as part of a 2-year pilot project between Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services and Statistics Canada Research Data Centre (Statistics Canada, 2015).

Study Three: Qualitative Study

The Road from Welfare to Work: The experiences of those who have left

The third study builds on the research conducted in study two by providing a qualitative analysis of ODSP recipients with mental illness who have earned sufficient income to exit the system or those who are in the process of transitioning out of the system due to earned income that

disqualifies them from continued income assistance. This study was conducted via key informant interviews with four groups of participants: 1) former recipients of ODSP with a primary diagnosis of mental illness, 2) current recipients who have exited but are back on the system; 3) employment service providers that have successfully worked with former recipients in the transition process, and 4) ODSP program supervisors that can provide information on the process of policy development for implementation on the ground. Drawing on the principles of grounded theory, the focus was on exploring the process of transitioning off disability income support benefits among people with mental illness.

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Chapter Two: STUDY ONE

*Active Labour Market Policies for People with Disabilities in Receipt of Public Income Benefits:
A Scoping Review*

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Active labour market policies (ALMP) are used in advanced welfare states to support transitions to work for people who are unemployed or underemployed, including people with disabilities (PWD) in receipt of means-tested disability income support.

OBJECTIVE: This study explores the nature, strength, and limitations of Active Labour Market Policies across advanced welfare states (ALMP) for people with disabilities (PWD) in receipt of income benefits from social assistance programs.

METHODS: Following the eight steps of a scoping study, we identified 21 documents through a scan of eight databases and consultation with key informants. The majority of these documents are scholarly publications including seven literature reviews, two program evaluations, four social policy analyses, and two longitudinal studies.

RESULTS: We extracted key findings related to delivery of labour (re)entry interventions for people with disabilities. Six themes are identified that discuss these ALMP features: 1) welfare ideology and the role of citizenship; 2) conditionality of benefits; 3) work capacity and the need for an appropriate definition of disability; 4) the politics of employment outcomes for PWD; 5) the missing elements of a successful ALMP; and 6) moving beyond ALMPs. The findings indicate that while various approaches are used in reintegrating PWD into mainstream employment, there are significant limitations that curtail the impact of these policies.

CONCLUSIONS: Regardless of welfare regime, no welfare state provides a policy mix that results in long-term employment success for PWD in receipt of means-tested income benefits.

Keywords: Welfare, Disability Pensions, Social Assistance, Employment

Introduction

Active labour market policies (ALMP) are used in advanced welfare states to support transitions to work for people who are unemployed or underemployed, including people with disabilities (PWD) in receipt of means-tested disability income support [1]. Although the structure and focus of ALMP vary across jurisdictions, they generally aim to support entry or return to the mainstream labour market [2]. There is a need to understand what is known about ALMP in advanced welfare states to guide evidence-based policy decision-making. In particular, it is important to understand ALMP for PWD who are in receipt of non-contributory means-tested income benefits, as they are the most recent group targeted for activation [3]. Although research has examined ALMPs in specific jurisdictions, there is a need to synthesize this knowledge and examine the nature of ALMP for PWD who are in receipt of means-tested benefits [4]. This paper presents the findings of a scoping review that sought to identify ALMPs for PWD and explore how they operate, their strengths and limitations.

Background

In the 1970s and 1980s, welfare was governed by the Keynesian concept of the benevolent state, with a focus on taking care of citizens who lacked the means to provide for themselves [5]. The states position arose from a booming post war economy in which a trade off between social protection and economic growth was not a concern. However, post industrial changes necessitated a new approach [6]. In the mid-1990s, a paradigmatic shift towards neoliberalism took hold in many jurisdictions, and with it the social protection role of the welfare state started to shrink [7]. In many advanced welfare states, this retrenchment was replaced with the notion of work in exchange for benefits, or workfare as it became known [8].

During the same period, the disability movement was advocating for increased equity in social and economic endeavours. Their call for disabled citizens to be fully included in economic life had a significant impact on how government approached labour integration for PWD [8, 9]. Instead of the former protectionism afforded disabled citizens, governments extended neoliberalism in order to address the growing welfare caseloads [10, 11] by broadening the principles of personal responsibility to PWD. In effect, this evolution ensured what Howard (2005) called “equality of treatment” without the requisite accommodations to ensure “quality of outcome” [12].

ALMPs were not originally designed with PWD in mind; rather, PWD were considered largely unemployable until very recently [13]; however, the new neoliberal regime slowly drew in the disabled population, in part, to stem the flow of claimants turning to welfare after exhausting other avenues of support such as employment insurance [14]. The defining feature of welfare-oriented ALMPs has often been the provision of income benefits in exchange for work participation [15]. While ALMPs are implemented in all advanced welfare states, it is taken up differently depending on the welfare regime in which they operate [2]. ALMPs consist of supply-side and demand-side interventions. Supply-side interventions focus on the individual worker by addressing barriers to employment, often through benefit sanctions and skill development. Conversely, demand-side interventions look to the labour market for solutions and include strategies such as wage subsidies. However, consistent with neoliberal principles focused on personal responsibility [16], supply-side interventions are favoured in ALMPs within welfare programs [4, 8].

Methods

A scoping review was chosen as the appropriate method to synthesize emerging evidence in this field given the limited research evaluating ALMP for PWD who are receiving disability income supports [17]. Drawing on the methodology developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) [18], this review consists of eight steps, as outlined below.

Step 1: Identifying a Research Question

The three-part research question guiding our review is “What is known about active labour market policies for people with disabilities receiving means-tested income supports, how do they operate, and what are their strengths and limitations?” Although the dividing line between active and passive LMPs can be nebulous [2], we focus on policies that consist of active measures for employment in the mainstream labour market.

Step 2: Identifying Documents

We conducted a literature search of peer-reviewed papers, as well as a grey literature search to ensure integrity and thoroughness [17, 19]. The key words applied to our scholarly database searches included: welfare leavers, social assistance, social security disability insurance, invalidity benefits, incapacity benefits, disability benefits, income benefits, and disability insurance, combined with employment, jobs, exits, transitions, and “labour market policies”.

A librarian was consulted to determine the most appropriate academic databases for the topic area. Our review of the scholarly literature was conducted using the following eight databases across three fields: 1) *health* - PubMed, CINAHL, PsycINFO; 2) *business/social science* -

Sociology Abstracts, Econolit, Public Affairs Information Service (PAIS) International; and 3) *general* - Web of Science, Canadian Public Policy Collection. A hand search was also conducted of the reference list for key papers, in addition to four key journals identified by the lead researcher: Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation; Journal of Policy Practice; Administration and Policy in Mental Health; and Work: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation. This search resulted in 229 documents from the scholarly literature once duplicates were removed.

Due to the vast array of papers pertaining to ALMPs that can result from an internet search, the keyword search used for the grey literature was narrower and based on recommendations from key experts in this area. The following sites were searched: The Department of Work and Pension (UK); Employment and Social Development Canada, and Social Security (USA). Consistent with recommendations by Briscoe (2015) and Côté, Curtis, Rothstein and Stewart [20], the grey literature search terms were applied to four of the most popular search engines: Google, Yahoo, Bing, and Dogpile, using the phrase “active labour market policies” and “people with disabilities.” After removal of duplicates and irrelevant articles, 161 articles from the grey literature were retained for analysis.

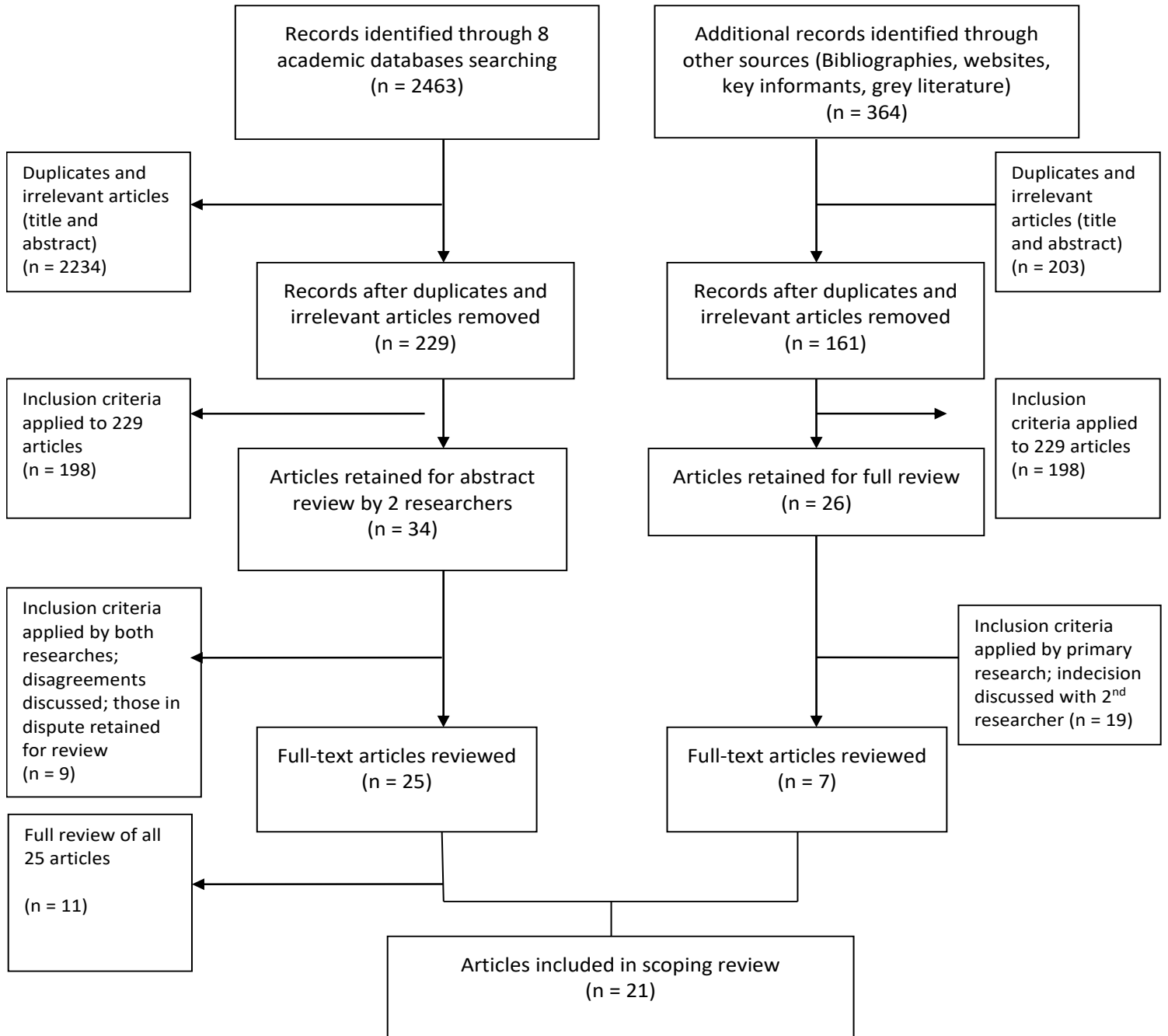
Step 3: Document Selection

The inclusion criteria for this review were documents that focused on adults with disabilities who were in receipt of non-contributory means-tested disability benefits in mainstream employment; only documents published in English between 1990 and 2016 were retained for full-text review. The year 1990 was chosen as that is when ALMP began being introduced in government policy

and programming [11]. Documents addressing contributory programs (where the worker pays into the program through employee contributions), describing programs that serve multiple groups beyond PWD, and those focused specifically on youth were excluded.

From a review of the titles and abstracts of 390 documents, 34 academic papers and 30 documents from the grey literature were identified for full-text review. Upon full-text review, 35 more documents were excluded from the analysis, resulting in a total of 29 documents including 22 peer-reviewed papers and seven reports from the grey literature. To avoid duplication, the original papers from the reviews were cross-referenced, resulting in the exclusion of an additional nine articles. Three articles were added through consultation with stakeholders, which provided a final list of 21 articles for the scoping review. The PRISMA (2009) flow diagram was used to depict this iterative process and ensure only articles pertaining to the research question guiding this review were included in the final analysis. See Figure 1 for a comprehensive tracking of this process.

Scoping Review Extraction Flow Diagram



Step 4: Charting the Data

A data extraction chart was created to map the process of “synthesizing and interpreting qualitative data by sifting, charting and sorting material according to key issues” [18 p.8] across five informational data points: 1) Reference/citation/Reviewer, 2) Purpose/Study Design, 3) Active labour market strategy/policies identified, 4) Strength of existing ALMPs, and 5) Limitations of existing ALMPs. A shortened version of this form is shown in Table One.

Reference/citation/Reviewer	Purpose/Study design	Active labour market strategy/policies identified	Strength of existing ALMPs	Limitations of existing ALMPs
<p>1 Hyde, M. (2000). From welfare to work? Social policy for disabled people of working age in the United Kingdom in the 1990s. <i>Disability & Society</i>, 15(2), 327-341.</p>	<p>Social policy analysis: Discusses welfare restructuring of the 90s; workfare for disabled welfare recipients. Recommendations for policy reform.</p>	<p>Five components of the “New Deal for Disabled Persons” (NDDP) described (accessing, job seeker allowance (JSA) provisions, personal advisors, disability allowance and a revised disability definition).</p>	<p>Introduction of Labour Market Policies that remove "perverse incentives" from the disability benefit system.</p>	<p>NDDP measures perpetuate mass unemployment: failure to find paid work, increase in unsatisfactory (and inferior) work conditions, increase in income deprivation, intensified stigma, and intensified social control (bureaucratic and medical regulations). Emphasis on "supply side" (recipient) measures were favoured over other policy options such as upskilling of disabled persons and employer obligations to create an inclusive.</p>
<p>2 Clayton, S., Bamba, C., Gosling, R., Povall, S., Misso, K., & Whitehead, M. (2011). Assembling the evidence jigsaw: insights from a systematic review of UK studies of individual-focused return to work initiatives for disabled and long-term ill people. <i>BMC Public Health</i>, 11(1), 170.</p>	<p>Systematic review: A systematic review of articles published (2002 – 2008) examines interventions for Longterm ill and disabled persons on incapacity benefits.</p>	<p>Discusses 2001 – 2008 reforms. Four strategies of the 2008 Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) program and its pathways to work (PtW) employment initiative discussed; including case management, financial incentives, and the health condition management program (CMP)</p>	<p>ONE - increased employment outcomes of 16+ hours; Increase in employment rates for new and existing claimants after 24 months; significant reduction of benefit receipt; PtW showed an increased likelihood of being more job ready after 18 months.</p>	<p>Effective and long-term evaluations are missing; including service delivery approaches; Due to nature of service delivery funding, creaming efforts were found; low threshold of financial incentives meant only low level jobs are available which erodes the support offered by this incentive.</p>

Reference/citation/Reviewer	Purpose/Study design	Active labour market strategy/policies identified	Strength of existing ALMPs	Limitations of existing ALMPs
<p>3 Parker Harris, S., Owen, R., & Gould, R. (2012). Parity of participation in liberal welfare states: human rights, neoliberalism, disability and employment. <i>Disability & Society</i>, 27(6), 823-836.</p>	<p>Social Policy Analysis: analyses of the active labour market policies for PWD in three countries: UK, USA, Australia</p>	<p>Description of three ALMPs across three jurisdictions: The USA’s 1999 Ticket to Work; the UK’s 2008 PtW, and Australia’s 2005 conditional benefit receipt introduced to the Disability Support Pension (DSP), and categories and earnings exemption amounts explained.</p>	<p>Small uptake in employments noted.</p>	<p>There is an absence of evidence on the structural issues (demand side interventions); outcome-based funding leads to creaming; work capacity assessments divide people into can and can not categories ignoring their individual needs (UK and Australia)</p>
<p>4 Lindsay, C., Greve, B., Cabras, I., Ellison, N., & Kellett, S. (2015). Assessing the evidence base on health, employability and the labour market—lessons for activation in the UK. <i>Social Policy & Administration</i>, 49(2), 143-160.</p>	<p>Literature review: A comparison between ALMPs in UK and Denmark. Recommendations of alternative measures.</p>	<p><u>UK</u> “Pathways to Work” (2003-2010) and its successor “the Work Programme” discussed, as was 2011 work capacity assessments. Denmark’s flex job programme discussed as well as resourcelob (for those 40 and under).</p>	<p>UK: Work capability assessments are important step to recognizing partial work capacity. Denmark: attempt to integrate support leading to labour market reintegration; rapid expansion in uptake of flex-jobs</p>	<p>UK: little progress in improving claimants’ health and employability; sanctions for non-compliance hampering efforts; ineffective tools to measure work capacity; lack of evaluations for initiatives such as CMP Denmark: promise of coordinated, holistic approach remains elusive</p>

Reference/citation/Reviewer	Purpose/Study design	Active labour market strategy/policies identified	Strength of existing ALMPs	Limitations of existing ALMPs
<p>5 Lindsay, C., & Houston, D. (2011). Fit for purpose? Welfare reform and challenges for health and labour market policy in the UK. <i>Environment and Planning A</i>, 43(3), 703-721.</p>	<p>Literature review: Review of the existing evidence re: UK disability claimants on IB pre and post 2003 and 2010 welfare reforms.</p>	<p>The Invalidity and incapacity Benefits programs (IV and IB) are discussed; including an exploration of the work capability assessments and the various work streams (support group, Work- related activity group (WRAG), and Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), claimants are directed to.</p>	<p>Some claimants getting emotional and social support with the Conditional Management Program (CMP); ESA no longer conflate the unemployed vs unable groups as they are streamed into three distinct groups; Fitness for Work Pilots present a potential starting point in engaging employers to promote health in workforce.</p>	<p>The CMP is not well known, nor is it leading to employment outcomes; personal advisor service are poorly trained in illness management; no following up on claimants who leave benefits for employment; employers attitudes and corporate cultures/practice is not being explored.</p>
<p>6 Etherington, D., & Ingold, J. (2012). Welfare to work and the inclusive labour market: a comparative study of activation policies for disability and long-term sickness benefit claimants in the UK and Denmark. <i>Journal of European Social Policy</i>, 22(1), 30-44.</p>	<p>Scoping review: To compare the UK and Denmark ALMP models to determine what policy learnings the Danish system can impart.</p>	<p>The evolution of the UK's NDDP is discussed from 1998-2011. Denmark's flex-jobs and 2006 new roads to employment (claimants with MI) also described.</p>	<p>UK: job search activities and provision of financial incentives, such as RTWC Denmark: generous employer provided subsidy (flex-job) and generous income benefits (based on average wage in LM); co- location of employment and health service providers; active inclusion of social partners (employers and</p>	<p>UK: only a 15% move of PtW clients into employment. Not maintained beyond subsidized period; Lack of demand side interventions Denmark: Employment outcomes decrease in subsequent years; flex-job participants are located between mainstream LM and Disability Benefits (DB) so some stigma.</p>

Reference/citation/Reviewer	Purpose/Study design	Active labour market strategy/policies identified	Strength of existing ALMPs	Limitations of existing ALMPs
			trade unions) in ALMP decisions.	
7 Kirby, S., & Riley, R. (2004). Compulsory work-focused interviews for inactive benefit claimants: an evaluation of the British ONE pilots. <i>Labour Economics</i> , 11(4), 415-429. Chicago	Longitudinal quantitative study: Evaluation of the Compulsorily Work focused interviews (CWFI) in the ONE pilot on work behaviour.	The ONE (pilot) programme in the UK was discussed as it relates to sick and disability benefit claimants (job seekers allowance, incapacity benefits, severe disability insurance).	Tools and incentives to find work are introduced.	Overall the ONE programme did not influence the probability of those on sick benefits leaving the system; A limitation of ONE -- introduced too soon when new claimants were more concerned about receiving their benefits; poor outcomes for personal advisors (only 26% discussed finding work).
8 Corden, A., & Nice, K. (2006). Pathways to Work from Incapacity Benefits: A study of experience and use of Return to Work Credit. Research Report. Department for Work and Pensions Research Report, vol. 3. Corporate Document Services	Longitudinal Qualitative analysis: Evaluation report of PtW and Return to Work Credit (RTWC); conducted 35 interviews and used longitudinal panel data.	One of PtW's financial incentives – Return to work credit (RTWC -- non-taxable earnings supplement payable to incapacity benefits recipients who return to, or move into, paid work) was detailed.	Credit made work financially feasible and offered them financial security.	Credit did not affect decision to work.

Reference/citation/Reviewer	Purpose/Study design	Active labour market strategy/policies identified	Strength of existing ALMPs	Limitations of existing ALMPs
<p>9 Gupta, N. D., & Larsen, M. (2010). Evaluating labour market effects of wage subsidies for the disabled– The Danish flex job scheme. <i>The Danish National Centre for Social Research, Research Department of Employment and Integration, Working Paper, 7, 2010</i></p>	<p>Program Evaluation: To evaluate the employment and disability exit effects of a wage subsidy program (flex-job) for the disabled.</p>	<p>The 2004 changes to the flex-job initiative were discussed in terms of access.</p>	<p>High demand for flex-jobs by claimants; did moderately increase employment.</p>	<p>Potential deadweight losses of flex-jobs; did not lower exit from system of long term disabled.</p>
<p>10 Social Security and Social Integration, (2002). Active Labour Market Programmes for People with Disabilities: Facts and figures on use and impact. EU.</p>	<p>Government commissioned analytical report: type, scope, expenditures (0-4.6% of GDP) and impact of ALMPs in the EU Member States are discussed; impacts and challenges in evaluation are also noted.</p>	<p>ALMPs were explored in terms of the populations served. Specialized programs for PWD were identified and compared against mainstream programs. Incentives within these programs were also addressed.</p>	<p><u>A</u>ssisted to various degrees in getting PWD reintegrated into LM</p>	<p>Outflow to mainstream employment is very limited. The exception is Austria that has tailored approaches that are time intensive but pay off in significantly higher employment outcomes; Lack of monitoring and evaluation of ALMP for persons with disabilities including employment rates and quality of life indicators; Disability related professional skills are lacking; absence of employer engagement.</p>

Reference/citation/Reviewer	Purpose/Study design	Active labour market strategy/policies identified	Strength of existing ALMPs	Limitations of existing ALMPs
<p>11 Greve, B. (2009). The labour market situation of disabled people in European countries and implementation of employment policies: a summary of evidence from country reports and research studies. <i>Academic Network of European Disability Experts (ANED)</i>.</p>	<p>Think tank commission analytical report: Summary of evidence from country reports and research studies provides background on the EU employment strategy and highlights evidence of integration and retention strategies for PWD.</p>	<p>A number of different ALMPs were identified such as job search, counselling, job coaching, legislative measures, tax credits, subsidies, etc. for example: quotas Denmark and UK: Best Practices identified</p>	<p>Limited success of quotas, subsidies, work related credits.</p>	<p>Need for integration without lose of needed supports; need for increased disability specific expertise of the counsellors</p>
<p>12 Carcillo, S., & Grubb, D. (2006). From inactivity to work. OECD Library.</p>	<p>OECD analytical report: Examination of activation strategies across OECD countries with application of said strategies to disabled citizens. Recommendations for improvement of ALMPs.</p>	<p>Partial work capacities and use of sanctions were discussed extensively. Looking at initiatives in Austria (VR), USA, and Denmark (permanent employer subsidies)</p>	<p>Work-focused interviews showed higher intake rates when introduced after the 8th week; Financial incentives have positive short-term benefits; sanctions have more positive impacts on employment activities than incentives; Experience ranking had a positive impact on reducing inflow to disability benefits</p>	<p>Evaluation reports on the impact of programing and employment outcomes are lacking.</p>

Reference/citation/Reviewer	Purpose/Study design	Active labour market strategy/policies identified	Strength of existing ALMPs	Limitations of existing ALMPs
13 Dorsett, R. (2007). The Effect of Pathways to work on Labour. <i>National Institute Economic Review</i> , 202(1), 7989.	Summary of program evaluation: Presents a summary of a Pathways to Work evaluation and its impact on income benefit receipt and transition into employment	Expansions of the Pathway to Work employment program was discussed, such as expanded benefit coverage, the CMP, and the choices package.	After 18 months a positive effect of 7 points was shown. (apart from mental illness).	Findings show the greatest decline to 6 months after start to no statistical significance after 14 months on the program.
14 Bambra, C., Whitehead, M., & Hamilton, V. (2005). Does ‘welfare-to-work’ work? A systematic review of the effectiveness of the UK's welfare-to-work programmes for people with a disability or chronic illness. <i>Social Science & Medicine</i> , 60(9), 1905-1918.	Systematic review: 16 studies focused on participants (16-59) with moderate disabilities engaged in a range of welfare to work measures from 1996-2002	A range of ALMP measures were discussed from Pre- 1997 (Work Preparation) to through to work trials and PSA introduced in 1997 The residential training component (1-year intensive vocational courses in colleges) was also described.	Generally led to some employment gains (only 2 of the studies had controls, it is not possible to determine if the employment outcomes are due to intervention or external factors).	Most of the research on ALMPs are not concerned with employment outcomes as a primary objective; More experiential evidence is needed; ALMP studies that focus on preventing decline into benefit programs are lacking.
15 ODSP Action Coalition (2011). An Activation Agenda for People with Disabilities on Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).	Report to government on 2012 Ontario social assistance reforms: Presents an activation framework that can be used to support the work	The report recommended a proposed activation framework that included 4 key components: Dynamic understanding of disability, Adequate income, Effective employment related supports, Accessible Labour Market	Reframe disability and employability on a continuum, creating the preconditions for integration into the labour market.	System interaction ie. EI and rapid reinstatement of ODSP benefits are missing in literature; legislative measures, such as AODA do not go far enough in providing workplace accountabilities; lack of employer and service provider education

Reference/citation/Reviewer	Purpose/Study design	Active labour market strategy/policies identified	Strength of existing ALMPs	Limitations of existing ALMPs
	participation of ODSP recipients.			
<p>16 Pickles, C., Holmes, E., Tittley, H., & Dobson, B. (2016). Working welfare: a radically new approach to sickness and disability benefits.</p>	<p>Social policy analysis: New model of disability benefits proposed based on a reform of the existing UC benefit in the UK introduced in 2012.</p>	<p>A range of measures borrowing from existing measures were Proposed to improve disability benefits including the Universal Credit (UC) (A single “out of work” benefit with one income rate; comprised of 3 components: a) online application form b) proximity to the labour market diagnostic tool c) health questionnaire (with possible occupational health assessment)) ESA out of work benefits, Australia’s job capacity assessment tools, and New Zealand’s model.</p>	<p>UK: creates efficiencies in the system by addressing Introduction of degrees of work capacity New Zealand: single core benefits identify claimants by their distance to the labour market not by their disability; decrease in number of sickness benefits claims Australia: work capacity measures capture fluctuating work capacity and degrees of support needed; job outcomes increased</p>	<p>Decreased outflows from the system due to perverse financial disincentives (WRAG WRAG was paid 40 -50% higher benefits than JSA group prompting those on benefits to “fail” their work capacity assessments to stay on higher benefits. Insufficient resources to fund ALMP that show promise (NZ initiative scrapped in 2008).</p>

Reference/citation/Reviewer	Purpose/Study design	Active labour market strategy/policies identified	Strength of existing ALMPs	Limitations of existing ALMPs
17 Eichhorst (IZA) Michael J. Kendzia (IZA) Jonathan Benjamin Knudsen (NIRAS) Mette Okkels Hansen (NIRAS) Barbara Vandeweghe (IDEA Consult) Ingrid Vanhoren (IDEA Consult) Eva Rückert (WIFO) Bernd Schulte (Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Social Law) October 2010	Social policy analysis: Describes the impact of measures to a variety of disability claimants across the EU.	Pathways to Work, Employer Quotas (2 – 7% of EU states have them), and Denmark’s Flex-jobs (cited as best practice) were described.	Quotas may get people in workforce (but only low skilled token positions); flex jobs lead to shift in focus from work incapacity to degrees of capacity for employment.	work (partial) capacity vs incapacity needs more evidence behind it.; there is no universal definition of disability leading to poor program statistics and evaluations (eg. Flexicurity); lack of information of workplace accessibility.
18 Heap, D. (2014). The Rights and Responsibilities of Working-Age Sick and Disabled Benefit Claimants in Austerity Europe. <i>Journal of Contemporary European Studies</i> , 22(2), 143-156.	Comparative analysis of two EU welfare states in UK and Denmark with a strong focus on ALMP for disabled.	ALMPs for PWD across 2 welfare states were discussed: UK (1995 – 2011 programming); Denmark (2004 – 2013) programming, ie. Flex-jobs.	Work Programme was to provide more intensive supports to clients; and encourage providers to serve more barriered; Flex jobs increased work rate of sick and disabled.	Funding and time is inadequate to assist the most barriered; creaming and parking of IB/ESA claimants in favour of more job ready claimants; Flex-jobs did not see a reduction to flow onto benefit system; FJ were too expensive to maintain; program evaluations were lacking.
19 Waddington, L., Pedersen, M., & Liisberg, M. V. (2016). Get a Job! Active Labour Market Policies and Persons with Disabilities in Danish and European Union Policy.	Case study: Paper examines the use of ALMP on PWD and a special case study of Denmark’s flex jobs.	Denmark’s flexicurity model and rehabilitation schemes were described pre and post 2013.	Financial incentives to employers; supported employment provided extra assistance to get PWD into LM; flex-jobs led to most increase in employment.	Funding and time thought inadequate to assist the most barriered; creaming and parking of IB/ESA claimants in favour of more job ready claimants; quotas met with mixed results.

Reference/citation/Reviewer	Purpose/Study design	Active labour market strategy/policies identified	Strength of existing ALMPs	Limitations of existing ALMPs
20 Høgelund, J., & Pedersen, J. G. (2002). Active Labour Market Policies for Disabled People in Denmark. The Open Labour Market Working Paper 18: 2002.	Scoping review: Government commission report that Examines the ALMPs available for PWD in Denmark and evaluates their effectiveness	Three ALMP schemes were discussed: flex jobs, shaane scheme (PWD having permanent partial work capacity), icebreaker scheme (for newly educated PWD).	Advanced probability of employment in open market	Created stigmatization, reduced job protection (flex-worker not covered under UI fund); deadweight and displacement effects. Jobs usually on the periphery of companies' core business
21 Strumpel, C. Who Needs Supported Employment and How? Transforming Disability Welfare Policies, 2004.	Conference proceedings report: Provides policy recommendations for strengthening SE in EU.	Eight recommendations for a Supported Employment approach to activation were offered.	supporting persons with severe disabilities to find and retain employment in an integrated setting within mainstream labour force.	Focus on quantitative measures (number of job placement provided) leads to creaming and jeopardizes quality of job secured/job tenure

Step 5: Collating, Summarizing, and Reporting the Results

Analysis of the data went beyond charting to identifying themes by comparing and contrasting different concepts extracted from the literature, identifying patterns in the data, and discussing the policy implications of the findings [21]. Therefore, themes were developed by categorizing data from the extraction table to assist with organizing the findings [22]. Further, we used a "descriptive-analytical method" [18 p.9] by describing the categories and specific activities within each ALMP strategy and analyzing their effect on the target population [23].

Step 6: Consultation with Stakeholders

Five Canadian and one American expert in work disability policy and ALMP for PWD were consulted to discuss the purpose of the scoping review and to identify additional documents not already captured. As part of our approach in step two, the stakeholders were asked to review the list of documents we identified from our searches. After the first draft of the themes was written, we reached out to the same stakeholders and two additional stakeholders from the European Union (EU) for further feedback. Specifically, we asked if they were surprised by the findings, if the findings resonated with their knowledge of the field, and if anything seemed to be missing or particularly noteworthy from their perspective. Stakeholders suggested including evidence on supported employment. The lead researcher reviewed papers suggested by the stakeholders; one of which fit the criteria for this scoping study and was included in the extraction form.

Step 7: Using an Iterative Team Approach

A second researcher reviewed 10 percent of the articles identified for possible inclusion in the review and served as a second check on the accuracy of search results. In addition, the

researchers met to determine whether the approach to data extraction was consistent with the research question and purpose. Where there was disagreement, the articles were retained for full text review. Lastly, themes that developed from the data charting were discussed and reached consensus amongst the research team.

Step 8: Identifying the Implications of the Findings for Policy, Practice, and Research

As part of our analysis and write-up, we outline the implications for policy, practice and research. This was accomplished through discussions with key stakeholders in the field, as well as the full research team. Policy implications are provided in the discussion section.

Results

More than 21 ALMP programs and/or strategies are described when the seven papers addressing multiple initiatives across jurisdictions are taken into account. The vast majority of these documents examined ALMPs in the EU. Of these, 12 were specific to ALMPs in the UK; six discussed ALMPs in Denmark; one briefly addressed the Australian model; while three compared multiple models across the EU. The Canadian programs that came up in the search were national contributory programs and did not meet the established inclusion criteria. The structure of American welfare-to-work programs (apart from the Ticket-to-Work [TTW]), meant different populations were eligible for the same benefit programs, making it impossible to distinguish between PWD and other groups. Thus, there are no Canadian or American programs or strategies represented in the documents included in this analysis.

The articles described ALMPs that fell into two distinct welfare regimes: neoliberal and social democratic. Neoliberal regimes described in this review are characterized by strict eligibility criteria and conditionality of benefits governed by a rights and duties contract [8]. Conversely, the tenets of a social democratic position found in this study value equal access to market resources and provide generous social benefits, viewing these benefits as the pre-condition of a person's ability to function effectively in a flexible labour market. Eight of the 21 papers compared ALMPs across the two distinct regimes. The papers included in this review consist of descriptive studies, with no Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs). The ALMPs primarily describe mainstream interventions, such as wage subsidies within a general employment service. However, one paper (Social Security and Social Integration) identifies two broad categories of ALMPs for PWD: mainstream and specialized [24]. Specialized programs were defined as those programs that were reserved for PWD. These programs were largely found to be ineffective in increasing employment numbers in the open labour market, in large part because they served to increase stigma and entrench poverty by placing them within a setting meant for disabled workers [8, 25]. In addition, vocational rehabilitation (VR), a form of specialized supports, was frequently used with disabled job seekers to combine medical intervention with employment skill development [26].

The analysis resulted in six themes that describe the nature of ALMPs offered to PWD in non-contributory means-tested income benefit programs, which are typically programs of last resort: 1) welfare ideology and the role of citizenship; 2) conditionality of benefits; 3) work capacity and the need for an appropriate definition of disability; 4) the politics of employment outcomes for PWD; 5) the missing elements of a successful ALMP; and 6) moving beyond ALMPs.

1) Welfare ideology and the role of citizenship

The nature of the programs examined in this review can be divided upon ideological lines based on the extent to which the state intervenes to correct market inequalities on behalf of its citizen [6]. The impact of this ideological divide is the focus of this theme and illustrates the relationship between welfare ideologies and the role of citizenship, premised on the right and duty principle of citizenship [11, 27]. This notion of citizenship is typically grounded on expectations around contributions to the labour market (or at least preparation toward that end) in exchange for strong social protection from the state [11]. Nine of the 21 papers describe ALMPs operating within a social democratic regime, such as Denmark; while fourteen papers describe programs that operate from a neoliberal stance, such as the UK, US and Australia. Etherington and Ingold (2012) refer to the ALMPs in these two regimes as “enabling measures” and “workfare,” respectively [8 p.33]. Enabling measures tend to favor strategies such as subsidized employment, health management, and training. Conversely, workfare typically includes interventions such as benefit sanctions, work assessments, and mandatory participation. One enabling measurement, the Condition Management Program (CMP), (introduced in certain regions of the UK in 2003) is worth noting as it was addressed in five of the papers. The CMP acknowledged the need to address treatment alongside employment supports [8, 28]. Clayton et al. (2011) state that CMP helped move claimants toward employment by helping improve condition management [29]; however, the program ultimately had little impact on employment outcomes. Two reasons for poor employment outcomes were insufficient attention to mental health conditions, the duty of the government to address workplace accommodations, and inadequately addressing other complex barriers to employment

Conversely, in social democratic countries such as Denmark and New Zealand, activation measures aimed at increasing self-sufficiency are tempered with measures that increase social inclusion for the most marginalized, with an eye to quality of life for their citizens [24]. This philosophy is embedded in a policy approach used in Denmark called *flexicurity*, defined by Eichorst et al. (2010) as “a combination of a) flexible and reliable contractual arrangements, b) lifelong learning strategies, c) active labour market policies, and d) social protection systems” [3]. These authors describe this program as an “effective measure to include disabled people in the labour market” (p. 66). The flagship program of this model, the flex-job scheme, is a prime example of this social democratic ideology. Lindsay, Greve, Cabras, Ellison and Kellett, (2015) described flex-jobs as a demand-side initiative that provides employers with generous subsidies to hire workers at reduced hours for full pay [30]. Prior to 2013, employers in Denmark were given life-time subsidies in exchange for employing PWD with reduced work capacities at standard wages [11].

By contrast, the majority of ALMPs within neoliberal regimes are designed to find claimants a job via the quickest route using the least intensive (or costly) resources [31]. The most prevalent ALMPs used in these countries are benefit sanctions and tightening eligibility, which is intended to influence citizen behaviour by inducing work desire [1]. For example, the UK’s introduction of the *New Deal for the Disabled* (NDDP) in 1997 required work capacity assessments and regular interviews with work advisors called mandatory work-focused interviews [3]. Between 2003 and 2010 a series of increasingly harsh workfare interventions were trialed on new and returning claimants [8]. By 2011, all disability claimants were subject to these interventions. PWD receiving state support underwent a compulsory work assessment and if deemed “fit to

work” were directed to either work on their employability, and eventually re-enter the labour market, or were placed into Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), a stream that provided smaller income benefits and stricter sanctions for non-compliance [32]. In practice, only 10% of the disability caseload were placed into a third category – a support group, in which work was not a requirement for receiving state support [8]. During the same period, The US was experimenting with a similar approach in their Ticket to Work program, that provided claimants with a voucher to secure employment services [33].

Regardless of the initial ideology, however, there is a noted trend toward more neo-liberal approaches, even among social democratic states [34]. For example, by 2004 Denmark had reduced subsidies to employers and partial subsidies were only available to those with 2/3 work capacity (instead of the 1/3 capacity that was previously provided for). In 2008, these attractive incentives were further reduced due to their operational costs, eventually capping lifelong subsidies at five years [11].

2) *Conditionality of benefits*

Conditionality of benefits is a defining feature of ALMPs that was woven throughout the review. It was addressed in 12 of the 21 documents. Conditionality can be defined as a recipient’s obligation to work or prepare for work in exchange for state support [2], thus shifting from passive to active work integration measures [16]. The levers used within government to enforce activation is referred to as *sticks and carrots*. While sticks, such as benefit sanctions, are the chosen instrument of neoliberal states, social democratic countries favor carrots, such as skills training and work subsidies [11].

Neoliberal countries lean heavily on changing the personal attributes of recipients as a condition of income benefits [33], improving their employability to fit within current labour market structures as opposed to adding flexibility into the labour market. To this end, the UK has undergone many system changes in the design and implementation of ALMP that seem to advance neoliberal ideologies, beginning with a name change in 1995 from invalidity to incapacity benefits. In 2001, the UK began experimenting with a variety of activation measures such as restricting program access [32]. By 2008, the UK mandated work participation for new disability recipients under the banner of Employment Support Assistance (ESA). With this program came new measures including a work capability assessment (WCA) and a personal (work) advisor who was tasked with enforcing participation rules or handing out harsh benefit sanctions for non-compliance [35]. The new ESA, with its various streams and degrees of conditionality, was largely viewed as a failure by the UK parliament, serving to further entrench those on the caseload [11].

Australia's ALMPs also introduced conditions to benefit receipt in 2005 with its welfare-to-work amendments (Parker Harris, Owen & Gould, 2012). If disability pension claimants were determined through a WCA to be capable of working 15+ hours per week they were placed on either the "Newstart" or "Job Seekers Allowance" and were provided with a lower benefit rate than their Disability Support Program (DSP) counterparts [33]. New programming introduced four years later combined with outcome-based funding served to reinforce the stereotype of the disabled claimant as deficient [33]. This served to reinforce the neoliberal trend spreading across the EU. Our review found that carrots, while a softer approach to activation, still constitute

conditionality of benefits as workfare measures are hovering in the background and ready to be implemented should other less coercive measures not be taken up. Disability claimants are expected to work; however, ALMPs in the social democratic regime have a strong, built-in social protection component that does not exist in the UK or the US [36]. Moreover, the aim of these ALMPs does not have a singular drive to reduce benefit expenditures. They take a more holistic approach to service delivery, ensuring disability recipients have what they need to enable them to (re)integrate into mainstream labour market [31]. Despite a promising approach to ALMPs in social democratic countries, programs were ultimately deemed too costly to maintain. By 2004, specialized services were being halved; with 2013 witnessing a change in the life-long wage subsidy within the flex-job program to a five-year maximum [11]. In short, even the more generous regimes were now adopting neo-liberal ideologies by imposing harsher expectations on PWD [11].

3) Work capacity and the need for an appropriate definition of disability

Work capacity is a concept used in many ALMP that speaks to the degree a person can work regardless of the nature or degree of their disability [33]. Assessments of “fitness for work” for PWD emerged as a prominent theme in this review and was addressed in 11 of the 21 papers. According to Pickles, Holmes, Titley, and Dobson (2016), the nature and severity of a disability is often used to gauge one’s employability and their distance from the labour market [37]. A measure of one’s work capacity is often grounded in the definition of disability, which McAllister et al. (2011) state is guided by either a medical model (a limitation due to the impairment) or a social model (barriers to participation are embedded in environmental/attitudinal factors) [23].

The UK's definition of disability has changed over the years to reflect the type of ALMP favoured during a particular period [37, 38]. For example, invalidity benefits considered the social and economic context in a particular region to determine eligibility for benefit receipt. However, the introduction of new WCA in 1995 and the subtle change in language from "invalidity" to "incapacity" signaled a shift in direction [10, 26]. According to Hyde (2000), this narrowing of the disability definition to exclude social-environmental factors (such as the state of the labour market), and reduction of disability to a "functional capacity to perform work tasks" was viewed as an attempt to restrict access to benefits [38 p.329]. These WCAs were further revised in 2008, becoming even more rigid under the new ESA program. The clear majority of recipients were deemed able to work and received a lower benefit rate and had an obligation to attend a series of work focused interviews with personal advisors [29]. Parker Harris et al. (2012) argue that the design of these WCA treats disabilities as static, further reinforcing the "can and cannot" work dichotomy that fails to consider the varying, temporal impact of disability on functions of daily living [33 p.828]. Authors from our review papers suggest this approach to WCA does not consider the complex biopsychosocial factors that are needed to paint a comprehensive and accurate picture of work capacity over time [37, 39]. A post-assessment of ESA claimants found that by May 2015, 75% were assigned to the support group, where there was no expectation of employment [37].

Similarly, in Australia work capacity is based on the number and nature of disabilities separating a person from the labour market, coined the "distance from the labour market approach." [37 p.37]; however, these assessments appear to have greater design functionality. For example, two

work assessment instruments are used in determining remaining work capacity for PWD: Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) and the Employment Services Assessment. The JSCI is a questionnaire intended to direct beneficiaries into three different streams. The ESA aims to determine the degree of work capacity in eight hour increments, thereby taking into account fluctuating work capacity [37].

4) The politics of employment outcomes for PWD

This theme illustrates the impact that service delivery approaches have on a person's ability to secure and retain competitive employment in the open labour market. The papers in this review revealed that successful employment outcomes for individuals with the greatest distance from the labour market is hampered by a service delivery structure that reserves the most effective interventions for those closest to the labour market, resulting in reduced access to services and supports to those with more significant barriers to employment [11, 28]. In this environment, those who are most job-ready get the support over those with the greater barriers [11]. This theme was explicitly addressed in all but one of the documents [40].

The UK's initial goal was to reduce the disability caseload by one million by 2015. This target was an aggressive measure to activate those that have become comfortable on benefits [32]. This quantitative goal encouraged service providers to focus on the clients who need the least support at the expense of those most in need, in order to meet program targets set in their agreements with government [41]. By 2015, however, the UK fell short of their goal, managing to move only 100,000 people off benefits [37]. Additionally, long-term job retention was never evaluated [29]. A systematic review by Clayton et al. (2011) attribute these poor outcomes (in 31 of the 42

studies) to the heavy emphasis placed on supply-side interventions [29]. Instead of enhancing incentives to encourage employers to hire PWD, workfare programs served to create additional disincentives to workforce entry, such as the ineffectiveness of personal advisors to reconnect claimants to the labour market [8]. An evaluation of this program only saw a 15% increase in employment rates among disability claimants and these numbers waned after the return to work (RTW) subsidy ended [8].

The ESA replaced Invalidity Benefits (IB), resulting in varying levels of employment support depending on group assignment. However, Etherington and Ingold (2012) suggest that the main problem with the policy is that it focused on providing a supply of ready and cheap labour at the expense of the most vulnerable workers [8]. While there were a fair number of incentives provided to jobseekers (often in the form of tax credits), policy makers preferred benefit sanctions for “motivating” beneficiaries into the workforce [1]. Financial incentives had some short-term positive effects on the uptake of employment [1]. Interestingly, the WCA had a slightly higher uptake when it was introduced later in the process (on the 8th week of benefit receipt), as it gave time for beneficiaries to learn to manage their conditions before introducing them to work activities [1]. Targeted interventions for PWD in programs of last resort tend to be low-level supply-side supports such as “work search advice” [38 p.328]. Lacking are the supports needed to build human capital such as vocational training [29].

Despite the much more generous ALMP operating in social democratic states, the policies tended to creep towards neoliberalism over time, favoring outcomes that emphasize self-determination and independence. For example, when flex-jobs were initially introduced, they were viewed as

bold and innovative programs, equally favoured by jobseekers and employers. In fact, the flex-job program was in such demand initially that it generated a waiting list [34]. Evaluations of flex-jobs found a 28% increase in claimants moving into employment [8]. Despite the initial praise for the program, by 2011 flex-jobs were deemed by the government as too expensive to maintain. They also did not meet the expected reduction to the inflow onto benefits [8]. Indeed, 55,000 were added to the rolls while flex-jobs operated [11]. Furthermore, flex jobs by their very design are still not comfortably situated within the mainstream, as they tend to be on the margin of a business' main operations, resulting in further stigmatization and marginalization [8]. Moreover, some reviewers felt those that did secure employment through the flex-job schemes likely would have secured work on their own [34].

5) The missing elements of a successful ALMP

This theme refers to the gaps in ALMP design that were identified in 11 of the 21 papers. Several authors have expressed concern about ALMP design and the lack of high-quality evaluations [11, 28, 30]. There is little evidence about what happens to those who are sanctioned and lose benefits [32], and there was a lack of high quality evaluative studies focusing on the impact on employment and quality of life outcomes. Clayton et al. (2011) expressed concern about the quality of ALMP evaluation designs, which are said to be rushed; RCTs are extremely rare and where longitudinal studies are observed, they do not capture sustainable employment outcomes [29].

Data on the wellbeing and needs of employees in the labour market, and the active engagement of employers are also notably absent. For example, Lindsay et al. (2015) observed that the labour

market structure is out of step with the needs of employees, especially those who are disadvantaged by a combination of disability impairments, lack of decent work, and deficient demand-side interest [42]. Moreover, many of the documents in our review noted that more aggressive community and employer partnerships are needed to improve job quality and job retention for PWD [4, 8]. These partnerships could result in upskilling and more accountable employer engagement [24, 38].

6) *Moving beyond ALMPs*

This theme is about offering alternative strategies to assist PWD in last resort programs with employment retention. Five papers speak to this theme and begin to highlight next steps for policy and action. At times, the papers in our review made broad philosophical statements about the ongoing sustained effort that is needed to effect change. For example, Pickles et al., (2016) referred to employment for PWD as an iterative process, requiring a longer-term investment [37]. Parker-Harris et al. (2012) contend that governments should move beyond the neoliberal rhetoric of activation and focus on making structural changes to the labour market: “Emphasis on individual responsibility subsumes the goal of structural changes i.e. discrimination, attitude, and employer responsibilities” [33 p.828].

Several jurisdictions are experimenting with reducing inflow onto disability benefits by making employers accountable for their employees’ reintegration into the workforce, thus eliminating the automatic redirection of the disabled into public disability pensions. Authors believed this new approach will avoid awarding only partial benefits based on capacity to work. For example, Sweden’s social policies help prevent workers from leaving employment by heightening job protection [26]. According to Carcillo and Grubb (2008) when workers go off sick, “employers

are required to contribute up to 15% of benefits for the rest of the spell” [1 p.24]. Similarly, Luxemburg has increased security by attempting to provide better access to social, personal, and health benefits in the workplace [1]. The Netherlands have likewise implemented a system which places financial responsibility for sick leave on employers by basing premiums on actual disability costs, resulting in an inflow reduction of 15% [1].

In Ontario, Canada, the ODSP Action Coalition proposed an ALMP framework that consists of a revised definition of disability which considers social conditions affecting employment, and one that provides an adequate income. Moreover, the Coalition’s proposed framework calls for strengthened supports within employment programming, acting on structural labour market issues, thus ensuring a disability friendly workplace [40]. This framework holds promise for improving employment outcomes.

Pickles et al. (2016) propose a revised ALMP model that borrows from several EU programs demonstrating promise for positive employment outcomes for disabled claimants. Pickles’ “Universal Credit” simplifies the benefit system by merging all work benefits into one program [37]. They view this simplified all-in-one benefit as a “key precursor to a more personalised system focused on what a claimant can do” thereby permitting them to claim the income they need to survive [37 p.4]. Pickles et al. (2016) assert that a health questionnaire should be added to the intake process that considers all biopsychosocial factors that affect their ability to secure employment [37]. One way to ensure this shift is to include occupational therapists in this process, as is done in Denmark [8]. A revised notion of disability was also proposed in New Zealand’s 2013 approach, which resisted diagnostic labelling and instead treats PWD the same as

any other unemployed individual, by providing one flat out-of-work benefit paid at the “unemployment rate” for both the unemployed and disabled recipients, effectively removing “disabled” from the equation; thereby negating the “can and cannot work dichotomy” [37 p.12]. Unfortunately, as Pickles reports, the implementation came to a stop with a new government in 2008 that abandoned the roll-out.

Discussion

The papers captured in our scoping review found two distinct approaches to policy implementation - neoliberal and social democratic. While both approaches have created innovative approaches to (re)engagement of PWD in the mainstream labour market, the solution to optimal employment outcomes for this marginalized worker population does not lie within an either/or approach. Instead an optimal approach will take the best of what both have to offer, or devise an alternative to the ALMP discourse.

The rhetoric of employability that is prevalent in neoliberal policies can also be seen to a less extent in social democratic policies. However, the blinding drive to strengthen the “employability” of PWD diverts the attention away from other solutions to market engagement, such as the failings of the labour market to integrate PWD. The Employability rhetoric puts the blame of joblessness on the failure of the individual instead of considering providing appropriate employment supports or flexible labour market structures. In this climate of blame, outcome-based funding reinforces this recrimination by imposing (often unreasonable) performance measures on employment service providers who resort to creaming and parking of clients to meet their targets [43]. This hard-line approach further alienates PWD, especially in depressed

markets [44]. More to the point, a focus on employability marks disabled job seekers as deficient, which places the PWD on the margins of the labour market at the onset. At the same time, passive ALMP are being passed off as active ALMP to justify a tough love method of activation. For example, sanctions were used in both types of welfare regimes to induce the desired work behaviour. The evidence suggests that benefit sanctions do have the desired effect of getting recipients to find work (albeit, in precarious jobs) and even exit the system; however, the long-term effects on job tenure have not been studied [45]. Moreover, the impacts of these sanctions have not been evaluated in great depth as it concerns disabled workers. Indeed, Haughton et al. (2000) state that it is reasonable to expect the most vulnerable workers to be excluded from this form of activation [44].

Work capacity is a central concept discussed in the papers. The findings indicate that current iterations suffer from design flaws. For example, the UK WCA is a stringent measure that has a number of limitations, including but not limited to the fact that they are completed at one point in time, not over multiple visits [39, 46]. This static snapshot could result in a disabled person presenting well on the day of the assessment, being found fit for work, and subsequently placed into a labour market that is unable or unwilling to accommodate the person's disability. This is especially problematic for episodic conditions for which flexibility of work arrangement is key to success in the workplace. A recent study conducted for the Canadian government found that 82.2 % of PWD had conditions that affected their ability to work or volunteer at least some of the time [47]. This statistic is relevant considering the capacity to work concept addressed in our scoping review.

WCAs are considered a best practice by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) because they shift the focus from disability to ability. Yet, they remain problematic without a simultaneous focus on redressing structural issues within the labour market [37]. By contrast, programs that force PWD into the first available job erodes the progress that has been made in moving people closer to sustained employment [13]. It is encouraging to note that some of the papers addressed how WCAs could be reconfigured to ensure those with some work capacity could find success in the labour market without compromising their health [10, 37]. The findings from our review called for a more comprehensive approach, moving away from the tick box approach; instead, entailing a medical professional who assesses the person holistically. This proposed assessment would identify specific barriers to employment and recommend workplace accommodations that could address the identified limitations. For example, in a response to the UK's ESA and Personal Independence Payments (PIP) assessments, Disability Rights UK, a pan disability group, called for fulsome reform that takes into account "not just the physical or mental conditions that make it difficult for someone to work, but also other barriers to work such as housing issues, debt, relationship breakdown, lack of access to treatment and employer stigma"[48]. This holistic approach would also need to address the lack of specific expertise to assess medical conditions. New Zealand has recently published practice guidelines that, if implemented, will bring assessors to the process that have specific knowledge of disabilities and their impacts on workplace activities [48].

The factors that contribute to successful employment outcomes were woven throughout the studies. However, the complexity of disability created a tension between ALMP's dual aims of

decreasing disability caseloads while increasing social and economic inclusion. Hyde (2000) asserts that employment policy continues to emphasize the impairment of the individual, thereby “adapting disabled people to the needs of employers” [38 p.338]. Conversely, the proposed holistic approach is akin to the social model of disability which sees “the whole person” and acknowledges that social factors, such as the structure of the labour market, shape employment outcomes [40].

Despite this tension, there are papers that demonstrate progress on this front. Many of the articles spoke to accommodating degrees of work capacity, providing innovative alternatives to the status quo including Australia’s Employment Services Assessment, the removal of diagnostic labelling in New Zealand, as well as revisions to the WCA process focused on ever-changing social circumstances [37]. New Zealand is said to be the one jurisdiction that has acknowledged the “negative effects of diagnostic labelling” [37 p.4]. The 2013 welfare reforms in this country addressed the ALMP issues other jurisdictions tried to resolve with work capacity assessments. By providing one flat out-of-work benefit paid at the “unemployment rate” for both the unemployed and the disabled, the term disabled was effectively removed from the equation thus negating the “can and can not work dichotomy” [37 p.12]. In theory, this freed PWD to see themselves as any other jobseeker and focus on what they could do in the labour market, not what they could not do. Likewise, the work capacity assessments focused on a distance from the labour market approach rather on the degree to which their disability impaired functioning on the job. It held promise in removing the disincentive to leave benefits by removing the income differential.

The New Zealand approach brings us closer to what Håvold, Harsløf, and Andreassen (2018) have termed an “asset model” of disability [49 p.179]. This model will require a change of practice in which labour, welfare, and medical actors work together to create a health promotion approach to employment for PWD. More recent government assessments are starting to acknowledge the strength of this approach. For example, the UKs Work and Pension committee recommended redesigning their ESA process to ensure health-related barriers are considered in a revised WCA. One way to accomplish this for the department and contractors (of WCAs) is to use audio recordings to ensure accountability. Claimants fear that the assessments are being misrepresented, leading to denied benefits. Recording the meeting between assessor and claimant would ensure a record exists should a dispute need to be investigated [50]. Another recommendation was to address the segregation of existing services by co-locating employment and mental health services in the same agency [50].

The findings brought to the forefront an argument that has been raised repeatedly in the broader literature: PWD are not a homogenous group. Several hypotheses have been suggested in this review for why ALMPs failed to achieve expected outcomes. It may be that benefit conditionality failed to meet the needs of PWD. Weston (2012) asserts that while conditionality can be a legitimate strategy for improving employment outcomes, it is the “wrong prescription” for PWD [51 p.517]. This author argues that conditionality as a policy lever presupposes that PWD are exempting themselves from work instead of being excluded. There is a need to find the right balance of flexibility and adequate social protection in the labour market.

Our scoping review confirms what others have already found: that governments have replaced notions of welfare with workfare and that this notion has brought with it “an individualized model of citizenship that systematically ignores the social, economic and labor market conditions in which individuals seek employment” [33 p.824]. The way forward may be found in the solutions to advancing work engagement that lie beyond ALMP. This will require both political will and a new way of practice.

Limitations

This scoping review provides descriptive information on existing ALMPs. As the nature of the review does not allow for testing of alternative policy options, we do not offer recommendations for what the most effective policy mix should be. That Canada and the USA programs were not captured in our data collection process, even though they are known to be prominent welfare states, indicates that not all evidence relevant to disabled social assistance recipients has been captured in this review. Furthermore, only those articles that used the language of ALMP were captured in this review. This may have led to the exclusion of articles that described interventions that fall within the ALMP framework but did not use that specific language. In addition, many of the papers indicated that there is much we do not know about how ALMP work for PWD, particularly in the area of sustainable employment outcomes. To fill the identified knowledge gaps, there is need for more robust evaluations of ALMP for PWD that include better designed longitudinal studies, and cost-benefit analyses.

Conclusion

The articles captured in this review point to a need to continue to document and explore different

ALMP to determine next steps for research, policy and practice. In practice, there is need to improve the fit between the needs of the labour market with the supply of labour [52]. We need a policy mix that commits to a range of substantive investments including upskilling for PWD, providing the supports PWD require to stay on the job while managing their condition. We echo the suggestions made by Van Berkel (2009) that “services in the area of housing, child care, family support, [and] health” [53 p.30] are needed to improve employment outcomes. It does not come as a surprise - but it bears repeating - that employment supports for PWD requires a holistic approach that regards them as a heterogenous group of workers, not merely a failed addition to an overburdened caseload.

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* indicates references that were included in the extraction chart (available upon request to the lead author).

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Chapter Three: STUDY TWO

Abstract

People with disabilities who are in receipt of public income benefits are often an overlooked worker population. Rates of employment for this population have been historically low. This study examines the rates of system exit for reasons of employment for recipients of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). This study explores the rate of exit from ODSP for program recipients, with a focus on mental illness by comparing their exits against eight factors that are known to influence uptake of employment. The findings show that there is a small but significant number of recipients who do exit ODSP for employment. This study contributes to emerging data on the employment outcomes of ODSP recipients with mental illness who transition from welfare to work.

Keywords: work exit, employment, disability, income benefits

Introduction

People with disabilities (PWD), especially people with mental illness, are a worker population that experience significant exclusion from the labour market, despite the evidence that they are an underutilized worker population (Rigg, 2005; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2012). This difficulty is even more pronounced for people with mental illness who are recipients of disability income support programs, like the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Despite the concept of self-sufficiency that underpins these programs,

the current design of income support programs does not effectively advance their participation in the Canadian labour market (Rudnick et al, 2013). In fact, where employment outcomes are measured, it is securing not retaining a job that is considered a success (Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario, 2012).

The purpose of this study was to add to the existing literature on the employment outcomes of recipients in receipt disability income support programs. We examine the exit rates for ODSP recipients living with mental illness (MI) who have earned income from employment that exceeds the maximum benefit rate. Exceeding this rate precludes them from receiving further income support. This is an important worker population to study because of interest in curbing the growth of the ODSP caseload through stable employment. Understanding what is behind its growth and factors that support exit for employment is essential to reintegrate persons with disabilities into the labour market and curtail the rapid rate of growth of the program that could threaten its sustainability (Kerr, Smith-Carrier, Wang, Tam, & Kwok, 2017).

Literature Review

People with MI face higher rates of unemployment in comparison to their non-disabled peers (Kim & OECD, 2010; OECD, 2012; Turcotte, 2014). For this reason, a significant number of PWD rely on social assistance (Dewa, 2016; Hall et al, 2015,). Of all new entrants onto the system, individuals with a primary diagnosis of mental illness exceed all other forms of disability across developed nations (Ministry of Community and Social Services [MCSS], 2018). In Ontario, MI represents 70% of the primary conditions of applicants granted ODSP. The bulk of

this growth is among single recipients with no dependents (MCSS, 2018). Among these, the largest percentage are individuals of working age (MCSS, 2018). Growing disability income caseloads are placing a significant economic burden on the social security system. For example, between 2005 and 2010 the social assistance benefit component in Canada increased by \$1.7 billion (Stapleton, 2013). There is a need to better understand who is exiting the system for employment and predictors of exiting for employment to inform ongoing program improvements.

People with MI often cycle between low wage precarious work and social assistance (Latimer, 2005; Harvey, 2010). Evidence indicates that they need intensive long-term supports to be in the labour market. However, system design is such that labour market entry takes precedence over long term job tenure (Gewurtz, 2011). Service providers get paid more for getting someone a job than helping them to retain the job. This focus means that sufficient resources are not directed to helping people address their complex barriers to employment and find jobs that are well suited to their needs and competencies (Gewurtz, Cott, Rush, & Kirsh, 2012). People with MI who may need more intensive supports to help them retain employment often remain dependent on social assistance, which can increase the economic costs to other parts of the social safety net (PALS, 2006; SEEI Coordinating Centre, 2009). Moreover, it begs the question: what is the intended outcome of employment supports? If one of the objectives is to promote and sustain employment, then there is a need for training and other supports that contribute to retention and long-term labour market attachment (Anthony, 2011).

There is a growing acknowledgement among key stakeholders that policy and program decision makers lack the information they need related to employment outcomes and labour market attachment among people with disabilities (Warburton & Warburton, 2004). This gap is even

more pronounced for employment programs funded by provincial ministries that administer social assistance in Canada. Within these programs, information on the effectiveness of specialized employment supports for persons with disabilities are largely absent from the Canadian research landscape (Dewa, 2018; Lankin & Shiekh, 2012). It is imperative to fill this void, by gathering current data on the employment outcomes of workers with MI who are in receipt of social assistance and other public income security programs.

The Ontario Ministry responsible for social assistance now publishes quantitative data on its website, including the composition of caseloads, the percentage of recipients who are accessing employment supports, as well as how many report earnings (MCSS, 2018). However, these reports shed little light on the increasing cost of mental illness within social assistance. They do, however, highlight that despite focused efforts on improving employment outcomes among recipients, the percentage of all adults on social assistance reporting earnings from employment has remained virtually unchanged at approximately 10 percent since 1990 (OECD, 2010).

Chouinard and Crook (2010) conducted a qualitative study of 10 disabled women's experiences on ODSP, which begins to unpack these findings. They found that the program was structured to ensure "disabled and dependent citizens ... are cast as the abject others" thus justifying inadequacy of system supports (p. 30). There is a need to better understand the work exit patterns of people with MI to make evidence-based improvements.

Lightman, Herd, & Mitchell's (2008) Social Assistance in the New Economy (SANE) project in the 1990s examines welfare reform and the focus on rapid work (re)entry. Although focused on the general welfare program, Ontario Works (OW), the SANE project provides an in-depth analysis of the potential long-term economic trajectories of recipients (Lightman, Herd, & Mitchell, 2008). Key findings from this project reveal that the rapid labour market entry

approach to employment acts as a barrier to obtaining high quality jobs, as the push for any job compromises job quality and skill/fit matches. Furthermore, recipients with episodic disabilities fare worse as they have multiple barriers that preclude their economic independence (Vick & Lightman, 2010).

More recently, the former Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) provided researchers with access to administrative data from OW and ODSP (MCSS, 2014). Access to these data allowed for further exploration of the experiences of recipients, including those with MI (Marcotte, 2004). It provided foundational information to inform future research endeavors and program improvements by identifying factors associated with key outcomes (Corbiere, 2011). Indeed, Marcotte (2004) credits the nature of panel data with the ability to provide the diagnostic information needed for new insights and innovations.

In this study, we analysed an ODSP administrative dataset with ten years of observations from 2003-2013. to examine exits for paid employment. Recipients exit welfare at the point that benefits are phased out due to earnings that outstrip income benefits (ODSP, 1997). However, there is a need to understand factors associated with exits for employment. By examining the characteristics of recipients who are exiting the system, we can obtain information that can help inform policy revisions, which can support recommendations for effective policy and program features that can encourage and support efforts towards employment (Lankin & Shiekh, 2012).

Research Questions and Preliminary Hypotheses

This study set out to answer three research questions:

1. What factors are associated with duration/time on ODSP benefits, and what factors contribute to exit from ODSP?
2. Does mental illness increase or decrease the probability of exit?
3. What are the reported earnings from employment for recipients with MI? What percentage of recipients with MI are earning up to or more than the break-even amount? How do these earnings compare to ODSP recipients with physical disabilities?

These preliminary hypotheses tested in this study follow from the research questions:

1. People with mental health disabilities are the fastest growing disability type on the caseload.
2. People with mental health disabilities are less likely to exit ODSP than individuals with physical health disabilities.
3. Various demographic factors will have an impact on duration and exits, women, older recipients, and recipients with dependent children will exit ODSP at a lower rate than males, younger recipients or single recipients; married recipients will have a greater probability of exit than single recipients.
4. Recipients with multiple ODSP spells would be less likely to exit than those with only one spell.
5. The longer the time spent on ODSP benefits the less likely one is to exit to employment.

Methods

Data Materials

We use the same administrative dataset accessed by other Ontario researchers who published a paper on the ODSP caseload demographics from the same period (Kerr, Smith-Carrier, Wang, Tam, & Kwok 2018). The Ontario social assistance longitudinal administrative database (version

2) was comprised of yearly data for a ten-year period from 2003 to 2013, further comprised of monthly information across 35 variables. The data consist of de-identified Ontario income support microdata on Ontario Works (OW) and ODSP recipients. The original administrative dataset consisted of five files, containing 900,000,000 observations: 1) benefit unit (BU ie. family) record file, containing BU ID, program status, date application for assistance was granted approval and start date of an individual's income benefits; 2) member record file, containing the applicant's member ID, their marital status, and other indicators, such as whether an individual is participating in the ODSP Employment Supports program, and the disability indicator; 3) pay detail record (benefits) file; 4) income/deduction record file, and; 5) skills record file. This study was conducted only on the ODSP files. The entire 10-year period was used in the analysis. In addition, Version 3 of the MCSS data dictionary was referenced to identify the variables that would best answer our hypotheses. Our study employed both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis techniques to answer the above questions.

Study Population

The following inclusion criteria were used to select our sample:

1. Principal applicants of ODSP (those who apply for and receive income benefits) who had grant dates onto ODSP of 2003 onward.
2. Age 25 - 55 (at time of first receipt).
3. Recipients who were single at time of first receipt (not married, not living common law and who did not have dependents under 18). *

*This selection criteria meant that their marital and dependent status could change during their time on ODSP. This gave us a count of 161,361 unique individuals.

Single individuals were chosen for analysis because they comprise the majority (86%) of the current disability caseload (MCSS data). Identifying factors that may facilitate employment transitions for these recipients, may be the most efficient way to enhance employment outcomes for this population. The age range of 25 – 55 (when receiving benefits) was chosen to align with the later age that PWD often enter the labour market for the first time (Nordt, Müller, Rössler, & Lauber, 2007). Moreover, the lower and upper limits of our sample is the standard working age common in studies (Whitehead et al, 2009). If recipients were not engaged in employment by the age of 55, they were thought to be unlikely to leave ODSP until they aged out by turning 65; at which point, they become ineligible for ODSP and become eligible for Canada’s old age pension programs (some exceptions not withstanding).

Data Description

The primary outcome of interest in this study was the time (in months) to exit from ODSP for reasons of employment. “Exits for reasons of employment” is more commonly referred to as “work exit” (Ovwigbo, Tracy, & Born, 2004). We use this term in the remainder of the paper. There is a variable within the original dataset called “termination reason,” which is comprised of the range of reasons that a recipient’s income benefits are terminated, including employment reasons. This would have given us a direct measure of work exit. However, the employment codes contained in this variable were unreliable, with 98% of the values missing. Therefore, we devised alternative measures that were indicative of work exits. Thirty-six variables were retained for possible analysis (See Appendix A).

We constructed a variable (earnings2) to identify work exits. This variable separated earnings from employment into three categories: 1 is earnings ≤ 1000 ; 2 is earnings ≤ 2400 ; 3 is

earnings >2400. We used 2006 as the reference year for calculating the break-even or threshold level of earnings a recipient would need to have a work exit. The breakeven point is a Ministry calculation used to determine eligible benefits. For a single recipient, the break even is calculated as maximum income benefit (x2) + 200. Maximum income is based on the 2006 benefit (\$1086); \$200 is the allowable earnings exemption (amount recipients are allowed to earn before a 50% claw back on every dollar takes effect). We used 2006 as the reference year because it was the year in which earning exemptions were introduced (and earnings exemptions form part of the equation for calculating a break even point). Before 2006, income amounts had been frozen. The income benefit rate on which the breakeven was calculated is \$1086/month. The breakeven calculation: (allowance *2+200). Therefore, a recipient could earn \$2400 in 2006 before they were no longer eligible to receive ODSP income support. We hypothesized that if recipients earned in excess of the allowable earnings and were no longer on the system, then they could be said to have had a work exit.

Six (explanatory) variables used in the three frequency tables are included in this paper (Table 1). For the purpose of this study, a spell on ODSP ended when the recipient was not seen in the file for a period of six months. This duration is chosen to extend the maximum time persons with MI are known to retain employment (Corbiere, 2011). More to the point, an absence of a few months could simply indicate an interruption of benefits due to administrative penalties and not an exit from the system.

Table 1: Constructed (explanatory) variables

Variable Name	Descriptor
Age Group	Three age groups are defined 1 (25-34); 2 (35-44); 3 (45-55) – at first receipt of benefits.
Health Reason	Two health groups were identified using the ICD9 codes* in version 3 of MCSS data dictionary: 1 (physical disability– anything not coded as mental health diagnoses) 2(mental illness)

Months on Assistance	Months on Assistance was broken down into three categories: 1 = 12 months or less; 2= 13 months but less than 36 months; and 3= more than 36 months on assistance.
Spell Count**	Number of spells each individual has in total over the ten-year period
Spell Length	Length of spell used to determine spell counts
Earnings	Earnings=0 is zero, 1 is \$1-\$1000, 2 is \$1001-\$2400, 3 is >\$2400 * “earnings2” captures only those earnings from employment

*Codes for substance use were included in the ICD9 but were excluded in the analysis.

**Spell was defined by the absence of the recipient from the caseload for a minimum of 6 consecutive months.

We tested seven factors known in the literature to influence exits from the system for their association to the exit variable: 1) spell count, 2) sex, 3) level of education, 4) marital status, 5) number of children, 6) age, and 7) health reason (Achdut, 2016; Dewa, 2016). These variables were also used in a time to event function to produce six models that illustrate the impact of various factors (hypothesis 1-5) on the response variable (work exit). A multivariate complementary (clog-log) model determines rates of exit from ODSP for reasons of employment. Reasons of employment were determined by presenting models that varied in exit criteria from least to most stringent (Figure 3).

**Clog-log models
Least Stringent (6) to Most Stringent (1)**

Number of trials are the same for all six models: 4934149	MODEL 6 Number of Events: 21449			MODEL 5 Number of Events: 2215			MODEL 4 Number of Events: 1514			MODEL 3 Number of Events: 487			MODEL 2 Number of Events: 347			MODEL 1 Number of Events: 77			
	Parameter	Pr > ChiSq	Diff of Change	% Change	Pr > ChiSq	Diff of Change	%Change	Pr > ChiSq	Diff of Change	%Change	Pr > ChiSq	Diff of Change	%Change	Pr > ChiSq	Diff of Change	%Change	Pr > ChiSq	Diff of Change	%Change
Intercept	<.0001	-0.995182981	100%	<.0001	-	100	<.0001	-	100	<.0001	-	100	<.0001	-0.999958653	<.0001	-	100		
					0.995182981			0.999654217			0.999917044							0.999993469	
*baseline (ref=<6months)	.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		
baseline 2 (6-12months)	<.0001	-0.377679472	38%	<.0001	-	38	<.0001	-	37	0.0003	-	43	0.2313	-0.196919242	0.9393	-		0.028486389	3
					0.377679472			0.366946283			0.428562407								
baseline 3 (12-36 months)	<.0001	-0.458872309	46%	<.0001	-	46	<.0001	-	43	<.0001	-	51	0.0195	-0.321384103	0.6646	-		0.138344724	1
					0.458872309			0.434813775			0.507075864								
baseline 4 (36+ months)	<.0001	-0.584594447	59%	<.0001	-	58	<.0001	-	64	<.0001	-	62	<.0001	-0.555319841	0.0046	-		0.601321519	60
					0.584594447			0.636472379			-0.61584148								
**spellcount 1	.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		
spellcount 2	<.0001	1.75881158	176%	<.0001	2.141812931	214	<.0001	2.572980066	257	<.0001	3.240579778	324	<.0001	2.748665837	0.0166	1.617710289	162		
spellcount 3	<.0001	6.124930701	613%	<.0001	5.109836418	511	<.0001	5.899852262	590	<.0001	10.20320614	1020	<.0001	10.25148365	0.0032	7.48500086	749		
spellcount 4+	<.0001	16.32932235	1633%	<.0001	9.097622499	910	<.0001	10.58023772	1058	<.0001	22.81224633	2281	<.0001	19.79473854	0.001	28.21551781	2822		
sex (ref=male)	.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		
sex	<.0001	0.161253471	16%	0.0005	0.132355527	13	0.0005	0.207437083	21	0.0327	0.224092802	22.4	0.026	0.285824311	0.0984	0.50065248	50		
education (ref=<highschool)	.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		
education (high school)	<.0001	0.088717067	9%	<.0001	0.767736651	77%	<.0001	1.117211727	112	<.0001	1.202295003	120	<.0001	1.504026409	150	0.0011	3.063318483	306	
education (post-secondary)	<.0001	0.351209342	35%	<.0001	2.536013632	254%	<.0001	3.889059726	389	<.0001	5.730167285	573	<.0001	6.113539927	611	<.0001	9.526543293	953	
married (ref=not married)	.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		
married	<.0001	0.613168085	61%	<.0001	0.482159284	48	<.0002	0.563614299	56	<.0001	0.970327948	97	0.0022	0.966784548	97	<.0001	3.889059726	389	
children (ref=no children)	.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		
children	<.0001	-0.294536327	29%	<.0001	-	47	<.0007	-0.47064712	47	0.3154	-0.2370021	24	0.3013	-0.284661914	28	0.7398	0.172220719	17	
					0.472654844														
age group (ref=25-34)	.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		
age group (35-44)	0.1387	0.028190026	3%	<.0001	-	50	<.0001	-	55	<.0001	-	51	<.0001	-0.49671567	50	0.0005	-	60	
					0.496916943			0.553269601			0.508699833						0.600283607		
age group (45-59)	<.0001	0.219937954	21%	<.0001	-	72	<.0001	-	77	<.0001	-	73	<.0001	-0.747564624	75	<.0001	-	85	
					0.718493573			0.769959523			0.731981695						0.852952557		
health reason (ref=mental health disability)	.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		.	0		
health reason (physical disability)	<.0001	0.338032164	34%	<.0001	0.24757292	25	<.0001	0.364106997	36	0.0009	0.357032052	36	0.0038	0.370122292	37	0.2528	0.30199799	30	

Scale (The scale parameter was held fixed)
 *time off assistance measured in 6-month increments
 ** number of spells on ODSP

Data Analysis

We conducted all analyses using SAS version 9.4. Descriptive cross-tabulations were computed to determine the associations between age and earning levels, earnings by health reason, the duration of time on ODSP by age group and health reason; number of spells (on the system) by health reason and exit rates by health reason.

To model work exits, we used a clog-log function. Clog log is used for asymmetrical data and is the most suitable duration modelling for testing probability of success (vs failure). It is often used when the occurrence of an event is either very small or very large. For this reason, it is especially suited for large datasets to test whether an event did or did not occur (Tompa, Scott-Marshall, & Fang (2010).

We ran six clog log models, providing the effect (direction and magnitude) of eight independent variables (see Table 2) on the dependent variable “work exit”. We ran these models as proxies for work exit outcomes and tested least stringent to most stringent approaches. Models include to all eight spells that were observed in the dataset. Spell ends indicate an exit from the system. We did not model beyond the 3-month sequence as the ODSP system is programmed to automatically terminate the recipient after 3 months of consecutive income above the allowable threshold (break even point) (personal communication with MCSS staff, 2018).

Table 2: Independent variables used in Clog-log modelling

Variable Name	Descriptor
Baseline	three categories: 1 = 12 months or less; 2= 13 months but less than 36 months; and 3= more than 36 months on assistance
Spell Count	number of spells each individual has in total over the 10 year period
Sex	male or female
Education	three categories: less than high school, high school, and post-secondary
*Married	yes or no
**Children	yes or no
Age Group	three categories: 25-34;35-44;45-55
Health Reason	physical disability or mental illness
*Our inclusion criteria included recipients at first receipt; how some recipients' status changed during their time on ODSP	
** Recipients did not have dependent children on first receipt of benefits, but this inclusion indicates a change during their time on ODSP	

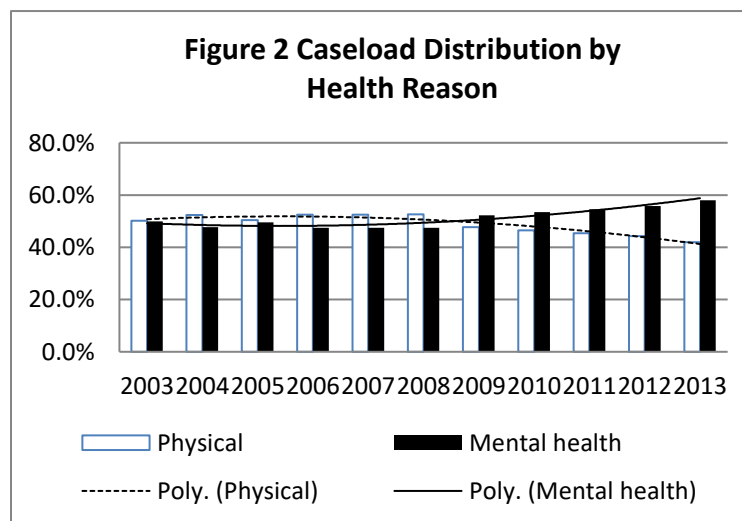
Results

Descriptive statistics

New entrants onto the system are predominantly male. This is true across all three age groups.

While this trend remains consistent for the entire observation period, the caseload numbers decrease for both sexes between 2010 and 2013.

Recipients with physical disabilities experience a higher entry rate than MI until 2008 when the trend is reversed. This pattern is the same for male and females (see Figure 2).



Regardless of age, most recipients spent more than 36 consecutive months on the system. The caseload comprised of single recipients between the ages of 25 – 44 had a greater rate of mental illness (MI), whereas the oldest age group (>45) were comprised mostly of recipients with physical disabilities (PD).

Some recipients had up to eight spells on ODSP; however, less than 5% of all recipients, regardless of health reason, had multiple spells. Indeed, 83.4% of recipients never exit ODSP for employment (40% of recipients with PD vs 43% for MI) (Table 2). Among those who did exit, persons with physical disabilities (PPD) exited at a slightly higher rate. The probability of exit is explored further in the models.

Table 2: Spell end vs. Spell end by Health Reason

	Health Reason	
	Physical Disability	Mental Illness
spell ended	9784 9.88%	6671 6.74%
remain on the system	39679 40.06%	42908 43.32%

For those recipients who had employment earnings and exited ODSP for any reason, the clear majority of recipients (93%) did not have employment income. Of those who did have earnings from employment, 581 recipients (PD = 285; MI=296) reported earnings more than \$1000 but less than \$2400 per month. On average, 2.5% of recipients with PD had earnings compared to 3.7% of recipients with MI (first spell). Only 1.5% (PD) and 2% (MI) of recipients had earnings at or above the threshold level (>\$2400). (See Table 3).

Table 3: Spell Count by Earnings from Employment

Physical Disability						Mental Health Disability					
Spell No.	*Earnings					Spell No.	*Earnings				
	0	1	2	3	Total		0	1	2	3	Total
1	36,362	1290	602	63	38317	1	38,873	1636	642	55	41206
	91.64	3.25	1.52	0.16	96.57		90.6	3.81	1.5	0.13	96.03
	94.9	3.37	1.57	0.16			94.34	3.97	1.56	0.13	
	96.64	96.05	94.06	90			96.13	95.39	92.64	90.16	
Total	37626	1343	640	70	39679	Total	40439	1715	693	61	42908
	94.83	3.38	1.61	0.18	100		94.25	4	1.62	0.14	100

*Earnings (monthly): 0 = \$0, 1 = \$1-\$1000, 2 = \$1001-\$2400, 3 = >\$2400

Modelling

The models are arranged from least to most stringent in terms of work exits. The key findings from the models are noted below:

Model 6 shows exits for any reason, regardless of earnings. This was the least stringent of all models and there were 21,449 exits. The relationship between the dependent variable (work exit) and all independent variables are statistically significant at <0.05, apart from the age group 35-44 years. In this model, the longer one stays on assistance, the less chance they have of exiting, indicated by the baseline measure. Those who were on for longer than 36 months had a 56% less probability of exit. In contrast, the probability of exit increases substantially with each subsequent spell on ODSP. Education greatly increases the probability of exit. Recipients with post-secondary education increased their chances of exit by 26% over those who only had high-school. Females had a 16% greater probability of exiting the system than their male counterparts; while recipients who were married had a 61% greater probability of exiting; whereas, recipients who had children had a decreased probability (29%) of exiting than singles or couples without children. Those aged 45 and

older have a 19% greater chance of exiting than the two younger age groups. Recipients with physical disabilities have a 34% greater probability of exiting than recipients with mental illness.

The number of exits in Model 5 (n=2215) was determined by having any positive earnings in the 2 consecutive months before spell end. All independent variables are statistically significant at $<.05$, except for having children. Also, much like Model 6, in Model 5 the longer one stayed on assistance, the less chance they had of exiting. There is a 35 percent less chance of exiting for those on the system for 12 months or less; when earnings are introduced into the model, the likelihood of exit decreases by an additional 28% for those on the system for more than 36 months. The probability of exit for employment increases substantially with each subsequent spell on ODSP, though not as drastically as it did with all exits (leaving for employment, other benefits, death were factored in). Education greatly increased the probability of exit. This probability increases by 177% for those who had post-secondary education. Females had a 13% greater probability of exiting for employment than their male counterparts; while recipients who were married had a 48% greater probability of exiting; whereas, recipients who have children have a decreased probability (47%) of exiting than singles or couples without children. The older one gets the less chance they had of exiting for employment. Those aged 45+ have a 22% lesser probability of exit than their younger cohorts. Recipients with PD had a 25% greater probability of exiting than recipients with MI.

The number of exits in Model 4 (n=1514) was determined by having earnings greater than \$1000 two consecutive months before spell end. All independent variables were statistically significant at $<.05$. The longer one stayed on assistance, the less chance they had of exiting. There is a 37 percent less chance of exiting for those on the system for 12 months or less; when earnings above \$1000

were introduced into the model, the likelihood of exit decreases by an additional 21% for those on the system for more than 36 months. The probability of exit for employment increased substantially with each subsequent spell on ODSP, though not as drastically as it did with all exits (leaving for employment, other benefits, death were factored in). Education greatly increased the probability of exit. This probability increases by 277% for those who have post-secondary education and had earnings above \$1000. Females had a 21% greater probability of exiting for employment than their male counterparts; while recipients who were married had a 56% greater probability of exiting. However, recipients who had children had a decreased probability (47%) of exiting than singles or couples without children. The older one gets, the less chance they have of exiting for employment. Those aged 45 or over had the least probability of exiting (22%). Recipients with PD have a 36% greater probability of exiting than recipients with MI.

The number of exits in Model 3 (n=487) was determined by having earnings at or above threshold level the month before spell end. All independent variables were statistically significant at $<.05$. The longer one stayed on assistance, the less chance they had of exiting. There is a 43% less chance of exiting for those on the system for 12 months or less; when the exit measure is an amount at the threshold level, the likelihood of exit decreased by an additional 20% for those on the system for more than 36 months. The probability of exit for employment increased substantially with each subsequent spell on ODSP, doubling for recipients who have more than 3 spells. Education greatly increased the probability of exit. This probability quadruples (453%) for those who have post-secondary education and are earnings income at the threshold level. Females had a 22% greater probability of exiting for employment than their male counterparts; while recipients who are married had a 93% greater probability of exiting when they reach the threshold level; recipients who

have children and are earning at the threshold level still had a decreased probability of exit, but the gap narrows by an additional 26% for those without children. The older one gets, the less chance they have of exiting for employment. Those aged 45 years or older have the least probability of exiting (22%). Recipients with PD had a 36% greater probability of exiting than recipients with MI. Earning at the threshold level did not change the probability of exit for either age or health reason.

The number of exits in Model 2 (n=347) was determined by having earnings at or above the threshold level in the last 2 consecutive months before spell end. All independent variables were statistically significant in this model at >0.05 , with the exception of baseline and children. The longer one stayed on assistance, the less chance they had of exiting, though the probability gap narrows for those earning threshold levels for 2 months in a row prior to exit. There is a 32% less chance of exiting for those on the system for 12 months or less; when the exit measure is an amount at the threshold level for 2 months in a row before spell end, the likelihood of exit narrows by an additional 16% for those on the system for more than 36 months. The probability of exit for employment increased substantially with each subsequent spell on ODSP, doubling for recipients who had more than three spells. Education greatly increased the probability of exit. This probability has a six-fold increase for those who had post-secondary education and are earning income at the threshold level in the last 2 months before exit. Females had a 29% greater probability of exiting for employment than their male counterparts; while recipients who were married had a 97% greater probability of exiting when they reach the threshold level; recipients who have children and are earning at the threshold level still have a decreased probability of exit, but the gap narrows to 28%. The older one gets the less chance they have for a work exit. Those aged 45 or older had the least probability of exiting (25%). Recipients with PD have a 37% greater probability of exiting than

recipients with MI. Earning at the threshold level did not change the probability of exit for either age or health reason.

The number of exits in Model 1 (n=77) was the most stringent measure of exit and was determined by having earnings in the last 3 consecutive months before spell end. All independent variables were statistically significant at <0.05 , with the exception of baseline 2 and 3 (those who have been on the system for <36 months), those with children, and health reason. The longer one stayed on assistance, the less chance they had of exiting, though the probability is better when recipients earn consistently at the threshold level. There is a 3% less chance of exiting for those on the system for 12 months or less; however, if they were on the system for longer than 36 months their probability of exit decreased by 57%. The probability of exit for employment increased substantially with each subsequent spell on ODSP, increasing four-fold for recipients who have more than 3 spells.

Education greatly increased the probability of exit. This probability triples for those who have post-secondary education and are earnings income at the threshold level in the last three months before exit. Females had a 50% greater probability of exiting for employment than their male counterparts; while recipients who were married had a 388% greater probability of exiting when they reach the threshold level for three months in a row before exit; recipients who have children and are earning at the threshold level still have a decreased probability of exit, but the gap narrows even more to 17%. The older one gets, the less chance they have of exiting for employment. Those aged 45 or older had the least probability of exiting (25%). Recipients with PD had a 30% greater probability of exiting than recipients with MI. Earning at the threshold level did not change the probability of exit for age, but there is a 7% greater probability that PWD compared to those with MI.

Limitations

Several limitations arose due to the nature and quality of variables in the original dataset. First, the administrative dataset used in this study was not designed for research purposes. Researcher access to this Ministry dataset was a pilot project intended to test viable models for access to government data (MCSS, 2014). Therefore, some of the variables that would have provided a direct approach to answering our research question (such as “termination reason”) were not recorded consistently, rendering them unreliable. The unsuitability of this variable necessitated the construction of other variables to answer our research questions (see Appendix A). This alternative method provided an indirect measure, at best; however, the use of both descriptive and inference statistics using hard and soft measures of exit provided a methodical (alternative) approach to determining recipients who exit for employment.

Second, data that could have provided a richer exploration of system level characteristics that influence work exits were not available to use. For example, when conceiving of this study, we wanted to investigate whether the nature of employment supports that ODSP leavers accessed had an impact on exit. However, the variable pertaining to employment supports in the dataset only provided a yes or no answer. Characteristics such as job search (independent/structured), community participation, employment placement (with/without incentives), job skills training and other programmatic supports are situated in a separate (employment supports) database, for which we had no access, limiting the usefulness of this variable in determining a relationship between access to employment supports and work exit.

Third, there were no variables that denoted whether a recipient was still on the caseload. The only way to track this was to notice when you no longer see them in the dataset. The absence of such a

defining variable means that each researcher would need to devise their own approach to tracking duration. This individualized approach has implications for replication of study findings.

Fourth, linkages to other datasets, such as the employment supports database or tax files, were not provided or permissible, making conclusions on employment trajectories limited.

Lastly, a gender analysis was limited as the options in the dataset were limited to the binary choices: male and female. It is not known whether the caseworker populating the dataset was limited to these choices, or even if recipients had an option to self-report gender identity. The limitations inherent in the male/female dichotomy could impact the gender analysis in this study. We also did not stratify on the sex variable because a gender analysis was not the focus of our study. It may be useful to conduct this analysis in later studies.

Discussion

Our study builds on an emerging body of research (Dewa, 2016; Kerr et al, 2017; Vick & Lightman, 2010) by contributing findings that identified the factors that are associated with work exits from social assistance. The findings of this research supported some of our hypotheses, while disproving others, highlighting clear trends in the data in terms of entry, duration and work exit. We hypothesized that people with MI were the faster growing disability group on the caseload. This hypothesis is partially supported. From 2003-2008, people with PD came onto the system in larger numbers. This trend reverses after 2008. Interestingly, this time point corresponds with the global recession, which impacted Ontario workers and the Ontario labour market (Stapleton, 2009). In a period of economic decline, workers with MI are often the first ones to lose their jobs (Evans-Lacko, et al, 2013); However, the increase of persons with MI on income supports may well be

attributed to a historical trend of labour market exclusion due to stigma and employer discrimination which forces them to rely on public income assistance (Stuart, 2016). It is therefore not a surprise that we see the persons with MI caseload numbers exceed that of persons with PD. This trend applied to work exits as well, with exception of the most stringent measure of work exit. Here we observe that the nature of disability is not statistically significant for work exits.

The results showed that work exit becomes increasingly less likely the longer someone stays on social assistance, regardless of the nature of the disability. This finding is likewise supported in existing literature which finds that once someone enters the system, work exits off social assistance are rare, and become increasingly unlikely the longer someone is on the system (August 2009, Dewa, 2016; Gewurtz et al, 2016). Conversely, the number of spells (times on the system) tell another story. For recipients who cycle in and out of ODSP (though most only have one spell), our findings reveal that the probability of exit increases significantly with each subsequent spell. On its face, this finding seems to be counterintuitive; however, it makes sense if the nature of the disability is considered. There exists a substantial body of evidence that indicates people with mental illness do not take a linear route to employment, and indeed that cycling between income benefits and work can be explained by the episodic nature of mental illness (Gewurtz, Cott, Rush, & Kirsh, 2015; Lam 2010). This finding also supports the established knowledge that repeated exposure to work strengthens work force attachment, providing for increasingly longer employment trajectories (Achdut, 2016). Given this evidence, it makes good economic sense to invest in quality employment programming to reduce the cycling pattern by connecting people with MI to more effective supports that help them retain financial independence for longer periods.

Many recipients did not engage in paid employment (57%). However, among those recipients with earnings from employment, most earned between \$1000 and \$2400. One possible explanation

supported by the literature is that recipients are strategically earning as much as they can without triggering possible exit, thus only earning up to the break-even point (Gewurtz, 2011). If recipients are ever to be encouraged to earn beyond this level, policy design needs to allow for a bridge to sustainable employment by providing more resources during a recipient's time on assistance and longer and more intensive follow-up supports. Without greater investment in this area, most recipients will not risk a work exit, and employment earnings will continue to stagnate.

Demographic factors, such as gender, age, marital status and having responsibility for a child does affect both duration on the system and work exit. Men's entry onto ODSP outpaced that of women year over year, lending support to the phenomenon Stapleton and Bedhar (2011) coined "the new face of social assistance" (20) and reaffirmed by others. For example, in a study by Dewa (2016) who conducted an analysis on employment benefit receipt in the ODSP program in March 2011, she found that there were 5% more men on the caseload than women. Our results show that by 2013, men had outstripped women on ODSP by 24%. In terms of work exits, women were much more likely to have a work exit than men, at a rate that is statistically significant. Even though men access ODSP employment benefits in greater numbers, which assumes they are readying themselves to enter the labour market (Dewar, 2016), males do not enter the labour market in greater numbers than their female counterparts. This observation may be explained by a changing labour market. Male dominated jobs in blue-collar industries are being replaced by service sector employment which tends to be more female dominated (Stapleton, 2011; Kim, Carrasco, & Herd, 2018).

Our findings on the age composition and work exit rates align with existing evidence. The oldest age cohort in our study have the longest system tenure and they exit at a much lower rate. This finding is to be expected in a population that is aging. According to Kerr et al (2017), population aging, combined with the acquisition of disabilities as you age, contributes to this phenomenon.

While, Kerr et al, used the same dataset that we explored, this finding is also echoed in other studies (Kim, Carrasco, & Herd, 2018). The rather unsatisfactory policy response to this issue has been to experiment with the retirement age, by either lowering it to retire workers out of the labour market (Gupta & Larsen, 2010), or raising it to keep them working longer (Staubli & Zweimüller, 2013). Neither of these solutions resolved the issue of how to employ older workers with disabilities, it simply shifted the economic burden to various public purses. Instead, there is a need to further explore the unique employment support needs of older recipients and develop innovative initiatives that will allow older workers to remain engaged in the life of their community for as long as they are able.

The effects of marital status and having children were also tested in our models. While we hypothesized that single recipients would be more likely to exit than their married counterparts, findings reveal that the opposite is true. The study on uptake of employment benefits conducted by Dewa (2016) suggests that this pattern can be explained by the higher employment benefit usage among married recipients, perhaps resulting in better employment outcomes. However, it seems reasonable to conclude that having two people in the same household with earnings allow the couple (whose earnings are combined for ODSP purposes) to reach the earnings threshold sooner than single earners. Dewa's findings also showed a lower uptake if recipients had children. Our findings mirror these results, which show that recipients with children are less likely to exit. Similarly, Kim, Carrasco, and Herd (2018) refer to a historical trend of parents with dependent children staying on the system longer than those without children. It is probable that parents do not want to take the chance on employment when they have dependent children to consider providing for. This finding reinforces the need for additional resources, e.g. more subsidized children care spaces for recipients with children to improve their employment opportunities.

The proportion change in our models when the impact of education on work exit was factored in provided the most striking observation. The role of education in employment success has been a subject of much debate in the literature (Saunders, 2005; Eichhorst et al, 2010). A widely accepted theory is that education leads to better jobs (Achdut, 2016; Zizis, 2011). However, the bulk of the evidence suggests that education alone will not lead to good quality employment, especially for PWD who typically have lower levels of education (Prince 2004; Saunders, 2005; Torjman & Marhoul, 2016). By stark contrast, our results demonstrate a strong correlation in all the models between higher education and work exit, which seems to indicate that education plays an important role in supporting the transition from social assistance to the labour market. This finding confirms decades of anecdotal observations in the field and established evidence from other jurisdictions. Moreover, this finding strongly points to promoting educational opportunities for recipients. Uptake of employment initiatives as enhanced supported employment initiatives, as well as investments in skills training and formal education are important strategies for improving social assistance to work transitions. Our study attempted to fill in some gaps in research on the employment outcomes of ODSP. The gaps that exist may likely be a result of the expectations that once PWD enter into the welfare system they are not likely to leave (August, 2009). These assumptions have deep and persistent roots. Indeed, they are embedded in ODSP legislation by designing policies that acts as barriers to long-term employment (see ODSP, 1997). This study moves the field forward in dispelling this particular myth around the fate of job seekers with disabilities who are in receipt of income support.

Conclusion

This study examined the factors that facilitate work exits off ODSP. These findings go beyond testing worn assumptions about the work capacity of persons with mental illness by providing data on recipients who exited ODSP for employment reasons. Providing evidence that some ODSP recipients are capable of securing earnings at an amount sufficient to be self-sustaining, we pave the way for evidence-based program improvements, such as a greater investment in resources to ensure a sustained transition from welfare to work. This work needs to be further developed by providing linkages to multiple datasets, such as individual tax files, which could create the opportunity to explore economic trajectories for this worker population. Unfortunately, this research also highlights that people with mental illness are outpacing those with other disabilities at the point of entry onto social assistance. Given the positive correlation between education and work exit, we suggest that more attention be directed to ensuring access to higher education. These findings should inform system reform to better support the needs of social assistance recipients who are able to exit the system for employment, which will, in turn, create cost-savings to social programming in Ontario.

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Appendix A: 36 (original) variables:

Variable Name*	Descriptor
Agegroup	Three age groups are defined 1 (25-34); 2 (35-44); 3 (45-55) – when we first observe them
Healthreason	Two health groups are identified using the ICD9 codes in version 3 of MCSS data dictionary 1 (physical – anything not mental) 2(mental illness) *Substance use is not included
Grantage	The age at which they were granted ODSP. This number was calculated by taking subtracting member_birth_date (“yearofbirth”) from grant_date (“grantyear”): grantage=grantyear-yearofbirth
Months on Assistance	Counts the number of months each individual is on assistance * includes multiple spells
Cntcat	break down months_on_assistance into three categories: <12 then cntcat=1; if 13<=count<=36 then cntcat=2; if count>36 then cntcat=3
Spellcount	number of spells each individual has in total over the ten-year period *spells defined by the absence of the recipient for minimum consecutive six months off the caseload
Spellbegin	beginning of spells within a recipient's monthly observations
Spellend	end of spell within a recipient's monthly observations
Spelllength	length of spell used to determine spell counts
“Prevyear/premonth/previousspell/currentyear/currentmonth”	created to determine spell begin and spell end observations
Censored	those recipients who are still on the caseload at the end of the observation
Non-censored	captures those recipients who have a spell-end by the end of the observation period
Earnings2	earnings2=0 is zero, 1 is \$1-\$1000, 2 is \$1001-\$2400, 3 is >\$2400 * “earnings2” captures only those earnings from employment
Exit earnings	those who had earnings at breakeven point in their spell end month *breakeven (monthly) = benefit max*2+200 ie. 2006
birth1, education1, child1, marital1, icd91	Codes recreated to replace missing codes

*Constructed variables are based on 35 variables used in the original (MCSS) datafiles

Chapter Four: STUDY THREE

Negotiating Transitions from Welfare to Work Among Recipients Living with Mental Illness

Abstract

BACKGROUND: There is a lack of empirical data on the experiences of people with mental illness (PMI) who transition from welfare to work, or how policy programs are designed to facilitate this outcome.

OBJECTIVE: We explore the resources and supports that PMI receive to facilitate exit from disability income benefit programs for employment.

METHODS: Drawing on a grounded theory approach, we examine the exits of recipients with mental illness from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Data were collected from semi-structured interviews with current and former recipients with mental illness, service providers who support current and former recipient, and Ministry staff.

RESULTS: Four themes emerged: (a) picking yourself back up; (b) breaking the rules to get ahead; (c) stabilizing illness for employment success; and (d) getting supports as vital to successful employment exit. The overarching finding, however, is that system supports are not the determining factors in a successful transition. Rather, participants describe how recipients can exit for employment by leveraging personal resources to successfully transition off income support benefits.

CONCLUSIONS: A system redesign is needed to address the inherent tension between social and health programs if successful welfare-to-work transitions for PMI are to be realized.

Keywords: welfare, employment supports, system design, mental illness

Literature Review

The system and individual level factors that prevent people with mental illness (PMI) from securing and retaining employment have been well documented (Corbière, et al, 2010; Piggott, Sapey, & Wilenus, 2005). Existing studies have examined barriers to employment for people with mental illness, including the lack of adequate supports (Gewurtz, Kirsh, Jacobson, & Rappolt, 2007), lack of hard and soft skills (Corbière & Lecomte, 2009) and attitudinal and structural barriers (Kirsh, 2000). The literature narrows significantly, however, when exploring the barriers to employment encountered by PMI who are in receipt of income benefits. Even less is known about the specific system and individual level factors that facilitate exits from disability income support programs for employment (Vick & Lightman, 2010).

It has been over a decade since Frenette and Picot (2003) noted that “no Canadian study has looked at the economic outcomes of welfare leavers in great detail” (p. 1). Since this observation was made, researchers working on the Social Assistance in the New Economy (SANE) study documented the economic well-being of general welfare recipients as they cycle between work and welfare (Lightman, Mitchell, & Herd, 2005, 2010). Although Vick and Lightman (2010) examined a subset of general welfare recipients living with episodic disabilities, there remains a scarcity of evidence on the exit trajectories of recipients in disability income support programs.

A human capital model suggests that recipients will exit income support and welfare systems when they have the appropriate work skills, experience and education they need to obtain jobs that pay them more than they can make on income benefits (Achdut, 2016). However, existing research on factors that support welfare system exits is mixed (Jones, Mavromaras, Sloane, & Wei, 2014), highlighting the complexity involved. Although social capital can take various forms, at its core, it is about the “quantity and quality of formal and informal social interactions”

(De Silva, McKenzie, Harpham, & Huttly, 2005, p. 619). A systematic review that included 21 studies published up to March 2003 on the association between social capital and mental illness found that those with strong social networks have better mental health (De Silva et al, 2005). The mediating effect of social support also supports job retention among people with mental illness (Nagle, Cook, & Polatajko, 2002). Conversely, the lack of support network(s) can hinder job retention (Gewurtz et al, 2007).

Despite the evidence that factors outside the individual can have importation implications for employment success, neoliberal government policies tend to place the onus for finding and maintaining work on the individual (Gewurtz, Cott, Rush, & Kirsh, 2015). “Activation” is the commonly used term to connote the process by which the unemployed are provided with supports to reengage in paid work. Strategies for activation are intended to change the individual’s work behaviors by sanctioning benefits for those who do not comply. However, this approach has been shown to be ineffective in increasing long term employment outcomes (Webster, 2016). In fact, there is evidence to suggest that successful long-term employment outcomes are even more remote for recipients who get established on disability benefits (Achdut, 2016; Kinn et al, 2014; Gewurtz, et al, 2015). Furthermore, there is consensus among researchers that without first stabilizing the illness, sustained employment is not possible (Achdut, 2016; Hall et al, 2015).

In Canada, income support recipients are not required to work in exchange for benefits. Yet, returning people to work is a stated objective of many disability support programs (Gewurtz, et al, 2015). An environment where work is encouraged but not legislated has created a tension that Engelbrecht and Lorenzo (2010) have referred to as a “double-edged sword” (p. 10). Recipients can work and are encouraged to work but the line between earning enough to supplement income

benefits, but not enough to jeopardize benefit receipt creates a barrier to full and inclusive employment (Vick, 2014).

In this study, we examine system and individual level issues through the experience of people with mental illness who have left disability support programs for employment, those assisting them with these exits, and Ministry staff. In Canada, social assistance or welfare type income support for PWD who have no other form of income is provided at the provincial level. In Ontario, this program is called the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), which offers employment supports for those who can and want to work and provides several incentives to encourage work. For example, recipients are given a work-related benefit of \$100 per month for each month they report earnings from employment (no minimum cap). There is also a \$200 earnings exemption; income above this amount is deducted by 50 percent on the dollar. Recipients can keep their drug and dental benefits if they exit for employment and their employer does not provide coverage. In addition, there is a rapid reinstatement policy in effect to ensure recipients can be fast-tracked back onto the system if they lose their job.

Although supporting recipients towards economic self-sufficiency through employment is a stated goal of ODSP (and other disability benefit programs across other jurisdictions) the supports and resources provided to enable this transition has not been examined. The purpose of this paper is to explore exits for employment from ODSP from the perspectives of recipients who had exited the system, service providers and Ministry staff. The research question guiding this study was: *How have individual and system level factors contributed to exits from ODSP to mainstream employment for recipients with mental illness?*

Methodology

Data Collection

Our data collection was undertaken in the summer of 2017. Following ethics approval from a university research ethics board, we recruited 13 participants across three groups: six former recipients of ODSP living with mental illness, four employment service providers who assisted the population under study in the transition process, and three operational staff from the Ministry of Community and Social Services. We recruited former recipients via an invitation posted through an on-line newsletter for PMI, the waiting area of select community mental health agencies, and the reception area of local ODSP offices. Service providers and Ministry staff were recruited through the principal investigator's (PI) professional contacts following a theoretical sampling approach (Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). Recipients were asked to share their lived experience of existing benefits, whereas service providers were asked to consider what factors seemed to distinguish and support those who were able to exit the system. Ministry staff were consulted to illuminate emerging findings and clarify aspects of the benefit program. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Informed consent was obtained prior to beginning each interview.

Data Analysis

We collected and analyzed data simultaneously. Interviews were imported and analyzed in Dedoose, an online mixed-methods research platform. New data were compared to emerging findings through an iterative, constant comparative process (Charmaz, 2012). Transcripts were coded for incidents, allowing us to interact with the data by asking “what is going on here?” Using a constant comparative approach, we examined the initial codes against each other,

between interviews within participant groups, and between participant groups (Boeije, 2002). This process allows for related codes to be grouped together into categories. During the selective coding phase, we compared categories to capture how concepts changed under different circumstances. This process resulted in combining categories or expanding some categories to incorporate similar concepts. It also allowed us to detect patterns and identify emerging themes. We then compared these themes with raw data to ensure they accurately reflected the experiences of participants. This approach allowed the social process and the emerging themes to take shape inductively (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Trustworthiness of Data

Reflexivity, which involves balancing what was said by participants with how it is interpreted by the researcher (Cutcliffe, 2000) was applied by capturing our reasoning, judgment, and emotional reactions in field notes and memo writing during the analysis and write-up phases of the research. We also conducted member-checking, whereby participants were invited to review and provide feedback on their profile, suggested pseudonyms, and the social process diagram. Furthermore, interviewing three different stakeholder groups allowed for triangulation to ensure “in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (Denzin, 2012, p. 82).

Findings

The “Hostage” Negotiation Process

PMI who have exited ODSP for employment are a small but distinct group of people who have rarely been given a voice in academic literature. However, their experiences of leaving ODSP can make an important contribution to the emerging evidence on the fate of welfare leavers. A dominant metaphor emerged from the analysis that imbued the data with a “feeling dimension,”

allowing us to grasp the essence of participants’ experiences as they fought to disentangle themselves from the system (Patton, 2002). This metaphor is best illustrated in the hostage negotiation process (see Figure 1). *Hostage* is a term that emerged from an interview with a Ministry staff member who was describing the nature of employment supports available to recipients. The term refers to the lack of choice recipients have in service delivery. In the words of this informant: “employment is the difference between sort of being a hostage to a system since there are no other systems that people can shop around for. I mean really, we have hostages, not clients.” The negotiation begins from the day a person is approved for ODSP, takes on a broader meaning when compared against the experiences of recipients who are trying to get off ODSP in the absence of system supports.



The overall finding of our analysis is that the system is not designed to move people off social assistance. Rather, those that do successfully exit and stay off the system do so because they were able to gather the necessary resources required to transition out despite inadequate support

from the system. In this context, the hostage negotiation process (HNP) illustrates the challenges recipients encounter as they negotiate their exit from the system. The HNP process is mapped on two distinct paths: (a) ODSP as a safety net, and (b) ODSP as a stop-gap. Recipients who viewed ODSP as a safety net see it as their primary source of income over an indefinite period.

Conversely, the stop-gap recipients see ODSP as a detour in their life course, a place to “stop and take stock” and start again. The path to employment is traced along these two trajectories. Of the six recipients interviewed, four can be classified as stop-gap, while two fit in the safety-net group. The recipients who view ODSP as a stop-gap tend to use their time on ODSP to gather the resources they need to help them transition off ODSP, such as money for treatment or professional connections that will lead to quality employment, often breaking the rules along the way to give them the ability to exit. Regardless of the path taken, recipients who leave the system reach the same juncture: a point in the negotiation where they describe obtaining the medical supports they need to stabilize their condition. Ontario does provide publicly funded health care coverage; however, the mental health supports recipients need (such as trauma therapy) is often not covered. Therefore, recipients described needing to gather these specialized resources on their own before they could move forward. Four recipients accumulated the resources they could anticipate needing in their transition off ODSP, finding secure, stable and quality employment that they were able to maintain; two exited ODSP successfully at one point, but have since cycled back on. The HNP clarifies how some recipients are able to exit ODSP while others are not.

Our research question places an emphasis on the four stop-gap recipients who succeeded in staying off ODSP; however, we contrast their experiences with the recipients who exited at one

time but have since cycled back. The themes that emerged from the analysis are constructs of the larger “hostage negotiation” metaphor that frames this study.

The Themes Embedded in the Hostage Negotiation Process

We identified four themes that emerged from the analysis which are embedded in the HNP: (a) picking yourself back up; (b) breaking the rules to get ahead; (c) stabilizing illness for employment success; and (d) getting supports are vital to successful system exit.

Picking yourself back up.

Picking yourself back up refers to a person’s ability to rally after the health or life event that precipitated their arrival on ODSP. This theme captures the determination exhibited by recipients as they methodically traced an action-oriented approach to tackle their goal of exiting ODSP. Importantly, movement towards exiting ODSP occurs because of their own efforts that extend beyond the standard services and supports offered to them. Recipients reflected on the systematic approach to gathering these resources; service providers noted how those who exit seem to be distinct in terms of their approach and view of ODSP.

Recipients who have managed to stay off ODSP described the need to “thrive” not just “survive.” With this mindset they found the fortitude to set long-term goals and the steadfastness to see them to fruition. For example, Rafael, a 47-year-old former recipient who is currently living with PTSD and an eating disorder, is emblematic of the determination exhibited by stop-gap recipients: “I know it’s going to take me longer [to get off ODSP] because lack of working but I am doing it. And that’s the end of it.” This resolve was noted by service providers as well. For example, an employment coordinator of a community agency stated that supports alone are insufficient to successfully exit the system; recipients who exit tap into a reservoir of inner

strength to stay the course despite obstacles: “I think the key thing is not they’re seeking our services out on their own but that they have that motivation and determination to find work and get off the system.” In contrast, recipients who were unable to harness their own resources often experienced multiple spells on ODSP, which led to an acceptance of ODSP in their lives. Kaerta, a 27-year-old mother illustrates this resignation: “I went back on just because . . . I’ve had no issues getting a job, just the problem in my life I don’t know how to keep ’em right.” Kaerta’s experience speaks to the barriers inherent in episodic conditions such as mental illness, where individuals often fluctuate between wellness and disability.

Stop-gap recipients used their time on ODSP to regroup in preparation for moving forward. For example, Xena, a 45-year-old professional living with depression noted that ODSP enabled her to “stop and take stock, and start again.” She approached her exit from ODSP by “taking one step at a time” and finding a volunteer position to prepare herself for labour market re-entry, while still receiving ODSP. Like Xena, the other recipients in the stop-gap category described a methodical, deliberate process of moving forward. Cedric, a 53-year-old cook who was on ODSP for 10 years, described the strategic and measured way forward that he took back to the labour market:

I went out and found the things that I wanted to do and did them . . . I started volunteering and realized how much I enjoyed it So then I got hired on as a cook and eventually got into the program as a cook supervisor . . . I want to do it better and I was not thinking employment at this point . . . So I went and I got a student loan out and went that way. And then went back and continued in the supervisory position before I got hired on to where I am now.

The methodical approach to exit also involved measuring the pros and cons of leaving ODSP.

This process of weighing options was articulated by Cedric, who described his internal struggle:

I was offered full-time; well do I take this and leave ODSP? Which most people wouldn't do . . . because you're giving up all that security and, and I decided no, that the chance of getting off ODSP permanently was worth more than the security that it gave me.

The stop gap recipients discussed their strategies for staying on track with their employment goals despite working on stabilizing their condition. Xena describes how she reinforces her resolve by giving herself positive self-talks to succeed in meeting her goals: "I said okay, you've got like a year or two years to do something. It doesn't have to be everything, you don't have to be everything you thought you'd be but try something." The service providers who witnessed permanent exits off the system echoed recipients' experiences that long-term goal setting was key: "the ones that are successful . . . have a plan of action."

Breaking the rules to get ahead.

The recipients we spoke with did not delight in breaking the rules; but they believed that it was necessary in order to gather the resources needed to successfully exit ODSP. Most of the recipients we interviewed stated that the income they received from ODSP was insufficient to allow them to transition off ODSP. Many of the participants told us how recipients felt driven to sometimes break the rules to get sufficiently ahead to enable a transition off the system. This was true regardless of whether they were stop-gap or safety-net recipients. For example, Kara, a 54-year-old recipient who is self-employed and has since cycled back onto ODSP stressed that "the amount of money that you're allotted does not even come close to helping a person just pay for

the basic necessities in life.” In addition to paying the rent and food, recipients need to figure out how to pay for employment related needs, such as gas to get to work. To meet all her living expenses, Kara engaged in bartering to get by: “So, in order for me to break away ever from this system I need to make the money to pay bills and to buy stuff.” She did not report this exchange of goods. Similarly, both Rafael and Fuma also admit to not reporting all of their earnings, and telling others to do the same in order to get ahead and safeguard the resources needed to eventually make the transition off ODSP: “whenever I talked to other people on ODSP who said they wanted to work, I told them to work for cash and do not tell ODSP you are doing it because they will punish you.” These admissions shed light on the realities faced by recipients as they are attempting to live and move forward on ODSP, at times using illicit ways to accumulate the resources they need.

Stabilizing illness is important for employment success

This theme speaks to the need for someone with a mental illness to be able to manage their condition to secure and retain employment, which applies to all recipients regardless of how they view ODSP. The two measures to achieve this stability cited most frequently by participants were trauma therapy, counselling and a consistent medication regime.

Rafael stated quite simply that the right treatment was key to working his way off the system: “What can I tell you? I got the right treatment with the most amazing . . . doctor, psychologist . . . I’m not going to be pulled back anymore.” In fact, stabilizing the illness was seen by all study participants as a pre-condition for stable employment. Without access to appropriate and timely medication and counselling, participants across all three groups believed that sustained employment was not possible. Indeed, five out of the six recipients spoke to the value that access to proper therapy had in ensuring job retention. Raphael explains that the trauma therapy he

received was the foundation for getting and keeping a job. Cedric's process to wellness also involved a combination of medication and therapy: "It took me years to find the proper antidepressant and like maybe that sort of persistence or willingness to sort of do what the doctor says. Like go to therapy for 25 years and I'm still in therapy managing it and stuff like that."

Every service provider we spoke with addressed the vital role that medication played in retaining employment. For example, a job developer at an employment program, explained the importance of adhering to a medication regime:

If a person obviously is doing well and taking their medications and it's making them able to focus and it's making them able to you know get there on time and complete the tasks and be . . . a productive employee . . . definitely, the medications are an important factor. If they start to go off the medications and then everything starts to fall apart I mean that can be very detrimental.

Recipients also noted that their productivity in the workplace is dependent on their adherence to a good medication regime. If medication is part of a person's health care regime, participants believed that this regime needed to be uninterrupted in order to function optimally in their place of work, otherwise their job may be compromised, leading to being fired or quitting. For example, Kara lives with OCD and found that when her symptoms are appropriately managed she is able to function well in the workplace: "If all the ducks are in a row then I'm really good. I can just sail through, like life is good." Ultimately, it was a breakdown of regime that left Kara with no choice but to quit her job and go back on ODSP.

In 2006, medication coverage for ODSP recipients was extended to those who did not have drug benefits through their employers. Despite these positive policy changes, the fear of losing access

to expensive psychiatric medications persists. For some recipients, this fear is compounded by difficult relationships with their caseworkers. For example, Fuma lives with bipolar disorder. His time on ODSP was fraught with tension, and he believed caseworkers made deliberate attempts to sabotage his benefits. Indeed, he reported he was cut off benefits multiple times while on ODSP. To safeguard his medication supply, Fuma resorted to stockpiling in case his benefits were to stop without warning:

A mentally ill person not taking their medication is usually a very negative thing. So, the first thing that happens when you break an ODSP rule if you didn't stock up on your meds you're out of them in three days. Now, go ahead and make good decisions.

Similarly, Rafael described what it is like to try and work without the appropriate treatment believes that providing access to a range of treatment options could save the system years of benefit payouts:

You know if they give me somatic treatment when I needed it really I mean let's say 2008 when I got there, by 2010 easily I was going to be able to fully work and be independent. It would save . . . I don't know four years of ODSP payments. You know what I mean; they keep you there. They keep you there and . . . many of those, probably half of those, they don't need to be there. That's it. And it's sad.

Recipients and service providers addressed the consequences of not being provided timely and appropriate supports. Cedric believes that in the absence of these supports, the likelihood of languishing on ODSP and the loss of human potential is real: “there's so much potential there

that will probably never get realized and just because of the nature of the system and the way its set up and how it's funded." Cedric's observation underscores the system tension that is inherent in ODSP. That is, eligibility for ODSP presupposes that a person's illness renders them incapable of working. Therefore, little attention is devoted to preventing a focus on building supports for those who can work, further eroding the social and human capital of those who turn to the system for supports.

Getting supports are vital for system exit

This theme is about the nature of supports that recipients need to assist them in transitioning off ODSP. There was agreement among all recipients that ODSP did not facilitate their exit off the system. Without exception, all recipients provided a detailed account of their multiple attempts to access employment supports from the system. Their requests were met with minimal assistance, ignored, or at worst, discouraged; if recipients did receive assistance in their job search it was often external to the system. The diagram in figure 2 illustrates how system supports are positioned in relation to recipients' own efforts to secure external resources. System supports orbit the supports recipients are able to garner themselves. System supports are viewed as secondary to individual efforts to find employment, available but passive.

1) Nature of Supports That Ensure Job Quality

According to the service providers we interviewed, the nature of jobs secured while on ODSP is vital to a successful transition. One service provider shared her experience of those recipients who have successfully maintained employment off the system and noted that: "it was a difference of being like the forklift operator as opposed to somebody on an assembly line. This service provider suggested that recipients with higher levels of education also have higher expectations for themselves and are not pursuing minimum wage opportunities: "It's not about

that they're actually finding jobs in their education[al] background or fields but that they've just come in maybe with a different expectation of . . . what they're capable of and what they're going for.”

Recipients and service providers noted that the nature and quality of a job can be the difference between working to supplement income benefits (those who view ODSP as a safety net) or working your way off the system. Despite the value that service providers offer in helping connect recipients to employment; these system-level barriers mean that only those who are able to harness the energy they need in spite of seemingly insurmountable barriers will succeed in leaving ODSP for employment. Fuma echoed this reality, stating, “only the most self-motivated individuals are actually going to go and seek to work at all.” The other participants concurred, noting the need for the system to change to enable more recipients to exit. As stated by Cedric, “Unless the system changes, nobody's going to want to take the chance to get off it.”

2) Purpose of Supports in System Exit

Participants from across the three participant groups (recipients, service providers, and Ministry) believed that existing employment supports are not adequate to support system exits for recipients. Cedric believed that the purpose of ODSP employment supports is to help those recipients who want to “dabble in part-time stuff.” For this reason, caseworkers “are not looking for the people who could get out.” This observation reinforces the notion that the system is not designed to address the higher-level employment needs of the stop-gap recipients. Indeed, the findings suggest that the system treats employment endeavors as one component of a larger social inclusion strategy, but not necessarily as a goal onto itself as the following quote from Ministry staff implies:

At some point, your case worker is required to call you and conduct what we call “active case management,” which is to call you and not frighten you and not scare you but to call you and say you’ve been on ODSP for a while . . . How can they connect into the community?

However, some participants suggested that recipients need to look beyond the system for support if they want to exit the system:

I think this is an opportunity where it can’t be through ODSP. It’s got to be through other people and organizations to be able to know how to work with people at ODSP and help them to see what possibilities might be out there.

Discussion

People with mental illness who have exited ODSP for employment are a small but distinct group of people who have rarely been given a voice in the academic literature. However, their experiences of leaving ODSP can make an important contribution to the emerging evidence on the fate of welfare leavers and inform the development of social assistance programs that can support transitions to employment.

The metaphor that frames this study uses strong language. However, this is not the first study of its kind to use the image of “hostage” to describe the negative interactions between social assistance recipients and those charged with providing services to them. A qualitative study comprising 50 recipients of America’s Social Security Insurance system found that “checks were held hostage” to “coerce the recipient’s behavior” (Gallmeier & Levy, 1998, p. 401). The

language of hostage negotiation conjures a violent power struggle between program staff and recipients that has an alarming similarity to the negotiation process in this study.

The findings revealed that two types of recipients exist: those who see the system as a temporary reprieve (the stop-gap recipients) and those who see it as an ongoing safety net. The findings suggest that the recipients who are successful in leaving ODSP do so because they are able to acquire and leverage their own resources. Moreover, former recipients describe tapping into their resourcefulness and resilience as they resolve to stay the course, despite the seemingly insurmountable barriers blocking their path.

The hostage negotiation process maps the path to exit for two distinct groups. In reality, many recipients with mental illness deal with fluctuating work capacities as a result of episodic conditions. This map does not take into account these work trajectories. Yet, attitudinal and programmatic barriers inherent in ODSP means that employment supports are not designed to address partial work capacity (Vick, 2014). While the impact of episodic conditions on system exits are important to understand from a policy perspective, this issue did not surface as a theme in our study.

Our two central findings are consistent with existing literature. That is, that a strong support system comprised of family, friends, and other community supports, and the ability to manage illness symptoms are both essential to maintaining employment (Corbière, et al, 2011; Krupa, Kirsh, Gewurtz, & Cockburn, 2005). However, this study contributes to the literature by highlighting the system-level factors that impede exit from disability benefits for recipients who could otherwise leave ODSP for employment. The findings suggest the need for access to coverage for medication and mental health services beyond the social assistance program to support ongoing work capacity.

ODSP's employment support mandate is to help recipients "prepare for, obtain and maintain competitive employment . . . to increase economic independence" (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2006). However, our findings show that the current system has the effect of trapping people. Indeed, recipients are responsible for finding their own way out. This finding echoes a study conducted by Gewurtz, et al. (2015) which found that the "ODSP system still fails to encourage employment among recipients and support individuals towards finding and keeping jobs." (p. 128). Our findings reveal that employment is not used by program providers as a lever for system exit. Rather employment is seen as just one component among others to facilitate a broader social inclusion strategy.

Our findings suggest that there are two broader issues at play that need to be addressed before system exit can be considered a viable program outcome. First, there is an inherent tension between social and health services. While ODSP is a social program that provides income and employment supports to PWD, our findings suggest that without access to timely and appropriate mental health services, sustained employment will continue to be illusive for many recipients. We need to understand how access to mental health services can be improved, to better address income, employment, and medical concerns in a holistic manner. Therefore, it is critical to develop a more supportive system, perhaps one in which employment and mental health supports are co-located, to ensure that those who are capable of labour-market participation have the supports they need to realize this.

Second, and perhaps more insidious, ODSP is a social program that has embedded the neoliberal principle of personal responsibility into its approach to employment (Chouinard & Crooks, 2005). Those who are unable to secure and retain employment are viewed as "personally defective" (Herd, Mitchell, & Lightman, 2003, p. 4). This belief fuels assumptions about

motivation that system operators rely on to explain disappointing employment outcomes (Van Hal, Meershoek, Nijhuis, & Horstman, 2013). Interestingly, many participants in our study, including some recipients, believed that motivation could triumph over any deficiency in the system. This mindset lends itself to what Van Hal et al. (2013) referred to as a “psychological interpretation” (p. 810), blaming the individual for their situation, rather than considering “the relationship between the institutional context and the person operating in such a context” (p. 810). Gewurtz, et al. (2015) countered this concept of motivation by looking to the system to explain poor employment outcomes: “a focus on personal deficits prevents real investment in changing aspects of the system that continue to be ineffective and constraining” (p. 130).

The findings from this study suggest that significant system change is needed to better equip recipients with the resources they need to be successful. In Ontario, the government has responded through three recent parallel and complementary initiatives that in combination promise to increase income exemptions, increase income security rates, create early intervention supports for people with mental illness, and develop a seamless system of employment and training interventions (Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2016, 2017).

Furthermore, there is growing awareness of the urgent need for improved coverage of medication and mental health supports within the publicly funded healthcare system (Drummond, Giroux, & Pigott, 2012).

The findings in this study have implications for the delivery of employment supports to disabled workers in advanced welfare states. Our findings align with existing evidence that the workfare principles underpinning welfare programs are producing work but not necessarily quality long-term employment (Pennisi & Baker Collins, 2017). The beliefs that keep governments wedded to the notion of improving employability is rooted in the belief that the need for income benefits is

temporary and can be overcome with improvements to the self (Pennisi & Baker Collins, 2017).

The reality is not that simple. Disability benefit programs are comprised of recipients with varying levels of need. Therefore, the key to improving employment supports within the system is to reduce the negative impact of health limitations through a range of personalized supports (Weston, 2012). The reforms suggested by this study are promising and may lead to improvement in how recipients manage their transition for welfare to work.

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Chapter Five: Conclusion and Discussion

Overarching Theme

The employment fate of welfare leavers in Canada who are in receipt of disability income benefits is a population that have largely been ignored, with a few recent exceptions (Crawford, 2016; Dewa, 2016). Yet, there is an abundance of research that addresses the confluence of factors that have contributed to the low employment rate among people with disabilities, and especially people with mental illness (Corbiere, 2004; Gewurtz, Cott, Rush, & Kirsh, 2015). The three studies presented here contribute to existing literature by addressing the (re)integration into mainstream employment for people with disabilities (PWD) who are in receipt of public income benefit programs, with specific attention paid to people with mental illness. The theory of wicked problems is used to frame these studies and provides a reference point from which to understand the complexities of a seemingly intractable and contested issue that advanced welfare states have been grappling with for many decades: How to curtail the growth of disability income benefits while providing quality employment opportunities to its users?

Other researchers have conceptualized the problem of quality employment among this worker population as “complex knots” (Crawford, 2016, p. 88) that require much work to undo (Crawford, 2016). Others have asserted that these complex social issues become intractable because at its most fundamental level, they are rooted in value judgements about the people tangled up in them (Head, 2017). Indeed, decent employment for PWD demands a non-traditional approach (Crawford, 2016). In this body of work, I took a new approach to this problem by starting at the end, using a policy implementation strategy called backwards mapping (Elmore, 1979). Instead of examining the resources needed at the front end of the system as

people enter onto assistance. I explored the situation for people who exited for employment to ask the question “what happened between entry and exit that allowed them to become self-sufficient”?

I explored this issue from multiple angles, employing three different research approaches, drawing on different methodologies and data to answer different research questions. This triangulation serves to strengthen the analytical power of this body of research, which allowed me to unpack this “wicked problem” in greater depth (Green 2006). The scoping review drew on international documents about active labour market policies, the quantitative study drew on administrative data from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and a qualitative study drew on the lived experiences of individuals who have successfully exited a provincial disability benefit program for employment and staff who administer the program and work with recipients. While each study examined different aspects of this issue, common threads emerged and are important to address as they have implications for program delivery and future policy directions in the design of publicly funded social assistance programs for people with disabilities.

Points of Convergence

Key points of convergence in this thesis include: 1) the view of PWD as workers, 2) the lack of evidence-based practices and policies, 3) system tensions, 4) perverse work (dis)incentives, and 5) need for system reform. These findings provide an opportunity to target program changes that will provide greater assistance to recipients who are able to exit the system for employment.

Views of PWD as workers

The studies reaffirm the now accepted knowledge that PWD, including those with serious mental illness can work and want to work. Given the increased demands on income support systems and

developments in human rights and accessibility legislation, there have been efforts towards inclusion and integration in the labour market. In Ontario for example, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act was introduced in 2005, leading to accessibility standards in areas that impact labour market participation such as transportation, the built environment, and employment.

Despite these efforts, findings from all three studies indicate that PWD, and especially people with mental illness, remain a marginalized worker population and untapped sources of talent. At best, they are viewed as a “reserve army” of workers who employers resort to when there are labour shortages (Hyde, 2000; Grover, 2005). It is important to note here that even with labour shortages, workers with mental illness are often overlooked. Perhaps this is due to the nature of the labour shortages. Many are in skilled trades, training for which is often denied to the disabled worker population; however, their exclusion could well harken back to the systematic discrimination still practiced within our labour market, despite employer education. Despite these barriers, there have been changes to income security programs. Labour market policies have also made some provisions for inclusion of PWD in mainstream employment, such as employment quotas and the flexicurity approach used in Nordic Countries that balance employees’ needs for flexible work arrangements with employers’ needs for a skilled workforce. Unfortunately, when PWD do secure employment it is usually in entry level positions or jobs on the fringe of the workforce (Clayton et al., 2011). Misconceptions about the work capacity of PWD persists, despite the many examples of those who surpass expectations. Without policy changes that reflect the pattern of work attachment predicated on the nature of their disability, they will remain an untapped resource.

Lack of evidence-based practices and policies

This body of research revealed the need for the collection of more evidence to inform policy and program enhancements. The findings from the scoping review called for more rigorous evaluations into the mix of active labour market policies that are appropriate and effective for PWD, especially those with mental illness. In all three studies, the findings highlight an urgent need to collect more data on the long-term employment outcomes for this worker population. The inconsistent documentation in administrative files also speaks to the need for better data collection processes. Without these data, investments cannot be made in appropriate supports and services to ensure those who can work, and those who can be self-sufficient, are given the resources they need to accomplish this. This goal requires a shift in policy objectives from merely helping PWD secure a job to ensuring job retention in decent employment (Crawford, 2016).

System tensions

An over-arching question that emerged out of these studies was “what is the purpose of social assistance?” This question emerged as a response to the system tensions that were revealed in all three studies. The main criteria for meeting eligibility for disability income benefits (ODSP in Ontario) is that the claimant must have a functional impairment that is so severe it restricts one’s ability to work. Indeed, they must present a very compelling case for being too disabled to work. However, once on the system, recipients typically have access to employment programs. In Ontario, employment programming is strongly encouraged, however, in some jurisdictions it is compulsory. Either way, this program design creates a paradoxical situation that recipients need to navigate. Magnifying this challenge is the reality that when they are well enough to attempt employment, their efforts are stymied by a results-based approach to employment that rewards

service providers who can rapidly place disabled job seekers into the labour market, effectively excluding job seekers with the most barriers to employment.

The three studies reaffirmed existing evidence that people with mental illness can require intensive supports to secure stable employment, which is typically beyond what welfare regimes are designed to accommodate. This finding was highlighted in the international scoping review and addressed by all participant groups in the qualitative study. Additionally, the quantitative findings reveal that of those who have earnings, only a fraction earn enough to have a work exit, which suggest that significant barriers to employment keep them reliant on public income benefits. Results-based funding to employment programs is designed to reward providers who prioritize labour market entry over job retention and career development. An evaluation report by the BC government (2016) stated that it takes PWD two to three years to obtain employment and that they may have to go through multiple placements before they find suitable employment. This reality is out of alignment with current funding structures (Employment Program BC, 2016). This tension boils down to policy design and an inability to foresee the unique needs for PWD who try to (re)enter the labour market. In Ontario, the design of the program suggests that ODSP was designed to help people find part-time, entry level jobs rather than help PWD find secure jobs that might support them to exit the system.

This tension has resulted in what Torjman (1993) coined the “Welfare Wall.” If recipients dare to take a chance on employment, they are taxed back at such a high rate that exiting for employment is the exception (August, 2009). This reality was borne out in our studies.

Perverse Work Incentives

System tensions create the space for work (dis)incentives to flourish. This research examined the range of approaches that have been implemented to coax or coerce recipients back into the

workforce, such as sanctions and earnings incentives; the studies revealed that the former can, at best, only achieve immediate short-term results. Indeed, administrative “sticks” often result in churning between social assistance and low-wage precarious employment. In recent years, governments have acknowledged the principle of personalized supports as the most effective welfare to work policy (Ceolta-Smith, Salway & Tod, 2015). Further, consistent with research by the Mental Health Commission of Canada (2012), our scoping review and qualitative study revealed that personalized supports are necessary for securing and retaining employment. When health-related employment supports that provide tailored assistance to the individual are added into the system, recipients engage in the employment process, and are often more successful. In a study of benefit conditionality in UK welfare programs, Weston (2012) asserts that where personalized supports are present “there is a good case for government policy” to invest (p. 526).

Need for System Reform

System reform to better serve workers with disabilities emerged as an issue in all three studies. There are some areas that were raised as reform priorities. Numerous studies in the scoping review spoke to the need for a redesign of welfare state programs that focus on quality employment and job retention (Clayton et al., 2011; Parker-Harris, Owen, & Gould, 2012). These suggestions for system reform were also raised in the qualitative study. To effect this change, several recommendations were made, such as investing in resources such as transitional medical and drug coverage and other disability related benefits. Access to these resources will strengthen work capacity and ensure those who leave disability income benefits can remain self-sufficient.

The benefit of skills training and education in securing quality employment was evident in the scoping review and qualitative study; however, the probability of exit when education was

factored in (as evidenced in the models) was a powerful confirmation of the association between education and employment success. Training refers to better and more effective training for service providers, but also provision of supports to job seekers within a human capital framework. Indeed, the building of human (and social capital) are critical to sustaining employment outside of welfare. Social capital refers to one's capacity to build support networks, both in the professional world and the social world. Having social capital often leads to opportunities to develop human capital (the acquisition of skills and education) (Lin & Huang, 2005). However, it is not enough to stop at securing a job. An analysis of two UK social program pilots, explains the distinction between work first and human capital approaches; calling for a human capital approach that is set apart by its commitment to skill development over the long-term to ensure sustainable outcomes for social assistance claimants. The study findings in this thesis suggest the need to embed a human capital approach into employment service delivery (See Smith-Carrier, 2012). To stay off the system, PWD need what every other worker is entitled to: the opportunity for a quality job that has the potential for career advancement. This can only be achieved by sustained quality investments in human capital.

The qualitative and quantitative studies employed the backward mapping approach as an alternative to a top-down (or forward mapping approach) that is traditionally used in policy implementation. Asking the right policy questions can be accomplished by looking at what is needed to achieve the desired outcomes. To do this, one needs to start at the intersection of public policy and recipient decision making (Elmore, 1979). That intersection is the client/caseworker relationship and the point at which the recipient engages with employment. Public policy administered from the top is a poor substitute for positive relationships on the ground. If quality, sustainable employment is the goal, service delivery agents, including case

workers and employers must be part of the solution. The evidence borne out in the studies is that employers are focused on filling immediate job vacancies. Given the funding formula service providers are operating within, this translates into “creaming” and a focus on those with fewer barriers to employment who can immediately take on an available position. Employment programming has been slow to engage employers as part of the solution. In Canada, research institutes, such as the Centre for Research on Work Disability Policy, and employment networks, such as the Canadian Council on Rehabilitation and Work, are forming collaborations with employers and other community stakeholders to create employer inclusive strategies to tackling the wicked problem of employment for PWD.

Strengths and Limitations

A key strength of this body of work rests in the multi-disciplinary approach that was applied, resulting in different perspectives informing the research in unique ways. These contributions provided a rich and fulsome exploration of a complex policy issue. The combination of diverse expertise and multiple methodologies allowed for an examination of the issue that enhanced the rigor and credibility of the study findings.

The limitations of each study were identified in the papers. However, there are other limitations outside the scope of the paper which are addressed here. One limitation is the structure of the thesis, itself. Some study details, such as the effect of bias and a discussion on qualitative techniques such as saturation and triangulation are often excluded from published papers (and as a result, this thesis) because the journal’s maximum word lengths do not allow for a robust discussion on some of the finer points. This is a challenge when reporting on qualitative findings, especially on a subject as complex as social policy.

Within these constraints I had to learn to “hit the reader over the head” (committee member’s repeated caution) with messages in a concise manner that often leaves little room for addressing the policy nuances that contribute to program outcomes. For example, there are administrative practices such as the social tribunal decisions that inform the pattern of entry/exits onto the system that were not fully addressed in the qualitative paper due to word length requirements. Finally, the time allotted for research in my doctoral studies had implications for the transferability of findings. While saturation was reached, Corbin and Strauss (2008) note that “in reality, a researcher could go on collecting data forever, adding new properties and dimensions to categories,” concluding that a researcher can claim saturation when the concept under investigation is “sufficiently well developed for the purposes of the research” (Corbin & Strauss, Chapter 7, 2008). Providing more participant experiences may have seen more concepts emerge; however, given the time constraints inherent in a thesis project, it was not feasible to interview more participants.

Future Research Directions

I echo Michael Prince who, in a conference presentation to members of the Canadian work disability community, called for “fundamental changes in the way we think about our public investments ... in public policy and our everyday practices” (Prince, 2017). We need to move beyond short-term assistance that looks to the immediate goal of employment anywhere in any job at any pay. Those policies are short sighted and not equal to the task of tackling wicked problems. The following recommendations will bring us closer to this vision:

Need for richer datasets

Each dataset is limited in scope and nature. Linkages may help resolve deficiencies with single source datasets. One possibility is a linkage of the MCSS administrative dataset with the employment program dataset to follow recipients after exit to track long-term employment outcomes. This administrative dataset could also be linked with tax files to follow recipients after exit to track economic trajectories.

Quality of jobs

The quality of jobs recipients secured were not examined in depth. Evidence reveals that many PWD work in the service sector, in which jobs are notoriously low paid without the security of benefit packages (Crawford, 2016). My research suggested that education influences the quality of jobs PWD secure. However, a next stage of research on employment outcomes might be to compare the exit numbers against the available National Occupation Codes (NOC), to provide a more thorough understanding of the nature of jobs being secured.

Changing organizational culture

Government institutions are infused with values, identities, traditions, culture and established routines and rules, which create inaction of progress or what Head (2017) refers to as “policy gridlock” (p. 11). To break out of this stronghold, a new shared culture will need to be developed. This new shared culture will take collaboration, innovative approaches and political will. While organizational culture did pop up through the research, it was never discussed at any length. The examination of organizational culture on the impact of employment outcomes was outside the scope of this body of research. Research in this area would contribute to advancing quality employment for PWD.

Policy Implications

There is still much work to do in coming to a shared understanding of the most effective options for enhancing employment supports for PWD who can leave welfare for work. Sustained, quality employment for this worker population requires innovative policy solutions, such as backwards mapping and experimental policy approaches. Despite the policy options that are available to decision makers, Ontario is currently experiencing policy gridlock (Head, 2017). Values and evidence have collided. Backward mapping and other experimental approaches may offer a way forward, but it will take the will and cooperation of all affected stakeholders to create an environment in which this is possible.

Personal Reflections

I had some triumphant moments and harsh realities in equal measure through this journey. After completing my comprehensive exams and having one paper published, I thought I had made it to the half-way point. If my journey was Mount Everest, I had made it to the summit. Little did I realize, I had just arrived at base camp. The climb was just beginning. My Master's advisor congratulated me on reaching this stage: "It's the most gloriously selfish time in your life - just you, your research and your writing. Enjoy it!" Looking back, the steps were excruciatingly painful at times, but the journey was amazing. I did enjoy it immensely. Let me share some lessons learned.

The iterative process used in grounded theory gave me the advantage of observing emerging patterns as data were still being collected in my qualitative study; and I did not like what I saw. I thought my data findings would show that those who exited must have had access to supports that others did not. When I did not find this in my data, the process of examining the role the investigator plays in shaping research (reiterated ad nauseam in methodology classes) became real to me. It caused me to pause and examine my own biases before proceeding with more interviews. This process of reflection was, I resolved, an integral part of data collection, and ultimately increased the credibility of my findings. I also came to understand that you did not need to confirm a hypothesis to have findings that are valuable.

The quantitative study proved to be a very steep learning curve. It tested my resolve to get a PhD many times! Fortunately, I had incredibly patient, knowledgeable, and kind mentors in my supervisor and the committee members who equipped me for the climb. I confess to having a somewhat disordered mind. This reality does not mesh well with the structured and methodical approach to data mining. Through this process, I learned how to think more critically, slow down and reflect before acting. In short, I learned to navigate using an iterative approach to knowledge acquisition.

Conciseness is a virtue, at least to journal editors and supervisors. This undertaking has made me a better writer, more direct, and less verbose. I hope my ability to write a cogent paper, making every word count, is a skill I continue to improve. In short, there have been many valuable lessons over these last four years; but it has been an immensely rewarding journey.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter



March 30 2017

Project Number: 2800

Project Title: Welfare to Work for Recipients of the Ontario Disability Support Program

Principal Investigator: Dr. Rebecca Gewurtz

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter dated March 21-2017 which enclosed revised copies of the Information Consent Forms along with a response to the additional queries of the Board for the above-named study. These issues were raised by the Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board at their meeting held on February 21-2017. Based on this additional information, we wish to advise your study had been given *final* approval from the full HiREB.

The following documents have been approved on both ethical and scientific grounds:

Document Name	Document Date	Document Version
Demographic Form_final	Jan-16-2017	1
Email invitation_former_recipients_Jan16_2017_final	Jan-16-2017	1
interview_guide_former_recipients_final	Jan-16-2017	1
interview_guide_SP_jan16_2017_final	Jan-16-2017	1
Letter of Consent_WhoW_study_feb27_2017_v2 (in person)	Feb-27-2017	2
Letter of Consent_WhoW_study_March21_2017_v3 (mailing)	Mar-21-2017	3
PhD_study_protocol_PL_feb27_clean2017 (1)	Feb-27-2017	2
studyJanuary2017_recruitment_final	Jan-16-2017	1

The following documents have been acknowledged:


Document Name	Document Date	Document Version
TCPS2_CORE training Review Feb. 2017docx	Feb-27-2017	version 2

Please Note: All consent forms and recruitment materials used in this study must be copies of the above referenced documents.

We are pleased to issue final approval for the above-named study for a period of 12 months from the date of the HiREB meeting on February 21-2017. Continuation beyond that date will require further review and renewal of HiREB approval. Any changes or revisions to the original submission must be submitted on a HiREB amendment form for review and approval by the Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board.

PLEASE QUOTE THE ABOVE REFERENCED PROJECT NUMBER ON ALL FUTURE CORRESPONDENCE

Sincerely,

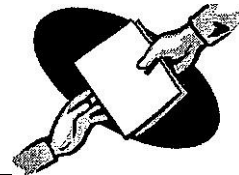

Dr. Mark Inman, MD, PhD
Chair, Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board

The Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board (HiREB) represents the institutions of Hamilton Health Sciences, St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, and the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University and operates in compliance with and is constituted in accordance with the requirements of: The Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans; The International Conference on Harmonization of Good Clinical Practices; Part C Division 5 of the Food and Drug Regulations of Health Canada, and the provisions of the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act 2004 and its applicable Regulations; For studies conducted at St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton, HiREB complies with the health ethics guide of the Catholic Alliance of Canada



Do you have a mental illness? Did you leave ODSP for employment in the last 10 years?

A PhD researcher at McMaster University, is conducting a study on former recipients of the ODSP program and is interested in hearing about YOUR EXPERIENCES. This research will explore the experience of ODSP recipients with mental illness who exit the system for employment.



I want to hear from YOU!

You are invited to participate in an interview to share your experiences. You will be provided with a \$20 gift card to thank you for your participation.

Contact: Pam Lahey at **226 343-8916** or laheypm@mcmaster.ca

Version – January 16, 2017

Appendix B: PhD Proposal: Manuscript Style Thesis – ethics protocol (version 2)

Pam Lahey
February 27, 2017

My Research Focus

Work ability and participation is one of several identified areas of research within Rehabilitation Science. My program of research fits within this broader umbrella. It is focused specifically on the work integration of people with serious mental illness who are seeking meaningful and valued roles within mainstream society.

Introduction of Research Problem

There is emerging research on the employment and economic trajectories of persons with episodic disabilities, such as mental illness, but to date there is little understanding of the employment trajectories taken by job-seekers who are recipients of provincial disability support programs (Vick and Lightman, 2010). Much of the literature is focused on recipients of general welfare programs. While there is some anecdotal evidence, there is no known Canadian empirical evidence that provides data on who leaves disability support for paid employment in the mainstream labour market; nor is there any current data that tracks the economic well-being of recipients once they exit social assistance for employment. My thesis research will begin to address this gap in the literature, thus building on what is known about the socio-economic fate of welfare leavers with disabilities (Vick and Lightman, 2010). I will explore these gaps further through a research study with three distinct phases: 1) a scoping review on active labour market policies in welfare-to-work programs for people with disabilities; 2) a quantitative analysis of administrative data from Ontario social assistance programs to explore individual and system

level factors associated with exists from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), and 3) a qualitative study examining the experiences of people living with mental illness who have left ODSP for employment.

Research Question(s)

Multi-phase study: each of three components build on the other to ask a broader question: what individual and system level factors contribute to former recipients who have exited the system for employment?

The scoping review question:

- 1) What do we know about active labour market policies in welfare-to-work programs for people with disabilities?

Qualitative study questions:

- 1) What are the experiences of former ODSP recipients who have left ODSP for employment in the mainstream labour market?
- 2) What are the supports and services used or needed by former recipients to secure and retain employment in the mainstream labour market?

Quantitative study questions:

- 1) What are the individual and system level factors associated with exit from social assistance for ODSP recipients with mental illness?
- 2) How many recipients with mental illness exit ODSP for employment?

Brief Background of Key Issues

Many people with mental illness can and want to work (Crowther, Bond, Huxley, 2001; Kirsh, Krupa, Cockburn, and Gewurtz, 2010; Menear et al. 2011; Vick, 2014). Despite their capacity for employment, people with mental illness have among the highest rate of unemployment of all disability groups. Moreover, many recipients of social assistance often cycle between low wage precarious employment and social assistance (Kirsh, 2000; Smith Fowler, 2011; Vick and Lightman, 2010; Dewa, 2016).

Historically, the provision of public income benefits has been underpinned by the principles and values of the governing state (Trattner, 2007). In the 1970s, we witnessed a passive system of supports that were guided by principles of universality and social protection. However, by the 1990s a market-based welfare scheme had taken root in many jurisdictions, including Canada. A benevolent system of support to the needy was replaced by retreating government assistance and a new emphasis on personal responsibility (Lundberg et al, 2008; Peck & Theodore, 2001). This roll back phase of neoliberalism provided income benefits in exchange for mandatory work participation (often referred to as workfare) (Peck, Theodore & Brenner 2010). In a subsequent roll out phase, disabled citizens seen as more deserving of income benefits were provided income that did not have any work participation requirements attached (Ferguson 2009; Parker-Harrison; Owens & Gould 2012). In Ontario, Canada, these benefits are provided within the Ontario Disability Support Program. While the tenets of neoliberalism were softened with this new program as they were made voluntary rather than required, if disabled recipients wanted to work, the nature of the supports and services necessitate that they be job ready and strive toward greater independence (Chouinard 2005; Gewurtz, 2011). The steady increase in disability caseloads since the program's inception has necessitated a discourse centred around helping

ODSP recipients gain independence and self-sufficiency, while providing them with the supports the need to realize this goal (Ontario, 2012; Stapleton, 2004). Recipients with mental illness are of interest because they represent the fastest growing segment of the ODSP caseload. In Ontario, mental illnesses represent approximately 52% of the primary conditions for applicants granted ODSP benefits (Ontario, 2012; Stapleton, 2014). Despite this renewed emphasis on integrating people with disabilities into the mainstream labour market, we have little understanding about the extent to which recipients are exiting the system for employment, what happens to recipients who have left income support programs for employment, or what system level factors facilitated that exit (Frenette & Picot, 2003).

There is a small body of literature that highlights a small proportion of social assistance recipients do report sufficient earnings to exit the system for work (Fletcher, Winter, & Shih, 2005; Cook 2006). In Ontario, there is a small body of literature that speaks to the experience of transitioning off social assistance (Lightman, 2008; Lightman, 2010). These studies look at social assistance recipients deemed “employable” but do not address the fate of job seekers with disabilities who leave the disability income benefit system. There seems to be a dearth of evidence tracking welfare recipients after they leave welfare. Recipients do exit social assistance for many reasons other than employment; however, their fates are not known unless they return to the system. As Frenette and Picot (2003) affirm, “when a spell ends, no follow-up information is collected unless there is re-entry into the system (p. 7)”.

Today, there is a growing acknowledgement among key stakeholders that policy and program decision makers lack the information they need related to employment outcomes and labour

market attachment among people with disabilities (Smith-Fowler, 2011). What are the individual and system level predictors that allow those who exit disability benefits to sustain employment and achieve upward mobility in the labour market after their exit? What can we learn from these individuals to make changes to the work disability benefit system to prevent ongoing cycles between low-wage work and disability benefits? This research aims to provide this missing data which can then be used to inform policy that may be effective in increasing self-sufficiency among our most marginalized workers.

Paper #1 From Welfare to Work: A Scoping Review

Objectives:

To conduct a scoping review examining what is known about how active labour market policies function within welfare to work programs for people with disabilities. This research will act as the foundational piece upon which the other two papers build. The purpose of this review is to present the existing body of literature on this issue and identify the gaps in the evidence base, for the purpose of summarizing these findings and disseminating them to policy makers and other key stakeholders (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Methodology:

A scoping review is a preliminary assessment of the size and scope of published, unpublished research and grey literature related to a specific field which can help inform policy and practice in the field of question (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Abrami et al, 2010; Levac, 2010). This work will be guided by Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) six step methodological framework (see Appendix A).

My search strategy will consist of a scholarly literature review and a review of grey literature. To commence, I will review peer reviewed journals in databases contained within three broad areas: **health** (PubMed, CINAHL, PsycINFO); **business/social science** (Sociology Abstracts, Econolit, PAIS International); and **general** (Web of science, Canadian Public Policy Collection). This search will be complemented by two additional searches to capture articles not included in these databases: a) hand-searching of four key journals: Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation; Journal of Policy Practice; Administration and Policy in Mental Health; and Work: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation; b) the reference list for articles selected from the database search as a check against any relevant literature that was not picked up by the electronic search. Many journals for the current year are not available in the electronic collection. For this reason, I will also check Research Gate for current issues of peer reviewed journals, which seems to be more up to date with respect to published papers.

I will also conduct a search of grey literature within Canada pertaining to government commissioned documents on the transition from welfare to work for disabled job seekers (Appendix D). Grey literature is important to this scoping review because much of what is known about active labour market policies is discovered through research that is commissioned by governments. Evidence indicates that omitting grey literature from the exercise threatens the integrity of the review (Abrami et al, 2010).

The search terms used for both phases of the data collection will be as follows: welfare leavers [*and*] Social Assistance [*or*] Social Security Disability Insurance [*or*] Invalidation Benefits [*or*]

Incapacity benefits [or] disability benefits [or] income benefits [or] disability insurance, [and] employment [or] jobs [and] exits [or] transitions [and] “labour market policies”

The inclusion criteria for this scoping review will consist of articles that are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods in nature; include English language articles only (Relevant French language articles will be listed in an Appendix); and are published between 1990 and 2016. Given the narrowness of the topic of interest, all jurisdictions are in scope. Only those articles that explore competitive employment will be considered for inclusion. This inclusion criteria may expand depending on the volume of papers that are returned in the search.

Analysis:

I am using Endnotes and Google documents for managing records. I will also use a charting system for synthesizing and interpreting qualitative data by sifting, charting and sorting material according to the following eight elements: title of paper, author(s), year of publication, purpose of the study, location of study, methodology, study population, key findings related to employment transitions, (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005; Levac, Colquhoun, & O’Brien, 2010).

Paper #2 The Road from Welfare to Work for Recipients with Mental Illness: Who are They?

Objectives:

To report findings from a quantitative study examining the individual and system level factors that are associated with earnings-related exits of recipients with mental illness from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) income support system. The study will draw on descriptive statistical procedures to provide an overview of income support recipients with mental illness

who gain sufficient earnings to transition off social assistance. This data will “provide the ministry with relevant research for evidence-based policy decisions” (Statistics Canada, 2014.)

There is a significant gap in Canadian data about who exits provincial disability support programs. The findings from this research will expand the current body of literature by providing quantitative data in Canada’s most populous province. Updated empirical evidence on social assistance data can be used to improve programing and supports for people with mental illness seeking employment, as well as identifying the ongoing supports they need to sustain employment and reduce multiple social assistance spells.

Methodology:

Microdata from Ontario social assistance files for a 10-year period from 2003 to 2013 housed at the Statistics Canada Regional Data Centres (RDCs) will be used for analysis. This dataset was made available as part of a 2-year pilot project between Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services and Statistics Canada Research Data Centre (Statistics Canada, 2015). A sample set has been chosen for analysis. Variables were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: Single applicants to the ODSP program who are between 25 and 55 years of age, for each year of the dataset.¹ The minimum age requirement was selected because it is standard age inclusion criteria for Canadians with disabilities in Statistics Canada data; 55 was chosen because labour participation after this age is greatly reduced (Turcotte 2014; Whiting 2005). Applicants will be selected for analysis if they have exited the system during the 10-year period covered by the dataset. Depending on results, recipients with the same characteristics who are

¹ Single applicants are defined as individuals who are not married, living common-law or have dependent children

close to the break-even point because they reached the earnings threshold will be added to the analysis.² There were 13 variables selected for analysis (Appendix B). These variables will be used for computing descriptive and predictive modelling to answer a number of data inquiries.

Test/Procedures:

Based on existing evidence, the following hypotheses were made: 1) the number of ODSP single applicant recipients with a mental illness leaving employment, or ready to transition from ODSP, will be less than 1% of the sample set; 2) Individuals with mental health disabilities are less likely to exit ODSP than individuals with physical health disabilities; 3) Individuals living in large urban centres are more likely to exit ODSP than individuals living in small communities; 4) The longer the time spent on ODSP benefits the less likely one is to exit to employment; 5) Individuals with higher levels of education coupled with employment support training will exit at a higher rate than others; 6) those with multiple spells on social assistance are less likely to exit than other recipients.

Analysis:

Descriptive statistics will be used to compute a frequency table showing the number of recipients who exit the system each year and provide a total over the 10 year period. The frequency and extent of participation in employment and skill development by disability type, as well as other key characteristics such as gender, age bracket, region of residence, and educational attainment will be used in computations to compare exit rates. The number of exits per individual will be cross tabulated with other key variables such as the reported earnings from employment, education level, accommodation type, NOC and regional codes on member files to some

² Breakeven means the amount of outside earnings required to reduce ODSP entitlement to \$0.00

between group comparisons using T-tests. In addition, we will conduct multivariate regression modelling to determine the association among other characteristics associated with exit from social assistance. A table of the variables used in this study are listed in Appendix B. We will use SAS statistical software 9.4 to undertake all quantitative analysis in this study.

Paper #3: The Road from Welfare to Work: The Experiences of Those on the Road

Objective:

To report findings from a qualitative study exploring how recipients negotiate their exit from ODSP for employment. This exploration of the transition process will be examined by interviewing former recipients of ODSP who were successful in leaving ODSP for sustained employment in the mainstream labour market and from service providers who provided the services that facilitated employment success for welfare leavers.

Methodology:

I will use a grounded theory approach from a social constructive lens to conduct 8 – 12 semi-structured interviews. 5 to 8 interviews will be conducted with former recipients and 3 – 5 interviews will be conducted with employment service providers.

Subjects/Recruitment Plan:

I will recruit two groups of study participants: employment service providers and former ODSP recipients who self identifies as having a mental illness and have exited ODSP for employment. The former recipient participants are either currently employed or unemployed. This diversity will allow me to capture the precariousness of employment, as well reflect the patterns of employment that are observed with episodic disabilities. In addition, interviewing both participant groups (those who have exited ODSP for employment and those that have exited but may have cycled back between disability benefits and employment) will allow me to assess how ODSP policies (eg. rapid reinstatement and transitional medical benefits) have functioned as strategies to assist with welfare to work transitions. Three sampling strategies will be used to meet my recruitment numbers. I will begin participant recruitment using expert sampling, which

is a method employed when there is little empirical evidence available to guide the selection process (Creswell, 2013). I will use my existing network of community advocacy and professional contacts to facilitate contact with study participants. A request will be sent with study details via the ODSP Action Coalition listserv, the News to Go monthly bulletin published by The Ontario Peer Development Initiative, and a Facebook page for ODSP recipients. In addition, service providers will be contacted to request a study poster be displayed in their waiting rooms. Those interested in participating will be able to contact me for more details.

If these methods do not result in sufficient study numbers, I will broaden my inclusion criteria to include recipients whose earnings are reaching the earnings threshold limit within the ODSP program. The same recruitment strategy as defined above will be used. I will call the service providers I have worked with in the past to ask them to assist me in my recruitment efforts. This network of providers spans the various regions across Ontario to provide me with regional diversity. To build on the expert sampling strategy, a snowball sampling approach will be used to identify former recipients of ODSP who may potentially qualify to participate in this study. I will reach this participant group by reaching out to my existing network of policy and advocacy professionals, asking them to circulate a flyer about the study to organizations or individuals who fit the broader category of participants.

Once former recipients have been identified, I will implement criterion sampling, a form of purposeful sampling that identifies study participants who “have experience of the phenomena being studied” (Creswell, 2013, p. 155) to ensure they meet the following criteria: ODSP recipients who have exited welfare between 1 to 5 years ago; still identify as having a mental

illness. I will send identified study participants a consent form via email at the email address they indicate. I will request that they send back this consent via email to laheypm@mcmaster.ca. This consent will be received before interviews take place.

Data collection will be conducted using semi-structured interviews, followed by a demographic questionnaire (Appendix C). This approach, as Clarke (2003) notes, allows us to see and feel the “denseness of situations in social life” (p. 556). Interview guides have been developed (Appendix D) which provide structure but allow for flexibility to capture the unique experience of each participant.

Analysis:

I will use Dedoose, a cloud-based qualitative software program, to store and analyze the data. I will use a constant comparative approach by gathering data in the field, completing some initial coding, and returning to the field to gather new data that shapes the analysis (Charmaz, 1990). Later coding will involve grouping related codes into thematic categories, and the categories (with the aid of memo writing and field notes) will be used to draw relationships between the categories until the point of saturation occurs and new data does not allow for fresh insights (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2002). These categories will be used to explain the experiences of the key informant groups and complement the quantitative data collected in phase one to provide a comprehensive picture of exits from ODSP among recipients with mental illness.

Thesis Research Timeline

Component	Ethics Granted	Data Collection Start	Data Complete	Complete Analysis	Complete Draft to Committee	Revision Returned by	Committee Revisions Complete
Chapter 1 - Introduction	None required	January 2017	March 2017	September 2017	December 2017	February 2018	June 2018
Paper 1	None required	January 2017	May 2017	February 2018	April 2018	May 2018	June 2018
Paper 2	None required	December 2016	December 2017	February 2018	April 2018	May 2018	June 2018
Paper 3	January 2017	February 2017	January 2018	February 2018	April 2018	May 2018	June 2018
Final Chapter	None required	February 2018	February 2018	February 2018	April 2018	May 2018	June 2018

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Arksey and O'Malley's Scoping Review Methodology Framework

1. Identify the research questions: what domain needs to be explored?
2. Find the relevant studies, through the usual means: electronic databases, reference lists
3. (ancestor searching), websites of organizations, conference proceedings, etc.
4. Select the studies that are relevant to the question(s)
5. Chart the data, i.e. the information on and from the relevant studies
6. Collate, summarize and report the results
7. Consultation (optional) Provides opportunities for consumer and stakeholder involvement to suggest additional references and provide insights beyond those in the literature
8. Identifying the Implications of the Findings for Policy, Practice, and Research

Variables for Analysis

	Variable Name	Variable Description
1	Program Code 400	ODSP recipient
2	Member Code	ODSP applicant
3	Gender	Male/Female identifier
4	Marital Status (S0)	Single recipient
5	Grant date	Date application is granted
6	Extract date	Date which applicants starts to receive benefits
7	Termination Code	Refers to six reasons for termination of income benefits due to earned income status
8	Leaving Employment Code	Refers to reasons why recipients left their job
9	National Occupation Code	Provides information on the sector in which employment is secured
10	Education Level	Level of education that recipient holds
11	Employment Supports Training	Data item that identifies whether recipient has received any training through employment supports program
12	Accommodation Type	Type of housing recipients lives in eg. rent, own, board
13	Municipal Code	Identifies the region in which recipient lives

Letter of Consent



LETTER OF INFORMATION / CONSENT – all participants

Study Title: *From Welfare to Work: The Experiences of Those on the Road.*

Local Principal Investigator (Supervisor)

Rebecca Gewurtz, McMaster University, 905-525-9140 ext. 22189, gewurtz@mcmaster.ca

Principal Investigator (PhD Candidate):

Pam Lahey, McMaster University, 226 343-8916, laheypm@mcmaster.ca

Funder: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) of Canada

You are being invited to take part in this research and share your insights and experiences related to the transition process from ODSP to employment in the mainstream labour market for people with mental illness.

In order to decide whether or not you want to be part of this research study, you should understand what is involved and the potential risks and benefits. This form gives detailed information about the research study, which will be discussed with you. Once you understand the study, you will be asked to sign this form if you wish to participate. Please take your time to make your decision. Feel free to discuss it with anyone you wish.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research is to examine the individual and system level characteristics that support ODSP recipients to leave social assistance for employment in the mainstream labour market. In order to make policy recommendations to improve the employment support program within ODSP, an understanding of the current system level strategies and individual characteristics that make exiting the system a possibility are needed.

What will happen during the study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

- Speak to the principal investigator (Pam Lahey) by telephone or email to discuss the study and your potential involvement, answer any questions you might have, and set-up an interview time.
- Participate in an interview. During the interview you will be asked questions about your experience related to leaving ODSP for employment.

- The interview will last approximately 1 hour, on one occasion, at a date/time that is convenient to you. The interview will either take place by telephone or in a private room in a program office that is mutually convenient. Travel expenses (bus tokens) will be reimbursed for former recipients.
- The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed (typed) to ensure accuracy. The Principal Investigator will also take detailed notes.
- After the interview, I will ask you to fill out a short questionnaire in order to collect some basic information like your age, gender, length of time on income support or length of time in your current role.
- former recipients will be provided with a \$20 gift card upon completion of the interview in recognition of their time and expertise.

Are there any risks to doing the study?

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. However, you may feel uncomfortable sharing your experiences or worry about how others will react to what you say.

Please be aware that you do not need to answer questions that you do not want to answer or that make you feel uncomfortable. And you can withdraw (stop taking part) at any time. Below, steps to protect your privacy are described.

How many people will be in this study?

The PI will interview approximately 8 to 12 study participants across Ontario. Participants fall into 2 categories 1) former ODSP recipients (5 – 8); 2) employment service providers (3 -5).

Are there any benefits to doing the study?

A greater understanding of the individual characteristics and system level predictors that enable recipients to transition off ODSP. This knowledge will allow us to identify policy strategies to better support recipients who want to work.

Are there any costs to participating in this study?

There will be no costs to you to participate in this study. You will receive a \$20 gift card in appreciation of your contributions to the research.

What information will be kept private?

Steps will be taken to protect your privacy and safeguard the confidentiality of the interviews. Your data will not be shared with anyone beyond the research team, except with your consent or as required by law. All personal information, such as your name and phone number, as well as the identity of your program/organization will be removed from the data and will be replaced with a number. A list linking the number with your name will be kept in a secure place, separate from your file. The information that you provide in the interview will be kept without identifying

information on a password protected computer that will only be accessed by me, the investigator. Once the study is complete, data will be destroyed (electronic information permanently deleted).

If the results of the study are published, your name and the name of your program will not be used, and no information that discloses your identity will be released or published without your specific consent. Audio recordings will only be reviewed by myself (the principal investigator) and my academic supervisor(s) (LPI).

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

Your participation in the study is voluntary. You can decide to stop (withdraw), at any time, even after signing the consent form. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. If you withdraw, you have the option of removing your data from the study, which means your comments will not be used. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still be in the study.

Future contact

The principal investigator (Pam Lahey) may wish to contact you in the future for more information or clarification related to this study. By providing your contact information here, you are providing permission to be contacted in the future as part of this study.

Please provide the best way to contact you (Email or Telephone)

Information about the Study Results

If you would like a brief summary of the results, please send a message to the principal investigator (Pam Lahey). Contact information is listed below.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or need more information about the study, please contact, Pam Lahey, investigator, at laheypm@mcmaster.ca or **226 343-8916**.

This study has been reviewed by the Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board (HIREB). The HIREB is responsible for ensuring that participants are informed of the risks associated with the research, and that participants are free to decide if participation is right for them. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Office of the Chair, HIREB at 905.521.2100 x 42013.

CONSENT

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Pam Lahey, PhD Candidate.

Please review and check the following if you agree:

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 signed copy of this form.

I agree to participate in the study.

I agree that the interview can be audio recorded.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant (Printed)	Signature	Date

Consent form explained in person by: Pam Lahey

_____	_____	_____
Name and Role (Printed)	Signature	Date

Demographic Form – Recipients

Interview code:

Interview date:

Age:

Gender:

Experience with mental illness:

Length of time on ODSP:

Length of time off ODSP:

Key points in employment journey:

Education:

Current work goals:

Current employment status:

Current sources of income:

Current monthly or yearly earning

Demographic Form – Service Providers

Interview code:

Interview date:

Current position:

Length of time in current position:

How many ODSP recipients have you seen exit the system for employment?

Description of current position (related to income support and employment):

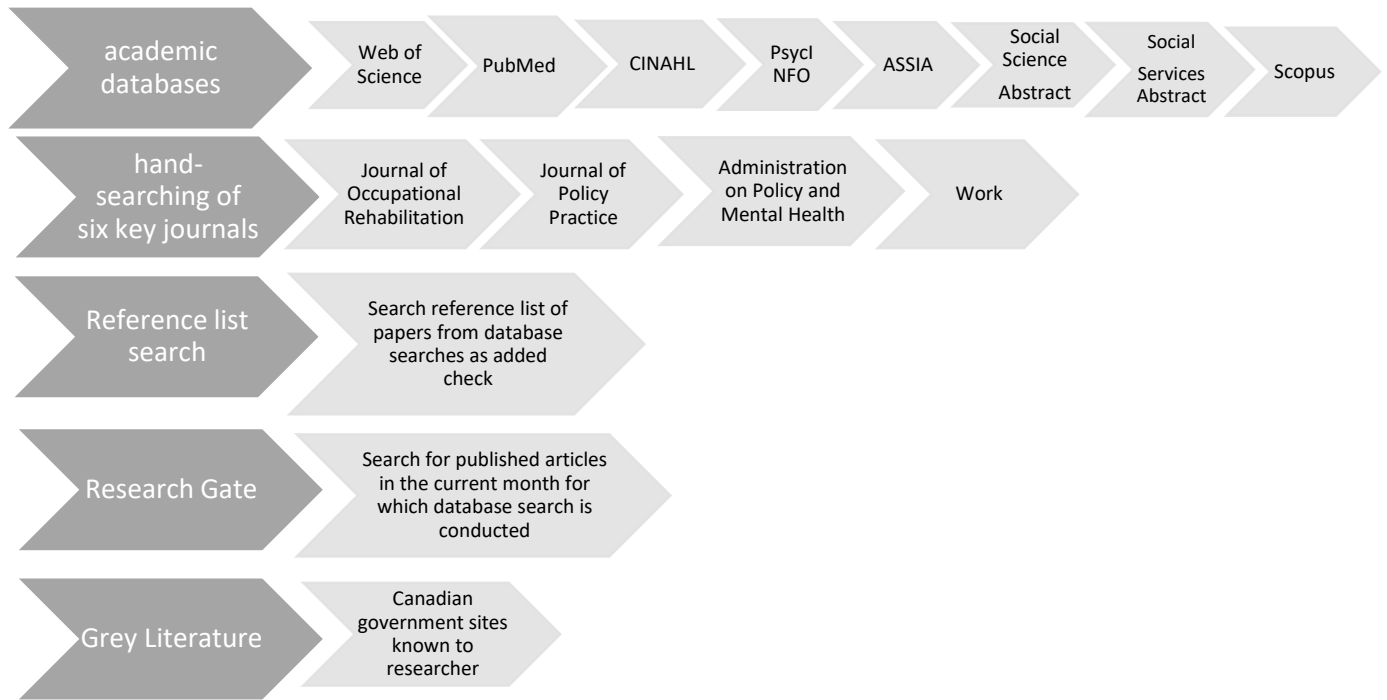
Interview Guide (Former Recipients)

- 1) Please tell me about your experience leaving ODSP for employment. [probe – What do you believe are the factors that helped you exit?]
- 2) What was your employment experience while you were on ODSP?
 - a. What supports were you provided while on ODSP to help you secure and maintain employment?
 - b. What was your experience earning income from employment while receiving benefits?
 - c. Did you receive any training to help you find and keep a job?
- 3) Did any specific program feature facilitate your employment success?
 - a. How was this initiated?
 - b. What supports were you provided with?
 - c. What was the experience like for you? (challenges and facilitators)
- 4) Can you please describe any ongoing benefits that you receive from ODSP or any other program (e.g. CPP-D, EI, employer-sponsored benefit) (NB – this can be income/health/dental)?
- 5) Can you describe any employment, career supports, or professional development that you have received since leaving ODSP?
- 6) What has been your employment experience since exiting ODSP?
- 7) What has your financial situation been since leaving ODSP? [prompt better off, the same, or worse]
- 8) What are your future goals for employment?
- 9) How do you think ODSP could better assist recipients/former recipients to pursue employment?
- 10) I have reached the end of my questions. Is there anything else you would like to add?
- 11) May I contact you again if I have additional questions?

Interview Guide (Employment Service Providers)

- 1) Can you describe the nature of your work with ODSP recipients/former recipients? [probe - how long do you work with recipients and in what capacity?]
- 2) Tell me how ODSP recipients transition off the system?
- 3) From your experience, what are the key supports/services/resources that help recipients with mental illness secure and retain employment?
- 4) Can you describe the key factors that seem to help recipients succeed in gaining long-term employment? [probe – individual and system characteristics]
- 5) What are the challenges that ODSP recipients face in trying to exit the system for employment?
- 6) What kinds of jobs do recipients typically secure? How does this differ between those who transition off ODSP and those who supplement ODSP with their earnings?

Scoping Review Data Collection Schematic



Appendix C: Welfare to Work: participant demographics

Service Users							
Pseudonym	Gender	Highest Education achieved	Status	Nature of current Employment	Age	Time on Assistance	Time off assistance (for employment)
R1: Rafael	Male	Post-secondary	Former recipient	Addictions Counsellor	47	5 years	3 years
R2: Fuma	Male	Post-secondary	Former recipient	Construction worker	56	15 years	5 years
R3: Xena	Female	Post-secondary	Former recipient	Not disclosed at request of participant	45	2 years	5 years
R4: Kerta	Female	No Highschool	Recipient (cycled back)	Not working currently	37	5 years (1 st); back on for 6 years now	6.5 years
R5: Cedric	Male	Post-secondary	Former recipient	Cook	53	10 years	5 years
R6: Kara	Female	Only gr. 8	Recipient (cycled back)	Self-employed (cleaning company)	54	3 years (1 st); back on for 3 years now	1.5 years
Service Providers							
SP1: ODSP_JD	Female		Job Developer (3.5 yrs)				
SP2:	Female		Holistic lifeskills – employment is but one component 5 years				
SP3: Federally funded emp. program			2: employment coordinator 5 years				
Ministry Staff							

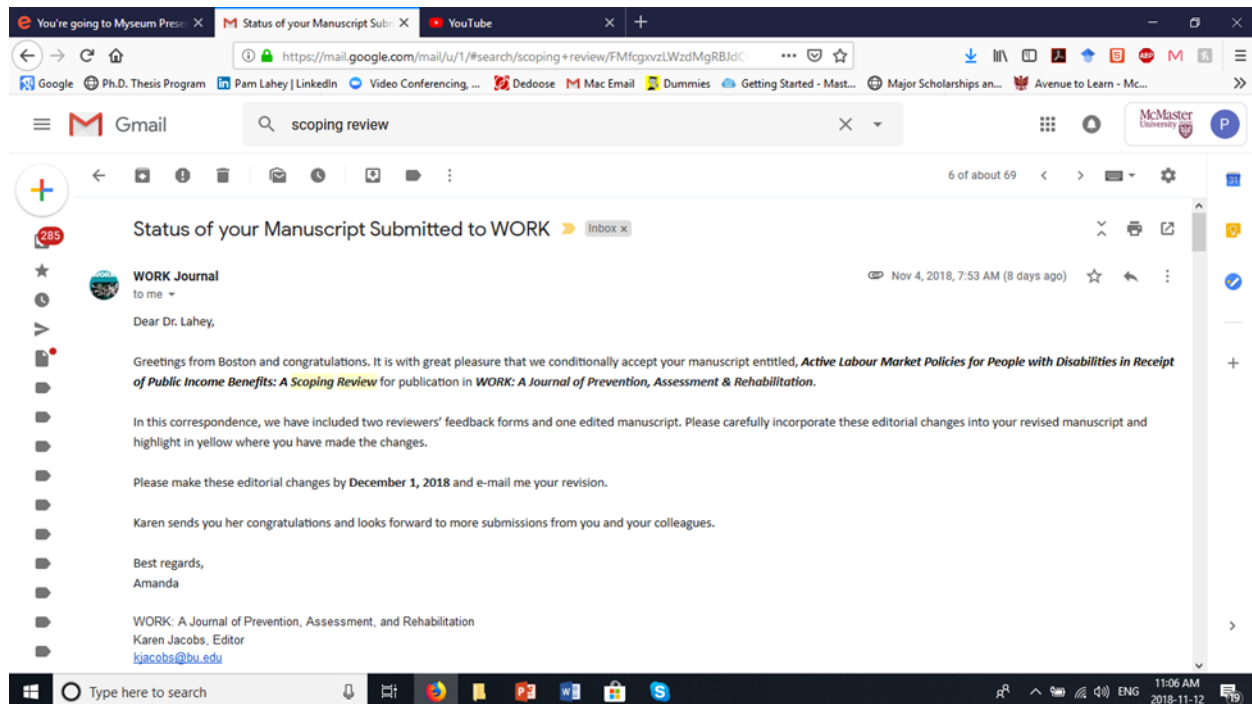
M1:
Ministry

Female

2: Regional
director and case
manager

Appendix D: Journal Acceptance Emails

Study One: *Active Labour Market Policies for People with Disabilities in Receipt of Public Income Benefits: A Scoping Review*



Study Two: *The Road from Welfare to Work for Recipients with Mental Illness: Who are They?*

October 13, 2018

“Submission Acknowledgement from The Canadian Review of Social Policy

Thank you for submitting the manuscript, "From Welfare to Work: A quantitative study of work exits for ODSP recipients who have mental illness." to Canadian Review of Social Policy / Revue canadienne de politique sociale. With the online journal management system that we are using, you will be able to track its progress through the editorial process by logging in to the journal web site”:

Manuscript URL:

<https://crsp.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/crsp/author/submission/40335> –

Study Three: *Negotiating Transitions From Welfare to Work Among Recipients Living with Mental Illness*

Journal of Disability Policy Studies

**Journal of Disability
Policy Studies**

**Negotiating Transitions From Welfare to Work Among
Recipients Living With Mental Illness**

Journal:	<i>Journal of Disability Policy Studies</i>
Manuscript ID	Draft
Manuscript Type:	Research Article
Keywords:	employment supports, system design, people with mental illness, Welfare programs

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