

Thesis – S. Mitrea; McMaster University – Political Science

LABOUR MARKET POLICY AND THE COGNITIVE FACE OF POLITICAL
ECONOMY

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CANADIAN ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET POLICY AND THE COGNITIVE FACE
OF POLITICAL ECONOMY

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LAY ABSTRACT: This dissertation explores how public policy can shape how individuals automatically think and act, thereby informing their ‘common sense’ and rational thoughts. I will examine what Canadian active labour market policy (ALMP) communicates to policy recipients in terms of how they should conceive of themselves as workers, their expectations of the market, and of the state. I combine policy analysis with mechanisms derived from cognitive psychology to examine what ‘everyday’ public policy components – such as websites, forms, and job search systems - communicate, and crucially, whether they do so in a way which is conducive to ‘automatic thought’ (e.g. ‘common sense’). This approach fills in gaps political psychology, public policy, and the political economy of regimes.

ABSTRACT: A frequent question in academic and non-academic research is how particular systems are formed, maintained, and potentially, changed. This dissertation explores the question above through the intersection between political economy and public policy, specifically on accumulation: how economic and social relations come to be, endure, adapt, or fail. This is reflected in a slew of theories, paradigms, and research programmes, yet most utilize a macro or meso lens and rarely look at ‘micro’ level phenomena and processes – those involving everyday interactions and people. At this level, a significant, yet absent, component is the way individuals may come to automatically think and act through receiving information conveyed in ways that promote internalization or automaticity. The ongoing question, then, is what regimes communicate and how they do so.

I will examine the role of active labour market policy (ALMP) in sustaining contemporary accumulation trajectories in Canada by analyzing what it communicates to policy recipients in terms of how they should conceive of themselves as workers, their expectations of the market, and of the state. However, what public policy communicates does not, in and of itself, explain how people come to *internalize* particular ways of thinking and acting. As such, I combine policy analysis with cognitive psychology to examine what ‘everyday’ public policy components – such as websites, forms, and job search systems - communicate, and crucially, whether they do so in a way which is conducive to ‘automatic thought’ (e.g. ‘common sense’).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

ALMP: Active Labour Market Policy. The programs, policies, and initiatives in labour market policy that focus on improving the quality of labour supply, creating demand, and matching supply to demand.

LME: Liberal Market Economy. Those economies characterized by arms-length, competitive relations between state and firms, competition, and formal contracting. LMEs usually have more flexible labour markets marked by greater levels of non-standard employment.

CME: Coordinated Market Economy. Those economies which are defined by relatively more collaborative relations between firms and the state, some coordination between economic actors, and actor reputation. These economies tend to have more protected labour markets.

FYFT: Full-year, full-time employment, as opposed to part year or part time.

SER: Standard Employment Relationship. An employment category which is full year and full time, permanent, and is more likely to be higher paying, unionized, and to offer benefits.

NSER: Non-Standard Employment Relationship. This term describes employment which falls outside the SER, including low-wage work, part year, part time, contract work, and own-account self employment.

SIS: Social Investment State. A theory of social policy in which the state shifts resources from ‘protecting’ citizens from market risks, such as unemployment, to ‘investing’ in them so that they may navigate those risks themselves.

Chapter 1: Introduction

A perennial question in academic and non-academic research is determining the means by which cohesion in a system is formed, maintained, and undermined. In political economy and public policy, this question is often expressed in discussions of ‘regimes’ – typologies or systems which organize ideas, activities, and relationships between actors and structures (Harvey 1990, 121; Levitt 2013; Hall 1993). This dissertation explores the question above through the intersection between these two fields, specifically on accumulation: how economic and social relations come to be, endure, adapt, or fail. This is reflected in a slew of theories, paradigms, and research programmes¹, yet most utilize a macro or meso lens and often elide a close examination of public policy. As such, relatively little attention is paid to ‘micro’ level phenomena and processes – those involving everyday interactions and people – and even less on cognition, or put differently, the way people think and act.

Accumulation regimes explore the stabilization of particular interactions between consumption, production, and accumulation conditions. Specifically, how the behaviour of multiple actors – business, workers, state employees and institutions, financiers, and all other manner of politico-economic agents – comes to be aligned (‘stabilized’) in a time and place (Harvey 1990, 141; Vidal 2013; Levitt 2013). Economic trajectories, institutions, processes, actors, and relationships interact consistently with the state through legislation, regulation, and public policy (McBride & Mitrea 2017a; Vidal 2013; Pierre 2015). This addresses macro and meso components of an accumulation regime, yet a component is missing: the way that individuals think and act as workers is central to developing and maintaining economic and public policy trajectories (Berry 2016; Harvey 1990; Dunk 2002). The ongoing question, then, is not just how such regimes maintain sufficient cohesion to operate, but how is cognition mobilized and cultivated to these ends?

I will examine the role of active labour market policy (ALMP) in sustaining contemporary accumulation trajectories in Canada by analyzing what ALMP communicates to policy recipients in terms of how they should conceive of themselves as workers, their expectations of the market, and of the state. However, what public policy communicates does not, in and of itself, explain how people come to *internalize* particular ways of thinking and acting. As such, I approach this study using the insights of cognitive and socio-cultural psychology – which are insufficiently studied in political economy and public policy literatures but provide tools for understanding the processes by which

¹ Such as ‘Varieties of Capitalism’, regulation theory and accumulation regimes, social structures of accumulation, cultural political economy, hegemony, world systems theory, multiple institutionalist approaches, new constitutionalism, and theories of the state (such as the ‘competition state’ or the ‘lean state’) (Hall & Soskice 2001; Harvey 1990; Mitrea 2016; Paul 2012; McBride & Mitrea 2017a; Pierre 2015).

people come to think and act in particular ways. Specifically, I combine policy analysis with cognitive psychology to examine what ‘everyday’ public policy components (which policy recipients interact with directly) communicate, and crucially, whether they do so in a way which is conducive to ‘automatic thought’ (e.g. ‘common sense’) (Yanow 2003; North & Fiske 2012; Holt & Rainey 2002; Haddow & Klassen 2006). I do not assume to uncover what policy recipients would learn from ALMP or the ‘intentionality’ of policy designers or anyone involved in the delivery of said programs. The wording, discourses, rules, forms, and procedures employed in these programs communicate ideas and practices, whether intentional or not.

ALMP is a subset of labour market policy and provides individuals with the resources to (re)enter the labour market, and so operates at the intersection of work and social support, thereby significantly determining a person’s life outcomes (Lightman 2006; Morden 2016; Haddow & Klassen 2006; Wood & Hayes 2016). Because of its role, ALMP is the primary policy area which the unemployed or transitioning in the labour market *directly interact* with in the form of websites, resources, forms, job search systems, training programs, and more (Morden 2016; Wood & Hayes 2016). If, through these programs, individuals come to understand themselves as workers who should be flexible, who should not expect employment security, who should expect to be geographically mobile and work in non-standard employment,² than those individuals internalize a ‘common sense’ which is beneficial to firms which seek a flexible and docile workforce and to governments which have been devolving greater responsibility for survival to individuals. This chapter outlines my research problem, its position in the literature, contributions, the research question, hypotheses, the overarching framework of the dissertation, and chapter summaries.

State of the Literatures

My work focuses on how accumulation regimes are maintained, and responds to three major gaps in three intersecting literatures: Marxist and Neo-Marxist Political Economy, Post-Structuralist Criticism, and Contemporary Policy Studies on active labour market policy in Canada. Overall, none of the three literatures provide a thorough account of *how* individuals come to think and act in particular ways (‘cognition’), none focus on the truly everyday direct role of public policy in shaping cognition, and with policy studies specifically, when psychology is considered, it is overwhelmingly focused on the behavioural school.

Marxist political economy is discussed above in the introduction, and while there are many theories and schools within this literature, I focus on the accumulation regime theory emerging from the regulation school (Harvey 1990, 141; Berry 2016). This approach is particularly useful because it (ostensibly) provides a networked *and* holistic

² Such as part-time, part-year, or contract work, for example.

understanding of the components and processes which make up a particular configuration of socio-economic and political trajectories.³ In the regulation school approach, an accumulation regime is maintained by a ‘mode of regulation’, which covers the norms, habits, laws, regulating networks, and other institutions across public and private spheres (Berry 2016; Bieling et al 2016). These institutions ensure an ‘appropriate consistency of individuals’ behaviours with a ‘scheme of production’, thereby stabilizing broader consumption and accumulation relations. Within the ‘mode of regulation’ are typically two categories: 1) managing prices and exchange (addressing the decentralized signals coordinating producers and consumers, the role of background institutions such as private property and contracts, and state interventions); 2) managing labour and citizens. While the first category is extensively discussed in the literature (Harvey 1990, 142; Bieling et al 2016), the second is not to the same degree. When it is, however, the observations are frequently incisive, but the processes by which people come to think and act in particular ways which benefit accumulation regimes is not explored. This category discusses the relative power between capital and labour to ensure profit generation, and the habituation, socialization, and dominant norms – all articulated through institutions such as the media, religion, education, and the state - which sustain these relations. Yet, a search for the literature⁴ on ‘accumulation regime(s)’ and ‘psychology’ or ‘cognition’ revealed *no relevant sources*. There is a strong and insightful Marxist literature on subjectivity (perhaps most famously, work in the Gramscian tradition on common sense and hegemony and in the Althusserian tradition on interpellation), but again, it does not elaborate on exactly how ideas rooted in institutions or interests come to be reflected in people’s everyday thoughts and actions – the *how* of common sense, interpellation, and other concepts is missing from this literature (Wright & Roberts 2013; Hall & O’Shea 2013). Similarly, this literature tends to focus much more on ‘meso’ and ‘macro’ levels of analysis, mostly on political economy at the level of the state, between states, and institutions at various levels (Harvey 1990; Berry 2016; Bieling et al 2016; Levitt 2013; McBride & Mitrea 2017a).

The post-structuralist literature which directly or indirectly relates to labour market policy is outlined in more detail in Chapter 2 as part of the ‘coding spectrum’ for the dissertation’s methodology. This literature is effective for evaluating the ‘content’ of what may be communicated through public policy to recipients – the potential ‘end results’ of how people think and act or the kind of ‘common sense’ they develop. Scholars in this field have discussed how ideas operate in everyday social relations, through the state, media, and other institutions which reflect particular interests, constraining the scope of what is permissible, normal, and possible (Yanow 2003; Fox & Alldred 2014; Willmott 2005). However, as with the Marxist Political Economy

³ Unlike, for instance, the ‘Varieties of Capitalism’ literature, which is very useful for examining the interface between different economic institutions, but is more limited in the scope of factors it considers (Hall & Soskice 2001).

⁴ In the Scholarportal and JSTOR databases as of March, 2018.

literature, they pay insufficient attention to *how* cognition develops and people come to internalize particular ways of thinking and acting. Discussions on subjectivity influenced by public policy have shown how particular ideas are reflected in public policy, political discourse, and even from subjects through concepts such as governmentality, subjectification, self-regulation, and more (Newman 2013; Hall & O’Shea 2013; Harrison 2013; Mitrea 2017). For instance, post-structuralist criticism of labour market policy has highlighted the pervasiveness, resilience, and implications of ideas, such as those that argue that labour market outcomes result primarily from individual efforts (e.g. ‘hard work’) – and how they reflect power, benefiting some actors and interests over others (Read 2009; Pathak 2014; Clarke 2005; Diprose 2014; Dunk 2002; Hall & O’Shea 2013). However, none of the cases above interrogate the processes ‘in between’ - how do ideas, which are clearly evident in public discourse and policy, come to be internalized?

Finally, the last literature my work responds to is contemporary policy studies, particularly in the area this dissertation focuses on: active labour market policy (ALMP). The predominant studies in the academic literature, whether from economics or political science, as well as from policy think tanks and the government, focus on the *outcomes* of ALMP – what measures are most effective in aiding people into (or back into) the labour market? Are some measures better in the short term (such as job search systems, resume preparation, counselling, etc.) and some in the long term (such as skills training, apprenticeships, co-ops, employment subsidies)? Is there a trade off? What are the labour market outcomes of individuals who go through ALMP? How quickly do they find employment, what are their wages upon (re)entry into the market, what is their average length of employment, and what is the expenditure per intervention and in relation to outcomes (Wood & Hayes 2016; Employment Insurance 2016; Morden 2016; Vosko 2011; McBride 2017)? Other questions in the ‘mainstream’ literature focus on the governance of ALMP in Canada, such as the inter-governmental administration and the cornucopia of programs and shared jurisdictions (Morden 2016; Haddow & Klassen 2006; Wood & Hayes 2016; Employment Insurance 2016). Some mainstream and many critical scholars rightly question whether the Canadian ALMP landscape, which developed during late Fordism in the early to mid-1970s, can account for a present and future of insecure work, flexible demands by employers, and accelerating disruption brought on by new technologies (Cameron 2006; Banting 2006; Vosko 2011; Finnie & Irvine 2011; Morden 2016). They question the state of Canadian public and private sector training – the latter of which is very minimal – the adequacy of employment insurance in eligibility and income replacement, and the effect of consistently decreasing ALMP expenditures. For instance, ALMP expenditures dropped 50 percent from 1996-2014 as a result of federal and provincial austerity⁵, leaving Canadian spending at 0.22 percent of GDP in 2014 (Wood & Hayes 2016, 7; Morden 2016, 6). Other studies focus on the

⁵ The former of which directly influencing the latter, an example of asymmetrical federalism (Cameron 2006; Banting 2006).

connection between unionization, employment standards, and the state of labour markets as necessary considerations when crafting ALMP (Haddow & Klassen 2006; Vosko 2011; McBride 2017). Again, while mainstream and critical policy literatures around ALMP ask crucial questions about its effectiveness and effects on workers, they do not examine *how* ALMP can shape how people think and act. Further, when the literature has looked at what ALMP communicates to individuals it has ignored the ‘front-end’ of these policies⁶ in favour of training and counseling, which are utilized at far lower rates (Herd et al 2009; Lightman et al 2006; Morden 2016).

The Everyday and Public Policy

None of the literatures above have addressed ‘front-end public policy’, in a consistent and comprehensive manner. Government websites and sometimes forms are referenced at times, but usually as a piece of evidence or a passing reflection, not as a central unit of analysis (Berry 2016; McBride & Mitrea 2017b; Clarke 2005; Hall & O’Shea 2013). Particularly in labour market policy, the ‘everyday effects of public policy’ are taken up either indirectly (analyzing how policy decisions affect people’s ability to find work and live) or focus on interactions with service delivery in the forms of case managers or training programs (Herd et al 2009; Lightman et al 2006; Morden 2016). While these sites are absolutely important, policy recipients – often the unemployed and transitioning in the labour market – interact much more frequently with ‘front-end’ elements, making them an ideal unit of analysis for the way public policy can shape automatic cognition (Morden 2016; Herd et al 2009; Employment Insurance 2016).

Psychology in Public Policy: The Behavioural School

The final gap I address is found in contemporary public policy. While a deep engagement with psychological processes is virtually absent from Marxist Political Economy and rarely taken up in a policy context in Post-Structuralist Criticism, it is taken up in contemporary policy studies and practice in the form of behavioural psychology. In public policy, ‘policy innovation labs’ (PILs) have emerged to address ‘wicked policy problems’ (e.g. climate change) using experimental studies involving cross-sectoral collaboration. There are over 100 units identifiable around the world, most of which were established after 2011, with 17 Canadian Federal PILs since 2015 (Cones 2015; Christiansen 2014, 59; Kohos 2014). One dominant strain deploys psychological insights from behavioural economics to improve policy design, implementation, and outcomes – evident in the UK with their ‘Behavioural Insights Team’, in the Obama Administration, and in Australia, New Zealand, France, Saudi Arabia, Denmark, and Brazil (Pykett et al 2011; Cones 2015). In Canada, behavioural economics has been applied to encourage

⁶ i.e. websites, forms, procedures, and documents.

energy conservation for the Ontario Energy Board (BEWORKS 2014), used by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA 2015), and used in birth registration, old age security, and smoking cessation in Ottawa (Kohos 2014). These applications converge around the general goals of modifying behaviour on a population level toward particular (‘rational’) ends while reducing the cost and coercive elements of intervention (Pykett et al 2011; Cones 2015).

While behavioural economics and psychology have had significant influence in policy debates for decades (Fischer 2003; Pykett et al 2011; Thaler & Sustein 2008), a renewed interest in the past several years has come from ‘nudging’ – guiding individuals toward particular decisions by altering default choices (‘choice architecture’). Nudging is deployed as a means of reacting to ‘universal and predictable cognitive biases, which are known to affect behaviour’ (Marlow 2015; Thaler & Sustein 2008; Grune-Yanoff & Hertwig 2016; Cones 2015). Nudging assumes decision makers are unable to choose rationality, that choice architecture is inevitable,⁷ and that the incorporation of ‘opt-outs’ satisfy libertarian criteria (Cones 2015). While useful, behaviouralism ignores how policy can proactively shape how people automatically think and act, and also ignores facets beyond behaviour (action), like emotion and memory (North & Fiske 2012; Snow 2006; Bargh et al 2012). Further still, much of the work is not in the academic literature (instead in government and think tank research), not focused on Canada, and not at all on labour market policy (Thaler & Sustein 2008; Pykett et al 2011).

Contributions & Significance

I seek to fill these gaps in study and practice by examining how public policy can shape recipients’ ‘automatic cognition’ (i.e. ‘common sense’) in the everyday, using Canadian ALMP as a case study. In particular, I will analyze the policy side of this puzzle, combining policy analysis with cognitive psychology to examine what ‘front-end policy elements’ – such as websites, forms, applications, and so on - communicate to policy recipients, and crucially, whether they do so in a way conducive to automatic cognition. In doing so, I will conduct a ‘process mapping’ of each of my case studies, examining the consistency and repetition of ALMP programs within (i.e. between job search systems and ‘career discovery’) and across (i.e. between Ontario’s ALMP and Federal Employment Insurance) each other. My case studies are Ontario and British Columbia’s Job Search, Labour Market Information (LMI), and Career and Skill Discovery programs and Federal Employment Insurance (my justification for case selection is in Chapter 2).

In terms of the academic literature, my work aims to fill the gaps above in Marxist Political Economy, Post-Structuralist Criticism, and Contemporary Policy Studies by examining the role of everyday, ‘front-end’ policy elements in shaping how people think and act. In this way, I seek to push the boundaries of the literatures above to examine the

⁷ Thaler and Sunstein argue that choice architecture is inevitable, that no decision making juncture created by individuals can be value-neutral (2008).

role of psychology and policy in the everyday on accumulation regimes. For both research and policy practice, my study will contribute insights into the psychological effects of policy, how policy is designed and implemented in the everyday, and how policy ideas can become ‘common sense’ among the public (and even among policy makers themselves). This would add a perspective beyond behavioural economics, which by definition does not address precisely how ideas are understood by individuals, encoded into memory, organized, ‘activated’ automatically, and used in the everyday. Further, the behavioural perspective focuses solely on reacting to individuals, while a cognitive perspective can illuminate how public policy can proactively shape automatic thought and action.

Incorporating cognition into the study and practice of public policy is significant to governance and democracy because automatic thoughts occur faster than deliberate ones, are resilient to change, have strong emotional associations, and inform deliberate thinking (Holt & Rainey 2002; North & Fiske 2012; Bargh et al 2012; Snow 2006). Policy makers may find the examination of what front-end policy elements communicate and how to be useful in improving the delivery of public policy and the capacities of recipients to engage with them in an informed manner.

This research will also examine whether there is a ‘mismatch’ between what ALMP communicates and what it offers. ALMP spending is at an over 30 year low, with increasing emphasis on ‘short-term’ measures such as job search assistance which lead to poorer long-term labour market outcomes as compared to skills development programs (Employment Insurance 2016; Wood & Hayes 2016). If, with such low spending and a focus on short-term measures, ALMP also facilitates a ‘common sense’ of focusing on skill development and market conformity, then there is a ‘mismatch’ or dissonance between the messaging and what the policies offer. Further still, the current Canadian paradigm of ALMP is poorly equipped and oriented to address rising levels of labour market precarity (i.e. non-standard work, stagnant wages, low control over work), indicating another ‘mismatch’ (Morden 2016; Vosko 2011; McBride 2017). This mismatch between what ALMP offers, communicates, and broader material conditions of policy recipients’ lives may contribute to poorer long-term labour market outcomes, which lead to greater dependence on the state, poor social determinants of health, psychological distress, and reduced social and political participation (Benach et al 2014; Vrankulj 2012; Lewchuk et al 2013).

This project also has relevance for NGOs who work with ALMP recipients (such as community youth employment services), who may be interested in what public policy communicates to recipients so as to empower them to engage reflectively with it. Further, one of the primary insights of this project is to directly connect public policy – even at an everyday level – to political economy, the latter of which examines who gets what, when, how, and where (i.e. the distribution of rights, benefits, and burdens). This work could be translated into more accessible formats to outline the ways that public policy is not always organized around effectiveness, but often around particular ways of thinking which sustain particular relations of production and consumption. For instance, one of the findings of Chapter 4 is that while Employment Insurance (EI) funds skills training programs, the ‘everyday’ elements that the unemployed work with (e.g. EI applications)

consistently encourage immediate labour market re-entry and make no mention of training. Short-term ‘rapid re-attachment’ measures have been shown to result in less stable employment and lower wages compared to training measures (Morden 2016; Woods & Hayes 2016). In this way, there is a disconnect between the goals of a policy, what it offers, and what it communicates (and what ‘common sense’ it constructs) – insights which will be relevant to policy makers, NGO’s working with target populations, and the public. Similarly, advocacy and labour organizations may be interested in what ALMP communicates to workers, but also how it does so – indicating a need for a different kind of critical education to prepare individuals to engage reflexively with content which, under certain conditions, may develop into common sense.

Research Questions & Hypotheses

My overall research question is *how* can public policy shape the way people think and act, and toward *what* specific kinds of thoughts and actions? More specifically, I ask what does Canadian active labour market policy communicate to policy recipients about themselves as workers, the labour market, the role of the state, and how does it do so? These questions are informed by the gaps identified in the literatures above, and recently by Berry (2016) who, in discussing the UK’s post-2008 economic policy, made a somewhat passing point that these policy areas have a latent role in shaping the behaviour and attitude of workers, which is key to maintaining an accumulation regime. I explore my primary question through the following considerations:

1. What understanding of workers, the labour market, and the state is communicated: what do the components in the ALMP case study focus on or elide? What expectations and assumptions are evinced? What ways of thinking and acting are encouraged/discouraged? What content (i.e. the idea that survival is contingent on selling labour in the market) vs. what procedures are communicated (i.e. being accustomed to filling out forms, to surveillance and reporting, to conditionalities, etc.). Are recipients encouraged to reflect on the structures and trajectories which contributed to their unemployment (active) or only encouraged to re-enter the labour force (docility)? Does ALMP empower or disempower, politicize or depoliticize on individual or collective levels?
2. (Mis)Match: which actors, institutions, or trajectories benefit or suffer from what is communicated in the ALMP case studies? For instance, does the ALMP case study address survival or career development during unemployment or does it just encourage re-entry into the market - benefiting a liberal market economy which requires a high supply and low cost workforce, as well as a state which has increasingly limited capacity for social support;
3. How is automatic thought facilitated: what mechanisms for developing automatic thought (discussed in Chapter 2) are deployed in the case studies and in what ways? How is something like operant conditioning (reward-punishment) evident across labour market information or surveillance and reporting mechanisms?

4. Context: how might what is communicated speak to broader socio-cultural discourses (and their affective elements, e.g. the shame typically associated with unemployment) and data on material conditions (i.e. rising cost of living, stagnating wages, increasing non-standard employment, etc.)? For instance, what might it mean to push workers back into the market when a higher percentage of new jobs are part year/part time, in a city with exponentially rising cost of living, like Toronto?

I hypothesize that ALMP will articulate a way of thinking and acting to policy recipients in which their experiences and vulnerability in being unemployed or transitioning in the labour market are made secondary or elided. The primary message will be to encourage (or require) them to ‘activate’ - to rapidly re-enter the labour market and focus on their employability. I also expect that these messages will be repeated within ALMP programs and across them, increasing the likelihood of internalization. If my expectations are correct, ALMP’s messages and procedures will benefit capital (in producing docile workers who continuously lower their expectations, improve their abilities, and who are in need of work) and the state (encouraging dependence on the market and not the state) at the expense of workers’ short and long-term labour market outcomes.

Conceptual Framework

Chapter 2 discusses the theories which will be used to situate and analyze the empirics of this project, but this section will outline the broader conceptual framework which drives the dissertation. I will discuss the usefulness of a cognitive lens, the framework in which I will apply it, and a lens to evaluate the ‘stakes’ and potential effects of my analysis (‘mismatch’).

Why Psychology? Cognition, Common Sense, and Power in Public Policy

Psychological insights provide useful tools to fill in gaps in the literatures above which speak to, but do not address, *how* people come to think and act in particular ways. In this project I focus specifically on the processes by which public policy can shape *automatic cognition*, which are the thoughts and actions which occur faster than deliberate ones, are resilient to change, have strong emotional associations, and can inform deliberate thoughts and actions (Holt & Rainey 2002; Burdein et al 2006; Lodge 2005). Repeated studies in cognitive and political psychology have demonstrated that a person’s subconscious or ‘automatic’ cognition weaves together feelings, biases, and information, and informs how they react to topics like race, gender, political leaders, parties, policy propositions, insider/outsider perspectives on political communities (e.g. immigration and refugees), and much more (Burdein et al 2006; Lodge 2005; North & Fiske 2012). This means most people, most of the time, will be “biased reasoners”, evaluating new information based significantly on their existing assumptions and

feelings. Further, ‘automatic’ cognition shapes people’s expectations of their wellbeing, work, and the state.

In this way, automatic cognition articulates a phenomenon similar to Gramscian common sense, described as a spontaneous, naturalized way of experiencing and living in the world - "a way of thinking that is itself rarely thought about" (Knight 1998, 106; Hall & O’Shea 2013, 8). Automatic cognition, however, fills a gap in ‘common sense’: how it is developed. As the various literatures above have argued, managing how citizens and workers think and act and their expectations is key to maintaining an accumulation regime, and “the notion that individuals must become self-sufficient through work” is central to a liberal market economy in which capital benefits most if labour is in high supply, is low cost, and is flexible (51). This ‘management’ is easier if workers willingly accept these conditions as ‘common sense’ - "a way of thinking that is itself rarely thought about" (Knight 1998, 106).

Stuart Hall and Alan O’Shea (2013) say “the battle over common sense is a central part of our political life”: in explicit examples, former British Prime Minister David Cameron in 2011 said “and let this be our message – common sense for the common good” (8) while former Ontario Premier Mike Harris undertook a ‘common sense revolution’ in the mid-1990s (Knight 1998, 106). Yet ‘common sense’ is more ubiquitous than these examples would indicate. For example, the idea – prevalent in Liberal Market Economies – that life outcomes are a result of individual efforts rather than structural processes is highly salient, as are ideas around the ‘efficiency of the market’ or that the unemployed and welfare recipients are ‘lazy’ (McBride & Mitrea 2017b; Diprose 2014; Mitrea 2017; Clarke 2005; Dunk 2002). Common sense fits with the intersecting components of this dissertation: it has long been theorized in critical political economy and policy studies, it is a form of ‘everyday thinking’ which provides a sense of meaning to the world, it speaks to material realities (such as unemployment, and how to face it), is shared ‘to some extent by everyone’ even if it is contested in some ways, is continuously transformed and adaptable, and it constrains/encourages particular ways of thinking and acting (Hall & O’Shea 2013, 9). In all these ways, common sense is essentially a strong and resilient network of ideas (what is termed a ‘schema’ in cognitive psychology – more on this in Chapter 2), automatically informing how people come to interpret, think, feel about, and act on stimuli (Bracher 2012, 92; North & Fiske 2012). As such, understanding *how* automatic thought develops provides an insight into how common sense emerges.

The ‘stakes’ of common sense – if interpreted as ‘automatic thought’ from cognitive psychology – is the possibility of shaping how people think, talk, act, when, and where *at a pre-conscious level* (Willmott 2005; Law 1999). In other words, the ability to cultivate automatic thought is to seed particular relations of power as natural, common sensical, or inevitable. In the case of this dissertation, if ALMP communicates to policy recipients in a consistent way throughout a program, and if what is taught is consistent with the structure of the labour market, public policy, cultural ideas, and material realities

(survival contingent on the market), then the broad conditions for creating automatic thought are met. Further, if *what* is communicated by ALMP to policy recipients articulates an understanding of themselves as workers, of the labour market, and of their relationship with the state which focuses on individual responsibility for life outcomes and the primacy of the market, then ALMP constructs a common sense which benefits capital over workers.

Cognition is also an applicable approach to ALMP for several reasons. Institutions can, wittingly/unwittingly, implicitly/explicitly, shape attitude and behaviour (Collier & Callero 2005; Fiske & Taylor 2013; Verhulst et al 2012). Although the active labour market policy literature has shown this with training programs (e.g. attitudinal adjustment, albeit without a psychology lens), it and related literatures have not focused on the minutia of documents, rules, and procedures (Herd et al 2009; Lightman et al 2006; Little 2001). These components precede, accompany, and follow training programs and other active labour market policy instruments and are utilized far more widely and regularly by policy recipients (Morden 2016), yet they are rarely discussed and more rarely examined (Wood & Hayes 2016; Haddow & Klassen 2006; Herd et al 2009).

Further, although not explored sufficiently in the Marxist Political Economy, Post-Structuralist Criticism, or Contemporary Policy Studies literatures (see above), all outline some concern with how individuals think and act. Indeed, in the Marxist Political Economy literature, there are frequent mentions of the significance of managing workers' (and citizens') behaviour in maintaining an accumulation regime (Berry 2016; Harvey 1990). As Dunk (2002) states, "both corporate and state actors have to work hard to produce a relative passivity among the workers" (879). When Harvey (1990) discusses regulation theory's concept of accumulation regimes, he specifically outlines that the 'disciplining of labour power to the purposes of capital accumulation' involves 'repression, habituation, co-optation, co-operation, and socialization within the workplace and society' over generations (123). Crucially, he states:

The socialization of the worker to conditions of capitalist production entails the social control of physical and mental powers on a very broad basis. Education, training, persuasion, the mobilization of certain social sentiments (the work ethic, company loyalty, national or local pride) and psychological propensities (the search for identity through work, individual initiative, or social solidarity) all play a role and are plainly mixed in with the formation of dominant ideologies cultivated by the mass media, religious and educational institutions, the various arms of the state apparatus, and asserted by simple articulation of their experience on the part of those who do the work. (Harvey 1990, 124)

From the perspective of the state – particularly one which adopts neoliberal principles of devolution, individual responsibility, austerity, and facilitating business activities and interests – it is cheaper to devolve responsibility for circumstances to the individual and

legitimate that, rather than to focus on investing in labour market policy or addressing structural socio-economic problems (Whitworth & Carter 2014; Berry 2016; McBride & Mitrea 2017b).

Whatever ALMP articulates through everyday, front-end elements reveals the accumulation regime embedded in those policies, just as much as explicit political statements or macro policy design. Studying cognition provides a theoretical and empirical opening to study how ideas embedded in public policy have the potential to be internalized to the level of ‘automatic thought’.

I do not make deterministic claims that individuals will internalize exactly what is communicated, I merely hypothesize that there will be a consistency to what is communicated by ALMP which will be complimentary to getting people back into the labour market as the first goal, and that it will do so in a way that facilitates automatic cognition. As Schnellenbach (2012) said, psychological tools have the effect of stabilizing particular norms and constructing to a kind of common sense. Automatic thought can function as a ‘cognitive lock’ which can constrain how people look at policy and political platforms, the structure of the labour market, their ideas of justice and fairness, and more (Hall & O’Shea 2013; Knight 1998). Recall further that automatic processing operates in advance of, in parallel with, and informs controlled processing, or ‘reflective, effortful thought’ (Burdein et al 2006; Lodge 2005; North & Fiske 2012). In this way, examining cognition reveals a particular form of governance, based not just on material conditions, institutions, discourses, or affect, but on influencing the way people automatically, naturally think, act, and feel: common sense constructed through *cognitive governance*.

Cognitive Governance

The literature on accumulation regimes highlights the role of a range of processes, actors, and institutions in stabilizing the interactions between consumption, production, and accumulation (Berry 2016; Harvey 1990). For instance, following a new constitutionalist argument⁸ McBride & Mitrea (2017a) discuss the tension inherent in neoliberal economic policy:

"For decades, neoliberal political parties and associated interests have prevailed on policy issues within normal political processes. However, there are no guarantees that such predominance in ideas and policies will continue indefinitely. The possibility exists of slippage between theory and practice, or of outright reversal. For capitalist and political elites, the ideas and policy choices central to neoliberalism need to be bolstered by institutions that render them automatic and “beyond politics.” This is what has driven and still drives the desire to

⁸ The analysis of supra-national agreements between states which supersede domestic governance in various ways.

constitutionalize core principles. From a neoliberal perspective, constitutionalization is insurance against potential future setbacks in open political debate and contestation" (2).

The quote above is at once emblematic of a strong concern of the Marxist Political Economy literature and represents its overwhelming focus on macro and meso levels of analysis. This study has similar concerns, but from the other side of the spectrum: I focus on the ‘bottom-up support’ for an accumulation regime, whether passive or active, in terms of the way workers think and act about themselves as workers, the labour market, and the state. Just as constitutionalization is meant to insulate particular policy trajectories and accumulation regimes from democratic change, *cognitive governance* is the cultivation and management of individual, automatic cognition to shift expectations and understandings to facilitate particular outcomes. This construction of common sense, then is to the benefit or detriment of particular actors, institutions, and ways of being with consequences for economic, political, and social relations and material wellbeing.

Cognitive governance focuses on the processes by which material, semiotic, and affective⁹ dimensions emerge or are mobilized to shape how people automatically think and act in the world, toward particular ends. The human brain naturally processes external and internal stimuli to determine patterns and appropriate responses (discussed in more detail in Chapter 2), but this processing has stages and requirements to ensure optimal internalization, and can be instrumentalized: intentionally or not, certain ways of thinking and acting *can be encouraged* through the use of cognitive mechanisms which develop automatic thought.¹⁰ Cognitive governance focuses on the ‘how’ of common sense and directly addresses the ‘gap’ between ideas articulated by institutions and actors and how people come to internalize them.

Cognitive governance requires a focus on everyday material-semiotic interactions (‘stimuli’), how particular thoughts and actions can be encouraged or discouraged (‘constraints’), and specific sites and processes by which *automatic* thought and action are cultivated (‘encouraged automaticity’). This approach examines how macro and meso processes, such as economic and policy trajectories at supra-national, national, subnational, and institutional levels, filter down to shape people’s everyday lives. In this study, this approach is applied to Canadian active labour market policy in its broader context.

⁹ Although affect, or pre-conscious feelings of intensity which precede and give ‘force to’ emotions (like the sensation of intensity associated with anxiety), is significant to automatic cognition, it is not explored significantly in this study due to feasibility concerns (North & Fiske 2012; Bargh et al 2012; Snow 2006).

¹⁰ For instance, the idea that a person invites sexual assault or harassment based on their clothing may not be found explicitly in laws or policies in North America, but a lack of consistent negative reinforcement for such ideas (in the form of discourses, changed policies, social relations, etc.) along with positive reinforcement (in the form of judicial decisions, rebuking still salient ideas about ‘modesty’, and other issues, practices, and ideas that encourage patriarchal outlooks) makes that an *automatic* response for some people.

Expanding on each of the three components above, and how they relate to one another, is key to outlining how cognitive governance operates. While the focus of this study is on how automatic thought is cultivated, that cannot be studied in a vacuum. Chapter 2 explores this point in more detail, but it is important to note that how we think and act, whether ‘automatically’ or ‘consciously’ develops in a particular environment of discourses, material conditions, and constraints on thought and action which are mutually constituted (North & Fiske 2012; Bargh et al 2012). In particular, *coherence* or complementarity among these three components creates the best possible conditions for the development of automatic thought (Holt & Rainey 2002; Bargh et al 2012). To understand how ‘common sense’ develops and is maintained requires attention to these everyday conditions and factors.

First, ‘stimuli’ describes everyday salient cultural discourses (e.g. of individual responsibility) and material conditions (e.g. of employment, debt, housing, etc.) which constitute the environment people live in. People engage with stimuli constantly so as to survive and thrive in their environment, and eventually, develop strong, automatic responses to patterns they observe. For instance, in a Liberal Market Economy like Canada, people come to learn that being on welfare is stigmatized and that they are individually responsible for their life outcomes (Clarke 2005; McBride & Mitrea 2017b). Further, as Chapter 3 outlines, public policy and political economy trajectories have led to structural labour market shifts which increase precarity, decrease the role of the state in protecting individuals from the exigencies of the market, and increase labour market flexibility. This culminates in material conditions defined by greater labour market insecurity, stagnant wages, rising debt, and retrenching state supports. These semiotic and material stimuli are everyday and crucial to survival, will be dealt with regularly by people, and so will result in the formation of automatic thought (Bargh et al 2012; Holt & Rainey 2002). *What* becomes automatic, however, is also determined by the other components of cognitive governance. Indeed, various studies have illustrated how workers reduce their expectations of their lived outcomes and the labour market (Vrankulj 2012; Lewchuk et al 2013; Dunk 2002; McBride & Mitrea 2017b), and cognitive governance provides *a possible* avenue through which that process is driven.

Second, ‘constraints’ describes the organization of the environment articulated above to shape how people can engage with stimuli. Just as cognition does not develop in a vacuum, discourses and material conditions do not either. Laws, policies, institutions, and social relations open and foreclose possibilities for action. At a macro level, this refers to the structure and interactions of and between public policy and political economy trajectories to encourage and constrain particular actions. For instance, these trajectories in Canada have resulted in the increasing flexibilization of labour amid wage stagnation, while public policy responses have retrenched while adding conditionalities. At a meso level, constraints refers to the organization of a public policy program, and how the particular stages, processes, documents, and so on constraint or encourage particular actions. Together, macro and meso constraints shape how individuals can engage with their environment. Consider a hypothetical individual who recently lost their

job. Based on the trajectories outlined above, support from the state has stagnated, and so (in the absence of private wealth and support), the individual must return to the labour market. With retrenched state support, this individual has less time and resources to find work appropriate to their skills or even which can support their expenses, and so many ‘reduce their expectations’ and ‘make do with less’ (Vrankulj 2012; Lewchuk et al 2013; Dunk 2002). For this study, before I even examine the cognitive mechanisms intentionally or unintentionally deployed by ALMP, it is evident that the interaction between stimuli and constraints already has tremendous potential to shape automatic thought and action.¹¹ This points to a kind of ‘secular internalization’, wherein an accumulation regime defines the conditions of life regardless of an individual’s politics – the organization of public policy and political economy shape everyday material conditions and discourses *and* constrain the scope for action, all to the benefit or detriment of particular actors, ideas, and institutions.

Third, ‘encouraged automaticity’ is the element of cognitive governance that ‘zooms in’ on specific processes, interactions, and sites in which automatic cognition could be cultivated. Returning to the example of the individual above, should they turn to the state in response to their unemployment (stimuli), and enrol in an ALMP program, they may receive the message that they should return to the labour market. Applying a cognitive lens draws attention to the mechanisms and processes (outlined in Chapter 2) by which a message can be internalized to the level of ‘automatic thought’. For instance, the ALMP recipient may find that the message above, and others, are repeated across the everyday front-end elements of the programs they are working with: they may find that the website for the ALMP component they are using, an application form, and labour market information, are consistently repeating the same message, modeling a particular kind of worker, and using active learning techniques. ‘Encouraged automaticity’ is the part of cognitive governance which draws attention to the natural process by which people develop automatic thoughts and actions to respond to their environment (stimuli and constraints). This also requires a focus on how that process might be affected by a person’s environment (e.g. the intentional or unintentional deployment of cognitive mechanisms which develop automatic thought in ALMP) rather than just responding to it – again, cognition does not develop separately from the environment in which it develops. If the interaction between stimuli and constraints draws attention to how thought and action are shaped through our environment (‘exogenously’), ‘encouraged automaticity’ draws our attention to how those elements are reconciled in our minds (‘endogenously’).

Crucially, the degree to which ideas can become internalized as ‘common sense’ is not contingent on the content of the ideas articulated (e.g. ‘employability’), but whether those ideas are repeated consistently and broadly across a person’s environment and whether they are complementary with their material-semiotic conditions (stimuli) and the organization of that environment (constraints). Even ideas which reinforce the exploitation of individuals can become automatic thought if they *respond* to stimuli and

¹¹ This interaction between stimuli and constraints can be applied to the functional imperative for supporting tax cuts (regardless of politics, as costs of living rise while wages remain stagnant, people need more money) or shopping at low-wage, small business destroying retailers such as Walmart.

constraints. For example, employability discourses may be problematic in reducing the problem of unemployment purely to individual responsibility, but in the absence of other resources, policies, and supports, they are the only response and they do speak to people's material realities. In this way, the stimuli we encounter, how our environment constrains the ways we can respond to stimuli, and how our mind responds to both highlights the *mutual constitution* between cognition and the material-semiotic world we live in.

Applying a cognitive governance lens to labour market trajectories and policy involves utilizing salient theories across the cognitive psychology landscape focused on the aspects of policy which recipients interact with directly – the front-end elements such as documents, applications, websites, and more. These everyday policy elements, in the context of broad trajectories in material conditions (stimuli), economic processes, and public policies (constraints) have the potential to shape automatic thought (encouraged automaticity) – common sense – based on what they communicate and how.

(Mis)Match

Finally, (mis)match is the aspect of this analysis which draws attention to the *distribution of benefit and detriment* to particular actors as a result of the elements of cognitive governance outlined above. If Canadian ALMP is organized in such a way as to facilitate automatic thought, will its messages (if internalized) be to the benefit or detriment of the unemployed and transitioning in the labour market? Is the broader context in which Canadian ALMP operates – the stimuli and constraints of material conditions, salient discourses, and economic and policy trajectories – organized to the benefit or detriment of workers (and which ones, in what contexts)? Chapter 3 will examine the context of Canadian ALMP to provide empirical data to determine how economic and policy trajectories, and the material conditions which emerge as a result, are to the benefit or detriment of particular actors. I hypothesize that Canadian ALMP will articulate ideas of individual responsibility for labour market outcomes, rapid labour market (re)entry, conforming to the market, and implicitly lowering expectations of the market and the state. If these ideas are indeed articulated, and if they are done so in a way that is conducive to the development of automatic thought, then ALMP will have constructed a common sense which 'matches' with (or benefits) an accumulation regime based on flexible labour, with public policies based on devolution, retrenchment, and individualization. Conversely, such an ALMP 'mismatches' with positive labour market outcomes (stable, full-time employment, living wage or higher) for workers and their material and psychological wellbeing.

If cognitive governance is meant to provide insight into how common sense is cultivated and maintained, (mis)match examines the ramifications of that common sense. Put differently, cognitive governance examines *how* power operates at the level of individual cognition, and (mismatch) examines the potential and realized effects of that operation of power.

Caveats

There are several caveats to this analysis. First, the focus is not on what people learn but what is communicated by public policy, how, and to what distribution of benefits and burdens. Second, the focus is not on intentionality but effect. The messages embedded in ALMP, and whether they are filtered through mechanisms identified in the cognitive psychology literature, may not be the result of intentional design, but that does not mean they cannot have negative (or positive?) effects for particular people.

Why Active Labour Market Policy?

This project is focused on exploring how an accumulation regime might be cultivated and maintained from the ‘bottom-up’ through cognition. Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) was chosen for several reasons:¹²

1. Labour market policy operates at the intersection of work (income, job quality, etc.) and social support (in the form of employment insurance for employed persons as well as social assistance for employable persons), and so significantly determines the material, and consequently, social, psychological, and emotional wellbeing of a person's life (Read 2009; Pathak 2014; Haddow & Klassen 2006; Lightman 2006). This is all the more important in a Liberal Market Economy such as Canada, where increasing labour market precarity and the devolution of support to the individual make labour market policy a crucial nexus (Herd et al 2009; Morden 2016; Vosko 2011; Wood & Hayes 2016).
2. Labour market policy shapes the structure and conditions of labour markets (particularly through 'minimum standard' measures such as employment standards and relations), and so significantly determines the nature of precarity in a context (Haddow & Klassen 2006; Herd et al 2009; McBride 2017).
3. As a 'meso level' policy area, labour market policy is not just an expression of 'mid-level forces' but mediates between the 'macro and micro', contributing to shaping ideas and practices (Porter & McKeen-Edwards 2013, 11). Provincial labour market policy often deals directly with people as workers, but is also shaped by macro forces, such as fiscal austerity shifting more responsibility to the provincial level or international economic and institutional pressure to flexibilize labour markets and policy (Lightman 2006; Herd et al 2009; McBride & Mitrea 2017b).
4. Because people's existence as workers/non in the labour market determines their life chances, this has been shown to shape how people understand themselves (Read 2009; Pathak 2014; Little 2001). In this way, labour market policy operates at the intersection of material and semiotic aspects of employment, 'hard work,' 'merit,' and individual responsibility, to name only a few (Read 2009; Pathak 2014; Little 2001).

¹² Chapter 2 discusses the rationale for the particular cases within ALMP.

5. Particularly with active labour market policy, whose explicit goal is to ‘activate’ people to (re)enter the market, certain ideas and practices are *reinforced* as key to employability and cultivating the self as a worker, and as such, likely constructs a relatively specific schema (Haddow & Klassen 2006; Herd et al 2009).

I approach these considerations through labour market policy, a 'meso' institution between the 'macro' of the political economy of accumulation regimes and the 'micro' of individual-level cognition because it is central to the mediating between workers and capital and to the everyday survival of the former.

Labour market policy is also replete with ‘front-end policy elements’ which policy recipients (often the unemployed and transitioning) interact with frequently, and so has the potential to shape how they automatically think about political concepts such as labour, the market, and the state (Herd et al 2009; Morden 2016; Dunk 2002).

Chapter Summaries

This project has seven chapters including this introduction. Chapters 2 and 3 cover the theoretical approach and empirical context in which the analysis takes place, chapters 4-6 cover the empirical analysis, and chapter 7 concludes the study. The following section will briefly summarize the content of each chapter.

Chapter 2 outlines the theories and methods which will be used to examine what active labour market policy (ALMP) in Canada communicates to policy recipients and *how*. The chapter begins with core concepts in cognitive psychology and how they will be situated in a framework which closely considers the role of context and material-semiotic relations in an effort to explain how ‘common sense’ is cultivated in the everyday. I then discuss the specific methods, data sites, and data sources utilized before elaborating on the analytical framework I will proceed with. Lastly, I discuss validity and reliability before concluding.

Chapter 3 explores Canadian political economy and public policy trajectories (and their global context) in which ALMP is situated. Examining the broader context in which ALMP operates is crucial because of the complementarity between stimuli, constraints, and encouraged automaticity. That is, the messages communicated by ALMP are more likely to be internalized if a) they utilize mechanisms which facilitate automatic cognition identified in the cognitive psychology literature and b) they ‘match’ with (work as a response to) material conditions and the organization of state-market-individual relations. This chapter also explores how the dominant accumulation regime in Canada changed over time, driven by global trajectories, facilitated by public policy, and “provides the material and ideational context and survival demands for individuals to engage with ALMP”.

Chapter 4 is the first of the case studies, and examines Federal Employment Insurance (EI). As stated in the previous section, the experience of being unemployed or

transitioning in the labour market is indifferent to federal-provincial jurisdiction (although it is affected by it), and so a more ‘complete’ picture of what policies individuals would turn to must include federal and provincial programs. The chapter begins with an examination of the policy developments of the program, mapping it in its broader policy context and then mapping its internal components. After that, I apply the framework outlined in chapter two to the most necessary steps involved in applying for EI: the main webpage, the application, and reporting.

Chapters 5 and 6 explore Ontario and British Columbia’s ALMP landscapes, which are far more diverse than EI (particularly after the 1996 reforms which devolved much of EI Type II programs to the provinces). These chapters each have an analysis of their own ALMP trajectory, but also share an analysis of broader trajectories in Canadian ALMP, focusing on de facto jurisdictional shifts, the role of fiscal policy, what types of programs are currently being pursued, and what the academic and policy literature says about the effectiveness of these programs. Similar to the EI Chapter, both provinces’ ALMP will be situated in relation to federal and other provincial programs, as well as mapping the relationship between *components* of the ALMP programs themselves. I then apply the framework for analysing cognitive governance to job search tools, labour market information, and career and skill discovery in each province, which are the most prominent and cross-referenced everyday front-end programs.

Chapter 7 concludes the overall analysis by returning to the questions outlined in the introductory chapter and comparing the findings from the case studies. I then build on the framework developed in Chapters 1 and 2 to further considerations based on the findings from the case studies, looking again at ‘secular internalization’ (the way stimuli and constraints interact to shape thought and action), the way subjects are atomized and contained by cognitive governance, the colonization of imagination, depoliticization, and the reconfiguration of time and space. I then return to (mis)match to examine the implications of cognitive governance in Canadian ALMP before turning to recommendations, new questions, and directions for future research.

Conclusion

Accumulation regimes shape our everyday lived experiences and possibilities in the way that the market and the state are organized, interact, and operate. While many studies across Political Economy, Post Structural Criticism, and Contemporary Policy Studies have examined the ‘macro’ and ‘meso’ of economic and policy trajectories in creating and maintaining accumulation regimes, none have seriously looked at how cognition is cultivated in the everyday as another avenue for securing accumulation. The coming chapters will examine the theoretical framework and context for analysing what Canadian ALMP communicates to policy recipients through everyday components (such as websites, forms, applications, etc.), and whether it does so in a way that is conducive to the development of ‘automatic thought’ or ‘common sense’. A cognitive governance lens

– which looks at the mutual constitution between everyday stimuli (such as material conditions of employment, debt, cost of living, etc.), the organization of policies to constrain the scope of action (constraints), and encouraged automaticity – aims to reveal how common sense can be cultivated by everyday policy components. The kind of common sense ALMP articulates to workers about how they should conceive of themselves, the market, and the state will illustrate the orientation of ALMP in terms of who it advantages and disadvantages and whether it sustains the contemporary accumulation regime in Canada.

Chapter 2: Theory and Methods

In this chapter I will outline the theories and methods which will be used to examine what active labour market policy (ALMP) in Canada communicates to policy recipients. I hypothesize that ALMP communicates to policy recipients a way of conceiving of themselves as workers, their expectations of the market, and of the state, in a way that ‘matches up’ with current policy and political economy trajectories of a Liberal Market accumulation regime. I do not assume to uncover what policy recipients would *learn* from ALMP or the ‘intentionality’ of policy designers or anyone involved in the delivery of said programs. The wording, discourses, rules, forms, and procedures employed in these programs communicate ideas and practices, whether intentional or not. My analysis is informed by insights from cognitive and socio-cultural psychology, which are insufficiently studied in political economy and public policy literatures, but provide tools for understanding the processes by which automatic thought can be developed. Specifically, I look at what Canadian ALMP communicates to policy recipients and whether it does so in a way that is conducive to automatic thought. In Chapter 1 this was situated in a framework of ‘cognitive governance’, which looks at how automatic thought is cultivated and maintained to the benefit of particular ideas and actors – in other words, providing the *how* of common sense.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, the way that individuals think and act as workers is central to developing and maintaining economic and public policy trajectories. Individuals come to understand themselves as workers who should be flexible, who should not expect employment security, who should expect to be geographically mobile and work in non-standard employment relations. As a result, those individuals internalize a ‘common sense’ which is beneficial to (‘matches up with’) firms which seek a flexible and docile workforce and to governments which have been devolving greater responsibility for survival to individuals.

This chapter begins with core concepts in cognitive psychology and how they will be situated in a framework which takes context and social interactions more seriously in an effort to explain how ‘common sense’ is cultivated in the everyday. I then discuss the specific methods, data sites, and data sources utilized before elaborating on the analytical framework I will proceed with. Lastly, I discuss validity and reliability before concluding.

Dual-Process Cognition, Schemas, and Automaticity

People’s ‘gut’ or ‘immediate’ emotional, behavioural, and cognitive reactions to their everyday lives are crucial not only because they can occur independent of reflective thought (i.e. the immediate thought that an unemployed person is ‘lazy’ or should just ‘work harder’), but because they inform our conscious thinking as well (Snow 2006; North & Fiske 2012). As such, the effect of public policy on cognition is particularly impactful if it can shape people’s ‘immediate’ reactions, which is described in cognitive

psychology as ‘automatic cognition’ as opposed to ‘conscious’ or ‘reflective’ cognition, together constituting dual-process theory (Holt & Rainey 2002; Hewstone et al 2015). Automatic cognition is stored in our long-term memory (LTM) in the form of ‘schemas’ which operate as interconnected ‘nodes’ organizing information about anything we encounter in our environment, activated when triggered by stimuli, and potentially brought into short-term memory (STM, or ‘working memory’ – WM) to inform thought, action, and feeling (Hewstone et al 2015; Baron & Ranaj 2006; Bracher 2012).

Dual-Process Theory and Automaticity

Dual-process theory argues that cognition is split between automatic (or ‘experiential’) processing and controlled (or ‘reflective/conscious’) processing, an idea that has been postulated and tested since 1890 (Bargh et al 2012; Holt & Rainey 2002, 12). Contemporarily, Schneider and Shiffrin (1977) experimentally distinguished between controlled processes, which are strategic, effortful, conscious, required for novel or complex tasks, and which may require significant cognitive resources and automatic processes (12). Controlled processing is considered to be serial (X then Y then Z), performed more slowly, under the control of the individual, and is very vulnerable to cognitive load (i.e. stressors, multiple stimuli, inebriation, etc.). This form of processing is also easily established, altered, and reversed (Snow 2006, 546; Bargh et al 2012). Conversely, automatic processes require fewer cognitive resources, are faster (activating within 240ms of stimulus presentation vs. 2000ms for controlled processing) and result in fewer cognitive or behavioural errors, occur without the intention of the individual, have greater retention in LTM, can operate in parallel with other automatic and controlled processes (allowing for multi-tasking),¹³ and are virtually unaffected by cognitive load (i.e. stressors, etc.) (Holt & Rainey 2002, 12; Snow 2006, 546; Hewstone et al 2015). Automatic processing, however, requires significant repetition to function, thoughts and actions are difficult to control, suppress, or modify, and it is difficult to analyze or explain the separate components of an automatized process. Automatic processing begins pre-consciously, that is, without intentional (‘controlled’) activation. This typically takes the form of environmental stimuli ‘triggering’ an automatic affective/cognitive/behavioural response. Automatic and controlled processing for any given task constitute a continuum, not distinct poles, with most behaviour and cognition a combination of automatic and controlled processing, with one or the other being more prominent depending on the context (Holt & Rainey 2002, 13; Snow 2006, 546; Bargh et al 2012; Van Lange et al 2013).

¹³ e.g. when driving, the automatic process of turning the steering wheel in the direction you want to go works in parallel with the other automatic processes of managing acceleration and braking with the potentially controlled process of trying to remember how to get to the hardware store – as opposed to what would be an automatic process of taking a very regular route.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, there are cognitive mechanisms identified repeatedly across multiple psychology literatures which have been shown to aid in the development of automaticity. I will examine whether and how ALMP (intentionally or not) deploys these mechanisms when communicating messages to policy recipients: should such mechanisms be deployed consistently and repeatedly, they are more likely to result in automaticity, or ‘common sense’. Depending on what messages are constructed as ‘common sense’ will determine who would benefit or suffer from their internalization.

Mapping Automatic Cognition: Schema Theory

Schemas are the basic building blocks of cognition in cognitive psychology, and act as blueprints which organize categories of information and relationships between categories in our long-term memory. These building blocks mediate the encoding, storing, and recall (activation and then recall into WM) of complex social information: they inform perception/recognition (what we notice), evaluation (‘positive/negative’), expectations, guide controlled processing (attention and search), interpretation, fill in gaps in information (assumptions/predictions based on schema), and more (Hewstone et al 2015, 377; Baron & Ranaj 2006; Van Lange et al 2011; Fiske & Taylor 2013). Schemas are ‘automatic’ forms of cognition, and so can be activated spontaneously by stimuli and without conscious effort (although they can be activated consciously as well). Schemas can be about anything we encounter, including others (‘person schemas’), ourselves (‘self-schemas’), recurring events (‘event schemas’), functional or motor related tasks (e.g. driving) and are the basis of attitudes, stereotypes, and ‘common sense’ (Fiske & Taylor 2013; Baron & Ranaj 2006; Bracher 2012, 92;). While automaticity describes a *process* whereby *information* - feelings, actions, and thoughts - is retrieved without conscious effort, schemas describe the *organization of that information* which is retrieved automatically (Hewstone 2015; Fiske & Taylor 2013; Van Lange et al 2013; Bargh et al 2012). Information in long term memory which is not organized (not part of a developed schema) tends to be harder to access, while if it is part of a rich schema (more automaticized) it has a better chance of entering working memory (Hewstone et al 2015, 378; Fiske & Taylor 2013). While schemas are contemporarily predominant in cognitivist schools, they originally emerged in socio-cultural perspectives (with Bartlett and Piaget), which I elaborate below and pursue: the idea that cognition is inseparable from context and that in interpreting and acting in our context, we shape it through cognition (yet neither are reduced to one another) (McVee et al 2005, 533, 543). My case studies will examine *what* ALMP communicates to policy recipients (i.e. the ‘content’ of a schema) and *how*: whether it does so in a way that is conducive to automaticity.

An automatic schema is marked by strength, connectedness, and facets. First, the ‘strength’ of a schema is cyclical: the more times a stimulus is responded to with a schema (or network of schemas), the stronger that connection will be, the easier the schema will be activated (‘accessible’) through any aspect¹⁴ tied to the stimuli (Hewstone

¹⁴ i.e. if I develop a network of schemas for when I go to a restaurant (motor schemas for utilizing cutlery, social schemas to inform appropriate behaviour in that setting, specific schemas for different types of

et al 2015; Fiske & Taylor 2013). Second, the more times a schema has been activated, the more likely it will make connections with other schemas based on the context in which stimuli are presented. As schemas are ‘primed’ more often (activated but not always moved into working memory), their ties to the stimuli which primed them are strengthened as well as to any related schemas which were activated in priming (connections), making the ‘network’ of primed schemas more easily activated in the future (North & Fiske 2012, 91; Lodge & Taber 2005, 458). Third, schemas contain multiple facets, including affect (immediate feelings about a stimuli), behaviour (automatic actions in response to a stimuli), and cognition (automatic thought processes and connected information tied to a stimuli) whether they are about us, others, objects, events, patterns, or ideas (Snow 2006, 548; Hewstone et al 2015; Fiske & Taylor 2013; Collier & Callero 2005). Schemas are deeply interwoven through affect¹⁵ (preconscious experiences of intensity, such as anxiety), such that stimuli will be tied to and trigger affective responses (e.g. fear, excitement, arousal, etc.) often before cognitive and behavioural responses. Because of this, affect is the strongest factor determining which schemas are activated and how we interpret and act on stimuli (Slovic et al 2005, 535; North & Fiske 2012; Lodge & Taber 2005, 456).

While the particular context of a stimuli will trigger a particular combination of schemas, giving the appearance of flexibility, they are more difficult to amend the stronger and more connected they are (a hallmark of automatic cognition) and may adapt new information to ‘fit’ existing schemas (Snow 2006, 546; Hewstone et al 2015). The social cognition literature has documented various instances in which schemas change (i.e. a person's assumption about a group of people is abandoned or complicated), and others in which they do not. Indeed, it is not possible to predict with certainty how a person's schema will react to a stimuli in any given environment. Automatic cognition is not deterministic; for instance, stereotype schemas can be counteracted with other schemas or controlled processing (Hewstone et al 2015; Fiske & Taylor 2013; Baron & Ranaj 2006). Schemas do not contradict the possibility of agency, reflection, or resistance, but they often do constitute a hurdle to thinking and acting in certain ways (Hewstone et al 2015, 381; North & Fiske 2012).

The Development of Schemas and Automaticity

Schemas develop from direct encounters and second hand sources, including interactions with, or accounts of people, events, and texts and more (Hewstone et al 2015;

restaurants, perceptual schemas to look out for empty tables, identify staff, etc.), any stimuli which relates to a ‘restaurant’ will activate the network of schemas, making them ‘ready’ to be loaded into working memory for use if needed.

¹⁵ Despite the significance of affect to schema and automaticity, for feasibility reasons it is not directly analyzed in this study: semiotic facets such as discourses and material facets such how the ALMP case studies are organized and what options they provide for recipients to act can be readily assessed in this policy-focused analysis, but affect is more applicable to a subject-based analysis. I elaborate on why I chose a policy focus later in this chapter.

North & Fiske 2012; Fiske & Taylor 2013). The literature on schema development began with Bartlett, but most cite Piaget with elaborating a clearer model for their development: 1) if new stimuli can be addressed using existing schemas, that is ‘assimilation’ which describes a state of; 2) ‘equilibrium’. If existing schemas cannot address new stimuli, they are modified or abandoned and new, nascent, schemas are created, describing 3) ‘adaptation’, restoring equilibrium. The force which pushes us to return to equilibrium is 4) ‘equilibration’ (Fiske & Taylor 2013; Van Lange et al 2011). In Piaget's model, cognitive development was not utterly predictable, but showed that an inability to respond to a stimuli produced an unpleasant state which forced schemas to adapt or develop. While Piaget's model is based on a limited sample (natural experiments on upper-middle class European children) and argues for a universalism which elides social context, the basic elements have been confirmed through repeated studies (Holt & Rainey 2002; North & Fiske 2012; Fiske & Taylor 2013). For instance, 'equilibration' has been observed in studies on cognitive dissonance, such that, whether or not a schema is changed, individuals ultimately find a way to 'deal with' their dissonance and return to some semblance of equilibrium (even if that means avoiding the stimuli which triggers the dissonance!) (Fiske & Taylor 2013; Van Lange et al 2011; Hewstone et al 2015). Nascent schemas emerging from ‘adaptation’ provide an initial determination of how a situation works (how the subject thinks about, feels about, and acts in a situation), but after repeated exposures, the schema connects the occurrences of each exposure to determine patterns, link with other relevant schemas, and takes on a predictive capacity (Holt & Rainey 2002, 38; Bargh et al 2012; Fiske & Taylor 2013).

Strong - automatic - schemas develop pre-consciously, post-consciously, and consciously, with affective (i.e. emotions), cognitive (i.e. thought, information processing, ideas), and behavioural (i.e. actions) facets and through multiple mechanisms (discussed in a section below), but development is always contingent on consistency, repetition, and benefits from greater attention and motivation (Fiske & Taylor 2013; Van Lange et al 2011; Hewstone et al 2015; Holt & Rainey 2002, 30; Bargh et al 2012).

Pre-conscious activation occurs without intent or awareness and is a *direct* reaction to stimuli in a context. This develops through repeated and consistent stimulus-reaction chains and is learned more passively, such as through unintentional observation (Holt & Rainey 2002, 28; Bargh et al 2012, 594). Post-conscious activation also occurs without intent or awareness but may be influenced by a *previous stimuli*. This is known as ‘priming’, wherein stimuli ‘A’ activates schemas ‘X, Y, and Z’, which remain in active in memory to display what appears to be a preconscious effect on the interpretation and/or reaction to stimuli ‘B’ (Holt & Rainey 2002, 28; North & Fiske 2012, 91; Fiske & Taylor 2013). As with pre-conscious activation, post-conscious activation develops through unintentional repetition which links particular stimuli to multiple schemas (Bargh et al 2012, 594; North & Fiske 2012, 90). Finally, conscious development occurs as a result of controlled processing – i.e. an individual is aware that they are attempting to form a habit or learn how to repeatable behaviour or thought process (Bargh et al 2012).

On the Significance of Schemas and Automaticity

Automatic and controlled processing shape how we think (cognition), feel (affect), and act (behaviour), how we perceive individuals, objects, and events, interpret, make judgments, and predict how a situation will unfold (Snow 2006, 547; North & Fiske 2012, 88; Bargh et al 2012). Even without conscious attention, automatic perception enables us to pick up information from our environment that we have learned to associate with particular feelings, cognitions, and behaviours¹⁶ (Holt & Rainey 2002, 28; Bargh et al 2012). As we encounter and learn how to react to stimuli (either through conscious effort, instruction, observation, and so on), the link between the stimuli and the reaction strengthens, develops multiple facets (thoughts, actions, feelings), and connects with other related ‘blueprints’ of stimuli and reaction. Crucially, because most activities or reactions combine automatic and controlled processing, and because controlled processing relies on parallel automatic processing,¹⁷ strong, automatic schemas *precede* and *inform* controlled processing: automatic responses are essential to conscious action and thought (Snow 2006, 547; North & Fiske 2012, 88; Slovic et al 2005, 536; Lodge & Taber 2005). Schemas form the basis of perception, interpretation, and reaction at an automatic level, and so provoke an individual's attitudes (which are plural and not often completely consistent) and *inform*¹⁸ their behaviours (Hewstone et al 2015; Fiske & Taylor 2013). The insights of cognitive psychology, particularly if approached from a perspective which considers the environment in which cognition develops, can provide the tools for understanding ‘common sense’ notions, such as the idea that survival is contingent on the competitive selling of an individual's labour.

Automaticity and schemas provide a cognitive explanation for *how* common sense develops, and they emerge as a result of a person's natural response to material-semiotic stimuli in their environment and the constraints on how they can respond. This study analyzes how public policy may shape people's response to their environment and constraints by – intentionally or unintentionally – deploying cognitive mechanisms which develop automaticity. I will do this by examining everyday ‘front-end’ policy components (such as forms, documents, and websites) which policy recipients interact with most frequently and directly (Morden 2016; Wood & Hayes 2016; Employment Insurance 2016). The following sections will outline my theoretical foundations, data sources, case selection, methods, a ‘model for the development of automaticity’ (to determine *how*

¹⁶ e.g. avoiding (behaviour) what we perceive to be a hooded black male on the basis of fear (affect) resulting from pervasive stereotypes (cognition).

¹⁷ e.g. consciously attempting to remember and think through how industrial relations differ in a coordinated market economy vs. a liberal market economy relies on the automatic activation of schemas for what capitalism is, what industrial relations are, what a coordinated market economy is, etc.

¹⁸ Automatic processing does not always translate to behaviour as a result of cognitive dissonance (conflicting schemas, e.g. between a stereotype and social expectations, or a stereotype and counter-schema) or controlled processing (actively restricting an automatic response) (Van Lange et al 2011).

ALMP may communicate), and a ‘coding spectrum’ (to determine *what* ALMP may communicate).

Ontology, Epistemology, and Psychology: The Role of Conditions and Context in the Everyday of Policy

This dissertation is informed by the intersection of several post-positivist approaches which enable me to pursue the conceptual framework of ‘cognitive governance’ outlined in Chapter 1 – the cultivation and maintenance of automatic thought at a population level. Overall, my approach rejects the idea that ‘reality’ is objectively knowable and revealed through empirical analyses of ‘law like generalizations’ (Halperin & Heath 2012, 27; Porter & McKeen-Edwards 2013; Law 1999). I pursue a neo-materialist ontology which contends that reality is a *social construction* emerging from material-semiotic interactions in a specific time and space (Porter & McKeen-Edwards 2013, 7; Law 1999; Willmott 2005; Fox & Alldred 2014). What we can understand about this reality (epistemology) is *cognitively interpreted* - how we (pre)consciously understand the world shapes how we define, measure, operationalize,¹⁹ think about, feel about, and act in it (North & Fiske 2012; Willmott 2005, 751; Halperin & Heath 2012, 312; Fox & Alldred 2014). I do not subscribe to some readings and applications of post-structuralism which reduces materiality to ideas or cognition. Institutions, edifices of power, and material conditions affect us regardless of our interpretation of them (e.g. a bullet will still kill regardless of its semiotic context) (Willmott 2005; Fox & Alldred 2014). Together, the interaction between the material, semiotic, and our understandings constitute ideas, practices, policies, institutions, and material conditions which constrain, conduct, and provoke ways of thinking, acting, and feeling (Law 1999; Porter & McKeen-Edwards 2013).

Here, power is conceived of as relations which shape how, where, and when we think, talk, and act. These relations emerge from the dialectical interaction between the material (i.e. institutions, experiences), semiotic (i.e. ideas, discourses, cultural notions), affective, and social across multiple scales (i.e. from the global to the national, subnational, local, etc.), but manifests in the everyday where people live, experience, think, and interact (Willmott 2005; Law 1999). Proceeding from this point keeps me attuned to how power emerges²⁰ contextually from interactions, what it emerges as (e.g. ‘common sense’, conditionalities in ALMP, policies encouraging flexibilization, etc.), who benefits, who suffers, what the consequences of emergence are, and how it is

¹⁹ Indeed, it is at this intersection that we can locate power which articulates particular regimes of truth as constitutive of ‘reality’ and other social orders (e.g. scientific paradigms) (Willmott 2005; Halperin & Heath 2012, 33).

²⁰ Power is not always ‘intentional’ (i.e. ‘explicit goals’); such a view simplifies how power coalesces and emerges by reducing it to a kind of ‘boogeyman narrative’. Indeed, it is not my goal to determine – nor is it my suspicion that – policy makers ‘plot’ to ‘teach’ a regressive schema. It is far more likely that those who designed programs did so based on exigencies beyond their control (i.e. budget limitations, political decisions) or based on what they perceived to be the best solution to resolve an economic issue (i.e. listening to neoclassical economists).

maintained and/or enforced. For example, the interpretation and articulation (discourse) of labour market conditions and structure (material, e.g. the competitive selling of labour) by labour market policy delineates a realm of possibility, shaping what workers and capital can do and expect.

This approach values empiricism (looking at materiality and that which is observable) as well as interpretivism (arguing that what is observable is apprehendable to us through interpretation) in an exploratory framework, such that the project is not an assumption to be 'proven' but a conjecture to be explored. This approach rejects grand, macro-level theories of power, instead focusing on the everyday of public policy – how it is implemented *from the position of a recipient* – routines, rules, tasks, and goals which shape how people live, think, and act in a particular material, social, and temporal context (Fox & Alldred 2014; Willmott 2005; Law 1999; Kristensen & Schraube 2013, 291; Hodgetts & Stolte 2013, 626). This approach empirically connects the macro (global and national trajectories) with the meso (mid-level policy paradigms such as active labour market policy) and the micro (everyday practices, culture, discourses, and material conditions) to identify how broader trajectories “penetrate the details of everyday life” through public policy, constructing the material realities and discourses which shape how people live, often overlooked by policy studies and even political economy (DeCerteau and Lefebvre in Kristensen & Schraube 2013, 291; Hodgetts & Stolte 2013). This approach also keeps me attuned to the material, social, and psychological *effects* of shifts in economic trajectories and labour markets and relations of power (Kristensen & Schraube 2013, 294).

The individualist (and usually positivist) focus of behavioural, cognitive, and even social psychology gave rise to ‘cultural psychology’ approaches which argued that human thinking, feeling, behaviour, and experience unfold in a specific historical, social, and material context from which it is not isolated – culture and cognition are mutually constituted or dialectical. These approaches emerged out of variations of the post-positivist approaches outlined above, beginning with the influence of Marx’s dialectical materialism (the argument that historical changes in society and material life produce changes in human nature) on the Russian School of Cultural-Social Psychology in the early 20th century (Marvakis & Mentinis 2013, 1795; Slunecko & Wieser 2013, 349).

Cognitive and cultural approaches have complementary strengths and weaknesses: the former tends to undertheorize the environment in which people exist and cognition develops, be deterministic, and individually focused, while the latter tends to undertheorize the mechanisms and processes by which cognition operates. To that end, I follow McVee et al’s (2005) efforts to re-situate schemas in a cultural perspective (from which they actually began): the way people think and act should be analyzed as emerging from *within* various contexts. This approach articulates a psychology which positions the mind as mutually constituted with the world, embodied in *everyday* social contexts (i.e. interactions with people, institutions, policies, etc.) demarcated in space, time, and history (Marvakis & Mentinis 2013, 1797; McVee et al 2005; Slunecko & Wieser 2013). A neo-materialist ontology and interpretive epistemology provide the framework for

approaching cognition in this way, and enable me to understand how public policy intentionally or otherwise communicates a particular schema – a way of thinking and acting – and may employ cognitive mechanisms which make it ‘automatic’. Further, this theoretical approach helps me understand how the development of that schema and automaticity interacts with material conditions (e.g. unemployment in a Liberal Market Economy), institutional elements (e.g. the consistency between a particular ALMP schema and other ALMP programs and policies), culture (e.g. the stigma of unemployment and benefit receipt), other contextual factors, and power – who benefits and who suffers as a result of the internalization of a particular schema.

Crucially, contextual factors in the everyday (discourses, institutions, culture, and material conditions) can *inhibit* certain ways of thinking and acting while *encouraging* others in the mutual constitution between cognition and the material-semiotic world. For instance, an individual’s cognition constrains how they are likely to perceive, feel about, think about, and act in the world, while socio-culturally situated discourses, social relations, institutions (i.e. increasingly conditional ALMP in a flexibilized labour market), and material conditions provide constraints on action and thought (Porter & McKeen-Edwards 2013; Kristensen & Schraube 2013, 291; Hodgetts & Stolte 2013, 626). As such, the theoretical foundations above speak to the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 1, in which ‘cognitive governance’ – the cultivation and management of automatic thought at a population level – is mutually constituted through material-semiotic stimuli, the constraints on action in an environment, and close attention to how people respond cognitively or are encouraged to respond.

Methods – Data Collection and Analysis

I approach the dissertation through the ontological and epistemological framework outlined above via two methods: interpretive policy analysis (with influences from critical discourse analysis) and process mapping. A ‘coding’ spectrum of existing facets of neoliberal common sense (e.g. entrepreneurial subjectivity, activation, austere subjectivity, resilience, etc.) and a consolidated list of specific mechanisms for the development of schemas will be used in conjunction with policy analysis. Together, these elements enable me to approach a policy framework and analyze it and its components to determine what it communicates (i.e. ideas and practices identified in the coding spectrum, as a baseline) and how (the mechanisms). Process mapping is used to explore the components and interrelationships within my case studies, between them, and how they fit in a broader policy ecology.

Process mapping describes an approach similar to ‘process tracing’, which involves ‘within-case’ systemic analysis based on qualitative data (Collier 2011, 823; Halperin & Heath 2012, 289). Process tracing is rooted in three components 1) ‘causal process observations’ (on pressures, incentives, motivations, etc.); 2) thick description to document and analyze trajectories, relations, and emergences; 3) an attention to

sequences (including critical junctures) (Collier 2011, 823). To facilitate ‘mapping’ I add a fourth component: ‘an attention to relationships’ *between* the elements examined. While the ‘mapping’ component of the dissertation is significant in illustrating the internal elements of a program and how they relate to one another (i.e. steps for completion, how do they constrain options in the program, etc.), as well as to other programs and the broader policy ecology,²¹ overall it provides contextual information which situates the primary, in-depth analysis of everyday policy documents (Weaver-Hightower 2008). For instance, how do the federal and provincial case studies (discussed below) connect to one another? Do any of the ALMP programs direct policy recipients to programs in another jurisdiction or in the same jurisdiction? If so, these programs would be more prominent (increasing the chances that recipients will utilize them), making whatever they communicate to recipients more often encountered and thus more likely to lead to automaticity. The other use for policy mapping is to look at the resources available to the unemployed from the government – a kind of mapping of the policy at the everyday level for these policy recipients. Overall, I aim to determine the internal consistency within and between programs (which is important to establishing strong schemas) and what paths they encourage and discourage.

The close reading of government documents and policies will be analysed using a combination of critical discourse analysis and interpretive policy analysis (Yanow 2000; Schon & Rein 1994; Yanow 2003; Milliken 1999). This approach carefully considers the assumptions, frames, and context of policy makers and policy relevant actors in the development and articulation of public policy, providing a ‘thick description’ (detailed, reflective, thorough analysis) of observations, relationships, and effects. Discourses are systems of signification which construct social realities, situate subjects/objects, and create binary oppositions based on power relations (Milliken 1999, 237). Critical Discourse Analysis seeks to expose the connections between language and power and is focused on the role of discourse in enacting, reproducing, and resisting social power abuse, dominance, and inequality (Halperin & Heath 2012, 312). Relevant questions include 1) how are policies, their components, and relevant artifacts (language, discourses, objects, acts) understood and framed by designers, recipients, and other actors? 2) how are policies, their components, and artefacts woven through material conditions, institutions, and critical junctures? 3) where do conflicts emerge, why, and how? 4) to what political, discursive, material, socio-affective, or other effect (Yanow 2000; Schon & Rein 1994; Yanow 2003; Schmidt 2008)? I will augment both approaches with a deeper consideration of everyday material-semiotic conditions and constraints. Further, in the broad tradition of ‘bottom-up’ approaches to public policy, I will focus considerably on the ‘everyday’ of public policy from the recipient’s position, particularly the mundane (i.e. forms, procedures, etc.) (Evans 2011; Fox & Alldred 2014; Hodgetts &

²¹ The environment in which a particular policy or set of policies is created, implemented, and understood as texts and discourses by a variety of actors, such as between the delivery of ALMP programs, what other programs or rules they rely on, at what level they are designed, with what apparent considerations and connections, how do federal transfers and programs fit in, and so on.

Stolte 2013). I will also use interpretive policy analysis to unpack the content and implications of the broad economic and policy trajectories which constitute the context of the dissertation, using its tenets to inform assessments of the impacts of labour market and policy trajectories and how that is relevant to cognition.

Interpretive policy analysis will be used in conjunction with the ‘model for the development of automaticity’ and ‘coding spectrum’ discussed below to provide a close reading of the case studies. The ‘model’ outlines cognitive mechanisms which have been repeatedly and consistently identified as conducive to the development of automatic thought and action, and provides an insight into *how* ALMP may communicate to policy recipients. The ‘coding spectrum’ outlines concepts which the literatures this study responds to (critical political economy, policy studies, and post-structuralism) have consistently identified as salient in late capitalism, particularly in LMEs – providing a range of interrelated ideas, or *what* ALMP may communicate. Most mechanisms in the model will be evaluated qualitatively (e.g. does an ALMP program in a case study create associations between ideas or actions or across both; if so, how?), but ‘repetition and consistency’ – which are perhaps the most crucial components to the development of automaticity – will also be analyzed through a quantitative content analysis. For instance, what terms or ideas are repeated within a component of a case study, across the case, and across the cases?

The process mapping approach will contextualize the close reading and provide insight into what ideas are articulated *within* a case study’s policy ecology and *across* the case studies (to highlight repetition and consistency). The close readings – through interpretive policy analysis augmented with the ‘model’ and ‘coding spectrum’ – will provide a deep qualitative and quantitative evaluation of *what* is communicated by the ALMP case studies and *how*.

Data Sources

My data sources are driven by a) the everyday of public policy, which is where people interact with it most consistently and directly (Morden 2016; Wood & Hayes 2016; Employment Insurance 2016); b) the mundane aspects of that everyday. Many active labour market policy resources do not involve interpersonal interaction, yet forms, documents, rules, procedures, and websites are rarely examined. Because of their under-theorization and ubiquity (as compared to interpersonal programs), these resources will constitute the primary data I analyze in case studies (Little 2001; Lightman 2006; Herd et al 2009; Reshef 2008, 6). These everyday policy artifacts and processes are not just ‘technically rational’ documents, they are political texts insofar as they encourage and discourage (sometimes with explicit conditions) how people should think and act in their efforts to navigate their environment and thrive.

I have undertaken an unobtrusive data collection approach, situating my case studies and broader economic and policy trajectories through secondary literature. For the policy and economic context, I will also draw on primary data including government

budgets and policy documents, relevant statistics, and publications from international policy actors (e.g. OECD recommendations on ALMP), and think tanks (e.g. analyses of automation conducted by the World Economic Forum). The process mapping approach illustrates the connections and significance of broader economic and policy trajectories to my analysis. For my case studies, I will draw on secondary research to outline the history of the case studies and evaluate their effects. Next, I will utilize process mapping to explore where the programs are situated (e.g. what websites), what their components are (e.g. sign up forms, rules and processes for undertaking the program, reporting, etc.), how they connect to one another within a program and with other programs, and then conduct a close analysis of the key components and their interrelationships using interpretive policy analysis with the coding scheme and mechanisms list (below).

Case Studies and Selection

I focus on three cases of active labour market policy in Canada which target the unemployed, underemployed, and transitioning in the labour market: Employment Insurance at the Federal level and a comparison of Job Search Systems, Labour Market Information, and Career and Skill Discovery programs in Ontario and British Columbia. Temporally, I will analyze these ALMP programs in the present (2017-18) but situate them in their policy trajectories, broadly from the mid-20th century with more attention post-1996 when the Federal government restructured social and labour market transfers, and subsequently, the Canadian ALMP landscape.

Like data sources, case selection was driven by my focus on the ‘everyday’ of policy: what programs are available to an unemployed person in Canada for their survival? This is not to say all unemployed people face the same circumstances or will have knowledge of, or pursue all of these programs. Rather, I start from three points: 1) what is available to these policy recipients; 2) the programs which are most prominent in their contexts (i.e. which components of Ontario’s ALMP are most highlighted) and across policy jurisdictions (i.e. which types of ALMP are most often mentioned *across* the case studies) and; 3) which programs offer the most ‘everyday front-end’ content such as forms, documents, and websites (i.e. not training or counseling programs which are already studied or programs which are highly targeted) which are used at far greater rates than training or skill development programs. In addition to the fact that the cases fit my criteria and justification, they are also significant according to the academic and policy literatures. While EI is ubiquitously found to be a central ALMP program for the unemployed in Canada, the provincial programs I will focus on have been found to be the ones policy recipients use the most (Wood & Hayes 2016; Morden 2016) and are the ones being focused on the most by federal and provincial governments (Employment Insurance 2016).

I will not pay explicit attention to the coercive side of active labour market policy in the form of workfare because a) those programs are have been addressed quite thoroughly in the literature (Little 2001; Lightman 2006; Herd et al 2009); and b) they are not the first option for someone recently unemployed or transitioning in the labour market. As such, I look at active labour market policy programs which target the

unemployed (but not abject), underemployed, and those interested in transition (i.e. careers or jobs) in the labour market.

I then map out how these programs speak to each other explicitly (i.e. a program in Ontario directing people to EI) or implicitly (i.e. a program in Ontario and EI sending the same messages), what they communicate to policy recipients (i.e. the best way to survive in an LME is, indeed, the market), whether they do so through cognitive mechanisms demonstrated to aid in the development of automaticity, and who benefits and suffers as a result of the ‘common sense’ which is constructed.

Case studies will be situated in broader policy and global political economy trajectories in Chapter 3. Rather than focusing on ‘levels of analysis’, I use the process mapping metaphor to conceptualize how what we might consider the ‘meso’ of labour market policy at provincial and federal levels is shaped by interactions at the municipal, national, and supra-national ‘levels’: while most ALMP is provincial (aside from Employment Insurance), federal transfers shape provincial policy regimes, provinces devolve responsibilities to local levels, and all respond to shifts in global economic trajectories and international ‘best practices’ (Porter & McKeen-Edwards 2013, 11; Reshef 2008; Herd et al 2009).

This project is concerned primarily with the ways public policy can shape cognition, and so a comparative analysis serves to underscore how ALMP constructs a common sense through particular messages delivered through cognitive mechanisms in different but relatively cohesive ways. As such, my case studies are driven less by the typical ‘Most Similar’ (cases that share many characteristics but differ in one crucial respect) or ‘Most Different’ (the reverse) comparative framework, but rather by interesting nuances and potential differences which would underscore how public policy communicates to policy recipients in different contexts (Halperin & Heath 2012, 210).

British Columbia is an example of what Haddow and Klassen (2006) called an ‘institutionally consistent jurisdiction’ marked by a competitive liberal market economy and market oriented welfare state (Reshef 2008: 94). From 1991 to 2001, the province was governed by the centre-left (ostensibly) NDP, which ‘introduced a significant shift to the left in each [labour market] policy domain’ (94). This reversed with the election of the centre-right Liberal party in 2001, shifting labour market policy to the ‘merits of efficiency’. Because the NDP period was considered to be less market oriented than Ontario’s Progressive Conservative reign, it may be a good comparison (Marks & Little 2010).

Ontario, between 1995-2003, saw a sharp pivot to the right after the NDP’s reign from 1990-95 (Reshef 2008: 93). In labour market policy terms, this returned Ontario to the pre-1985 status quo of market oriented liberalism. Here, active labour market policy disproportionately emphasizes job-seeking skills and attitudinal adjustment (Herd et al 2009, 139; Lightman 2006). For those who cannot find work, ‘community participation’ or unpaid work placements (which may not be covered by employment standards or EI) are required in exchange for welfare (Little 2001, 22; Marks & Little 2010).

Analytical Framework

In this section I will discuss my analytical framework, which informs how I apply the methods above and subsequent coding spectrum and mechanisms list. First, this framework is designed based off of the concerns and points of ‘cognitive governance’ and ‘(mis)match’ outlined in Chapter 1 and to respond to my research question.

For my research question, what understanding of workers, the labour market, and the state is communicated: what do the components in the ALMP case study focus on or elide? What expectations and assumptions are evinced? What ways of thinking and acting are encouraged/discouraged? What content is communicated (i.e. the idea that survival is contingent on selling labour in the market) vs. what procedures are taught (i.e. being accustomed to filling out forms, to surveillance and reporting, to conditionalities, etc.). Are recipients encouraged to reflect on the structures and trajectories which contributed to their unemployment (active) or only encouraged to re-enter the labour force (docility)? Does the component empower or disempower, politicize or depoliticize on individual or collective levels?

In terms of Cognitive Governance, how does the environment in which ALMP operates shape its potential to cultivate automatic thought? First, how do material-semiotic stimuli (such as discourses on individual responsibility and rising cost of living) interact(ing?) with constraints (such as retrenched social and labour market policies) shape the context in which the unemployed and transitioning turn to ALMP? How might what is communicated speak to broader socio-cultural discourses (and their affective elements, e.g. shame typically associated unemployment) and data on material conditions (i.e. rising cost of living, stagnating wages, increasing non-standard employment, etc.)? For instance, what might it mean to push workers back into the market when a higher percentage of new jobs are part year/part time, in a city with exponentially rising cost of living, like Toronto?

Individuals in that environment will ‘respond’ (the third component of cognitive governance) cognitively to the stimuli and constraints they encounter automatically, but what messages and cognitive mechanisms might they encounter with ALMP? How are the different components of the ALMP programs in the case studies organized, mutually referencing, what do they articulate, through what policy tools – such as surveillance, reporting, the length of time between reporting cycles, what activities are accepted (rules), what conditionalities are in place, etc. – and through what cognitive mechanisms (such as active learning, repetition, component training, and more outlined below)? How do ALMP’s messages, policy tools, and cognitive mechanisms ‘match’ up with the environment outlined above (and in more detail in Chapter 3)?

Finally, my analysis will be attuned to the (mis)matches which may result from what ALMP articulates, how, and in relation to its context. Which actors, institutions, or trajectories benefit or suffer from what is taught in the ALMP case studies? For instance, does the ALMP case study address the experience of unemployment or career development or does it encourage re-entry into the market - benefiting an LME which requires a high supply and low cost workforce, as well as a state which has increasingly limited capacity for social support. (Mis)match will be assessed through the coding scheme discussed later in this chapter and the economic and policy trajectories and material outcomes outlined in Chapter 3. If Canadian ALMP communicates a common

sense which reflects regressive ideas (e.g. of individual responsibility for life outcomes without any consideration of structural factors), it will benefit capital by encouraging workers to adapt to the market and reduce their expectations of it and the state. In the context of declining social supports and rising labour market precarity, this kind of common sense would be to the detriment of workers.

Approach

I will examine everyday, front-end policy components (i.e. forms, applications, websites) from the case studies above. My approach has three stages within each case study. First is a process mapping of the broader policy ecology in which the case study is situated. For instance, how does Federal EI connect with provincial ALMP and other federal ALMP programs? Do the programs refer to one another? How is one program situated among other programs in its jurisdiction (e.g. is Ontario's ALMP equally prominent as its education policies? Recall that a significant component to developing automaticity is complementarity between a stimuli or environment (e.g. ALMP) and other stimuli and environments which are related or which the subject experiences. Second is another level of program mapping, this time *within* each case study. For instance, in Ontario and BC I will examine Job Search Systems, Labour Market Information, and Career and Skill Discovery. Do these programs connect to one another? If so, how? Are messages and cognitive mechanisms articulated *across* the programs as well as within them? Again, consistency and repetition are key to developing automaticity, so mapping policies across each other and in their broader policy ecology is significant to this analysis.

Finally, the third step is a close reading of each component within a case study through interpretive policy analysis and the 'model for the development of automaticity' outlined below. I will determine what each component communicates and *how*. For example, if Job Search Systems encourage rapid labour market re-entry explicitly through discourse and/or implicitly through what information and tools are available, is this message repeated throughout the component? What about across other components? Is it consistent when repeated? Are active learning tools deployed? My analysis of each component of each case study will culminate in an evaluation of process mapping of the component across other components and their broader policy ecology, the close readings, and how both connect broadly with the stimuli and constraints identified in Chapters 1 and 3. This will provide a relatively holistic picture of what is communicated, how, and the complementarity at different levels (within each component, across components, within the broader policy ecology of a component, and with the broader stimuli and environment of the Canadian labour market and policy landscape).

Caveats, Background Considerations, and Assumptions

Here I will point to several limitations and assumptions which frame the analysis. The first caveat is that I will focus on what is communicated by ALMP and how, not what individuals learn from it (subject-based research). It is significant to understand the

processes by which ALMP communicates and how—intentionally or otherwise—through everyday policy artefacts and their interactions with broader material and discursive trajectories, and the depth required by the analytical framework I established above does not allow for subject based research in parallel.

The second caveat is that what is communicated is not deterministic: policy recipients, based on their pre-existing schemas, current activities (e.g. looking for work outside of government resources), spatial and temporal position, material conditions (e.g. familial wealth, level of education, experience, etc.), socio-cultural exposure and relations, and identity, will react to what is communicated through ALMP differently. Again, the focus is on what is communicated and how in a policy analysis informed by insights from cognitive psychology.

Third, there is substantial empirical evidence of the broad *salience* of discourses of individual responsibility and stigmas of unemployment and ‘dependency’, among others, in Canada (Marks & Little 2010; McBride & Mitrea 2017; Mitrea 2017). This does not mean that every Canadian has internalized these ideas, but that it is likely that most are aware of them, and therefore are likely established as schemas. If ALMP communicates these discourses, their broader salience will make it easier for them to be internalized to the level of automatic thought. Similarly, aggregate data on material shifts in labour market conditions, cost of living, and household finances suggests that while costs of living and household debt have grown over the last several decades, wage growth has been stagnant and employment precarity has grown or stabilized as a ‘new normal’ since the late 1990s (with another jolt post-2008) (Chapter 3). Finally, these material shifts result from documented economic and policy trajectories which shape people’s everyday lives (stimuli) but also how they can act (constraint). Thus, while this is not a subject-based analysis which can determine each individual’s lived experiences, there is substantial aggregate data which allows me to cautiously assume that the conditions outlined in this paragraph, this chapter, and the following chapter have been either directly encountered or observed by the vast majority of the population. Consequently, these conditions constitute the environment in which the cognitive effects of ALMP must be analysed. That is to say that a message delivered in a way that is conducive to automaticity will be far more effective if it is also consistent with the broader environment of a policy recipient. For instance, if an unemployed person is repeatedly ‘told’ to immediately look for work by ALMP, and they have no other policies to turn to for support, have experienced employment precarity or are aware of it, may not have substantial savings or private support, and are aware of the stigma of unemployment, then the message that person received from ALMP is consistent with their environment, and is more likely to be internalized.

Fourth, although motivation and attention are significant to automaticity, they cannot be measured here (Holt & Rainey 2002). However, I will cautiously assume a level of conscious motivation to complete the ALMP programs because a) the programs may have conditionalities that require completion for benefit receipt; b) when benefits are not offered, completion of the programs is likely still undertaken deliberately because of the motivation to find employment so as to secure survival (Little 2001; Lightman 2006; Herd et al 2009). Schema development is also contingent on the *functionality* of the

response to stimuli which is suggested, taught, or learned – for instance, the subject may be more likely to attempt to complete an ALMP program if they believe it will help them find employment (Little 2001; North & Fiske 2012). Individuals who are unemployed in a context of declining social supports (see above and Chapter 3) are more likely to sacrifice more for work, settle for less (i.e. reservation wages and job type or quality), and be less likely to negotiate or wait for a particular job (Dunk 2002; Nichols et al 2013). Further, multiple studies (e.g. Anderson 1982, 1983, 1992, Schneider et al 1982, and Rogers et al 1997) have not only validated the importance of attention and motivation to automaticity, but also that both are improved under ‘high workload’ and ‘mild stress’ conditions (Holt & Rainey 2002; Fiske & Taylor 2013; Bargh et al 2012). For this study, my cautious assumption of moderate to high motivation under the survival demands and stress of unemployment in Canada fulfill this requirement, but the case studies themselves may exacerbate stress and workload depending on reporting requirements, rules, and conditionalities.

Fifth is a consideration beyond the scope of this analysis: related to the fourth point is that the process of looking for work for survival, in and of itself, is disciplinary (Read 2009; Pathak 2014). This is important to keep in mind (and crucial to any subject-based work), because it may have a stronger effect on what schemas develop and will likely be complimentary to what is taught by ALMP.

Sixth, because this is a policy and not subject-based analysis, I cannot include individual mediating conditions to the development of automaticity. A policy analysis cannot determine whether a recipient comprehends an ALMP program, the effect of medium (i.e. digital vs. in person), what is learned, whether learning is effortful or automatic, learner identities (material conditions, cultural background, existing schemas, views of the state, and much more), prior experience with ALMP programs, affective responses to unemployment/public programs (affect is widely considered the strongest determining factor for interpretation), social comparison theory (individuals compare and modify attitudes and behaviours in relation to others), and motivation (Hewstone et al 2015; Van Lange et al 2011; Fiske & Taylor 2013; Baron & Ranaji 2006).

A Model for the Development of Automaticity

Here I discuss the cognitive mechanisms which are relevant to the development of schemas and automaticity and which will be used when analyzing the case studies. The first two ‘mechanisms’ are overarching and apply to the subsequent mechanisms as well.

First, **the Framing Effect** describes the way in which different conclusions are likely to be drawn from the same information presented in different ways (North & Fiske 2012; Fox & Alldred 2014). This is central and implicit in my ontological position outlined above, but bears mentioning. For example, information on labour market re-entry will be processed differently if it is framed as the only option vs. if it is framed as one option among others, and that job seekers should be aware of their rights in the labour market.

Reinforcement in the form of **feedback, consistency, repetition**, is central to all accounts on the development of automaticity. Reinforcement occurs when a relatively coherent and tight range of responses to a relatively coherent and tight range of

presentations of a stimuli are repeated consistently and with positive or negative feedback (direct via ‘operant conditioning’ or observed via ‘modelling’) (Holt & Rainey 2002; Bracher 2012; Hewstone et al 2015; North & Fiske 2012; Fiske & Taylor 2013; Bargh et al 2012). This can occur in several ways. **Spatial Repetition** is when ideas are repeated *within* an event or artefact (‘endogenous’) or *across* events or artefacts (‘exogenous’). The more often an idea is encountered, particularly in everyday communication, the more likely it is to inform schemas and become automatic. **Temporal Repetition** is repetition *throughout* a component and program rather than concentrated at one point. This is also known as the ‘spacing effect,’ wherein information is better recalled if exposure is over a longer period of time (Hewstone et al 2015, 380). **Internal Consistency** is when relatively consistent stimuli (i.e. unemployment and understandings provided of it) are met with relatively consistent responses (i.e. consistent encouragement or instruction to turn to the market), and then repeated. There should be consistency *within* a component (e.g. a form, endogenous) and *between* components in a program (e.g. forms, rules, etc., exogenous). Finally, **External Consistency** occurs when presentations of stimuli and responses to them are consistent with broader contexts in which subjects may encounter those stimuli and responses. Will a person’s existing schemas support or contradict what is taught by ALMP – this may differ from person to person, but living in a Liberal Market Economy, it is likely that even a Marxist is aware of how they could (and that they ‘should’) ‘get a job’. This is also captured in the ‘illusion of truth’ (more likely to believe a familiar statement) and ‘availability cascade’ (collective beliefs gain more plausibility through increased repetition in public discourse) cognitive biases (North & Fiske 2012; Hewstone et al 2015).

Moving on to specific mechanisms,²² **association** or ‘classical conditioning’ describes a form of learning in a social context in which an individual observes ‘patterns’ in the world between actions, ideas, emotions, and/or events and integrates those patterns into schemas if they are repeated consistently. This form of learning ranges from subtle to explicit, including minuscule cues and details of behaviour to very ‘clear’ associations (e.g. a father angrily denounces an increase in income taxes and the child associates the negative affect, behaviour, cues, and ideas) (Hewstone et al 2015; Fiske & Taylor 2013). Policy artefacts can create associations between particular actions (i.e. looking for work), expected results, and ways of thinking (i.e. employability).

Observational Learning/Modeling describes the process by which individuals replicate behaviour and/or attitudes observed from a model. For instance, the child in the previous example may also begin to critique ‘high income taxes,’ not because of personal experience or intentional learning, but because they are replicating the behaviour of their father (model) (Bargh et al 2012; Holt & Rainey 2002; Fiske & Taylor 2013). Policy artefacts ‘model’ particular behaviours and attitudes.

Operant Conditioning is the Pavlovian ‘reward/punish’ method, in which particular behaviours and associated ways of thinking are rewarded while others are punished

²² All the ‘specific mechanisms’ discussed in this section were present in the cases analyzed. Another mechanism which is prevalent in the literature and relevant to automatic cognition, nudging, was not present.

(feedback), creating and reinforcing a good-bad dichotomy. Reward/punishment can be experienced directly or observed ('vicarious reinforcement') (Hewstone et al 2015; Bargh et al 2012; Holt & Rainey 2002). With ALMP, knowledge of potential 'punishment' (i.e. continued unemployment resulting in material deprivation, potential shame, etc.) as a result of failing to find work or violating conditionalities can 'vicariously reinforce' the internalization of what is taught.

Priming is a significant cognitive mechanisms which describes the way a stimuli activates multiple schemas which remain in active memory to display an automatic effect on the reaction to a separate stimuli (Fiske & Taylor 2013; Holt & Rainey 2002, 28; North & Fiske 2012, 91). This connects those schemas which activated together in response to the first stimuli, making it more likely that they will be activated together. For example, if I say the word 'doctor', in addition to triggering whatever schema the listener has of a 'doctor', related schemas are 'primed' for activation, such as 'nurse' or 'stethoscope'. This is where the 'connectedness' of the coding spectrum fits: even if EI documents do not tie 'employment' to 'independence' (although it is implied throughout), repeatedly pushing the norm of employment potentially related salient and affectively charged topics, such as 'independence'.

Another significant mechanisms is the translation of **Declarative Knowledge to Procedural Knowledge via Component Training**. Multiple studies (i.e. Fitts 1964, Kintsch 1993, Shiffrin & Schneider 1977) indicate that automaticity develops best when declarative knowledge (abstract, content driven) is *compiled into* procedural knowledge (practices, rules, steps) - *how* to think, act, and perhaps feel in response to a stimuli (Holt & Rainey 2002, 31; Bracher 2012). For instance, a statement or procedure saying 'do X and Y to find employment, which is dignified' connects the declarative ('employment = dignified') to actual ways to think and act. Likewise, other studies (e.g. Anderson 1982, 1983, 1992, Schneider et al 1982, Fiske 1995, and Rogers et al 1997) indicate automaticity is improved when an overall response to a stimuli (i.e. a way to complete a task) is broken up into components of a whole, and training those components to automaticity (Holt & Rainey 2002, 28; North & Fiske 2012). In the context of ALMP, component training could involve guiding policy recipients on how to search for work, where to look, and how to present themselves. Finally, while I cannot determine policy recipients' comprehension (based on levels of attention, motivation, prior knowledge, and competence), component training should make tasks simpler, clear, with instructions, and in steps, all of which aids in the development of automaticity (Holt & Rainey 2002, 38; Bracher 2012; Bargh et al 2012).

Active Learning is the idea that reflection, interaction, and engagement in the learning process will improve learning outcomes and automaticity (Markant et al 2016; Bakon et al 2016). This mechanism has been a staple of research and practice in educational psychology for over fifty years. For instance, Collier & Callero (2005) found that policy recipients involved in a recycling program in which they were encouraged to adopt particular behaviours (with concurrent declarative knowledge) saw them develop corresponding schemas and automaticity. With ALMP, writing and filling out forms as well as conducting any activities of a program (particularly if they are requirements) may improve automaticity.

Based on the cognitive psychology literature, this model outlines how a particularly framed message, deployed through the mechanisms above, and repeated consistently, can be most conducive to being internalized to the point of automaticity. Each component of my case studies will be examined through interpretive policy analysis and this model, and evaluated in the context of the process mapping of each component and the environment in which they all exist: contemporary policy, economic, material, and discursive trajectories in Canada. While the model outlines mechanisms key to automaticity, consistency and repetition *beyond* the case studies, including across other policies recipients may encounter and their discursive and material environment, is a crucial component to strong automaticity.

Coding Spectrum

The coding spectrum offers a non-exhaustive rubric for evaluating *what* is communicated by the rules, conditionalities, processes, forms, and documents of an ALMP program. Those components may use rhetoric or culturally salient terms (i.e. ‘individual responsibility’) or they may imply them in, for example, requiring policy recipients to conduct job searches without offering any indication of support in finding work. This section is framed as a spectrum because what is communicated can be categorized as broadly progressive²³ or regressive²⁴ (Clarke 2005; Newman 2013). Below I outline eight intersecting concepts on the regressive side of the spectrum (with the progressive implied as the inverse) which have been discussed in various ways by critical political economists and policy scholars and post-positivists across multiple disciplines. Not all of these concepts may be reflected in the case studies, but they are included because they are the most widely identified and discussed evaluations of contemporary political economy and public policy trajectories, and constitute a relatively comprehensive rubric for *what* is likely to be communicated by ALMP.

None of these concepts are completely distinct, and that speaks to the interconnected nature of schemas and their potentially mutual activation through priming. For instance, a ‘liberal schema’, as outlined below, operates at the intersection of legalism (rights), individualism, and atomization, while a ‘neoliberal’ schema operates at the intersection of individualism, atomization, self-interest, rationality/utility maximization, and accumulation (Held 2006; Hall & O’Shea 2013). Depending on the scholars referenced, there may be even more intersections, indicating that these concepts, although not subsumable into one another, emerged from a somewhat shared history with concepts, practices, and institutions which are complementary. In practice, because these concepts are highly diffuse in LMEs like Canada, individuals have likely encountered them and developed schemas around them (Clarke 2005; Newman 2013; Mitrea 2017; McBride & Mitrea 2017; Hall & O’Shea 2013). Further, because the concepts intersect, encountering

²³ Focusing on individual material, physical, and psychological well-being and acknowledging structural effects on individual outcomes.

²⁴ Focusing on individual responsibility for outcomes, pushing them back into the labour market, ignoring structural facets of life outcomes, and not addressing their material, social, or psychological experience of precarity.

a stimuli related to ‘individual responsibility for life outcomes’ (such as the absence of structural considerations in ALMP and requirements to rapidly re-enter the labour market) would prime *all* schemas an individual has developed which are tied to that stimuli (i.e. the interrelated concepts below). This strengthens each schema, the connections between them, and makes them more likely to be the ‘automatic’ response for this and related stimuli.

The interconnectedness of these concepts is supported by schema theory (on how schemas connect to each other), priming, and in linguistics, wherein meaning is not fixed or static but relies on differing (‘I understand X by differing it from A and B’) and deferring (the process of differing deferred along sign systems) (Bargh et al 2012; North & Fiske 2012; Derrida 1982). For instance, the concept of austerity is not fixed, and relies on what concepts are tied to it in a context (e.g. just fiscal consolidation vs. its role in accumulation and finance vs. metaphors about belt-tightening and leanness) and how those concepts are conceptualized (Mitrea 2017). This is why it is relevant to briefly outline *several related* concepts: 1) if the schemas below are interconnected and 2) if what is communicated in ALMP activates components of even a single ‘schema’ below and 3) the subject has encountered ways of thinking and acting from more than one of the schemas, then 4) the development and activation of an aspect of even one of the schemas below would prime the others, based on their intersections, when triggered. As such, each concept is strengthened in being able to rely on the others to entrench an understanding, cover more stimuli because of connections between schemas, and so increase automaticity and the ‘common sense’ of each concept.

The concepts below cover *what* may be communicated²⁵ by ALMP and the model for the development of automaticity covers *how* they may be communicated. The first concept in this scheme is

‘Responsibilization’ is a concept based on the assumption that rises in inequality and poverty are a result of individual failings rather than structural design, and morally equates self-care, discipline, responsibility, and self-containment (‘you are responsible for yourself, but also for your effect on others’) with good citizenship and the realization of future security (Knight 1998; Whitworth & Carter 2014, 110). While ‘responsibility’ can and has operated in non-individualizing discursive regimes, it is framed through autonomy (individualization) and ‘personal choice’ by neoliberalism and austerity (Knight 1998, 125; Whitworth & Carter 2014, 110; Herd et al 2009; Harrison 2013).

Neoliberalism (also neoclassical, rational choice to some extent) is a highly salient concept in the literatures this study responds to. The rise of neoliberalism is marked by the increasing legibility of several ideas in policy, politics, economics, and culture: individualism, the primacy of markets and market logics, accumulation, rational self-

²⁵ The concepts discussed in this section all appeared in the cases analyzed. Some concepts which are salient in the literature but which were not reflected explicitly in the cases include Liberalism, which constructs a unitary, self-interested actor whose autonomy is paramount (Held 2006, 262-68; Blyth 2013, 116). Another concept was Resilience, which encourages individuals to internalize responsibility for precarity and be independent, rational, and adaptable (Aranda et al 2012, 548; Harrison 2013, 98; Diprose 2014). Finally, Risk was also not explicitly apparent, and it is a concept which pushes individuals to understand the world through risk and manage it themselves (Isin 2004, 217; Diprose 2014).

interest and utility maximization ('homo economicus'), self-determination (failure or success individualized), and individual responsibility (moral judgments for dependency, debt, etc.) (Stewart 1993, 317-318; Clarke & Newman 2012, 311; Marks & Little 2010, 195; Hall & O'Shea 2013, 11). Neoliberalism intersects with liberalism's focus on the individual and their self-determination, with individual responsibility in responsabilization, and competition in entrepreneurial subjectivity, yet they are not subsumable within one another.

One of the oldest concepts identified in the literature is '**Austerity**', which is more than policies of fiscal consolidation. It is a moral economy built around practices of consumption which frame individual responsibility for reduced consumption as a practice of 'good citizenship' (Knight 1998; Clarke 2005; Mitrea 2017). Failing to make the virtuously necessary shared sacrifices compelled by 'threats' (e.g. sustainability) undermines the future of the subject and the community (Clarke & Newman 2012; Mitrea 2017). Austere logics are rooted in neoconservative critiques (from the Protestant Ethic and Judeo-Christian asceticism) of the 'self-absorbed materialism' of consumer capitalism, privileging thrift (reduced consumption), self-reliance (self-containment), 'industry' (activation), and self-discipline (Kolozi 2013, 49; Walters 2013; Mitrea 2017). While potentially anti-capitalist, austere logics intersect with individualism, responsabilization, and activation. In practice, austerity policies typically redistribute resources to the private sector, such as through contracting out or privatization (Pierre 2015). For individuals, invocations of austerity are typically focused on reducing their dependence on social services rather than reduced consumerism (Clarke 2005; Mitrea 2017; Clark & Newman 2012).

'**Activation**' is a significant but relatively nuanced concept, which implores subjects to 'self-actualize', to transform from 'passive recipients of state assistance' into 'active subjects', making rational and responsible choices in their pursuit of self-sustainment (Clarke 2005, 448; Newman 2013, 43). For instance, workfare recipients (and workers in general) are socially constructed in these programs to 'self-actualize' through 'investment' in one's skills or abilities so as to make themselves employable (Pathak 2014, 105). In this framework, individuals are meant to 'take on' their individual responsibility for survival and well-being through entrepreneurialism, flexibility (e.g. finding work, developing skills), or reduced consumption (e.g. of healthcare resources) (Clarke 2005, 448; Newman 2013, 43).

A very influential concept contemporarily (particularly in LMEs) is '**Entrepreneurialism**', which is a distinct facet of neoliberal logic which focuses on internalizing the commodification of labour, such that people do not view themselves as workers, but as 'human capital' (Read 2009, 26). As Foucault said: "homo economicus is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself", and in this approach individuals are individually responsible for 'activating' themselves to develop their capacities and expectations in line with market competition, flexibility, and employability through 'investment in one's skills' (a hallmark of the 'human capital perspective') through market based pedagogies (e.g. training, education, mobility, flexibility) (Pathak 2014, 105; Read 2009).

While these concepts above are identified across the critical political economy, policy studies, and post-structuralist literatures as being highly salient in late capitalism – particularly in LMEs – I do not claim that all of them will be reflected in Canadian ALMP. Rather, the intent of this coding spectrum was to construct a rubric of salient, regressive ways of thinking and acting which may inform what ALMP communicates to policy recipients. They are identified as regressive because contemporarily they are overwhelmingly deployed as a means of locating responsibility for life outcomes solely in the individual, ignoring structural processes (such as the economic and policy trajectories outlined in Chapter 3). Further, because many of these concepts intersect, should ALMP communicate an aspect of one, it would prime any related concepts which a person has encountered, strengthening each concept, the connections between them, and their automaticity. While this study is significantly focused on *how* ideas become internalized to the level of common sense, *what* is communicated determines who benefits and suffers as a result.

Validity and Reliability

Generally, a study is valid if it measures what it claims to and if analytical inferences are in line with empirical evidence. Further, it is reliable if its results can be reproduced (Halperin & Heath 2012, 167; Yanow 2000; Yanow 2003). As this is not a quantitative, positivist study, reliability and validity will be addressed through reflexivity, detailed documentation, thick description, and substantiation through the literature (Schon & Rein 1994; Yanow 2000; Collier 2011). My positionality and identity has an inescapable effect on the decisions I make – choosing methods, theories, cases, how I analyze, etc. – which are acts of power determining what is mentioned, analyzed, or focused upon. For this reason, I will be reflexive, turning my critical capacities to my own work and context, turning to peers for their insights, connecting my approaches and inferences to the literature, being thorough in my analysis and description, and providing the primary data that I engage with (Schon & Rein 1994; Yanow 2003).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the cognitive mechanisms by which ‘common sense’ develops through schemas and automaticity in the everyday of public policy, situating them in an ontological and epistemological framework which takes context, culture, and social relations seriously as mutually constitutive with cognition. In that vein, the role of material-semiotic stimuli and the constraints of institutions and policies are important in shaping the environment in which cognition develop (cognitive governance) and in which policy recipients may turn to Employment Insurance and provincial ALMP.

Once there, ALMP rules, forms, documents, and procedures communicate to recipients how to conceive of themselves as workers, the labour market, and the role of the state. What is communicated may be progressive or regressive (or some combination), and may link related concepts, making what is communicated more potent. Further, if ALMP – intentionally or not – deploys the cognitive mechanisms outlined in the model

above, what is communicated is more likely to be internalized as ‘common sense’, particularly if it is consistent with broader material-semiotic stimuli and the organization of public policy and the market in Canada. The kind of common sense articulated by ALMP will be to the benefit or detriment of different actors and institutions, and analyzing it through a cognitive governance lens provides insights into how that is constructed.

Chapter 3: Immiseration, Political Economy, and Public Policy

This chapter explores the broader political economy²⁶ and policy trajectories in which my ALMP cases are situated. Chapters 4-6 will focus on particular active labour market policy (ALMP) programs, their internal consistency, external relationships with other programs, and what they communicate to policy recipients through the cognitive mechanisms outlined in Chapter 2. Context is crucial as consistency between what is communicated by ALMP and the broader world in which individuals live is key to developing deep, interconnected, and automatic schemas. Consistency operates in several ways: first, between the broad configurations and trajectories of public policy, political economy, and what is communicated by ALMP. Second, the strongest schemas are those which respond to people's needs.

The current post-Fordist accumulation regime in Canada and similar economies is based on leanness (consolidating management, processing, and staffing) and flexibility ('just-in-time' production, supplying, distribution, and labour) in the real economy to maximize accumulation for financial capital. Further, it is a political economy trajectory which is supported through *facilitating* states and public policy regimes (Harvey 1990; Pierre 2015; Vidal 2013). Public policies are increasingly organized so as to benefit capital and the wealthy (through re-regulation, reduced taxes, relaxed employment standards, corporate welfare, and subsidizing the costs of research and development, for instance), elide or punish the vulnerable (through retrenching social supports and their shift toward 'activation,' surveillance, and conditionalities), and reduce the role of the state in the economy (by adopting 'lean management' principles, through austerity, privatization, and through devolution of policy delivery and even design to the third sector) (Whiteside 2014; Brennan 2014; Blyth 2013; Berry 2016).

The results include decreasing employment quality and security, lower labour market participation among youth and marginalized groups, and heightened inequality in a time of rising cost of living relative to the 'golden age' of capitalism during late Fordism and the Keynesian Welfare State from post-WWII to the early 1970s (Tal 2016; Noack & Vosko 2012; Harvey 1990; McBride & Mitrea 2017). ALMP programs specifically teach people how to navigate this paradigm. However, while ALMP does address how to live and survive this 'new economy', it does so in a way that *facilitates* and benefits capital over workers ('matching' with the needs/interests of the former and 'mismatching' with the latter). Individuals are, in line with the trajectory of labour market policy (LMP) in liberal market economies (LME), are taught to embrace employability over employment security, and prepare themselves for a new reality of multiple careers – a sentiment expressed repeatedly by Canadian politicians (Iversen & Soskice 2015; Stanford 2013; Press Progress 2016).

The political economy and public policy trajectories outlined above encourage immiseration, which refers to the idea that capitalism is contingent on ever greater reductions of real wages, the deterioration of working conditions for the lower classes,

²⁶ The analysis of the intersections between politics (e.g. political institutions, interests, power relations, etc.) and economic (McBride 1996).

and sufficiently high unemployment (Marx 708). The benefit of immiseration for capital is threefold: first, lower or stagnant wages and working conditions reduce the cost of labour and mean a greater share of economic growth goes to profit; second, sufficiently high unemployment reduces the ability of workers to reject poor quality and paying work; third, such conditions may reduce workers' expectations of the market (Marx 1887, 708).²⁷

The focus of this chapter is on how such an accumulation regime is enacted in the global political economy ('macro'), facilitated by public policy ('meso'), and provides the material and ideational context and survival demands for individuals to engage with ALMP ('micro') and what it communicates to recipients about how to think and act in this regime. As such, this chapter provides empirical data to illustrate the broad material-semiotic conditions ('stimulus') that workers experience in Canada and the economic and policy trajectories which shape those conditions and constrain avenues for response ('constraint'). The process mapping and close reading of everyday policy components in Chapters 4-6 must be considered in the context of the environment outlined in this chapter, as consistency between people's lived experiences and *how* they are encouraged to think and act is significant to whether the latter becomes automatic thought. Should Canadian ALMP communicate ways of thinking and acting – particularly through the cognitive mechanisms outlined in Chapter 2 - which maintain the trajectories outlined in this chapter, it will construct a common sense which contributes to immiseration and a post-fordist accumulation regime. Accumulation regimes are maintained in multiple ways, from supra-political depoliticization of economic policy (i.e. new constitutionalism in multilateral trade and investment agreements and regional organizations) to attempting to manage cognition, and that is my focus.

The 'Macro': Historical and Emergent Trajectories in the Global Political Economy

An 'accumulation regime' is the long-term stabilization of particular institutional and behavioural relations between capital, labour, and the state (Harvey 1990, 121; Levitt 2013).²⁸ From the late 18th-mid 20th century, Fordism became dominant based on the rationalized, hierarchical division of industrial production into discrete and repetitive tasks, facilitating mass consumption, a culture predicated on both aspects, and increasing unionization (125-126). Fordism constituted a period of 'normal accumulation,' whereby an 'investor' uses money to buy/hire labour power and commodities to produce a new commodity, which is more valuable than its input costs, and is sold for a profit and reinvested into this process to produce new commodities, and so on (Harvey 2008, 137). Ultimately this leads to overproduction and the overaccumulation of capital which cannot be profitably reinvested and underconsumption in which growth cannot be absorbed by consumers, at which point creative destruction (the internal 'adaptation' of capital to

²⁷ Of course, immiseration undermines the capacities of workers to consume, and is an example of the externalizing behaviour of firms (reducing their costs without consideration for the ramifications) and inherent contradictions of capitalism.

²⁸ That definition was paraphrased by David Harvey from the 'regulation school' (i.e. Aglietta 1979, Lipietz 1986, Boyer 1986), and elides cognition – or the way people think.

changing conditions) and accumulation by dispossession (the appropriation of public resources, such as through colonialism or privatization) occur (Levitt 2013; Harvey 2008; Harvey 1990).

By the mid-1960s, the success of Fordist rationalization in efficiency gains, increasing internationalization (and offshoring) by US firms, and competition from ‘third world countries’ (particularly in South-East Asia), Europe, and Japan led to the fracture of the Bretton Woods agreement and the transition to floating exchange rates (Harvey 1990, 141; Vidal 2013; Levitt 2013). Neoliberals argued that ‘rigidities’ in investment, production, labour markets (evinced in the power of labour disruptions from 1968-72), and state social commitments led to flexible monetary policy and the inflationary wave, OPEC oil crisis, and stagflation of 1973 (Harvey 1990, 142; Berry 2016). The accumulation crisis of Fordism saw the emergence of ‘flexible accumulation’, which focuses on flexibility in labour processes, markets, productions, and consumption, increasing financialization, and intensified commercial, organizational, and technological change and creative destruction (Harvey 1990, 147; Vidal 2013). This accumulation regime presided over increased ‘efficiencies and productivity’ through new management techniques, initial automation, the globalization of supply chains, production, and distribution, and the compression of space and time (i.e. ‘short-termism’). Other aspects of flexible accumulation include the rising prominence of the services, knowledge, and creative economies predicated on workers developing their ‘human capital’, and weakening union power. These developments led to greater demands for worker flexibility in an environment of structural unemployment and underemployment with strong volatility, competition, stagnant wages, and narrowing profits – i.e. an immiserated workforce (Harvey 1990, 150; Berry 2016).

While profits have only recently begun to stagnate from decreased aggregate demand, the general Keynesian compact – the rise of growth, wages, and profits – has left only profits rising (Brennan 2014). Globally, decades of austerity in advanced capitalist (and other) states has led to an infrastructure gap, rising inequality, low global demand, and rising low quality work (see the last section of this chapter) (Whiteside 2014; Berry 2016; Levitt 2013).

In the ‘varieties of capitalism’ literature, Canada is typically considered a ‘liberal market economy’ (‘LME’, along with other Anglo-Saxon economies, such as the US and the UK), defined by arms-length, competitive relations between state and firms, competition, and formal contracting (Hall & Soskice 2001, 8; Iversen & Soskice 2015; Pierre 2015). LMEs generally have more fluid labour markets with increasing non-standard employment relations, little collaborative training, little funding for ALMP, and focus on individual responsibility for developing transferrable skills (as a result of relatively weaker employment standards and trade unions) (Iversen & Soskice 2015; Pierre 2015; Berry 2016). Industrial relations in Canada, like other LMEs, are a decentralized, legally based form of industrial pluralism in which state intervention is relatively minimal, providing a legal framework and administrative oversight that intervenes only to maintain industrial peace (Eidlin 2015; Hall & Soskice 2001). LME financing is heavily based on financial markets, with high transparency, dispersed

shareholding, and market valuation imploring managers to be sensitive to current profitability (Berry 2016; Sawyer 2014).

Canada is a financialized, hinterland, staples economy: more integrated into the US economy from late Fordism onward, with rising acquisition of Canadian businesses by US firms, only to be downsized and at times closed in the subsequent years (Layton 1976; McBride 1996). This economy relies increasingly on extracting and selling raw resources (by multinational corporations), on credit-based consumer demand, and on a large financial, particularly banking sector (Berry 2016; Layton 1976; Stanford 1999; McBride 1996). To be sure, high levels of financialization and weak trade unions and employment standards are ‘institutionally complementary’ to a flexible accumulation regime, but the funding, scope, and orientation of ALMP are also highly relevant (Hall & Soskice 2001, 17).

The remainder of this section will outline global and Canadian trends in financialization, globalization and the ‘race to the bottom,’ and sectoral shifts and accelerated disruption. These trajectories in the global (and domestic) political economy, particularly when complemented by domestic policy paradigms, lead to immiseration, which is as much a product of a shift to financialized flexible accumulation as it is *a necessary condition for it*. A higher supply of flexible and skilled labour enables firms to modulate their utilization of human capital in line with short-term profit motivations. As such, a high supply work force is central to a flexible accumulation regime in a financialized liberal market economy. These economic trajectories, in conjunction with the policy trajectories discussed later in this chapter, shape the material-semiotic conditions and constraints which Canadian ALMP and workers exist in and respond to. If the conditions discussed in this section are normalized by Canadian ALMP and communicated using cognitive mechanisms conducive to automaticity, it will construct a common sense that benefit this accumulation regime.

Financialization

‘Financialization’ refers to “the increasing role of financial motives,” markets, actors, and institutions in international and national economies (Epstein 2005 in Sawyer 2014, 6). Contemporary financialization expanded rapidly in line with the crisis of the Fordist accumulation regime and the transition to flexible accumulation: as normal accumulation ended and profitable reinvestment disappeared, financial markets and instruments²⁹ came to be a source of profit increasingly detached from the real economy, but which dictated its outcomes, particularly in liberal market economies (Odih 2003; Sawyer 2014; Montgomerie 2008). This period saw the erosion of capital controls established in the 1930s as international financial markets – based heavily in the metropolises of New York and London – grew in size, speed (thanks to ICT developments) and complexity, accompanied by a series of financial crises.³⁰

²⁹ e.g. the growth of derivatives – contracts based on an underlying asset, such as a promise to make payments based on the future movement of an interest rate.

³⁰ e.g. the collapse of international banks in the 1970s, the developing country debt crisis of the early 1980s, the Mexican Peso crisis of 1994, and the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-98 (Odih 2003).

As financial markets grew in size and reach, firms in LMEs increasingly turned to public trading as a source of capitalization (over traditional credit from banks), disciplining managers and firms to *constantly* maintain shareholder value, leading to greater transparency, surveillance, and disciplinary power for capital (shareholders) to deprive an entity of value nearly instantaneously.

As such, firms in highly financialized LMEs typically adopt a ‘short-termist’ orientation, maximizing profits and creating the expectations for future profits to satisfy equity markets, at the expense of reinvestment in the firm, employee wages, job security, job quality, and cost to consumers (Davis 2015; Harvey 1990; Berry 2016). Finance has grown to be a significant lobbyist, pushing for constant de-regulation, re-regulation, and ‘co-production’ of financial regulations at national and international levels to enable them to continue to utilize experimental financial mechanisms while ultimately evading accountability through government bailouts (Montgomerie 2008; Sawyer 2014; Levinson 2013; Blyth 2013).

Thus, corporations lower costs to maintain high profits, but also to engage in practices like ‘strip-mining’, wherein a firm buys back its own shares to instantaneously raise stock prices and enrich institutionalized investors (Leopold 2017). Although growth has slowed, profits and wealth have not followed the same dynamic, as after-tax profit as a percentage of revenue grew from 6.5 percent in the mid-1970s to a peak of nearly 12 percent in 2009 (Brennan 2014, 18). At the same time, the equity capitalization of the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX) top 60 Canadian firms relative to all firms declined from roughly 30 percent in the early 1950s to 15 percent in the mid-1970s before rising sharply in the early-1990s to reach a peak of 65 percent in 2009 (18). This indicates that finance has grown – despite relatively low growth in the real economy – become more concentrated, and has nearly doubled after tax profit while manufacturing has declined, wages have been stagnant, and employment quality has declined (Harvey 1990; Noack & Vosko 2012; Tal 2016). Contemporary financialization increasingly separates profit from the real economy (Stanford 1999) but at the same time makes the latter accountable to it – the first concern of management is short-term profitability as a way of maintaining shareholder value, dictating how they organize production, logistics, and labour.

Globalization and the Race to the Bottom

Globalization also drives flexible accumulation, providing the spatial, temporal, and conceptual foundations for ‘the race to the bottom’ – a process whereby global competition for investment drives a downward decline in real wages, regulations, and tax rates (Mehmet & Tavakoli 2003; Woods 2006; Jensen 2012; Mitrea 2016). Globalization is typically described as the intensification of interactions at a distance, including extensive and intensive expansion (Porter 2005; Berry 2016; Harvey 1990). The accumulation crisis of Fordism in the 1960s was driven in part by the ‘pressure valve’ of burgeoning trans-nationalism in the corporate world, as near full-employment, high wages, and strong labour movements in advanced capitalist states contributed to a decline in profitability and reinvestment (Harvey 1990; Vidal 2013). As a result of that and increasing global competition, mass consumption, and technological advances (in

transportation and telecommunications), corporations in the global north began exploring export-processing zones and the general off-shoring of production, supply, and logistics chains in less developed countries (e.g. South East Asia) with lower wage costs, weak or non-existent labour movements, and abundant labour supply (Winters & Martuscelli 2014; Harvey 1990; Levitt 2013). Multiple studies have qualitatively and quantitatively indicated that the liberalization of foreign direct investment (FDI) produced a downward pressure on regulation, labour demand/wages, and taxation (whether a direct result or derived from the *risk perception* of political and economic actors) (Mehmet & Tavakoli 2003; Woods 2006; Jensen 2012).³¹

Investment liberalisation has often been pursued in parallel with trade liberalisation, and is often included in large, multilateral agreements between states (beginning with the baseline World Trade Organization framework in 1994 and including examples such as NAFTA, the TPP, and CETA) which increasingly include regulatory conditions, somewhat extensive protections against state ‘appropriation’ of capital and its profits, intellectual property rights, and supra-national investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) (Winters & Martuscelli 2014; Mitrea 2016; Van Harten 2005). Similar to analyses of FDI, studies of multilateral agreements (including NAFTA and predictions for CETA) indicate that while they may increase growth (in some sectors), they limit the regulatory scope of national governments, decrease employment, increase productivity, and in the case of Canada, exacerbate the shift toward services and resource extraction at the expense of manufacturing (Trefler 2004; Mitrea 2016; Brennan 2015). In establishing these agreements at the supra-national level – beyond the scope of domestic, democratic politics – these agreements are ‘new constitutionalist’ and establish a depoliticized authority beyond the demos and nation state, but remain actively pursued by certain levels of government to the benefit of certain sectors of the economy (e.g. exporters with a competitive advantage) (Van Harten 2005; Mitrea 2016).

The globalization of capital has been facilitated by willing states (at least in the global north) pursuing international frameworks of trade and investment liberalization, the effect of which has been to encourage transnationalism in firms and a race to the bottom in wages, regulations, and taxation while maximizing profits (as will be discussed later in this Chapter, Canada repeatedly lowered its corporate taxes in an effort to remain ‘competitive’ internationally). States lower taxes and regulation and sign onto multilateral trade and investment agreements, reducing their capacity and scope to intervene in the economy. The result for workers – certainly in a context of weak retraining and transition policies in LMEs – is stagnating or decreased wages, lower employment security, and higher unemployment (and/or lower labour market participation). In this way, the effect of globalization on firms, states, and workers generally drives immiseration.

Lean Management, Flexible Labour, and the Acceleration of Sectoral Disruption

³¹ Despite the fact that that same literature does not find a relationship between lowering corporate taxes and attracting FDI (Jensen 2012).

For firms, increasing global competition (in addition to the accumulation crisis of Fordism) drove shifts to ‘lean management’³² principles focused on decentralizing production and logistics, vertical consolidation, flexibility in labour, and identifying and eliminating ‘waste’ (typically through work intensification, heavy standardization, rigid principles, statistical control, and eliminating employee discretion) so as to improve profitability (McCann et al 2015, 1558; Vidal 2013; Berry 2016; Holweg 2007). A concurrent shift has been in ‘just-in-time’ techniques (JIT), which, along with outsourcing ‘non-core activities’ constitute the two primary approaches for achieving flexible and lean production for firms (Holl et al 2010; Odih 2003; Harvey 1990). Productivity is improved through the use of new technologies such as automation, ICT advancements, and layout developments to achieve low-cost, “semi-customized” commodities which more precisely tune economies of scale in supply, production, staffing, and distribution to consumption levels (Holl et al 2010; Odih 2003, 298; Holweg 2007). For labour, this involves ‘numerical flexibility’ in hiring and firing to meet production or service demands, such as the use of fixed-term contracts, seasonal and casual labour, temporary agency labour, freelancers, and outsourcing to respond to fluctuating demand (Odih 2003, 301; Vidal 2013; Harvey 1990). These trends are evident in all advanced capitalist states, but in Canada (and the US), the major fragmentation occurred around the mid-1970s to 1990s, stabilizing in the late 90s and early 2000s, with another burst post-2008 (broad shifts in employment categories will be discussed at the end of this chapter) (CANSIM 282-0002 2017)

Crucially, the increasing influence of shareholders relative to labour and management results in an increasing focus toward short term profits and away from employment, spurring cost-saving endeavours such as ‘lean’ management through outsourcing and JIT flexibilization of capital inputs (including labour) (Davis 2015; Berry 2016). Concurrently, the weakening of labour movements and a combination of drift and outright re-regulation of employment standards also encourage lean and JIT (Eidlin 2015; McBride & Williams 2001).

While lean management and JIT describe changes *within* firms, there have also been sectoral-wide shifts as a result of exogenous competition and technological advances in ICT and automation (Harvey 1990; Vidal 2013; Berry 2016). The general trend in advanced capitalist states like Canada, but particularly in LMEs, has been a shift from manufacturing jobs to services, within which can be included the knowledge economy and the creative economy, as well as more recent emergences such as the ‘sharing’ economy (Harvey 1990, 157; Cheng 2016; Metcalfe 2010). As manufacturing dropped from 33.2% of total employment in 1960 to 28.3% in 1981 in Canada, services grew from 53.5% of employment to 66.2% . Early accounts show that retailing, distribution, transportation, and personal services remained stable, while finance, producer services (i.e. legal, marketing, advertising, etc., likely from outsourcing), insurance, real estate, and health and education grew (the ‘knowledge economy’) (Harvey 1990, 157; Vidal 2013; Levitt 2013). While manufacturing jobs defined the standard employment relationship (SER) as a full year, full time, regular hours, unionized, and decently paid job

³² Also in public administration, alongside or as part of ‘new public management’ reforms.

with benefits and the expectation of long-term employment security, this has shifted over time within manufacturing, toward more ‘flexible’ positions. The service sector, conversely, was more likely to produce ‘flexible’ work. These jobs were more likely to fall under the ‘non-standard employment relationship’ (NSER), which may be part year, part time, with casual hours or zero-hour contracts, less likely to be unionized, paying the minimum wage or close to it with limited benefits and little expectation of long-term employment security (Noack & Vosko 2012; Harvey 1990; Vidal 2013).

More recently, ICT advances have enabled firms with a small knowledge economy workforce to create digital platforms, such as the ‘sharing economy,’ which connects freelancers to customers (e.g. Uber, Task Rabbit) or individuals with capital to customers (e.g. AirBnB) (Cheng 2016; Davis 2015). Other examples include ‘crowd-based microwork’ and online freelancing, in which individuals bid to complete anything from a project (i.e. freelancers) to a small task (i.e. microwork), a sector which grew from 48mn in 2013 to 112mn in 2016 – a 133.33% increase (Policy Horizons 2016). These firms typically have high profits, very low employment, and very large market capitalization – much higher than larger scale employers (Davis 2015; Cheng 2016).

Advances in ‘big data,’ analytics, algorithms, and artificial intelligence are predicted to threaten approximately 50% of jobs in the coming 10-20 years, and are developed (and would be maintained by) relatively small groups of individuals at the high end of the knowledge economy (Helbing et al 2017; Santens 2016). Concurrently, nearly half of all existing jobs may be automated by 2033 according to an Oxford study, and in Canada, between 1.5-7.5mn jobs could be lost in the coming years (Deloitte 2015; Press 2017). Indeed, the major shift in employment will not be between manual and cognitive (i.e. the knowledge economy), but between routine and non-routine: routine manual and cognitive tasks grew by about 21% from 1983 to 1990 (in the US, ~3% a year), growing another 8.8% from then to 2007 (~0.5% a year) before shrinking by 13.5 and 19% by 2013 (Santens 2016). Meanwhile non-routine *manual* tasks rose steadily, about 93% from 1983-2013 (~3.1% a year) while non-routine *cognitive* tasks grew by 139% in the same period (~4.63% a year). AIs are now being created to perform the work of call-centre employees, personal assistants, and even the majority of tasks in insurance claims (Santens 2016). For instance, as a result of machine learning, automated trucking may eliminate millions of jobs in a very short period. A White House report in 2016 indicated that workers making less than \$20/hour in 2010 have an 83% chance to lose their job to a machine, while workers making \$40/hour have a 31% chance (Santens 2016; Helbing et al 2017). Combined, contemporary digitization and automation constitute the ‘fourth industrial revolution’ (preceded by the industrial revolution, electricity and mass production, electronics and early IT/automated production), a level of automation and digital advancement marked by accelerating development and scope of ‘cyber-physical systems’ (Peters 2017).

In light of the above, three phenomenon are likely to continue: 1) a small number of mass low wage employers who provide poor quality (i.e. non-standard employment) and often publicly subsidized jobs (wherein workers employed by these business make so little they qualify for public assistance) in retail, hospitality, and logistics (e.g. Walmart and the logistics side Amazon); 2) increasingly automated or soon-to-be-automated jobs

in manufacturing and some services, including in the knowledge economy; 3) very profitable firms who enjoy large market capitalisations but which employ relatively very few people (typically in the knowledge economy, e.g. Facebook, Google, and the digital side of Amazon). Increasing global competition, financialization, and technological advances in ICT and automation drive the shift from ‘diamond’ to ‘hourglass’ income and employment quality distributions, with moderate growth at higher deciles (i.e. non-routine cognitive tasks of the knowledge economy) and at lower ones (i.e. routine and non-routine tasks of services), with the lower end under increasing threat. The result is a decrease in the aggregate demand for labour while supply increases, which, in combination with stagnant wages, precarious employment, and retrenching social supports, signal the conditions of immiseration outlined in the introduction and the material-semiotic conditions which workers in Canada exist in and respond to.

Should the Canadian ALMP cases examined in the subsequent chapters communicate ways of thinking and acting which normalize or support the economic trajectories outlined above³³, and if they do so through cognitive mechanisms conducive to the development of automaticity, they will create a common sense which benefits a post-fordist accumulation regime, to the detriment of workers. If what is communicated by ALMP is consistent with the material-semiotic conditions, constraints, and trajectories outlined in this chapter, it will also increase the chances of the messages becoming internalized as automatic thought (cognitive governance).

The ‘Meso’: Historical and Emergent Trajectories in Fiscal, Social, and Labour Market Policy

The trajectories above in the global political economy are oriented toward extracting profit by reducing the costs of production to greater degrees through offshoring, JIT/flexibilization, lean management, and automation to serve the demands of shareholders in a highly financialized global economy (Harvey 1990; Vidal 2013; Davis 2015). However, these trajectories could only exist through either the drift of public policy (i.e. not keeping up with changes in the GPE) or the active roll back/roll out of regulations, policies, and laws. While flexible accumulation continues, governments face pressures from the ‘race to the bottom’ to lower the costs on capital (labour, regulations, taxes, etc.), and particularly LMEs like Canada take an increasingly market facilitating stance. However, while this orientation ‘matches’ with the needs of capital in flexible accumulation, it is a ‘mismatch’ with the wellbeing of citizens in the labour market. Further still, reducing the scope of government intervention in the economy through austerity has also reduced its capacity to provide social supports (Berry 2016; Blyth 2013; Levinson 2013). In Canada, social and labour market policy has increasingly devolved the risk of survival to the individual while facilitating the growth of capital—consequently providing a double benefit: not only do firms enjoy lower taxes and de/re-regulation, but as social supports retrench (rollback) and become more conditional on employment

³³ e.g. the idea that labour market outcomes are an individual’s responsibility alone, and that they should focus on cultivating their employability and conform to the market.

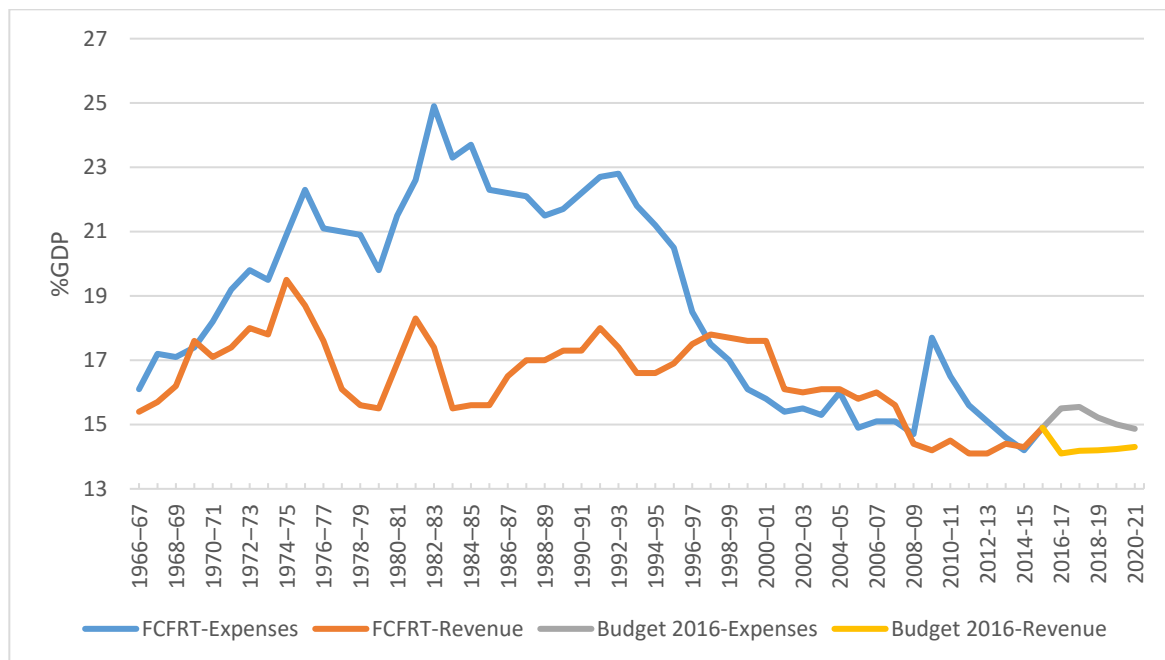
(rollout), they construct a workforce which has nowhere to turn for survival but the market (Lahey 2013; Whiteside 2014; Macdonald 2016; Noack & Vosko 2012).

These trajectories in public policy shape ('constrain') the ways that people can respond to the material-semiotic conditions resulting (significantly) from the economic processes outlined in the previous section ('stimuli'). The process mapping and close reading of the Canadian ALMP cases in the subsequent chapters must be considered in this broad context, as consistency across stimuli, constraints, and 'encouraged automaticity' (particular ideas delivered through cognitive mechanisms) increases the likelihood of policy recipients developing a common sense around what is encouraged.

The Lean State

As firms moved toward lean management in the 1960s and onward, states (particularly in LMEs) became 'lean' through the retrenchment of public sector employment, the introduction of business logics and processes (e.g. New Public Management) in order to enhance 'efficiency' and 'customer satisfaction,' and the reduction of expenditure and revenues (Pierre 2015; McCann et al 2015). Fiscal consolidation, or austerity, is the primary process by which the state becomes 'lean', with a focus on achieving balanced budgets (lowering the deficit to GDP ratio) and lowering the public debt to GDP ratio, usually through spending cuts as a means of stimulating economic growth, limit state expansion, and keep wages below increases in productivity (Blyth 2013, Levinson 2013; Berry 2016; Dellepiane-Avellaneda 2015). While many literatures claim the 8-10 years after the global financial crisis as the 'age of austerity' (wherein public bailouts of global north financial sectors expanded public debts and deficits, to be reconciled through fiscal consolidation), recent provincial and federal governments in Canada appear less explicitly oriented toward austerity (i.e. the NDP in Alberta since 2015, the Wynne Liberals in Ontario since 2014, and the Trudeau Liberals at the federal level since 2015). However, the overall, structural trajectory of government expenses and revenues has been on an austere trajectory since the mid-1990s, necessitating a reduced role for the government in the economy (Berry 2016; Dellepiane-Avellaneda 2015; Babbage 2014; Blanchfield 2015).

Figure 1: Federal Government Expenses and Revenues as a %GDP (\$2016)



Source: Finance Canada Fiscal Reference Tables ('FCFRT'), Budget 2016, and author's calculations.

Federal government revenues as a percentage of GDP fell from recent highs of 19.5 percent in 1974-75 and 18 percent in 1991-92 to 15.8 in 2005-06 and 14.3 percent in 2014-15 (Finance Canada 2016a). Similarly, gross expenditures have dropped from a recent high of 24.9 percent of GDP in 1982-83 to 14.9 in 2005-06 and 14.2 in 2014-15 (Finance Canada 2016a). At the same time, the effective federal corporate income tax rate (CIT) fell from a high of 42 percent in the 1953 post-WWII period to 17 percent in 2013 (Brennan 2015; Lahey 2015). Beyond the tax rate, the federal government spends \$103bn a year on 'tax expenditures' - which include loopholes, credits, deductions, and similar mechanisms which disproportionately benefit the top income deciles - nearly as much as the much more progressively distributed federal transfers (\$113bn - including the Canada Pension Plan, Guaranteed Income Supplement, Old Age Security, EI, and more) (Macdonald 2016). Taken together, these broad shifts in revenues and expenditures during the 2006-2015 period limit the government's fiscal capacity. This constitutes a form of 'structural austerity' insofar as tax cuts in the present undermine future spending capacity, thus 'locking-in' or 'entrenching' fiscal consolidation.

At the same time, monetary policy (set by an independent central bank) has an inflation target of 2% (between 1-3%) (King 2008; Vidal 2013). With the 'fall' of Keynesian economics in the post-Fordist period, government spending and intervention have typically been seen as an impediment to private sector economic activity, and so managing the money supply (i.e. the cost of credit) and inflation have been utilized over fiscal stimulus in times of crisis, such as with lowered interest rates and eventually quantitative easing in the US, Canada, and Europe after the 2008 crisis (King 2008; Blyth 2013; Levinson 2013). Low interest rates have not spurred significant investment by the private sector (in Canada as of 2014 capital was sitting on \$686bn), but have pushed

aggressive credit-based consumer spending, particularly in Canada, and leave little room for monetary policy in future crisis should rates not rise (CANSIM 378-0123 2017; Sanger 2014).

Austerity is at times misunderstood as pure retrenchment, but in practice is a redistributive strategy which changes the scope of the government's involvement in the economy and the lives of citizens (Blyth 2013; Levinson 2013; Berry 2016). Austerity certainly involves cuts to public spending (rollback), but the vulnerable and public sector workers typically bear the brunt of cuts, as federal transfers to the provinces have been repeatedly restructured and retrenched, putting pressure on provinces which respond by reducing spending on education, labour market policy, social assistance, and healthcare (Cameron 2006; Macdonald 2016; Banting 2006). Conversely, in cutting costs, governments in Canada have engaged in outsourcing, privatization, public-private partnerships, and corporate tax cuts and subsidies (rollout). This shifts public service delivery into the private sector, shifting employment from unionized and typically full year full time public sector jobs to often non-unionized and at times precarious private sector jobs. These trajectories increase the stake of financial capital in state services in looking for 'sustainable' investment, public infrastructure or state monopolies such as utilities (Noack & Vosko 2012; Whiteside 2014; Brennan 2015). The state's role in mitigating the exigencies of markets is reduced in regulatory scope, enforcement capacity, and in social assistance and labour market policy, while economic trajectories continue to seek out flexible labour and production practices which reduce working conditions and wages (Haddow & Klassen 2006; Pierre 2015; McBride 2017). Public policy in Canada facilitates these business practices by shifting the orientation of social and labour market policy, as outlined below.

Social Policy

Under Esping-Andersen's welfare state typology, Canada is typically considered a liberal welfare regime, characterized by means-tested and some universalistic social assistance components based on the Beveridge general tax based model (Kammer et al 2012: 460; Cameron 2006). However, increasingly lean states and transfers along with work-ethic discourses often undermine the effectiveness and generosity of social assistance, (Kammer et al 2012; Banting 2006; Herd et al 2009). More specifically, the social policy trajectory in Canada is heavily informed by the crisis of Fordist accumulation, the fiscal consolidation of the federal government that followed, and the devolution of more fiscal responsibility to the provinces in the form of restructured transfers. Overall, during the Keynesian period³⁴ social policy grew to *protect* citizens from the exigencies of the market (e.g. extended unemployment insurance and indexing

³⁴ In the pre-Keynesian period, support for the vulnerable was mostly private, typically provided through charities and the church (Cameron 2006).

of then universal programs of Old Age Security and the Family Allowance to inflation), while since then, have transitioned (through a combination of rollback and rollout) to *market empowering* – encouraging citizens to turn to the market for survival and providing them with resources to do so, typically in the form of education (connecting social policy to the overall supply side approach of labour market policy) (Cameron 2006, 62; Banting 2006).

Major cuts began in 1977 with the introduction of block funding for health and post-secondary education, followed by a cap on federal transfers for social assistance to Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia in 1989. The 1995 budget abolished the Canada Assistance Plan and the right to assistance based on need (cutting off the long-term unemployed), with funding never returning to previous levels (Cameron 2006, 68; Haddow & Klassen 2006). In the transition away from Keynesian social programs, new programs emerged while existing ones were amended and/or retrenched. The new paradigm for social programs is a combination of retrenchment and ‘investment’, often called the ‘social investment state’ (SIS) (Saint-Martin 2007, 286). This approach is closely linked with the knowledge economy, the human capital perspective of labour, and the supply side approach to public policy, wherein the focus shifts from protecting people from the exigencies of the market to ‘empowering’ subjects to participate in it (Marquardt 1999; Morden 2016). For instance, while social assistance policies have experienced heavy retrenchment at provincial levels, they have also shifted to focus on ‘activating’ the employable to develop their own skills and attitude to find employment (Herd et al, 2009; Lightman et al, 2006).

Labour Market Policy

Labour market policies (LMP) are rules, programs, institutions, and processes which govern the conduct of labour and capital, outline the rights of the former and potential activities of the latter, and how and when the state will intervene. In a LME like Canada, firms are highly autonomous, labour movements are weaker and decentralized, and training is not geared toward vocational skills or directly financed by capital or labour (Haddow & Klassen 2006; Hall & Soskice 2001; Iversen & Soskice 2015). Those major distinctions filter down into six major components of labour market policy. Worker’s compensation insurance schemes address workplace injuries and ‘occupational health and safety’ oversee particular workplace conditions. Employment standards cover pay and employment equity, parental leave, termination, and maximum hours of work with significant provincial variation, providing a ‘floor’ for labour market flexibility, and in the absence of weakening of labour movements, are crucial instruments. Industrial Relations (sometimes known as employment relations) cover the rules and requirements imposed on labour unions, employers, and which governs their interactions. ‘Social assistance for employable persons’ refers to provincial welfare programs which are financial transfers to mitigate the difficulties of unemployment. Until the mid-1990s,

these programs were considered passive measures (i.e. simply financial transfer), but afterwards they took on an ‘active’ character through conditionalities tied to finding work. Finally, ‘active measures’ cover policies and programs designed to increase employment opportunities for employable persons, including training and skills development. This is an area of mixed jurisdiction, as most training and education is provincial, but employment insurance – which increasingly incorporates active components – is federal (Haddow & Klassen 2006).

Overall, labour market policy in liberal market economies is more ‘hands off,’ *reacting* to trends in the private sector more than proactively intervening (Haddow & Klassen 2006; Pierre 2015). My focus in this dissertation is on active measures (which work to match the employable with jobs), but I will also speak to the minimum standards established by labour market policy in this section, such as employment standards and industrial relations. The ultimate effect of market facilitating minimum standards and individualizing active measures is to push individuals into the labour market without much attention to giving them the tools to succeed in it, leading to reduced expectations on the part of workers, lower cost labour, and higher supply.

Facilitating Flexible Accumulation: From Employment Security to Employability

The endogenous and exogenous factors discussed above which drove the shift from Fordist to Flexible accumulation and from market protecting to market empowering social policy (i.e. the social investment state) also shifted economic and labour market policy from macro-economic aggregate demand concerns to micro-economic, supply side concerns. As a result, the state-family-market-voluntary sector relationship was reframed so that the state reduced its role in mediating the externalities of capital accumulation, such as flexibilizing employment (Cameron, 2006: 67; Banting, 2006; Harvey 1990; Marquardt 1999). During late Fordism and the reign of Keynesian economics and policy, production and a macroeconomic orientation toward aggregate demand resulted in relatively full-employment and high employment security (low unemployment levels, increased protections resulting from unionization, and low incidence of NSER compared to SER) (McBride & Mitrea 2017; Harvey 1990). During this period, unemployment was generally conceptualized as a structural problem of aggregate demand rather than individual failure, and so policy was oriented toward the ‘demand’ for labour (i.e. job creation, either directly or indirectly through wage subsidies and tax incentives) over ‘supply,’ which focuses on the characteristics of individual employable persons (McBride & Mitrea 2017; Herd et al, 2009; Lightman et al, 2006; Marquardt 1999).

The supply side approach focuses on individuals' employability, responsibility, and attitudes (i.e. to ‘activate themselves’), devolving more responsibilities for the vagaries of the market to provinces, municipalities, and ultimately, individuals (Herd et al 2009; Lightman et al 2006; Cameron 2006; Banting 2006). This approach intersects strongly with the shift in social policy toward ‘investment’ in individuals (SIS), such that

labour market problems – such as labour market participation, unemployment, insecurity, wage stagnation, and poor job quality – are dominantly framed as the result of individual failure to attain the appropriate skills, education, and experience (‘human capital and knowledge’) to succeed in the labour market (Haddow & Klassen 2006; Morden 2016). Popular variants of this argument include the ‘skills mismatch,’ the idea that individuals in the labour market are not necessarily undertrained or undereducated, but that they have the *wrong* skills for the current labour market (a ‘zombie idea’ which has been repeatedly disproven) (Stanford 2013). The idea of a skills mismatch shifts the responsibility for poor labour market outcomes from employers – who, under flexible accumulation, work to lower labour costs and benefit from a modest level of unemployment – onto the unemployed. The result is renewed emphasis on – albeit reduced funding for – education, training, and skills development for the unemployed and underemployed, combined with an emphasis on individual responsibility for ‘activation’. It becomes overwhelmingly the responsibility of the individual, not the state or capital, to seek out, pay for, and develop their own employability.

The stated orientation of recent Canadian governments is important. Former Canadian Minister of Employment and Social Development Jason Kenney (Conservative) said in 2013 that he “will work hard to end the paradox of too many people without jobs in an economy that has too many jobs without people”, referring to the ‘skills gap’ narrative. More recently, Finance Minister Bill Morneau (Liberal) said that workers should become accustomed to ‘job churn’ in stating “we also need to think about, ‘How do we train and retrain people as they move from job to job to job?’ Because it’s going to happen. We have to accept that” while Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Liberal) said “we’re going to have, actually, multiple careers over the course of our lives” (Stanford 2013; Press Progress 2016).

Contemporary active labour market policy in Canada privileges rapid job placement and ties benefit receipt (whether in employment insurance or social assistance for employable persons) to efforts to find work (e.g. in the ‘workfare’ shift in welfare policies and EI reforms) (Herd et al 2009). In Canada the state’s ‘reaction’ to shifts in the global political economy individualizes responsibility for labour market outcomes by retrenching and devolving social assistance and funding for training (roll back) while embracing rhetoric and policies that drive the unemployed and transitioning back into the labour market (roll out).

Structural Reform of Labour Markets and Policy

The transition from demand to supply side labour market policy constituted a form of structural adjustment which redefined the role of the state in the economy toward minimalism and market facilitation at the expense of protecting citizens from the exigencies of the market. The following are some of the major mechanisms which structurally adjusted labour market policy toward flexibilization.

International ‘best practices’ encouraging flexibility include the International Monetary Fund’s labour market structural adjustment policies (SAPs), the European Commission, the European Employment Strategy, the UN Youth Employment Network (which has made employability one of its four priorities), and the OECD, which pushed labour market flexibility and an employability model since the mid-1990s with the ‘Jobs Strategy’ (McQuaid 2005; McBride & Williams 2001; McBride & Mitrea 2017). Ultimately, Canada received a very high score on implementing elements of the Jobs Strategy by the OECD (McBride & Williams 2001, 12). Perceptions of global competition which fuel a ‘race to the bottom’ in regulation, labour costs, and corporate taxes are complimentary in theory to the international best practices above, and also result in fiscal pressure on states (particularly in reducing corporate tax rates) (Winters & Martuscelli 2014; Vidal 2013). Thus, labour market policies shift toward employability either as a direct result of microeconomic strategy to ‘improve competitiveness’ or as a result of fiscal pressures which reduce the funding – and therefore scope – of LMP.

Ideology and partisanship may also contribute to LMP reform, as Conservative and Liberal parties at the federal and provincial levels (to some degree the provincial NDP in BC as well) have been more open to re-regulation toward a supply side paradigm. For instance, workfare in Ontario was introduced under a Conservative government in the mid-1990s, while the Employment Insurance Act (which cut benefit receipt and claimant levels) was implemented under a Liberal government (Haddow & Klassen 2006; Cameron 2006). Fiscal policy is a powerful tool of reform, as in the intergovernmental context of labour market policy in Canada, the provinces rely significantly on federal transfers to administer LMP. Cuts since 1977 and the negotiations over transfers since have highlighted how federal austerity can ‘trickle down’ to constrain provincial labour market policy. Finally, increasing the overall supply of labour through immigration puts downward pressure on wages and employment security, with programs such as ‘temporary foreign workers’ or expansions to economic streams of immigration used by governments³⁵ (CIC 2013).

Structural Reform of Labour Market Standards and Relations

Industrial relations and minimum standards in labour market policy, including employment standards (also known as employment protection legislation, or ‘EPL’) and labour law, determine what capital can do and the relationship between it, the state, and labour (Haddow & Klassen 2006). Standards and relations are crucial to determining the degree of flexibility in the labour market, and reforming these policies was central to OECD recommendations for Canada. Industrial relations determine the processes by which unions can form and act, and the erosion of union coverage since the 1970s in Canada has meant wage stagnation, a shrinking national wage bill, and heightened

³⁵ The latter of which grew by approximately 79% from 1989 to 2015, growing from approximately 52% of all permanent residents in 1989 to 63% in 2015.

income inequality (Brennan 2014, 7; Mackenzie & Shillington 2015). Union density (total private and public sector coverage as a percentage of the workforce) was 38% in 1981 and 30% in 2013 (shifting mostly in the 80s and 90s), while average hourly earnings followed the pattern, stagnating as density dropped (Galarneau & Sohn 2013, 3; Brennan 2014, 9). Families with one or more full time unionized worker were 1.75 times more likely to have incomes at the upper end of the income scale (deciles 5-9) (Mackenzie & Shillington 2015, 4). Since 1982, federal and provincial governments have enacted 216 pieces of legislation which have suspended, denied, or restricted collective bargaining rights for Canadian Workers, including changes to how unions can form and organize, and the correlating change in unionization can be seen below (Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights 2015):

Table 1: Change in Unionization in Canada

Jurisdiction	1981	2012	% Change
Canada	38%	30%	-21.1%
Newfoundland	45%	38%	-15.5%
PEI	39%	35%	-10.2%
Nova Scotia	34%	30%	-11.7%
New Brunswick	41%	29%	-29.2%
Quebec	45%	38%	-15.5%
Ontario	37%	27%	-27.0%
Manitoba	38%	35%	-7.9%
Saskatchewan	38%	35%	-7.9%
Alberta	28%	22%	-21.4%
British Columbia	45%	30%	-33.3%

Source: Galarneau & Sohn 2013 and author's calculations.

Occupational health and safety became more flexible in the 1990s (moving toward employee and employer self-regulation), as did worker's compensation (rapid re-entry into the market) (Vosko 2013; Lewchuk 2013). In Ontario, the Harris Progressive Conservative government flexibilized employment standards, including work hour limits, overtime regulations, gave employees the 'ability' to waive certain rights, excluded unionized employees from provincial protections, and reduced funding for the Ministry of Labour, undermining its ability to enforce employment standards (some of these changes were repealed by the Liberals in the early 2000s) (Haddow and Klassen 2006; Willow and Schetagne 2011). Similarly, after a Liberal government was elected in British Columbia in May 2001, they flexibilized employment standards, reduced monitoring and enforcement, exempted unionized workers from protections, flexibilized overtime rules,

and cut 16 percent of the Employment Standards Branch's funding, 33 percent of their staff, and 47 percent of their branch offices (Haddow & Klassen 2006; Fairey 2009).

These changes correlated with rising inequality, economic insecurity, homelessness, declining real wages, and increased precarity in the workplace, reducing employers' costs and employees' wages, security, and employment conditions (Tal 2016; Noack & Vosko 2012). In terms of drift, most employment standards have not caught up with changes in the labour market, such as the rise of (zero hour) contract work, agency work, and freelancing (a review of employment standards in Ontario is ongoing as of 2017) (Willow and Schetagne 2011; Ontario Ministry of Labour 2017).

Structural Reform of Active Labour Market Policy

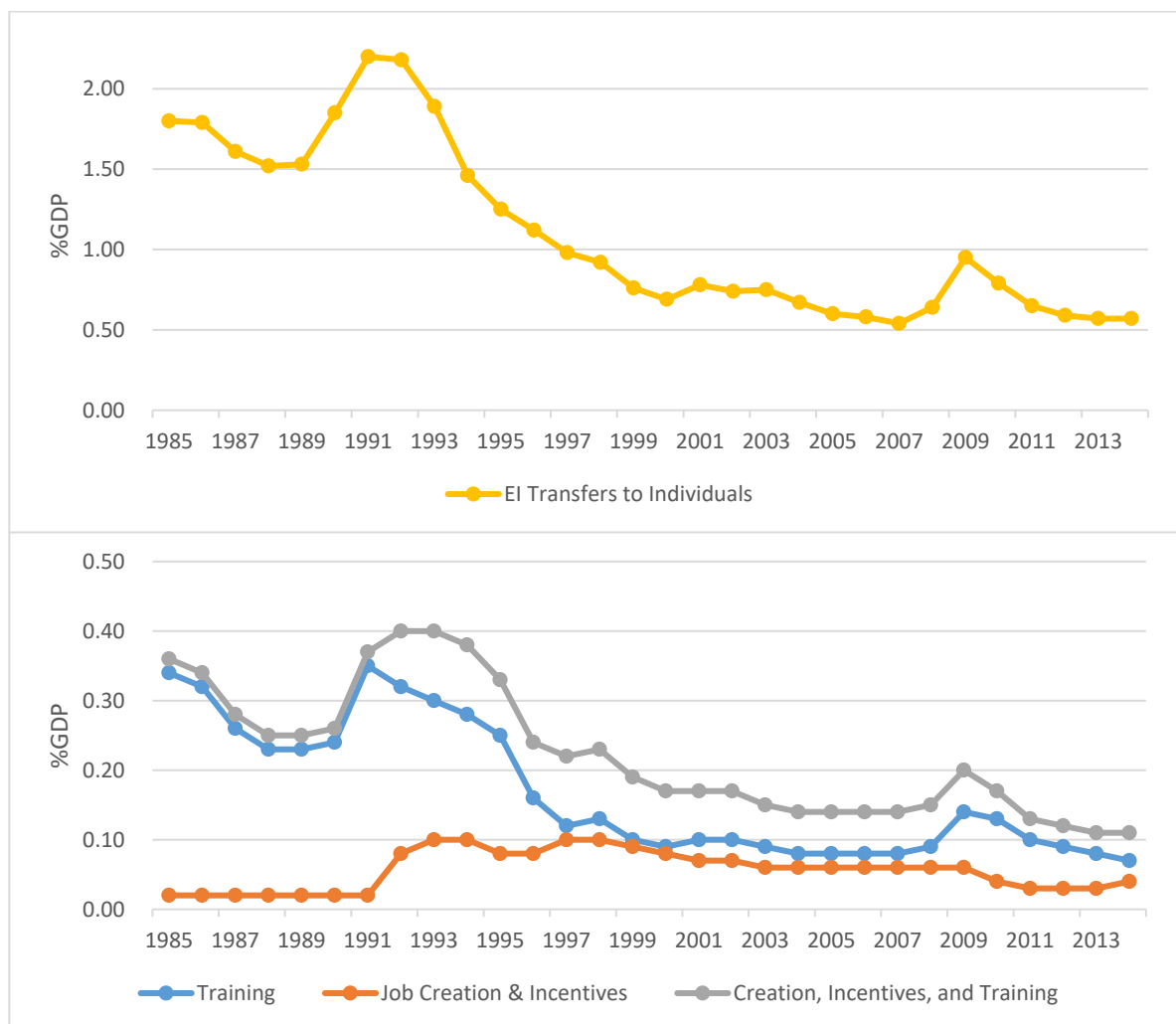
The shift to supply side labour market policy has meant an increased emphasis on ALMP, with greater focus on rapid labour market re-entry, particularly in LMEs (McBride & Williams 2001, 289; Haddow & Klassen 2006). In practice, this has typically meant retrenchment, re-regulation, and drift for minimum standards and industrial relations and rolling out 'activation' elements (Haddow & Klassen 2006; Banting 2006; Herd et al 2009). The changes relevant to my case studies – Federally administered Employment Insurance and ALMP programs in Ontario and British Columbia – will be explored in more detail in their respective chapters, while this section serves to outline general trends in ALMP reform.

'Reform' of ALMP occurred at somewhat different time periods for the case studies. Federally, the 1996 Employment Insurance Act implemented many changes geared toward encouraging rapid labour market re-entry and was enacted under a Liberal Government. Conservative and Liberal governments decreased entitlements to EI so that the proportion of the unemployed who were able to collect benefits declined from 74% in 1990 to 39% in 2001 (Cameron 2006, 68). In Ontario, social assistance was restructured toward a 'workfare' model to 'reduce dependency' by reducing benefit receipt (e.g. Ontario Works benefits were cut by 17 percent in 1996-97, and have experienced further direct cuts and stagnation due to inflation since) and tying receipt to job search efforts in the mid-1990s under a Progressive Conservative Government. At the same time, that government cancelled training programs instituted by the preceding NDP government (Haddow & Klassen 2006, 103; Herd et al 2009, 139). Similar transitions were observed in British Columbia in 2001, as a Liberal Government took over from an NDP government (Haddow & Klassen 2006, 169). Indeed, evaluations of the effectiveness of ALMP programs in Canada at labour market *re-entry* indicate that work-first conditionalities tied to benefit receipt are, unsurprisingly, among the most effective, along with job-search assistance (Morden 2016).³⁶ The trajectories above capture an elided contradiction in the transition to supply side labour market policy: at least in LMEs where market signals and control dominate, the 'shift' to active labour market policy (as

³⁶ However, as will be briefly explored in the case studies, rapid re-entry is often accompanied by a decrease in employment security and wages as compared to those who undertook training programs.

encouraged by multiple international institutions and most Liberal and Conservative parties in Canada) has not meant *a shift in resources* toward training and skills development. In actuality, the ‘active’ of active labour market policy describes an implicit and explicit emphasis on individual responsibility for cultivating employability – in line with the ‘activation’ concept outlined in Chapter 2 (while in Scandinavian countries ‘active’ typically refers to an interventionist state in training and job placement).

Figure 2: Canadian ALMP Spending as a %GDP, by type of Intervention



Source: OECD Statistics 2016 and author's calculations.

Figure 2 shows how public expenditure for ALMP programmes has changed in Canada from 1985 to 2014 (most recent data). During periods of heightened austerity (i.e. the 1990s under the Chretien Liberal Government and post-2009 under the Harper Conservative Government), expenditures for ALMP dropped considerably. However, it is also evident that during the global shift toward ALMP in the mid-1990s, there was a

slight bump to job creation and incentive programs, but a decrease to training programs, with both converging from the late 1990s to right before the 2008 financial crisis. Afterwards, job creation and incentives dropped further and training programs increased marginally, to return toward convergence by 2014. The greatest ALMP expenditures are transfers (72.1 percent in 2014), primarily from Employment Insurance, but those have dropped enormously from a high of 2.20 percent of GDP in 1991 to 0.57 percent in 2014. Overall, the ‘training’ focus of ALMP in LMEs is typically addressed through post-secondary education, funding for which has also declined from the federal government to be made up in tuition fees (Metcalf 2010). This trajectory is all the more problematic given the tremendously low rate of private sector training in Canada, such that from 2006-10, direct learning expenditures per employee in Canada dropped from \$912 per employee in 2006 to \$688 in 2010, a decrease of 24.56%. This rose to \$705 in 2012-13 (Conference Board of Canada 2014).

Since 2008, the Canadian federal government provided funding to the provinces and territories through the Labour Market Agreements (LMAs), which were used by the provinces to provide employment training programs and services to individuals underrepresented in the Canadian economy. This funding was given to those with disabilities, indigenous peoples, recent immigrants, and other minority groups (CED Network 2014). The LMAs were considered very successful, as the Department of Employment and Social Development found that 86% of participants were employed two years after completing job training programs (compared to 44% before) and earnings on average increased by \$323/week. In 2014, the LMAs were replaced with the Canada Job Grants (CJG) which are broadly targeted to all employed persons as opposed to the specifically targeted LMAs, which focused on skills and training for disadvantaged groups (MacKinnon 2013; CED Network 2014). The shift assumes a ‘skills mismatch’ (which Canadian economist Don Drummond and the BMO could not find evidence of) and that the private sector was the best decider of implementation, which also only pays 1/3 of the cost, while the federal government pays 2/3 (MacKinnon 2013; The Canadian Press 2014). The CJG are controlled by the private sector and target the already employed to provide very short term training as opposed to those marginalized by the labour market, with 60 percent (or more) of LMA funding moving to the CJG program (MacKinnon 2013; The Canadian Press 2014). What little was spent on training programs in Canada has increasingly shifted from targeting, and perhaps benefiting, the vulnerable (i.e. the LMAs) toward empowering corporations (i.e. the CJGs), which represents the overall orientation of LMP in LMEs: market facilitation, directly in the form of public policy and indirectly in their effects on the labour force.

The trajectories in Canadian public policy outlined above shift the role of the state from protecting people from the exigencies of the market to facilitating it. Responsibility for survival is devolved to lower levels of government (through fiscal austerity cutting transfers, putting more pressure on the provinces) and the individual, and social and labour market policies focus on ‘activating’ people so that they cultivate their employability (a ‘supply side’ or ‘human capital’ approach) and conform to the needs of the market. These policy trajectories facilitate the economic ones discussed earlier, and together culminate in the material-semiotic conditions (‘stimuli’, with the ‘semiotic’

discussed in more detail in Chapter 2) discussed in the next section *as well as* the range of responses available to people to address their conditions ('constraint'). For instance, an unemployed person is quickly driven back into the labour market – which is increasingly precarious – as labour market and social policies retrench and focus on activation. Should the ALMP case studies in the subsequent chapters communicate ways of thinking and acting which reflect this policy trajectory, and if they do so through cognitive mechanisms, they will a) construct a common sense which benefits a lean state and post-Fordist accumulation regime and; b) do so in a way that is consistent with people's stimuli and constraints, increasing the chances for developing automaticity.

The Lived Experience of Political Economy and Public Policy Shifts

The trajectories in the global political economy and Canadian public policy outlined in this chapter have had generally negative effects on wages, the employment rate/quality/security/expectations, and unionization rates during a period of increasing cost of living. The effects have been heightened inequality, lower financial security, and higher consumer debt. The shift from the Fordist accumulation regime--which was typically characterized by high levels of SER, unionization, wage growth, and a robust social state – toward Flexible accumulation has seen an increased role of financial capital in the real economy, greater global competition leading to a 'race to the bottom' in regulations, labour costs, and corporate taxes, technological developments in ICT and automation, and an overall shift from manufacturing to the service sector, bifurcated between the typically higher paying knowledge economy and the lower paying retail and hospitality industries. At the same time, structural austerity and the shift from market protection to market 'empowerment' in social and labour market policy in the 'SIS/human capital' approach has led to an emphasis on activation – rapid re-entry into the labour market with declining emphasis on training and skills development.

This section outlines broad developments in the material conditions Canadians experience as a result of economic trajectories toward flexible accumulation and policy trajectories toward market facilitation (e.g. structural reform of social and labour market policy, austerity, and expansive monetary policy). These conditions require a response from individuals experiencing them as to how they will interpret them and act on them. Should Canadian ALMP encourage automaticity around regressive ideas such as employability and individual responsibility in a context of declining social supports, rising precarity, and the broad salience of those regressive ideas in society, it will construct a common sense that benefits flexible accumulation based on an immiserated workforce and a lean state. Further, that kind of common sense is consistent with the material conditions below ('stimuli') and the economic and policy trajectories above (shaping 'stimuli' and constituting 'constraints' on action), increasing the likelihood of internalization to the point of automaticity ('cognitive governance').

These shifts have increased productivity while wages stagnate and employment shifts to greater proportions of NSER. From 1970 to 1990, productivity rose by 414 percent and another 120.8 percent from 1990 to 2015 (OECD Data 2016). At the same time, labour utilisation (hours worked per head of population) only rose by 15 percent and

the labour market participation rate declined from a recent high of 67.6 percent in 2008 to 65.7 percent in 2016 with unemployment at 7 percent (rising from 6.9 percent in 2014 and 2015) (CANSIM 282-0002 2017). This is all the more prevalent for new entrants into the labour market (15-24 year olds), whose labour market participation has dropped twice as much as the overall labour force since 2008, decreasing (from 67.3 percent in 2008 to 63.7 percent in 2016) while the overall labour force recovers (CANSIM 282-0002 2017). While there are nearly 1mn more people employed 25 and above since the 2008 crisis, there are 184,500 *fewer* people employed 15-24.

While the unemployment rate increased from 7.1 percent in 1976 to over 11 percent in 1983 and 1992, it was only lower than 1976 seven years in the 2000s, and sat at 7 percent in 2016. Beyond the unemployment rate there were significant shifts in employment categories during this period. Part time employment rose from 12.5 percent of total employment in 1976 to 19.2 percent in 2016. *Involuntary* part time employment also rose, from 12.8 percent of part time employment in 1976 to 20.2 percent in 2014 (OECD Statistics 2015). More worryingly, ‘own account self-employment’ – where an individual is self-employed without any employees, capturing contractors and freelancers – rose from 6.27 percent of total employment in 1976 to 10.6 percent in 2016 (CANSIM 282-0002 2017). As is expected in the shift to services and the knowledge economy, overall employment growth among full-time workers has been higher in low-paying sectors, increasing by about 24% while high-paying sectors saw only an approximately 11% increase in job creation from 2003-2016 (Tal 2016). Youth have suffered the most during flexible accumulation, with the share of 15-24 employment dropping from ~26% in 1980 to ~14% in 2015. As well, the share of low paying jobs (below the average wage) has risen from ~57.8 percent in 1997 to just under 61 percent in 2016 (CANSIM 282-0002 2017).

From the post-war period to the early 1980s, inequality decreased and real average weekly earnings more than doubled (increasing by 114% after inflation) (Mackenzie & Shillington 2015, 5). Since then, trends have reversed, with rising income inequality and average weekly wages and salaries *declining* by 0.3% from 1997 (peak) to 2013, while the adjusted national wage bill (wages and salaries as a %GDP) dropped as union density did (as did the rate of increase for average hourly earnings), from ~37% density in 1975 with 51% of the national wage bill to 31% density in 2010 and 44% of the national wage bill (11). At the same time, the income share of the richest 1% grew from 7.1% in 1982 to 12.1% in 2011. Indeed, since 1995 the GINI coefficient indicates an inverse relationship with union coverage (8).

At the same time, broad cost of living in Canada has increased 93 percent from 1978 to 2017 and 30 percent from 2002 to 2017, while housing affordability has plummeted: Canadians spent approximately 37 percent of their (median) household income on ownership in 1986 and 46 percent in 2016³⁷ (CANSIM 326-0021 2018; Wright & Hogue 2016). The shifts in employment trajectories and wage growth/share of labour have also led increases in the proportion of the population in low income. In 2015,

³⁷ This is of course worse in overheated markets such as Toronto (up to 70 percent of household income spent on ownership costs) and Vancouver (up to 90 percent).

14.2 percent of Canadians were below the Low Income Measure,³⁸ an increase of 6.8 percent from 2007. At the same time, 12.1 percent of Canadians were in low income households according to the Market Basket Measure,³⁹ an increase of 9 percent since 2007 (CANSIM 206-0041 2017)). These changes are worse for vulnerable groups such as those 65 and older, with those under the LIM increasing by 30 percent (from 11 to 14.3 percent of those 65 and older in low income) and the MBM increasing by 41.7 percent (from 3.6 and 5.1 percent of those 65 and older). Further, Canadian household debt has been rising steadily in line with wage stagnation and employment precarity, from 87.41 percent of disposable income in 1990 to 168.24 in 2016, nearly doubling (CANSIM 378-0123 2017).

The increasing prevalence of self-employment, contract work/freelancing, part time work, and stagnant wages within all work decreases the aggregate standards of the labour market. In combination with the stated orientation of the current federal government in encouraging workers to ‘become accustomed to job churn’, the conditions above may lower the expectations of workers. Shifts in technology and firm management continue to decrease labour demand and/or flexibilize it while drift and re-regulation in labour market policy (amid a drop in unionization) reduces labour protections (and the cost of labour). High levels of consumer debt mean greater financial insecurity and greater dependence on the labour market for survival, reducing the capacity of workers to resist low wages. Taken together, a higher supply of labour for jobs of decreasing quality and pay in conditions of high debt and cost of living increase immiseration.

Conclusion: Immiseration and Cognition

The trajectories above ‘match’ with the needs of capital and a lean state and ‘mismatch’ with the wellbeing of workers: technological advances, global competition, and ‘lean management’ lead capital to flexibilize and replace labour so as to lower its costs and maximize profits to satisfy shareholders. At the same time, the state in LMEs has moved from market protection to market empowerment, reducing expenditures on social programs, employment insurance, and active labour market policy while infusing all with ‘active’ components and conditionalities meant to drive the unemployed and transitioning into the market as quickly as possible. Capital and the state have increasingly become ‘lean’, the latter devolving more and more responsibility for survival to the individual and facilitating flexible accumulation in the former. The effect of these public policy and political economy trajectories is to lower the cost of labour, increase its supply, decrease expectations among workers, and increase dependency on the labour market, achieving immiseration in the Canadian labour market. Self-sufficiency is necessitated as the state pulls back from social protection, and the primary recourse for survival is to (re)turn to a precarious labour market.

The political economy and public policy trajectories and outcomes above are not new, yet their relevance for how people think and act is, as yet, unexplored. Excellent

³⁸ LIM: less than 50 percent of adjusted median household income.

³⁹ MBM: an absolute measure of disposable income vs. regional living costs.

work has examined the effect of material insecurity on mental and physical health, social relations, and identity (Herd et al 2009; Lightman et al 2006; Noack & Vosko 2012), but few have explored how public policy may shape how people think and act, and none have considered how the *everyday* aspects of public policy are significant in that regard. However, the trajectories and outcomes above are crucial to filling the above gap in the literature because – as was elaborated in Chapter 2 – automaticity and schemas develop through consistency, repetition, and functionality: if what is communicated by ALMP components is not consistent with the real world, and if material conditions do not drive the unemployed and transitioning to utilize ALMP components, then it is less likely that what is communicated by those components will form into strong, automatic schemas (i.e. ‘common sense’).

For the unemployed and transitioning, political economy and public policy shifts constrain the range of actions at their disposal. Decreasing generosity of social transfers (from Employment Insurance to provincial social assistance programs), cuts in training and other active labour market policy tools, and increasing conditionalities to get people back to work quickly encourage the unemployed and transitioning to re-enter the labour market, regardless of the conditions therein, as their primary recourse for addressing unemployment (barring private resources or supports). The labour market, as a result of increasing flexibilization, has a higher proportion of precarious labour in part time work, contract work, and more work in the bifurcated services sector, with the high end defined by the non-routine cognitive tasks of the ‘knowledge economy’ – which requires ever higher education, training, and specialization – and the low end defined by retail and hospitality jobs with often irregular scheduling, hours, low pay, and greater labour law infractions (Santens 2016; Peters 2017; Deloitte 2015). Thus, if ALMP programs encourage the unemployed and transitioning to understand their welfare as their responsibility alone and that they must turn to the market, it is complimentary to existing trajectories. In particular, if those programs communicate through cognitive mechanisms conducive to the development of automaticity, and if what is communicated is consistent with people’s material-semiotic conditions (‘stimuli’), and available resources for responding to their conditions (‘constraints’), then the automaticity that is encouraged will be more likely to develop (‘cognitive governance’) – to the benefit of a lean state and flexible accumulation regime based on an immiserated workforce.

While supra-national trade and investment or regional agreements maintain flexible accumulation from above, everyday active labour market policies maintain this accumulation regime ‘from below’ by encouraging workers to adopt a ‘common sense’ around their relationship with the market and state.

Chapter 4: Employment Insurance

This chapter focuses on what employment insurance (EI) in Canada communicates to policy recipients in the everyday, and whether it does so through cognitive mechanisms which promote automaticity. EI is a federal program and differs from social assistance for employable persons (provincial welfare/workfare programs) because it is not funded through tax revenue, is federally administered, and is conditional on past employment (among other criteria) rather than financial need (Leonard 2013; Lin 1998; Osberg 2009). EI is relevant as an *active* labour market policy program because recent reforms (particularly in 1996 and 2012) added conditionalities meant to ‘decrease dependency’ and increase labour market re-attachment (Osberg 2009; Finnie & Irvine 2011). Further, EI requires active participation to ensure benefit receipt, with an application, guidelines, and reporting, making it a potentially potent site for cognitive mechanisms.

I hypothesize that EI, in line with international ‘best practices’ and ALMP reforms in liberal market economies (LMEs), will be oriented toward rapid labour market re-attachment with little support for training, skill development, and decreasing transfers (with increasing surveillance and conditionalities) for the unemployed, increasing dependency on the labour market and facilitating an immiserated workforce which benefits a post-Fordist accumulation regime (Cameron 2006, 62; Banting 2006; Harvey 1990). These orientations complement trajectories in the global political economy outlined in Chapter three, wherein globalization, financialization, and technological advancements drive flexibility in wages and labour supply.

While ALMP funding and programs have a significant⁴⁰ impact on an accumulation regime, an individual’s cognition related to the labour market is also crucial (Berry 2016; Harvey 1990). If a worker internalizes the idea that they should not expect stable, secure, or reasonably paying employment (i.e. a living wage), that labour market outcomes are individual and not structural (and political), and that the state has no responsibility and little support to offer, than such a worker will be more likely to accept precarious employment, a retrenching state, and the increasing individualization of labour market outcomes. In short, if ALMP constructs a common sense around the ways of thinking and acting above, it encourages a depoliticized and docile worker who ‘goes with the flow’ and facilitates flexible accumulation in their cognition and behaviour as the state does through policy. This is, of course, an abstraction; individual cognition is complex, layered, and can be contradictory. Many workers may feel that current labour

⁴⁰ While policy changes (‘backend’) are crucial to establishing and maintaining an accumulation regime (e.g. flexibilizing employment standards to lower labour costs), the implementation and everyday elements (‘frontend’) are the mechanisms by which policy recipients *directly* interact with a policy domain and *more explicitly* receive a way of thinking and acting.

market trajectories are ‘unfair’ and that the state can and should intervene in different ways. However, most if not all workers *at the same time* are likely exposed to, understand, and work with the flexibilized ideas above as they are *functionally necessary* for survival in the current labour market.

This chapter begins with an outline of the history of EI and then continues by mapping EI in its broader policy context. Next, I map components internal to the program before moving on to apply my theoretical framework from Chapter 2 to the most necessary steps involved in applying for EI: the main webpage, the application, and reporting. The economic and policy trajectories outlined in Chapter 3 increase aggregate material precarity and risk (‘stimuli’). At the same time, increasing labour market flexibility, retrenching state support, and an emphasis on employability limits the options of the unemployed and transitioning for responding to that precarity (‘constraints’), with the trajectories and ideas above discursively and materially driving them back into an increasingly precarious labour market. If EI utilizes cognitive mechanisms to communicate ways of thinking and acting which are complementary to the trajectories above (i.e. market conformation and individual responsibility for outcomes), than it encourages an automaticity (‘cognitive governance’) which benefits flexible accumulation.

The History and Context of EI

Employment Insurance began with a constitutional amendment passed in 1940 which established ‘unemployment insurance’ (UI) as a federal responsibility (Lin 1998; Osberg 2009; Finnie & Irvine 2011). Contributions⁴¹ were originally split between employers (40 percent), employees (40 percent), and the federal government (20 percent), with coverage expanding from just 42 percent of the workforce in 1940 to 90 percent in the lead up to and passing of the Unemployment Insurance Act in 1971. At this point, benefit payments increased to 67 percent (75 percent for those with dependents) of insurable earnings from 40 percent in 1940. As well, eligibility requirements were reduced and recognized illness, injury, pregnancy, and retirement as qualifying reasons for applying for UI. The minimum number of weeks of work required to qualify was eight weeks in 1971, with a maximum coverage of 51 weeks. Only three weeks of coverage would be forfeited for various penalties (Koning & Banting 2013; Vosko 2011; Osberg 2009). UI from 1940-1971 was informed by the Fordist accumulation regime, predicated on mass routinized production with male single-earners, high union coverage, and rising wages, growth, and profits (Berry 2016; Harvey 1990). Government social programs expanded to include more people in social assistance, healthcare, and retirement security: ‘protecting citizens from the exigencies of the market’ (Lin, 1998; Osberg, 2009; Koning & Banting 2013). The relatively low qualification requirements and high replacement

⁴¹ Contributions today are between employers (58.3%) and employees (41.7%) (CRA 2016).

rates, coverage, and duration contributed to *worker's* flexibility to find new, suitable replacement employment which closely matched their expertise, location, and circumstances.

This trend began to reverse soon after the 1971 Act, as benefits and coverage retrenched while conditionalities increased from the mid-1970s onward, again reflecting trajectories in political economy and public policy (McBride 1992). As post-Fordism⁴² emerged from the accumulation crisis of its predecessor and flexibilized production, logistics, and labour, social policy shifted from protecting people from the market to 'preparing' them for it, which in practice meant reduced funding for social programs (fiscal consolidation), devolution to provincial and municipal governments, increased conditionalities and means-testing, and a greater emphasis on supply side labour market policy (individual investment in skills and employability, e.g. the 'social investment state') (Berry 2016; Harvey 1990; Cameron 2006; Banting 2006). For UI, this meant higher qualification requirements, lower coverage, lower replacement rates, and shorter duration, encouraging a new flexibility which benefitted capital by driving workers back into the labour market with less time and resources to find employment which matched their needs (Lin 1998; Finnie & Irvine 2011). Incremental changes started in 1976, but more substantive changes began in 1993 from Progressive Conservative and Liberal Governments, tightening UI eligibility to exclude those who quit without 'just cause', were fired for misconduct, or refused to accept 'suitable employment' while receiving benefits (Bill C-113, 1993) (Vosko 2011, 7; Osberg 2009). Bill C-17 in 1994 reduced the maximum replacement rate from 60 to 55 percent, and Bill C-12 in 1996 replaced the 1971 *Unemployment Insurance Act* with an Employment Insurance Act, introducing an 'hours calculation' (designed partly to account for increasingly precarious employment) for determining minimum work eligibility to receive EI and tied that to duration and level of benefits. These new thresholds actually resulted in fewer people qualifying for EI, as the percentage of the unemployed receiving EI decreased from 80 percent in 1990 to 48 percent in 1996 (Vosko 2011; Finnie & Irvine 2011; Lin 1998).⁴³

In 2012, the Conservative Government under Stephen Harper crafted Bill C-38, which introduced the most explicit self-activation criteria for EI by eroding 'suitable employment' - tied to a claimants state of health, family obligations, convictions, and a one hour commute - based on how often a claimant had used EI. 'Frequent claimants'⁴⁴ would have six weeks to find employment similar to their last with 80 percent of previous earnings; after, they would be expected to accept any job for which they are qualified

⁴² Discussed in detail in Chapter 3, referring to economic trajectories built around increased financialization, globalization, and flexibility in labour and production processes.

⁴³ Under the previous system, 12-20 weeks of work (defined as a minimum of 15 hours a week) within a 52 week period were required to qualify for UI, which was between 180 (12 weeks) and 300 (20 weeks) hours to qualify, while the new minimum was 420 hours.

⁴⁴ At least three benefit periods and paid at least 60 weeks of regular benefits in five years preceding a current claim.

with at least 70 percent of previous earnings (Leonard 2013, 3). New labour market participants and EI re-applicants required 910 hours or 23.5 weeks of employment to qualify for EI (Leonard 2013). Together, these changes were estimated to exclude 8,000 previously qualified EI recipients and save the government \$32mn, while the EI system's surplus reached \$3.6bn in 2013 and was frequently used in budget calculations as general revenue (Goar 2013; Porter 2015).

The trajectory in EI is not entirely toward further constraints. In 2016, the Trudeau Liberal Government reduced the initial waiting period for benefit receipt from two weeks to one, eliminated the new entrant and re-entrant requirements, improved job search databases, and repealed the 'suitable employment' changes introduced in 2012 (Employment and Social Development Canada 2016).

Compared to EI during Fordism, today qualification for regular benefits⁴⁵ is much more stringent, the replacement value of salary is lower, duration is shorter, and the process is governed by other requirements which pressure recipients to re-enter the workforce quickly with much less emphasis placed on their area of expertise, skills, or preferences for work.

Criticisms of EI

Frequent criticisms of EI argue that it would increase unemployment and wage rates (from a predominantly neoclassical perspective), that it would disincentivize work by providing a (too generous) safety net, and that EI recipients were 'lazy' and avoiding work (from intersecting historical discourses which tie morality to independence, self-sufficiency, and 'hard work') (McBride 2017; Mitrea 2017; Osberg 2009; Altman 2004). Economically, the logic was that unemployed persons receiving benefits could reject jobs while waiting for 'a better fit', increasing the (voluntary) unemployment rate, yet tightening the labour market, which would drive up wages and eliminate jobs (Osberg 2009; Altman 2004). At the same time, EI would theoretically also discourage labour mobility from areas with high unemployment to areas with low unemployment (Finnie & Irvine 2011). The intersection of the moral and theoretical concerns led some politicians, pundits, and technocrats to argue that, although perverting the functioning of markets by its very existence, too generous benefits would lead to abuse, with people delaying job search until their benefits expired or seeking employment simply to qualify for EI (Card & Freeman 1994; Koning & Banting 2013). However, analyses since the time of the 1971 UI Act have found little empirical support for the arguments above (Card and Freeman 1994; Altman 2004, 538). Findings indicate that the positive effects of EI on aggregate demand (by acting as an automatic stabilizer to enable continued consumption)

⁴⁵ While the 'regular benefits' stream has retrenched during this period, new streams have opened to enable leave tied to child care and now care for caregiving (Employment and Social Development Canada 2016).

contributed to job creation and largely offset the minor ‘negative effects’ on the unemployment rate (Card & Freeman 1994; Koning & Banting 2013; Vosko 2011).

Despite a lack evidence, the arguments above have retained salience and are complementary to the individualization of labour market outcomes in the shift toward supply-side LMP and contemporary EI: a less generous, more conditional system reserved for those who demonstrate ‘deservingness’ through previous participation in the labour market and efforts to immediately re-enter it (Vosko 2011; Finnie & Irvine 2011; Osberg 2009).

Other critiques argue that the system does not address changing labour market realities (Finnie & Irvine 2011; Koning & Banting 2013; Mowat Task Force 2011; Osberg 2009; Vosko 2011). Crucially, the ‘hours worked’ calculation, although designed to address changes in labour markets, tacitly assumes full-year, full-time employment (FYFT), a staple of the Fordist accumulation regime which is less reflective of current labour market trajectories (Koning and Banting 2013; Mowat Task Force 2011; Vosko 2011). Further, only those who work in ‘insurable employment’ qualify for EI, almost completely excluding the self-employed and contractors (except for highly targeted benefits), who are becoming a larger share of the labour market (Vosko 2011; Berry 2016).

By privileging FYFT for eligibility (reflected in the significant drop in coverage since those changes were implemented), EI discriminates against women, people of colour (particularly indigenous peoples), and immigrants, who tend to be disproportionately represented in precarious employment (e.g. temporary and part-time work) and less likely to qualify for EI despite paying into the system (Mowat Task Force 2011; Finnie & Irvine 2011; Vosko 2011). People of colour and immigrants are more likely to live in urban areas, which tend to have lower rates of unemployment, increasing the qualification requirements for EI and reducing duration of coverage. The 2013-2016 higher new entrant/re-entrant requirement of 910 hours only exacerbated these issues, putting downward pressure on wages by forcing the unemployed to take any work available, eliding personal and professional suitability (Léonard 2013).

The eligibility, replacement rate, and duration changes made to EI coupled with overall spending – a decrease of approximately 50.5 percent spent on EI per capita from 1991 to 2014 – has limited the effectiveness of EI as an automatic stabilizer (Finnie and Irvine 2011; Statistics Canada 2014; McBride 2017, 132). Particularly in response to crisis, the average percentage of unemployed workers receiving benefits in the first 18 months of a recession held from the 1981-82 (71 percent) to the 1990-91 (76 percent) event, but dropped significantly in 2008-09 (46 percent) (Mendelsohn and Medow 2010, 6).

Ultimately, contemporary EI is far from universal, decreasingly generous, and increasingly regressive,⁴⁶ driving the unemployed who qualify back into the labour market as quickly as possible. Rapid labour market re-attachment has poorer long term employment outcomes (in terms of tenure, quality of work, and wages) than training programs and other long term interventions, and contemporary EI strongly encourages this ALMP approach, encouraging a high supply of low wage labour (immiseration) (Wood & Hayes 2016; Morden 2016; Vosko 2011). The organization of EI is complementary to the material-semiotic conditions and constraints on action outlined in Chapter 3. Economic trajectories toward flexible accumulation and policy trajectories toward market facilitation have led to rises in aggregate precarity and risk (i.e. rising debt) with increasingly limited responses available (i.e. as a result of retrenching and ‘work-first’ public policies). If EI communicates ways of thinking and acting which are complementary to its organization and to the broader environment in which policy recipients live (and if it do so through mechanisms conducive to automaticity), it will construct a common sense which benefits flexible accumulation.

Mapping EI in a Broader Policy Context

In this section I will briefly analyze how the EI program is *presented* in a broader policy ecology and how its positioning contextualizes it in the ‘everyday’. ‘Vertical’ connections are between EI and separate programs and institutions⁴⁷ while ‘horizontal’ connections are between components *within* the EI program but not limited to the ‘regular benefits’ stream which I will focus on.

The EI program is situated in ESDC’s main page under ‘Services and Information’, and is the first link to the top right, with ‘Find a job’ immediately to the left. The other ‘labour market’ program is ‘education and training’ which is the sixth link, with other social programs in between and after (Employment and Social Development Canada 2017a). There are no connections to provincial labour market programs on the ESDC *main* page. The ‘Find a job’ link directs individuals to the ‘Job Bank’, a portal for employers to post jobs, labour market information, and a search engine for jobs which covers all the provinces.

Within the EI program, the first link is for ‘EI Benefits’ while ‘employment training initiatives’ is sixth, with information on EI regions, legislation, and reports in between and after. The ‘employment training initiatives’ link directs users to the ‘training programs’ of ‘education and training’, which are either very broad (i.e. ‘literacy and essential skills’) or highly targeted, such as programs for students and youth, ‘aboriginal and northern people,’ veterans, and the disabled (Employment and Social Development

⁴⁶ Those who earn less pay a higher proportion of their income and are less likely to qualify, and would receive lower benefits (calculated as a percentage of employed income).

⁴⁷ e.g. Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), the federal department which oversees national labour market programs, or between EI and provincial programs.

Canada 2017b). Finally, within ‘EI Benefits’ are links to ‘regular benefits’ other streams based on sickness and parenting, and a link called ‘lost your job’ (Employment Insurance 2017b).

From the highest point in the website hierarchy (ESDC main page), EI and ‘find a job’ are positioned at the top and next to each other, while ‘education and training’ is sixth. The association between EI and ‘find a job’ is repeated throughout the EI links, while ‘education and training’ are not. This is an example of spatial repetition and internal consistency *between* programs, and also contributes to association (classical conditioning) and priming: by situating EI and finding work together, consistently, across multiple levels and throughout the EI program, the association between those is strengthened, repeated, and more likely to be primed. Conversely ‘education and training’ is present on the main page with EI, and is only linked in brief, decontextualized instances in the online application and reporting. Altogether schemas related to entrepreneurialism (i.e. employability), neoliberalism, responsabilization, and activation are constructed and primed through the broad organization of EI. This encourages automaticity of these concepts.

Mapping *within* EI Regular Benefits

In this section, I will address consistency and repetition of ideas and practices *across* components in ‘EI regular benefits’ and what that means for automatic cognition (Employment Insurance 2016). The ‘regular benefits’ page is made up of several sections:

1. Seven tabs at the top-center of the page guiding applicants on applying for benefits, including: overview, eligibility, how much you could receive, what you need before you start, apply, after you’ve applied, and ‘while on EI’;
2. On the right side of the page, there are three sections with links: ‘guides and help’, ‘contact us’, and ‘related services and info’;
3. On the left hand side of the page, there is a list of twenty links covering the different types of EI benefits (which run in parallel with ‘regular benefits’), ‘EI Reconsideration’, links and instructions on completing EI reporting, information for employers, information on earnings while on EI and calculating benefits, and finding a job.

Repetition and consistency is evident before delving into the tabs, as ‘related services and info’ on the right side of the page contains links to ‘MCSA’ (my service Canada account), ‘Job Bank’, ‘Direct Deposit’, ‘Benefits finder’, and ‘Service Standards’. While the ‘benefits finder’ was decontextualized, not mentioned in any body of text, and appears once under ‘related services and info’ of EI pages, evocations to ‘find work’ are consistent, numerous, and repeated across EI pages and within them: there are links on

the right ('job bank') and left side ('finding a job') of the EI main benefits page, links are embedded at the top of tabs one through three, and the seventh tab is overwhelmingly focused on job search as a responsibility and the penalties for misrepresenting information to the EI program. Variations on 'finding a job' are the only elements repeated across all three parts of the page. This also reinforces the link between EI and finding employment which was outlined on the main ESDC page (as the two are placed together and at the top).

Analyzing Components Close Reading

Multiple studies have analyzed changes to EI and its effects (Osberg 2009; Finnie & Irvine 2011; Vosko 2011), but none have focused on the 'applicant side' of everyday front-end policy components which recipients interact with directly and more frequently than training or counseling (Employment Insurance 2016; Morden 2016). Although the full Employment Insurance Act and all changes are publically available, as are reports on the EI program and a comprehensive administrative guidebook (the EI 'digest'), legislation, policies, and administrative manuals and reports are not crucial to an individual's *application* to receive employment insurance (Employment Insurance 2017). As such, I will focus on the most direct path to apply for regular benefits: the most prominent instructions (the 'seven tabs'), the application, and reporting. I do not claim that applicants will or will not read beyond these aspects; however, to receive and maintain receipt of EI, all applicants must navigate the site to reach the application, fill out the application itself, and complete regular reporting.

I will analyze the components above to determine whether they employ mechanisms conducive to automatic cognition (Chapter 2) and what they communicate. I hypothesize that the EI program will primarily encourage rapid labour market re-attachment *without* much emphasis on training, the state of the labour market, or the experience of unemployment. I assume a moderate level of motivation and attention on the part of applicants because, in the absence of high savings or private support (i.e. family), unemployment in a context of retrenching social supports is materially, psychologically, and socially arduous (Vosko 2011; Finnie & Irvine 2011). In these conditions, the unemployed are driven to whatever supports they can apply for (including EI) and to look to the labour market for survival, regardless of the conditions therein, leading to reduced expectations – a component of the 'austerity' concept and reflected in empirical accounts of contemporary unemployment and labour market cycling (see Chapter 3).

Coverage, Benefit Rate, and Survival

Before looking at EI's main instructions, application, and reporting, it is crucial to briefly consider the material effects of changes to duration, coverage, and generosity of benefits. The material *outcomes* of changes to EI since the mid-1990s contextualize the textual: even if EI defined 'suitable employment' in a relatively progressive way (i.e.

taking into consideration an individual's obligations, limitations, and expectations), if generosity of benefits does not 'match' with the definition, it is inconsistent and less likely to form automatic cognition. Conversely, stimuli which are more stressful and directly connect with our material lives are *more likely* to form automatic cognition – in this case, low benefits would drive people back into the labour market regardless of the 'definitions' of suitable employment (Little 2001; North & Fiske 2012).

As of 2017, most of the changes from the mid-1990s have remained (Osberg 2009; Employment & Social Development Canada 2016). The maximum salary replacement rate is 55 percent (67 percent in 1971), minimum hours to qualify are 420-700 (10.5-18 weeks, 8 in 1971), and maximum coverage is 45 weeks (51 in 1971), with hours and maximum weeks dependent on the local unemployment rate (Employment Insurance 2016). In 2016, the percentage of the unemployed receiving EI was 41 percent (88 percent in 1971) and the average recipient in the early 1990s received approximately \$7,000, compared to \$5,000 in 2007 in constant dollars (Lin 1998; CANSIM 276-0022 2017; Koning & Banting 2013, 590).

Comparing minimum hours to qualify and maximum income under EI to likely income for people earning at the low-income cut-off (LICO), median income, and a living wage affirms the criticisms discussed earlier: EI overwhelmingly benefits higher income individuals in FYFT employment (Employment Insurance 2016; CANSIM 111-0009 2016; Living Wage Canada 2016; Citizenship & Immigration Canada 2017). For instance, an unemployed person in Toronto (April 2017 unemployment of 7.2 percent) would require 630 hours of insurable employment (15.75 weeks or nearly four months at 40 hours/week) to qualify for EI, which would entitle them to 17 weeks (3.9 months) of coverage. If they made \$51,300 (maximum insurable earnings) or more, they would be entitled to the maximum weekly benefit of \$543 (55% of weekly income), or \$9,231 over 17 weeks. If they had the maximum insurable hours of 1820 for the region (45.5 weeks at 40 hours/week – over 10 months employed full time), they would get 40 weeks (9.2 months) of coverage, netting them \$21,720 over 40 weeks.

However, even high income FYFT earners only receive marginally more than if they were employed earning the LICO: \$18,923.20 over 40 weeks. For someone actually earning at or below the LICO (\$24,600 annually in 2016), they would only receive \$260.19 per week from EI (\$10,407.60 over 40 weeks), which is 52.1 percent less than the high income individual. An individual living alone earning the median income of \$27,690 (2014, latest available data) would receive \$292.88 per week (\$11,715.20 over 40 weeks), which is 46.1 percent less than a high income individual. Even someone earning the high-end of the living wage (Vancouver, \$42,931 annually in 2016) would receive \$454.08 per week (\$18,163.20 over 40 weeks), 16.4 percent less. Thus, those who work in FYFT positions can most easily qualify for EI, and higher incomes contribute a lower proportion of their income to EI, yet receive the highest benefits and longest duration.

In the wake of the 1996 Employment Insurance Act, a 2014 analysis found that the bottom 20 percent of earners account for a low – 15 percent – and dropping proportion of EI recipients, along with the top 20 percent (13.8 percent), while quintiles two through four account for nearly 24, 26, and 22 percent: the most vulnerable workers are among the least likely to benefit from EI (CCPA 2014).

Overall, the material outcomes of EI policy changes bring it in line with the general trajectory in social and labour market policy: devolving more responsibility for survival to the individual while encouraging immediate attachment to the labour market. If what EI communicates through cognitive mechanisms (analyzed below) encourages ways of thinking and acting which are complementary to the trajectories above (and those outlined in Chapter 3), it will encourage an automaticity (‘cognitive governance’) which is beneficial to a flexible accumulation regime.

The Seven Tabs of Regular Benefits

When navigating to the EI Regular Benefits page, the seven tabs at the top-centre constitute the most straightforward, step-by-step guides for EI (Employment Insurance 2016). The two major themes in the seven tabs are the contingency of benefit receipt (on labour market participation, reporting, truthfulness) and ‘job search’. For instance, the first thing individuals see in tabs one through three is a link to ‘Job Alerts’: “Cut down on your job search time, let Job Bank email you when new jobs are available. Subscribe now!” (Employment Insurance 2016).

Tab one describes regular benefits as: “Employment Insurance (EI) provides regular benefits to individuals *who lose their jobs through no fault of their own* (for example, due to shortage of work, seasonal or mass lay-offs) and are *available for and able to work*, but can’t find a job” (emphasis mine). In the first paragraph and the ‘Job alerts’ link, ‘jobs’ and ‘work’ are mentioned five times in a semantically significant way⁴⁸ (seven including the two side panels) around searching for work, finding available work, and being available for work. The links at the bottom of the ‘overview’ tab inform users that there will be reporting involved in EI and that ‘fraud’ is something the program is concerned with (contingency).

Tab two states that an individual is eligible for EI if they were in insurable employment (excluding self-employed individuals and contractors) and lost that employment ‘through no fault of [their] own’, again re-iterating contingency. There are seven basic conditions – prominently at the top of the page – which outline the above, and the last two reinforce the ‘job search’ theme:

- are ready, willing and capable of working each day;

⁴⁸ A simple count of the number of times a word occurs on a page or in a document provides no context for how it is used and whether it is used in different ways. ‘Semantic significance’ is a way of pointing to the number of times a term is used in a similar way, with similar meanings, in similar or related contexts.

- are actively looking for work (you must keep a written record of employers you contact, including when you contacted them).

An individual may be ineligible for EI if they are unemployed as a result of participation in a labour dispute, misconduct, or voluntarily leaving work ‘without just cause’ (not defined). The remainder of the page discusses the number of hours of insurable employment required to qualify for EI, based on regional rates of employment, with exponentially higher requirements for those who ‘received a notice of violation regarding prior EI benefit periods’ (contingency).

Tabs three through six reinforce the contingency of benefits, as tab three provides the calculations for duration and weekly benefits, which are tied directly to past labour market participation. Tab four informs applicants they will need records of employment (ROEs) and salary amounts, reminding them of the contingency outlined in tab three, while the first line of tab five reminds applicants to review the eligibility criteria, and tab six reminds users of the reporting conditionality for benefit receipt.

Tab seven is by far the longest, and had 14 separate semantically significant instances of the term ‘job search’ or ‘looking for work’. A six paragraph section discusses the limitations to traveling outside of Canada while receiving EI, unless a recipient can “show that [they] are available for work in Canada while abroad”. Service Canada must be notified, and acceptable conditions include a funeral for family, accompanying family for medical treatment or to see them if ill, and attending a “bona fide job interview”. Fourteen days can be spent abroad for a “bona fide job search” and travel outside of the country is only allowed if you “have taken measures to be reached if an employment opportunity presents itself during your absence and that you are able to return to Canada within 48 hours”. Failing to abide by the conditions above may result in “penalties of up to three times your weekly benefit rate” and Service Canada will compare EI information with the Canada Border Services Agency. Between the length of this section, the limitations, reporting, surveillance, and penalties, it drives home the emphasis that an EI recipient’s purpose while on benefits is overwhelmingly to look for work – exceptions of up to seven days can be made to be with family that is seriously injured or if a family member had passed away.

Immediately after this section is a blue box with the title “what support is available to help you find a job” and includes links to the ‘Jobs Alert’ services and the Job Bank. This is the only part of the page which is in a different colour.

Nine paragraphs are dedicated to discussing misrepresentation in claiming benefits, penalties (monetary, prosecution, future benefits), and violations (increased hours required to qualify for EI in the future). Monetary penalties carry the Bank of Canada interest rate plus 3 percent, and can be up to three times the weekly benefit rate, maximum benefit rate, or amount of overpayment.

The next section details an applicant’s rights and responsibilities as well as Service Canada’s responsibilities. An applicant has the right to file a claim, receive

benefits owed to them, request a reconsideration, see any government record that contains their personal information, and be served in the official language of their choice (five bullets). Conversely, an applicants' responsibilities is 23 bullets, 20 of which deal directly with job search activities:

As a **claimant** of EI benefits, your **responsibilities** include:

- be capable of and available for work and unable to obtain suitable employment;
- actively search for and accept offers of suitable employment. For further information on what constitutes [suitable employment](#), visit the Employment Insurance section of the [Canada.ca](#) website;
- conduct job search activities that increase your opportunities to find suitable employment, such as:
 - assessing employment opportunities;
 - preparing a résumé or cover letter;
 - registering for job search tools or with electronic job banks or employment agencies;
 - attending job search workshops or job fairs;
 - networking;
 - contacting prospective employers;
 - submitting job applications;
 - attending interviews; - undergoing evaluations of competencies.
- keep a detailed record as proof of your job search efforts to find suitable employment as we may ask you to provide that proof at any time. Therefore you must keep your job search record for 6 years;
- you **are not** required to have employers sign your job search form or provide you with a letter confirming that you have applied for a job;
- let us know when you refuse any offers of employment;
- report all periods when you are not available for work;
- keep your appointments with our office;
- notify us of any separation from employment and the reasons for the separation;
- accurately report all periods of incapacity;
- obtain a medical certificate that confirms the duration of your incapacity;
- provide all other required information and documents;
- report any absences from your area of residence and/or any absence from Canada;
- report all employment, whether you work for someone else or for yourself;
- accurately report all employment earnings before deductions, in the week(s) in which they were earned, as well as any other monies you may receive.

Service Canada provides a list of its responsibilities, and it is curious that it is them, not the EI program or ESDC which has responsibilities. Unsurprisingly, they are

overwhelmingly technical, discussing ‘prompt and courteous service’, processing claims and timelines, providing accurate information, and communicating decisions.

What is Said and How

Across the seven tabs (even their names) the two themes of contingency-benefits and job-search are repeated and tied together, reinforcing an association (classical conditioning) between benefit receipt, contingency, survival, and the labour market. Through the description and link to frauds and reporting in tab one, eligibility requirements and reporting (‘record of job search’) in tab two, benefit and duration of coverage calculations in tab three, documentation requirements in tab four, eligibility reminder in tab five, reporting reminder in tab six, and responsibilities and discussion of violations in tab seven, the ‘contingency-benefits’ theme is spatially repeated. Further, the ‘how to apply’ link on the right panel and ‘reconsideration’, three reporting pages, and three application/calculation pages on the left reinforce this theme across different components. The ‘job alerts’ links at the top of tabs one through three and toward the top of tab seven, as well as the description of Regular Benefits in tab one, eligibility in tab two, and the limitations on travel outside of Canada and applicant’s responsibilities in tab seven, spatially repeat the ‘job-search’ theme. The ‘job bank’ and ‘finding a job’ links on the right and left panels reinforce the second theme of ‘job-search’.

Every subcomponent of every case has a qualitative analysis (interpretive policy analysis and the model for the development of automaticity, both outlined in Chapter 2) and a quantitative content analysis. Each of the quantitative content analyses in Chapter 4-6 search the components of a case study (e.g. for Chapter 4 the EI Regular Benefits Main Page, the EI Application, and the Reporting System) for several variables (and their modifiers, e.g. ‘train, training, etc.’) and then calculate several measures for them. The significance of each variable is discussed in the qualitative close reading. Only ‘semantically significant’ terms and sections are included. That is, I do not simply compute the number of times a term occurs, but verify each occurrence to ensure it is contextualized in the meaning of each variable (discussed below). For instance, ‘work’ is only counted in the context of an individual’s work history or activities, not in occurrences such as ‘workers outside Canada’.

The content analysis is used to highlight the repetition of concepts in an ALMP subcomponent and speak initially to consistency. Several measures are calculated for the variables and the ALMP components they appear in. Not all are reported for each case, rather, interesting outcomes are highlighted. Some measures speak for themselves (e.g. ‘total number of times a variable appears across all EI components’ or the average number of times a variables appears on a page) while others require elaboration. For instance, ‘repetition across’ pages in a component is measured by dividing the number of pages in which a variable occurred by the total number of pages in the ALMP component: e.g. if ‘Skills/Train’ appeared at all in two out of seven pages, it was repeated across nearly 29% of all pages in the component. ‘Consistency across’ pages in a component is measured by

comparing 1) the number of pages in which a variable appeared with 2) the average number of times all variables appeared on all pages in a component. For instance, 'skills and training' appeared on two of seven pages, but only appeared a maximum of three times on a page, while the average for all terms across all pages was 7.9. This measure provides a basic indication of how consistently a variable is repeated within a page. The more often - and more evenly distributed throughout and across pages (this is briefly evaluated qualitatively) - a variable appears, the more likely it is to contribute to automaticity, particularly if the meaning articulated is also consistent (also examined in the qualitative analysis).

In terms of the definitions of the variables, 'Skills/Train', 'Educate/Learn' and 'Career' search all references of those terms to capture when ALMP encourages skills development, post-secondary education, and any mention of the concept of a 'career' as opposed to just a job. These three variables, broadly speaking, refer to more costly ALMP interventions (yet more effective in long term labour market attachment and wage growth) and the prospect of a career for the policy recipient - which implies a longer term and more stable employment condition - and so capture references which are more to the benefit of the recipient.

'Attitude' is a relatively abstract variable, noting terms and sections in which an ALMP program comments on how a person should present themselves and interpret the actions of others. For instance, in a job interview, an application should indicate that they are 'thankful for the opportunity', that they 'should smile', and that they 'should let the interviewer set the tone'.

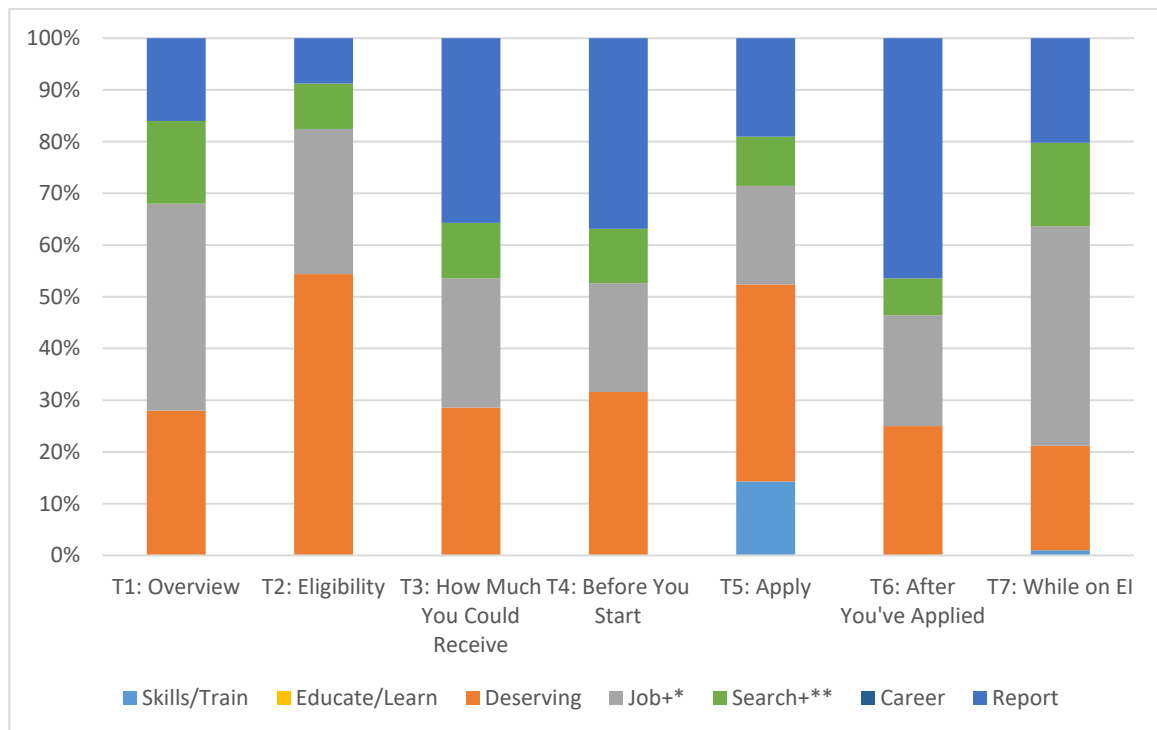
'Deserving' is specific to EI because it is the only case study with explicit conditionalities. This variable captures terms and sections of an ALMP program which deal with a policy recipient's 'eligibility/qualification for benefits, entitlement to benefits, conditionalities', and whether the recipient is 'available and able to look for work and lost their employment through no fault of their own'. 'Report' captures sections and terms in EI which deal with recipients reporting and recording requirements in relation to conditionalities.

'Job+' captures occurrences of the terms 'job, occupation, and work', all of which refer to relatively more isolated and less stable employment conditions than 'career'. 'Search+' covers variants of a job search theme, with terms such as 'search, apply, find, notify, browse, posting, and alerts'. Finally, 'LMI' captures terms and sections which deal with labour market demand (i.e. educational requirements, job growth) vs. quality indicators (i.e. wages, full-time vs. part-time, etc.) and instances in which market conformation is encouraged (e.g. 'when you know about job trends in Ontario... you can plan your career'). This is not to say that all of this information is not functionally useful to the unemployed and transitioning, but that the framing and type of information can encourage particular ways of thinking and acting which are more or less to the benefit of those recipients.

This content analysis is illustrative of the distribution of some key terms and concepts to this study, but is not meant to be a primary or causal source of evidence. Because of the challenge of semantic significance and that many variables are not captured by single terms (e.g. attitude or LMI), I use a combination of explicit search of

terms and manual categorization of sections and statements as falling into one category or another (e.g. 'expand your *learning*' fits under 'education and learning' while '*learn* about what employers are looking for' fits under LMI).

Figure 3: Terms by EI Content, the Seven Tabs



The 'seven tabs' of EI regular benefits were examined for repetition and consistency, and the most common variables were 'Job+' (89 times across all pages), 'Deserving' (87 times), and 'Report' (63 times). 'Search+' came in fourth with 34 occurrences, and 'Skill/Train', 'Educate/Learn', and 'Career' occurred only 4 times combined. The most repeated terms also appeared on all pages and were the only ones that registered consistency, with 'Deserving' being 100% consistent (occurrences per page being the same or higher than the average of all terms across all pages) followed by 'Job+' at 71.4%. These terms were also very evenly distributed throughout each page. Overall, 'Job+' occurred 89 times and accounted for 42% of all terms, while 'Career' did not occur a single time. 'Job+' and 'Search+' accounted for 57% of all terms, 'Deserving' accounted for 41% of all terms, while 'Skill/Train' and 'Educate/Learn' accounted for only 2%. The section of the seventh tab which dealt with 'claimant responsibilities' had 78.3% of points focused on job search, 17.4% on conditionalities (i.e. reporting and recording requirements), and only 4.3% - one point - on worker's rights (that they are not required to have an employer sign their job search form). Quantitatively, the dominant themes among the seven tabs were job search, conditionalities, and reporting requirements. These themes appeared on every single tab and were varying consistent.

‘Job search’ is consistent and heavily repeated: while ‘suitable employment’ is only mentioned five times in tab seven (with no definition), ‘job search’ or ‘looking for work’ was repeated 32 times across tabs one, two, three, six, and seven (and in the side panels), providing consistent repetition across (spatial) and within (temporal) tabs for the latter. In tab one, it is described using the terms ‘available’ and ‘able’; in tab two, ‘ready, willing, and capable of working each day’ (repeated verbatim in the bi-weekly reports) and ‘actively looking for work’. The 20 bullets in tab seven (also present in the online application) repeat the terms above, and include requirements to report periods of unavailability, incapacity (requires a medical certificate), and refusal of employment. These terms suggest a measure of character, resolve, and responsibility. The next line on ‘actively looking for work’ speaks directly to individual responsibility and activation, while the reminder to keep a written – and detailed – record of job search activity speaks to conditionalities, the main form of operant conditioning in EI which is bound up with an active learning element. The ‘deserving’ applicant is therefore also meticulous and *constant* in their job search efforts, which should be their only focus.

EI excludes those who quit, who participated in a labour action, and those looking to update their skills and education (tabs one, two and five), modelling the ‘good and deserving’ applicant (observational learning) who had high participation, understands that their place is in the labour market, that they should not quit work and expect support from the state (except in cases of illness or child birth). Further, benefit receipt, duration of coverage, and benefit amount is contingent (tabs one through six) on past labour market participation not individual need (calculated using regional unemployment), and on consistent reporting of job search activities (tabs one, four, six, and seven). The detailed information on determining eligibility (tabs two and three) are step-by-step, and so satisfies component training which aids in developing automaticity. In this case, internalizing the functional calculation for eligibility and also the association (classical conditioning) between benefits and sustained labour market participation.

Benefit recipients must accept surveillance in the form of truthful, regular reporting which is used to evaluate deservingness *based on* job search activities, while ‘violation’ information is linked in tab one, embedded in the last table of tab two, and discussed at length in tab seven. Together these elements act as negative reinforcement (operant conditioning), likely increasing applicants’ attention and improve automaticity, as failing to meet conditionalities risks benefit receipt.

The tabs themselves satisfy the component training mechanism for developing automatic cognition by facilitating comprehension through simple, straightforward steps which do not assume prior knowledge. Going from link to link in order constitutes a basic form of participation and active learning. In this way, the content of the tabs can be more easily processed and translated from the declarative knowledge that deservingness and survival is tied to the labour market into procedural knowledge (cognitive steps on how to think, feel, and act): first, the procedures of EI, and second, routinizing the association

between benefits, survival, and participation in the labour market. These elements constitute external consistency with broader cultural norms which venerates job holders.

What is Elided & Outcomes

The two themes associate (classical conditioning) a person's ability to respond to their material conditions (i.e. unemployment, precarity) with the labour market and job search activities, priming externally salient schemas of activation ('active' and 'available' are repeated eight times across three tabs), individual responsibility, and entrepreneurial subjectivity, as recipients are expected to undertake individual efforts to find work, based on their current skills and willpower. The primacy of the labour market, limited resources and role of the state (no mention of skills training or education), and low benefits evoke neoliberal and austere ideas (the latter particularly for the individual, as low benefits suggest the expectation that they will 'sacrifice' and reduce their expectations while looking for work).

Broadly speaking, the second theme is labour market re-attachment, but the *only* focus is on job search activities and not on any kind of training or education - the word 'career' is never mentioned in the seven tabs. None of the tabs or links in the side panels addressed surviving while unemployed (beyond the very low benefit threshold), mental and physical health, family conditions, or career development. In combination with the incredibly rare mention of skills training and education – accounting for only 2% of all terms – and no mention of the term career, this subcomponent of EI is overwhelmingly geared toward rapid labour market reattachment, reporting, and conditionalities. As a result, no attention is paid to the unemployed improving their skills, finding the same or better employment, or to the material, social, and psychological challenges of unemployment.

The seven tabs (intentionally or unintentionally) made associations between the major themes it articulated, repeated those themes consistently within and across tabs, and reminded policy recipients of conditionalities, reporting, and consequences for violations (operant conditioning). While there was weak active learning (merely going from tab to tab) at this stage, component training was stronger as the themes were not only articulated but broken into steps, with instructions, and translated into requirements. Because the themes are sufficiently distinct but consistently connected (e.g. *reporting on job search activities* as part of *EI conditionalities*), they should result in separate but related schemas. As these schemas intersect with themes across other ALMP programs and socially salient discourses (i.e. 'job search' is tied heavily to neoliberalism, activation, and entrepreneurialism), encountering them in the seven tabs likely primes these other schemas, strengthening each, the connections between them, and the chances for all of them to reach higher levels of automaticity. In other words, the major themes of the seven tabs and the broader discourses they connect to are more likely to become 'common sense'.

The material-semiotic conditions outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 and the material outcomes for EI recipients examined earlier in this chapter ('stimuli') provide a material impetus to find any work for survival, which is complemented directly by the focus on immediate 'job search' activities. Implicitly, this primes the 'austerity' schema wherein people are encouraged (or required to based on their material conditions) to 'make due with less' and perhaps 'expect less' from the market and state.

Increasingly limited recourses for the unemployed and transitioning (as a result of retrenching and market oriented social and labour market policies) limit people's options other than returning to the market or turning to ALMP ('constraint'). Thus far, the kind of automaticity encouraged ('cognitive governance') by EI's seven tabs is complementary to these stimuli and constraints resulting from *and benefiting* flexible accumulation and a lean, market facilitating state.

EI Application

The mandatory online application handles all the different streams of benefits and is 37 pages long, with potential 'forks' (opening up new options) at almost every stage. Applicants can apply by going through tab five ('apply'), after which they are taken to a page which begins with the now-familiar 'job alerts' banner (an example of spatial repetition across components), reminds them to review eligibility criteria, outlines a privacy policy (as the application requires a social insurance number), and includes a link to the application.

Of the 37 pages, the first thirteen were on technical information (i.e. are you starting a new application or trying to continue an old one?), types of benefits (e.g. regular, sickness, maternity), and demographic information. Seven pages deal with employment related information (highest level of education, union membership, name of employer, etc.). The next ten pages address the calculation of benefits (i.e. variable best weeks, other income, etc.), and the last seven pages restate the 'rights and responsibilities' featured in tab seven of the EI regular benefits main page.

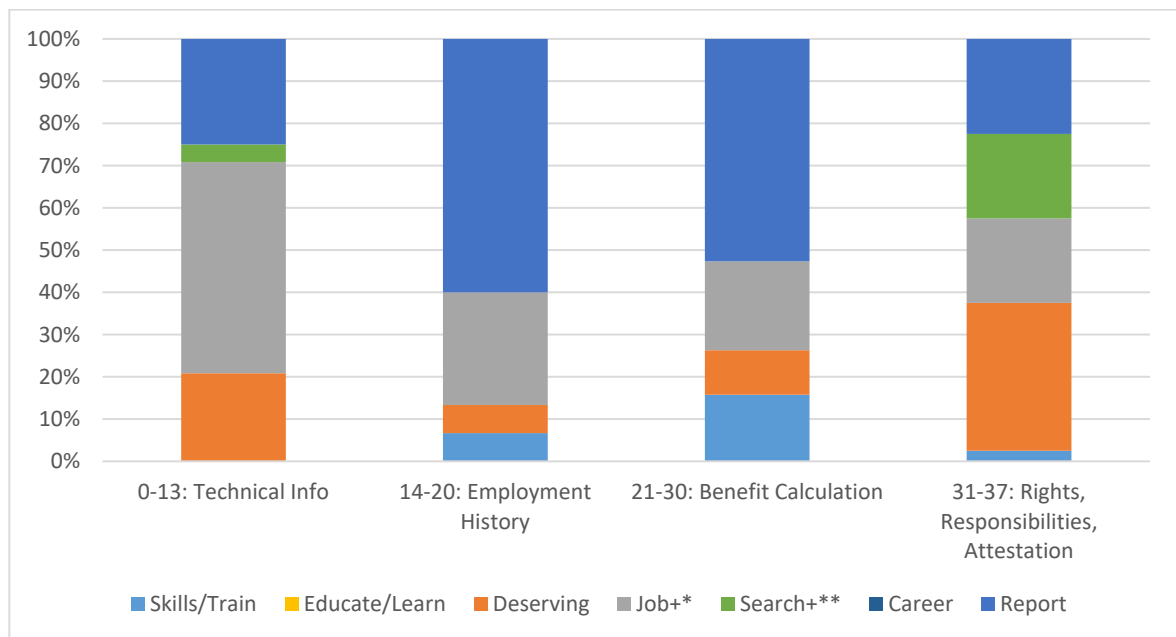
Overall, the application is a strong exercise in active learning, as most sections are small and involve many instances of information input, selecting options, and navigating different forks. Most sections of the application are relatively short, organized in single lines with headings and bullets, with seemingly clear steps and instructions. Generally, this would satisfy both the active learning and component training elements of developing automaticity.

What is Said and How

Not all the elements of the application encouraged return to the labour market. Beginning with the second page, applicants must choose between 'benefits for employees' (first stage in selecting 'regular benefits') and 'benefits for self-employed

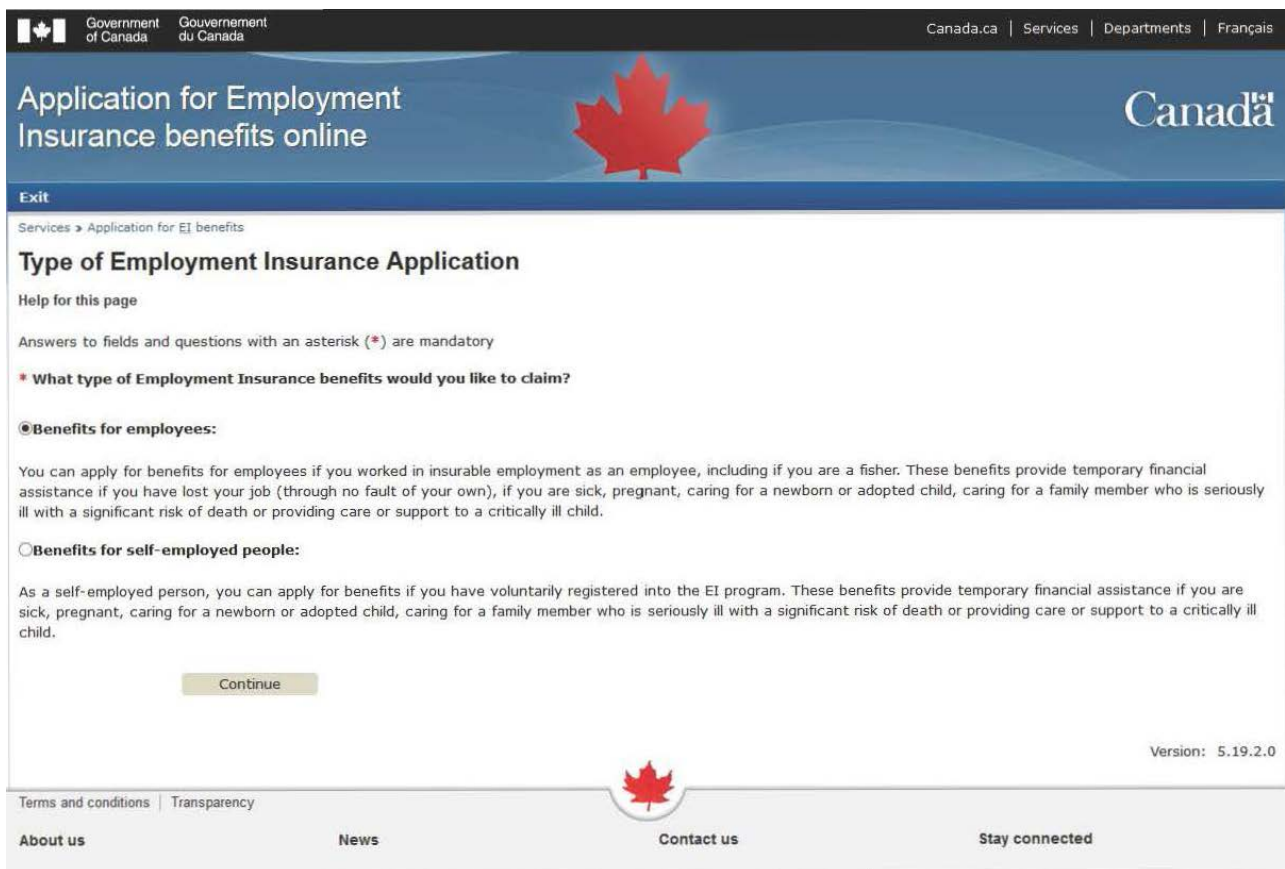
persons’, but the description of the former does not mention job search expectations. It does, however repeat the conditionality from the seven tabs that “temporary financial assistance” is for those who lost their jobs “through no fault of [their] own”.

Figure 4: Terms by EI Content, the EI Application



The EI application was split into four sections based on the topics they cover (and discussed above): pages 1-13 on technical information (i.e. types of benefits, whether this is a new or continued application), pages 14-20 on employment history, pages 21-30 on benefit calculation (i.e. records of employment, other employment information that would be used to calculate benefits), and pages 31-37 on an applicant's rights, responsibilities, and their attestation that their application is truthful. When examined for repetition and consistency, the most common variables were 'Report' (34 times across all pages), followed by 'Job+' (28 times), and 'Deserving' (22 times). 'Search+' was not as prevalent as with the seven tabs, appearing only 9 times, almost completely in the last section. 'Skill/Train' and 'Educate/Learn' were overall more prominent in the EI application, being mentioned a total of 5 times and in three of four sections. Only 'Report' and 'Job+' were 100% consistent (repetitions per section exceeding the average number of occurrences of all variables across all sections), with 'Deserving' at 50%. The last section had the most occurrences of all variables, accounting for 41% of all occurrences, and the dominant variables here were 'Deserving' and 'Report', accounting for 58% of all occurrences in this last section and 57% all sections. 'Job+' was repeated 28 times, while 'Career' was never mentioned. 'Skill/Train' and 'Educate/Learn' were more prevalent here than in the seven tabs, accounting for 5% of all terms and being repeated across 75% of sections (compared

to 100% for 'Job+', 'Deserving', and 'Report'). Interestingly, the EI application had a different distribution of themes than the seven tabs, with 'job' being tied more closely to conditionalities and reporting requirements rather than search activities. This, however, is not the same for the final section, which ties all the themes closely (both 'Job+' and 'Search' appeared 8 times in this last section, and 'Search' only appeared otherwise once in the entire application). Thus, while 'search+' was not consistent throughout the application, it was heavily repeated and consistent in the last section, such that the last thing applicants would encounter is a reiteration of the job-search-conditionalities-reporting schema that was constructed in the seven tabs.



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Type of Employment Insurance Application

Help for this page

Answers to fields and questions with an asterisk (*) are mandatory

*** What type of Employment Insurance benefits would you like to claim?**

Benefits for employees:

You can apply for benefits for employees if you worked in insurable employment as an employee, including if you are a fisher. These benefits provide temporary financial assistance if you have lost your job (through no fault of your own), if you are sick, pregnant, caring for a newborn or adopted child, caring for a family member who is seriously ill with a significant risk of death or providing care or support to a critically ill child.

Benefits for self-employed people:

As a self-employed person, you can apply for benefits if you have voluntarily registered into the EI program. These benefits provide temporary financial assistance if you are sick, pregnant, caring for a newborn or adopted child, caring for a family member who is seriously ill with a significant risk of death or providing care or support to a critically ill child.

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The sections on occupation and calculation of benefits (seventeen pages) reinforce the contingency of benefits on labour market participation, as was outlined in the tabs on the Regular Benefits page. There is a strong consistency but not pure repetition between these sections and the tabs. For example, applicants have to indicate why they are not working (page 16), but there is no indication from the application alone that some reasons are acceptable and others are not. However, the application itself would 'prime' an applicant's nascent schemas on EI developed through reading the seven tabs – including on eligibility – where they would have learned that quitting, participating in a labour

action, and being dismissed are not acceptable reasons. Reading this question would activate that primed schema and reinforce the association (classical conditioning) between eligibility for benefits, survival, and labour market participation. Similarly, the ten pages on calculating benefits may remind applicants of the limited benefits they would receive, and thus, the need to return to the labour market.

On page four, applicants must choose between the different benefit streams, and regular benefits are described in line (perfect consistency) with tab one: "you have lost your job (through no fault of your own) and you are *available for and able to work*, but can't find a job". Overall, only 21.6 percent of the application deals with job search while on EI (page four and the last seven pages), weakening temporal repetition within the application.

However, the bulk of the content in between deals with labour market attachment (as a contingency for duration and amount of benefits), and so primes the 'reattachment' or 'job search/looking for work' schema which has been repeatedly communicated through the EI process thus far. It is significant that the last section (18.9 percent of the total application), which ties together and *frames* the EI application process, is on rights and responsibilities.

The first of the last seven pages is entitled 'Rights and Responsibilities' with the page title: "Employment Insurance and You:" and "A Shared Responsibility" underneath.

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Rights and Responsibilities

Page 1 of 6

**Employment Insurance and You:
A Shared Responsibility**

The Employment Insurance (EI) program provides Canadians with temporary financial assistance while they are unemployed, participating in an apprenticeship or a work-sharing program, pregnant, sick/injured, caring for a newborn or newly adopted child, providing care or support to a gravely ill family member or to a critically ill child.

The right to receive benefits involves a shared responsibility between Service Canada and you, our client.

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Only twice on this page are recipients’ rights discussed, once in the section title and once in the last line, both tied to ‘responsibility’. The mention of “temporary financial assistance” is the only discussion of surviving unemployment.

Section three of ‘rights and responsibilities’ details the applicant’s responsibilities, completely consistent with tab seven: recipients must focus solely on labour market re-attachment through job search activities and report any periods or conditions which prevented them from conducting a job search (if they have medical proof). A subtle difference is that in tab seven the list is preceded by “your **responsibilities** include”, while in the application it states “when requesting **EI regular** benefits, including fishing benefits, you *must*” – making the association between the contingency, benefits, survival, and job search explicit.

Section five is reserved for discussing ‘absence from Canada’, but the message does not appear as stark and explicit on job-search requirements as in tab seven. This application focuses mostly on the need to report absences and the possibility of receiving benefits for compassionate reasons and even other reasons “as long as you meet the requirements for these benefits”. This again primes the ‘job search’, ‘conditionalities’, ‘reporting’, and ‘benefits’ schemas, increasing their strength, connectedness, and automaticity.

Section six reiterates interest on “debts you incur as a result of misrepresentation” and the “severe penalties or prosecution” associated with “false or misleading statements”. While the entire section on ‘rights and responsibilities’ implies the consequences for failing to meet responsibilities – which an applicant would have certainly encountered if they read even some of the content of the seven tabs – this last page is a strong reminder of the negative reinforcement (operant conditioning) utilized by the EI program. Finally, the last section is a stronger example of active learning contributing to automaticity, as the applicant must select between two options:

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Rights and Responsibilities

Page 6 of 6

Answers to fields and questions with an asterisk (*) are mandatory

Other important information

Interest

We charge interest on any debts you incur as a result of misrepresentation. We calculate interest on overdue debts daily, and that interest compounds monthly on the amount owing at the average Bank of Canada rate plus 3%.

False or misleading statements

If you knowingly withhold information or make a false or misleading statement, you have committed an act or omission that could result in an overpayment of benefits as well as severe penalties or prosecution. However if you notify Service Canada of your actions, we can waive monetary penalties or prosecution if we are not already investigating the matter.

Money owing

If you owe any money to the Employment Insurance Program, or the Canada Revenue Agency, or if the Department of Justice is garnisheeing your wages for unpaid family support, we may have to deduct money directly from your benefits. To make repayment arrangements, call the number indicated on your overpayment notice.

* I, Sorin Mitrea, have read and understand my rights and responsibilities, and;

I accept my rights & responsibilities

I do not accept my rights & responsibilities and want to abandon my application for Employment Insurance benefits

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The explicit wording of the second option frames the first and the EI process: should an applicant not accept their rights (not discussed) and responsibilities (consistently repeated), they therefore *choose* to “abandon” their benefits. Finally, the last page is entitled ‘attestation’, and states the following:

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Attestation

Answers to fields and questions with an asterisk (*) are mandatory.

I declare that the information given to the questions on the Application for Employment Insurance benefits online and questionnaires is true to the best of my knowledge.

I understand that this information will be used to determine my eligibility for Employment Insurance Benefits (including Family Supplement) and/or Employment Benefits, Services and Training. I have read and understand the Rights and Responsibilities statement.

I understand that the information provided is subject to verification and that making a false statement on an Application for Employment Insurance benefits online is subject to an administrative penalty or criminal proceedings for knowingly making this false or misleading statement.

* I, Sorin Mitrea

Accept the above attestation and want to submit my Application for Employment Insurance benefits online.
 Do not accept the above attestation and wish to abandon my Application for Employment Insurance benefits online.

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This page reminds applicants of the contingency of EI on ‘truthfulness’, past labour market experience to determine eligibility, and of the ‘job search’ theme by reiterating the importance of ‘rights and responsibilities’. Curiously, “Services and Training” are mentioned on this page but nowhere else in the application or in the seven tabs (lacking the consistent repetition of the contingency and job search themes). Finally, the active learning element of the previous page appears again, offering the same stark choice: should applicants not accept this attestation on truthfulness (another type of deservingness) and responsibility, they are *choosing* to abandon their benefits. Breaking down rights and responsibilities into six pages (and an attestation) serves to emphasize each section, keep each section short and more easily readable (component training), and requires users to click ‘continue’ after each section, constituting a basic form of active learning.

Upon submitting the EI application, a confirmation is available to the applicant with technical information, next steps (submitting ‘records of employment’), and instructions for accessing a claim online and for reporting, again repeating this form of contingency. Finally, the confirmation ends with a section called ‘Job Match’ and states: “Try Job Bank’s Job Match Service and get matched with jobs based on your skills, knowledge and experience” and provides a link. The confirmation is a final repetition in the application of both themes.

What is Elided & Outcomes

As with the seven tabs (and left and right panels on the main page), a strong association (classical conditioning) is created between contingency, benefit receipt, survival, labour market participation, truthfulness, and job search activities via consistent repetition across components (spatial) and somewhat within (temporal – too much concentration at the end of the application for job search to be fully consistent within the application). Particularly through the last seven pages, attestation, and confirmation, the ideal applicant is modeled as truthful and ceaseless in their efforts to return to work. Active learning was much more apparent in the application as compared to the seven tabs, as was component training: the themes above were broken into steps, with instructions, and turned into requirements for completing the application. Further, applicants had to reflect on their past experiences, carefully choose options, and proceed through the pages. The themes articulated by the application are distinct, but just like the seven tabs, were consistently connected.⁴⁹ According to the cognitive psychology literature, this should strengthen each individual schema but also the connections between them. These themes also intersect with others across ALMP and in society, priming schemas such as neoliberalism, activation, entrepreneurialism (on job search), and responsabilization (on individual responsibility to complete EI, report, and look for work). As a result, the schemas developed/reinforced through the EI application will strengthen, increase their connections with those other schemas (including those on job search and conditionality/reporting from the seven tabs), and increasing their automaticity. As such, the major themes of the seven tabs and the broader discourses they connect to are more likely to become ‘common sense’.

Again, no mention is made of training, education, or surviving the hardships of unemployment. Even though the ‘applicants’ rights’ in tab seven made no mention of the above or benefits based on need, they were excluded from the application, making the emphasis *completely* on labour market re-attachment. This (accurately) frames EI not as a right of Canadian workers, but as a reward for deservingness based on previous labour market participation. Overall, the same salient schemas from the previous section are primed with an overwhelming emphasis on individual efforts (activation) to endure unemployment (austerity, resilience), employ their skills, and return to the labour market (neoliberal, entrepreneurial).

The automaticity encouraged in the two EI subcomponents so far are complementary to the material-semiotic conditions outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 and the material outcomes for EI recipients examined earlier in this chapter (‘stimuli’) as well as the limited responses available to people to respond to those conditions (‘constraint’). The unemployed are encouraged by increasingly retrenched and market facilitating policy to return to the labour market and take complete individual responsibility for their life outcomes, and if they turn to ALMP, will encounter this message through the themes discussed above delivered through cognitive mechanisms conducive to automaticity (‘cognitive governance’). The ‘common sense’ constructed by the EI application encourages the unemployed to see EI as a temporary, conditional reward for

⁴⁹ e.g. *benefit receipt* was contingent on filling out the application as part of EI *conditionality* and *reporting* requirements, all driven toward *job search*.

deservingness and to rapidly return to the labour market, with no concern for quality of employment, skill development, or the material-psychological-social experience of unemployment.

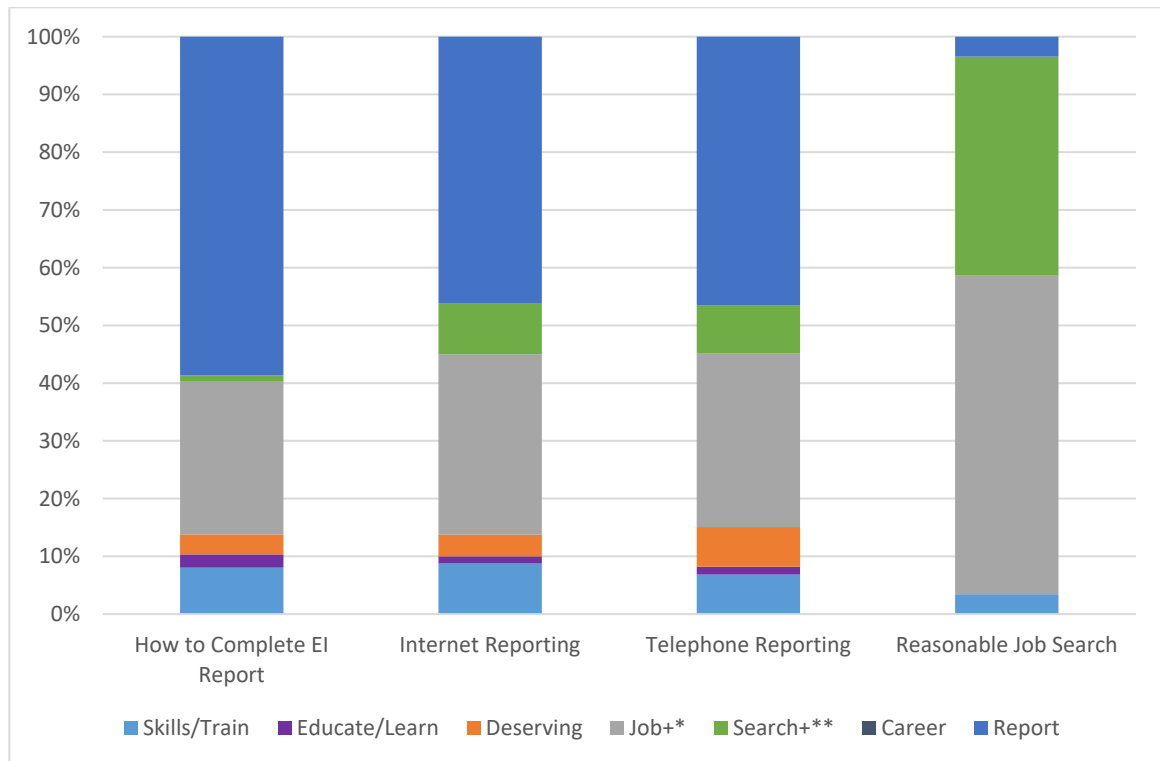
EI Reporting

After completing the application, individuals must complete bi-weekly reports (online, over the phone, or through mail) reporting their earnings, whether they attended training, and their availability for work to maintain benefit receipt (Employment Insurance 2016). The other component is a detailed record of their job search activities, however, this is only submitted at the request of a case worker, not regularly with the bi-weekly report. Without applying for EI, the online reporting system cannot be accessed, however, I will analyze the instructions across the three pages for each method of delivery, the questions outlined in the ‘mail’ instructions page, and the instructions for the job search record.

What is Said and How

In terms of consistency and repetition *across* components (spatial), tabs one, four, six, and seven, the online application, and three links on the left panel refer to the reporting requirement, and the instruction pages repeat very similar information.

Figure 5: Terms by EI Content, Reporting Systems



The EI Reporting System analyzed here - the 'how to complete the report' page, internet and telephone reporting pages, and the 'reasonable job search' instructions, again had a different distribution of variables from the other EI components. Unsurprisingly, 'Report' was the most repeated variable at 123 times across all pages, representing 45.7 percent of all variables across all pages. 'Job+' was next at 86 times (32% of all occurrences), 'Search+' at 25 times (9.3% of all occurrences), and only then does 'Deserving' come up at 11 times. Whereas the previous components dealt with conditionalities through the 'Deserving' variable quite a lot and consistently, it is not as present in these parts of the EI reporting system (and the 'how to' page actually includes all the questions on the biweekly reports). The only variable that was 100% consistent (repetitions per section exceeding the average number of occurrences of all variables across all sections) was 'Job+', with 'Report' at 75% and 'Deserving' at 0%. In fact, 'Deserving' was only repeated across three of four pages. Another difference in the reporting system was that, while 'Career' again did not make an appearance (the term has not appeared once in all the aspects of EI analyzed), 'Skills/Train' was repeated 20 times across all pages (and was repeated in each page) and 'Educate/Learn' was repeated 4 times - together accounting for 9% of all occurrences, almost as much as 'Search+'. 'Report' and 'Deserving' were repeated 458% more than 'Skill/Train' and 'Educate/Learn' together, and 'Job+' and 'Search+' occurred 363% more. Overall, the EI Reporting System made more mention of skills training and education than any other component, together receiving nearly equal prominence as a job search. Conditionalities far less prevalent (only

occurring around 3.5%) but Reporting was the most frequently repeated. The 'reasonable job search' instructions, which frame how to actually conduct a job search and record progress was different: 'Skills/Train' and 'Educate/Learn' appeared only once, while 'Job+' and 'Search+' appeared 27 times in total, representing 93% of all terms.

On the individual reporting pages and the questions that are asked, the focus is not as explicit on *just* job search activities. Indeed, in the opening line for all pages, the contingency-benefits theme is reiterated (“While you are receiving Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, you must complete reports to show that you are eligible”), but job search is not mentioned. On all pages, the main section is on ‘completing your report’, and gives nearly equal space to reporting work while on benefits, receiving other monies, recording training hours, and availability to look for work. Conversely, working while on benefits and receiving other monies only received two, three-line paragraphs in tab seven, compared to ten paragraphs and 23 bullets for job search responsibilities, and sixteen paragraphs on misrepresentation, violations, and consequences. Thus, association, modeling, and temporal repetition are not as stark as in the previous components.

Each report contains six yes/no questions, the first two on whether an applicant has been working⁵⁰ or stopped working (reasons must be given). The third question asks whether an applicant started a full time job they expect to “last for at least 4 weeks”; if yes, no more reports will be sent. The fourth question asks whether an applicant attended “a school or training course”, and the last question asks if they received or will receive money (other than from work, training allowances, or group sickness/maternity insurance), how much, from whom, and why. The fifth question is as follows:

Question 4 — Were you ready, willing and capable of working each day?

- If you answer "no": indicate the dates and the reason, for example holidays, sickness, in the box provided to that effect; and
- If you are entitled to group wage-loss insurance, you must fill in box E on Side 2.

The question could have simply been ‘were you available to work...’, but by using the terms ‘ready, willing, and capable’ the question encourages applicants to understand ‘availability’ as a full, embodied experience. In this way, availability is about being prepared to work (‘ready’), choosing and embracing work (‘willing’), and able to work (‘capability’). The last component does take into account an applicant’s wellbeing, and although it is not explained in the question itself, the instructions on the internet/telephone reporting pages state that injury and sickness are examples of an inability to work. If applicants answer ‘no’, they must indicate the dates they were not available and the reasons why – while valid reasons are not indicated here, they are outlined in the ‘responsibilities’ of tab seven and the online application. With online reporting, applicants must also answer whether they were “outside Canada between

⁵⁰ “Any” work, including self-employment and unpaid work must be reported.

Monday and Friday during the period of this report”, reiterating that facet of ‘job search’ from tab seven and the online application.

An eight paragraph, seventeen-line ‘confirmation statement’ must be accepted at the end of each report, which affirms the ‘truthfulness’ of the answers above and that they will be verified and used to determine continued eligibility for EI. This reinforces the contingency-benefits theme from the seven tabs and online application *within* the report itself, not just the instructions for the report.

The reporting pages do not give an indication as to what answers are ‘acceptable’ and why they are asked. For instance, hours worked and earnings from all sources must be meticulously documented, as well as hours spent in training and any allowances received, but no further information as to why is provided. Because of this, the pages fail an aspect of component training in that they require prior or outside knowledge for the steps to be fully understood. However, this flaw highlights the strong consistency and repetition of the seven tabs and online application, as the process of completing the report would prime EI schemas (i.e. on job search, contingency, eligibility, etc.) *with the strongest being most readily available* and strengthened through activation. Even though near equal space is devoted to ‘job search’ and other types of questions, the former was repeated consistently across (spatial) and throughout (temporal) the seven tabs, the left and right panels, the online application, and appears at the end of every online report⁵¹. Even with lower prominence and temporal repetition in these reports, there is very high consistency when ‘job search’ or contingency appear: the instructions on ‘availability’ (below) and wording of ‘Question 4’ (above) are explicitly consistent with the eligibility criteria in tab two and semantically consistent with tab one and the responsibilities outlined in tab seven and the online application. Conversely, while equal space is devoted to work and earnings in the reports, this was discussed once, in three lines on tab seven.

Availability

You will be asked the following question: "Were you ready, willing and capable of working each day, Monday through Friday, during each week of this report?"

If you were not available for work or you were not looking for work for any reason (for example, you were sick, injured or away on vacation), you must answer "no." You will be asked which days you were not available. You must also report if you leave Canada for any reason.

Answer all questions truthfully. [Providing false information is considered fraud and is punishable by law.](#) If you make a mistake during your online session, you will be able to correct it before submitting your report. If you discover that you made a mistake after you have submitted your report, it is important that you let us know as soon as possible; otherwise, you may have to pay back some or all of the money you received.

The other aspects of component training, i.e. clear and simple steps, are satisfied in the instructions and format of the reports. Also, while the reporting system is the strongest active learning component – with multiple yes/no questions and space for explanation – the overall level and distribution of repetition of previous themes (contingency-benefits and job-search) are lower than the previous components, thereby not contributing as strongly to automaticity. The lack of contextual information also

⁵¹ “To help with your job search, links to Job Bank services will be available at the end of your reporting session”, which suggests that the ‘job search’ theme will be repeated at the end of every report (twice a month for the duration of benefit receipt) (Employment Insurance 2016).

misses the opportunity to reiterate modeling and observational learning. However, the consistency of the message when the themes appear is high: benefit receipt is contingent on reporting on availability for work, and failing to do so or lying threatens benefit receipt (operant conditioning). Component training, active learning, and operant conditioning in the reports also facilitates increased attention to the relatively lower repetition of contingency (confirmation statement and the opening lines and statements on misrepresentation in the instructions) and job search.

Job Search Record

While there is no form or reporting process for the ‘job search record’, it is a repeated requirement in the ‘responsibilities’ outlined in tab seven and the online application: applicants must “keep a detailed record as proof of your job search efforts to find suitable employment”. In tab seven, this description has an embedded link to the definition of what constitutes ‘suitable employment’, and also includes a definition of a ‘reasonable job search’:

Reasonable job search

Reasonable job search activities include:

- assessing employment opportunities
- preparing a résumé or cover letter
- registering for job search tools or with electronic job banks or employment agencies
- attending job search workshops or job fairs
- networking ¹
- contacting prospective employers
- submitting job applications
- attending interviews
- evaluating your skills and competencies ²

You must be looking for a job every day that you are receiving regular or fishing benefits. Document all of these job search efforts for the **entire duration of your claim**. This includes the dates, names of employers you have contacted and their contact information, the type of work you were looking for and the results.

Keep this information in a safe place.

Employers do not need to sign your job search form or provide you with a letter confirming that you have applied for a job. You should never pay for proof of your job search and, if asked, you should refuse.

You are required to make reasonable and ongoing job search efforts while receiving EI regular or fishing benefits. We will take into account the availability of jobs in your community and your personal circumstances when we assess whether you have conducted a reasonable job search.

The lack of regularly required reporting for actual job search activities fails to tie operant conditioning to component training, active learning, and associations. The bi-weekly reports are strong examples of component training and active learning, and whatever associations, modeling, priming, repetition, and consistency is embedded is *enforced* as a result of operant conditioning: failing to complete the reports or complete them with satisfactory answers threatens benefit receipt. There is a latent operant conditioning for job search reports in the ‘threat’ that, at any time, EI case workers may ask for the ‘detailed record of job search efforts’ – a record which must be kept for six years.

The information required is detailed, consistent, and completely focused on job search activities (temporal repetition), including the dates of every job search effort, names of employers, their contact information, type of work, and results, making this a strong exercise in component training and active learning, potentially increasing the attention of applicants to the activity. The instructions also state that an applicant “must be looking for a job every day [they] are receiving regular [benefits]”, which is consistent with the bi-weekly reports and their instructions, the seven tabs, and the online application (spatial repetition). The ‘types of activities’ are repeated verbatim from the ‘responsibilities’ of the applicant in tab seven and the online application, consistently repeating the focus on the ‘job search’ theme. ‘Reasonable job search activities’ are explicitly focused – in title and description – on re-entering the labour market, with no mention of training, skills development, or education as a reasonable activity. The title itself frames the content and the reporting, as the term ‘career’ does not come up at all.

Unlike the bi-weekly reports, the steps and instructions in the ‘job search record’ are contextualized and have explicit spatial repetition with other components, as well as temporal repetition across the instructions. Consistency is verbatim or near verbatim with other components. The contextualization – as with tab seven and the online application – makes a strong association between survival, benefit receipt, job search activities, and labour market re-attachment. As well, the ‘model applicant’ is constructed as one who conducts the activities above constantly (“you must be looking for a job every day”), is thorough, documents everything, and thereby demonstrates their deservingness to receive benefits, and survive unemployment. Operant conditioning is latent (this record *may* be requested), but acts as a looming threat.

What is Elided & Outcomes

In line with the tabs and application, the hardships of unemployment are not addressed in the reporting system. Curiously, ‘training hours’ can be reported, but no context is given as to whether this would be considered part of a ‘reasonable job search’, with the only other mention of ‘training’ coming up briefly – again with no context – in the online application.

This final EI subcomponent also makes associations between contingency of benefit receipt, conditionalities, reporting, and job search (as well as ‘truthfulness’), but they are less repeated and consistent than previous components. However, ‘report’ was the most repeated and among the most consistent variables present, thus reinforcing the operant conditioning of the contingency of benefit receipt on recording and reporting how an applicant meets EI conditionalities. Active learning and component training were weaker compared to the EI application, but the themes were still broken down into steps. Further, the reporting system was heavily geared toward outlining all the steps and instructions necessary to complete the bi-weekly reports and job search record, which would both be strong exercises in active learning. The applicant modeled by the reporting system is truthful, willing and able to consistently record and report on their activities and

follow all EI rules, and is looking for work. This last theme is strongest in the last part of the reporting system analyzed, the ‘job search record’. The themes here are overwhelmingly geared toward immediate labour market re-attachment, tying it very explicitly to the conditionality/report themes. Altogether the reporting system (particularly the ‘job search record’ instructions) is likely to prime the schemas developed by an applicant as they went through the seven tabs and application (the logical steps before being able to complete any kind of EI report), particularly on an applicant’s ‘rights and responsibilities’, which were very consistent between the seventh tab, the end of the EI application, and the ‘job search record’ instructions. The fact that there was strong internal consistency and repetition within and across each, as well as the fact that these associations were often made *at the end* of a subcomponent, increases the strength of each schema, connections between them, and their automaticity.

While the distribution of space to the themes of contingency, conditionality/reporting, and job search were lower than in previous components, consistency was high and would likely activate the schemas on those themes (primed through reading the instructions and completing the reports regularly). The consistency of the themes when they would appear would likely prime the same salient schemas as the other components. For instance, the wording of the ‘availability’ question in the report would prime ‘hard work’ and ‘individual responsibility’ schemas (‘ready’ and ‘capable’), with strong moral valences on deservingness by using the term ‘willing’. These are tied in particular to the concepts of activation, austerity (in terms of its own activation facets and self-discipline), responsabilization, and entrepreneurialism. The schemas articulated by the reporting system (job search, conditionality/reporting, contingency of benefit receipt) would likely prime those developed in the other EI subcomponents, those in ALMP more broadly which are similar, and socially salient discourses, again, strengthening each, the connections between them, and their likelihood of becoming ‘common sense’.

Conclusion

A significant consistency is between the policy trajectory of EI, its material outcomes in higher conditionalities, lower duration, benefit amount, and replacement rate, the everyday policy components analyzed above, and the broader material-semiotic conditions (‘stimuli’) and options for response (‘constraint’) to those conditions in the environment in which EI and its policy recipients exist. This ‘higher level’ consistency reflects the orientation of EI as an active labour market program which materially, discursively, and psychologically drives the unemployed back into the labour market, regardless of its conditions (e.g. labour market precarity was not discussed once in any component above). The EI regular benefits main page, application, and reporting communicate to the unemployed that they alone are responsible for their employment and lived outcomes, while the state has no responsibility beyond administering ‘temporary financial assistance’ (which recipients pay into directly). The two dominant themes were the contingency of benefit receipt on past labour market participation, truthfulness, reporting, and on the second theme, consistent job search activities. Multiple cognitive

mechanisms were present, to varying degrees in all components, suggesting a high possibility that the *messages* of the components could be internalized into automaticity. Consistency and repetition across stimuli, constraints, and the automaticity encouraged by ALMP increases the likelihood of a common sense developing around the messages articulated ('cognitive governance'). The material side of low benefit rates combined with the psychological and discursive side of the components above prime salient schemas which are conducive to a post-Fordist accumulation regime: individual responsibility, activation, entrepreneurial subjectivity, resilience, and austerity. The unemployed are encouraged in every way to embrace immiseration, docility, and depoliticization: to reduce their expectations of the state and labour market and survive through their own abilities in the latter.

Chapter 5: Ontario

This chapter is the first of two on provincial active labour market policy (ALMP). While contemporary employment insurance (EI) does not have any nominal training or activation programs (these were transferred to the provinces in the form of the Labour Market Development Agreements starting in 1996), the provinces do, and reflect a much broader scope of possible labour market programs (Haddow & Klassen 2006; Wood & Hayes 2016; Morden 2016). EI regular benefits frequently referred to the federal job search program – the Job Bank – but never explicitly to provincial programs of any kind (see Chapter 4), and reflected an overwhelming focus toward rapid labour market re-attachment. Conversely, as will be shown in the following two chapters, provincial programs are more heterogeneous, have many targeted programs, and do not appear to explicitly privilege rapid re-attachment. As such, I hypothesize that the very high level of consistent repetition of rapid re-entry in EI will not be reproduced to the same degree, as the presence and variety of training and ‘long term interventions’ dilutes such a message. The same framework for developing automaticity will be applied to the provincial programs to determine what is being communicated to policy recipients and how in the everyday of ALMP. Again, while policy changes (‘backend’) are crucial to establishing and maintaining an accumulation regime, the implementation and everyday elements (‘frontend’) are the mechanisms by which policy recipients *directly* interact with a policy domain and *more explicitly* receive a way of thinking and acting. Provincial programs are the other ‘major’ ALMP site other than Federal EI to which the unemployed and transitioning may look to for survival, and what they communicate to policy recipients may or may not facilitate a post-Fordist accumulation regime which benefits from a pliable, low wage, depoliticized, and ultimately immiserated labour force.

I will analyze Ontario’s everyday labour market policy programs in this chapter and British Columbia’s in Chapter 6. As stated in Chapter 2, these provinces were chosen not on the basis of the traditional ‘most similar’ or ‘most different’ paradigms, but to explore the everyday of labour market policy in multiple sites to determine what is communicated to policy recipients. Convergences and divergences will be noted and explored, but not necessarily explained as that is not the goal of this project. Ontario and BC, however, are good sites as they ‘arrived at’ (or returned to) an ‘institutionally consistent’ liberal market economy and market oriented welfare state by the early 2000s, but Ontario went from a right-wing Progressive Conservative government to a centre-right Liberal government, while BC went from what was considered a centre-left NDP government to a centre-right Liberal government in the same period. General categories of ALMP programs in both provinces include job search, counselling, training and skills development, labour market information, and career and skill discovery.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of major trends in Ontario’s ALMP from the mid-1990s to the present. Next, I situate the provincial programs in *everyday* relation to one another and to any federal programs – how does Ontario’s ALMP frontend

present itself, its programs, and its connection to other programs. I then map relations between the three programs I will analyze: job search tools, labour market information, and career and skill discovery before analyzing each individually. If these everyday policy subcomponents (of Ontario's ALMP) encourage automaticity of rapid labour market re-attachment, total individual responsibility for labour market outcomes, and market conformation, they will construct a common sense which benefits flexible accumulation and a lean state over workers. If what is communicated through cognitive mechanisms is also consistent with policy recipients' material-semiotic conditions ('stimuli', i.e. rising material precarity) and options for responding to those conditions ('constraints') then the chances of those messages developing into common sense is increased ('cognitive governance').

The Development of Canadian Active Labour Market Policy, early 1900s-1990s

Active labour market policy is designed to increase individuals' employment opportunities and to match the demand and supply for labour through three general categories. First, by increasing the 'quality' of the labour supply through (re)training, education, and targeted programs such as 'life skills' (supply side). Second, ALMP may increase the demand for labour, for instance through wage subsidies and public works projects (demand side). Third, ALMP may seek to improve the matching of labour supply to demand, such as through counselling and job search assistance (supply side) (Wood & Hayes 2016, 5; Haddow & Klassen 2006, 81).

Labour market policy in Canada is a shared responsibility, with no constitutional or political authority given to federal or provincial governments to manage it completely, and ALMP *remains* a significant area in which there is strong federal-provincial overlap (Haddow & Klassen 2006, 68; Herd et al 2009; Morden 2016). Canadian ALMP experienced several significant 'shifts' roughly demarcating policy regimes, namely the late Fordism of the post-WWII period until approximately the mid-1960s, the transition to post-Fordism in the following period, and 'post-devolution' in 1996, which re-structured Federal-Provincial relations, spending, and program orientation in active labour market policy. I will discuss the pre-devolution period and Ontario's experience with ALMP during post-Fordism in this chapter, and discuss the post-devolution period and BC's experience with ALMP in Chapter 6. These reviews will touch on general trajectories and instruments to provide context for the cognitive analysis of everyday, front-end ALMP which will constitute the bulk of both chapters.

Until approximately the mid-1960s – coinciding with the late Fordist accumulation regime – there was small but steady growth in labour market policy provincially and federally, beginning with small networks of provincial employment offices in 1910, eventually growing in scope (e.g. vocational training and public works projects for job creation) with federal funding during the great depression of the 1930s. Then there was the launch of federal unemployment insurance in 1940, the growth of

federal employment offices to over 500 by the mid-1980s (with targeted programs for UI recipients and others), and growth in provincial offices in the wealthier provinces (Banting 2006; Haddow & Klassen 2006, 81).

Leading up to the mid-1980s, Canadian labour market policy had a more Keynesian orientation, conceptualizing training as supplementary to macro-economic demand management (McBride 1992; McBride & Mitrea 2017; Wood & Hayes 2016). This began to give way to supply side understandings (neoclassical) of labour market policy, ushering a ‘human capital’ approach focusing on individuals’ skills, which was complementary to shifts in the real economy which sought to flexibilize labour and other costs of business (Banting 2016; McBride & Mitrea 2017; Harvey 1990; Herd et al 2009). ‘Human capital’ took a brief neo-corporatist turn in the 1980s, seeking to involve labour and business in labour market adjustment. As the neo-corporatist experiment failed, the supply side approach was dominantly defined by devolution (to lower levels of government), marketization, and individualization of training from the early 1990s and onward,⁵² such that individuals were expected to shoulder the responsibility of determining what training they wanted (if any) and to increasingly absorb the costs (McBride 2017; Haddow & Klassen 2006; Wood & Hayes 2016).

Ontario’s Active Labour Market Policy

Pre-1985, Ontario experienced a long era of Progressive Conservative (PC) governments who presided over a generally standard LME approach to labour markets: competitive relations among firms and between them and employees, fragmented business and labour organizations, barely any private sector occupational training, and a government focus on post-secondary education⁵³ (Haddow & Klassen 2006, 101). The Peterson Liberals (1985-90) attempted to change this trajectory by dramatically increasing spending and taxation, expanding spending on training, and launching Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and worker’s compensation reforms (Herd et al 2009; Haddow & Klassen 2006, 95). The Liberals were defeated in 1990 at the onset of another recession as Ontario’s manufacturing experienced structural adjustment while the government incurred a substantial deficit, leading to an NDP victory on a deficit spending, Keynesian budget which sought to spur growth through aggregate demand policies (McBride 1992; McBride 2017).

The Rae NDP made a second attempt at bolstering ALMP to achieve efficiency *and* equity goals through greater collaboration with the private sector and labour by creating a neo-corporatist institution based on concurrent federal experiments. However,

⁵² International pressure (see Chapter 3) and political changes saw efficiency concerns win over equity in Ontario in the mid-1990s and in BC in the early 2000s (Haddow & Klassen 2006).

⁵³ With far less attention to vocational training which often benefited the disadvantaged and working class more directly. That said, before federal transfers retrenched and tuition fees rose, post-secondary education did provide significant opportunities for social mobility for the working class (McBride 2017).

constant friction between labour and business led to failure and the reabsorption of ALMP into the bureaucracy. The NDP's biggest project was jobsOntario in 1992, which offered up to \$10,000 for private sector employers for training a worker hired from welfare or who had exhausted UI; however, with high enrollment in both programs, jobsOntario grew to expend almost \$240mn in 1994 alone, further expanding deficit spending (Haddow & Klassen 2006, 103). By 1993, as the province barely emerged from the recession, the NDP curtailed public spending, partly by rolling back contracts negotiated with public sector unions, thus alienating many of their constituents and leading to a PC victory in 1995.

Mike Harris' led the PC's to victory through the 'common sense revolution', created by party insiders from what was often described as the right wing and the business community focusing on lowering taxes, balancing the budget by shrinking government and spending, and a more intensive supply side approach to ALMP (Haddow & Klassen 2006, 96). Harris eliminated jobsOntario shortly after forming government and terminated the neo-corporatist 'Ontario Training and Adjustment Board' (OTAB) in 1996 (but some local training boards survived). The PC government also cut many business subsidies and government grants, thereby undermining already weak private sector training (104). Overall the training budget was cut by 17 percent in 1996-97 (\$77mn). The PCs did little to reform training programs, but the introduction of workfare made social assistance ('welfare') from the state conditional on efforts to (re)enter the labour market while being subject to heightened surveillance. At the same time, welfare benefits were reduced by 21.5 percent (facilitated by Ottawa cutting cost-sharing for social assistance in 1995) (40, 104).

Harris' government sought a 'more flexible training system' to meet efficiency objectives of the market. Apprenticeship reform was undertaken in 1996 to be more flexible, with apprentices expected to shoulder more training costs, relaxed ratios between journeypersons and apprentices, shorter training periods, and narrow, job specific skills. Little more was done on ALMP until the 2003 Liberals came into power, who made a gradual increase to the existing spending on apprenticeship financing and rolled-back some changes to employment standards (Chapter 3).

Ultimately, the story of Ontario's ALMP is that of a typical LME with a brief attempt at CME institutions (coordinative neo-corporatism) and equity objectives (Herd et al 2009; Haddow & Klassen 2006). For all intents and purposes, Ontario's ALMP under the current Liberal government (Dalton McGuinty 2003-13 and Kathleen Wynne 2013-) continues the PC trajectory of ALMP serving market efficiency, which was a return to the pre-1985 period. In combination with consistently declining spending on ALMP (Chapter 3) - particularly since the 1996 devolution from the federal government - and individualization of labour market outcomes and human capital development, ALMP has retrenched, has a more limited scope of interventions, and is increasingly focused on job search assistance (Morden 2016). Together, these policy trajectories provide declining support for the labour force (aside from a comparatively large post-secondary education

sector producing general human capital) and so facilitate existing trajectories in political economy toward low wage, flexible, and immiserated labour. For a continuity of this review on devolution and an overview of BC's ALMP trajectory in the late-1980s and 1990s, see Chapter 6.

Ontario's trajectory in ALMP, and Canada's overall, is consistent with the shifts outlined in Chapter 3: a combination of austerity, retrenchment, and a reorientation toward market facilitating in social and labour market policy. With an increased focus on launching people back into the labour market rather than protecting them from its exigencies, ALMP limits the options the unemployed and transitioning have ('constraints') for responding to their material-semiotic conditions ('stimuli'). Should these individuals turn to the ALMP case studies examined in this study, they will encounter everyday front-end policy components which encourage an automaticity ('cognitive governance') which is complementary to the trajectories above. That is, a common sense around individual responsibility for rapid labour market re-attachment and market conformation (among other schemas), all of which benefit a flexible accumulation regime (by cultivating docile workers) and a lean state (reducing expenditures on the unemployed).

Mapping Ontario's ALMP in a Broader Policy Context

In this section I will briefly analyze how Ontario's ALMP is *presented* (front-end) and how it is connected with different levels of government ('vertical') and other Ontario ALMP ('horizontal') other than my case studies - job search, career and skill discovery, and labour market information – which will be examined in the next section. The 'front-face' of Ontario's ALMP is under the 'Jobs + Employment' website by the Government of Ontario⁵⁴, which will be found directly if a user searches some variation of 'looking for work Ontario' or 'unemployed Ontario'. Should a user 'navigate down' from the highest level of Ontario.ca, they will see twelve categories, a link describing how government works, and a link to Service Ontario (Government of Ontario 2016). The categories are not organized alphabetically and begin with 'Jobs + Employment', while 'Education + Training' is third, and 'Taxes + Benefits' is tenth (where Ontario Works – the provincial workfare program – is presented). 'Education + Training' has information for public and post-secondary education, student aid, and 'skills'. Under this last category, there is information on apprenticeships, adult learning, 'second career' (financial support for the unemployed to 'find work in high-demand occupations'), licencing, and a link to Employment Ontario, all of which is in 'Jobs + Employment' (Government of Ontario 2016).

⁵⁴ While previously the same information was available on ministerial pages, the new 'Ontario.ca' pages compiled relevant information by categories instead.

‘Jobs and employment’ states the following at the top of the page: “information for job seekers and businesses. Includes programs and resources to help you plan your career, get training, find a job, or hire workers for your business.” There are 14 links on the page, three for employers, two for EI and Ontario Works, and another on Employment Standards. The remaining nine links include:

- Employment Ontario: ‘get training, build skills or find a job through Ontario’s official employment and training network’
- Two job banks (federal and the Ontario Public Service)
- Labour market information (‘choose a career’): ‘find out which jobs are in demand and where they’re located’
- Three targeted programs: ‘students and young entrepreneurs’, ‘employment programs for people under 30’, and ‘supports for people with disabilities’
- Career and skill discovery (‘the skills you need’): ‘learn about the skills needed for different careers, and track the skills you already have’
- Financially supported skills training (‘second career’): ‘skills training and financial support to help laid-off workers find work in high-demand occupations’

The ‘Jobs and employment’ page, as the ‘hub’ of Ontario’s front-end ALMP, reflects a broader distribution of ways to engage with the labour market and unemployment than was featured in the ESDC and primary EI pages: training programs, income supports, and all other ALMP programs appear to have similar prominence. Particularly, including employment standards and income supports on the same page as other ALMP programs at least exposes readers to them as important elements in engaging with labour markets. While both programs have been retrenched and diluted to varying degrees since the mid-1990s (see chapter 3 for a brief overview), situating them on a ‘jobs and employment’ page informs users that *they have rights* and supports as employees, and this contributes to their schemas surrounding employment, the labour market, and the state.

The description of the page also paints a broader picture of activities for the unemployed and transitioning, eschewing a ‘pure’ message of rapid labour market (re)entry by including career planning and training in addition to ‘finding a job’. Again, the effect of this is to communicate a broader schema about the relationship between the individual as a worker, the labour market, and the role of the state. This is reflected in the nine primary links of the page, of which only two are explicitly oriented toward job search activities. Four of nine are training or targeted programs, one is dedicated to LMI, and another to career and skills discovery. While job search is embedded in four of nine programs, they are not *only* oriented toward rapid labour market re-entry.

Mapping *within* Ontario’s ALMP

Here I analyze my case studies (Ontario’s job search, labour market information (LMI) and career and skills discovery tools) in terms of connections between them, to other ALMP programs, and to what effect. All three cases are featured in the first section (with nine total links) of ‘Jobs and employment’. Job search in Ontario utilizes the Federal Job Bank, and is the second link (reading left to right, top to bottom). LMI is called ‘choose a career’ and is the fifth link, while career and skills discovery is called ‘the skills you need’ and is the ninth and last link.

First, the Job Bank is a job search and LMI resource, providing the unemployed with a job search system, alerts, automatic matching, and suggestions for finding and applying for work. Given that the Job Bank is explicitly a job search resource, that is the main theme repeated consistently. However, it does not connect to *any* other ALMP program, while *most* other resources do refer to the Job Bank (e.g. throughout EI regular benefits, in Employment Ontario, in Ontario’s targeted programs, in career and skills discovery, and indirectly in LMI). The absence of links to training, financial assistance, and employment standards constructs a very limited schema focused *only* on rapid labour market re-entry.

Ontario’s LMI is called ‘choose a career’ on the ‘Jobs + employment’ page, but is called ‘job trends and outlook’ when opened. The page is concise with relatively few links, consistent with the other Ontario.ca pages. LMI only connects to Employment Ontario via a link on the right-hand side. One of the main resources of Ontario’s LMI is occupation based information, which is situated on the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development site and has many more links connecting to other programs: LMI, a collapsed set of links for ‘post-secondary education’, an expanded set for ‘employment and training’ (including Employment Ontario, Youth Employment, Second Career, Apprenticeship, and Adult Learning), and a link to the Federal Job Bank.

Finally, Ontario’s career and skills discovery tool goes directly to a page on the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, again displaying the same series of links (this time with ‘post-secondary education’ expanded, and the first link is ‘choose a career’). The page is for the ‘Ontario Skills Passport’ (OSP) which provides resources for individuals to cultivate ‘essential skills’ and ‘work habits’. This page is very dense – while Ontario’s LMI had only ten links related to the content of the page, the OSP page has 42 links related to content.

All of the provincial resources connected to the federal Job Bank, either immediately or within a single link, and also connected across each other (i.e. the OSP connected to LMI and vice versa, and both connected to Employment Ontario and other programs). Conversely, the Job Bank did not direct individuals *anywhere* else and as shown in the last chapter, the EI regular benefits page repeatedly directly users to the Job Bank and job search resources *exclusively*.

As with the external mapping, this internal mapping exercise illustrates that Ontario’s ALMP landscape is more diverse and does not explicitly direct the unemployed and transitioning *only* toward rapid labour market re-entry, diluting any ‘singular message’ on the relationship between the worker, state, and market - not explicitly benefiting a post-fordist accumulation regime at this level.

Should the automaticity encouraged by everyday ALMP (examined below) be consistent with the organization between the three subcomponents analyzed (job search, LMI, and skill and career reflection), across other ALMP program, and across material-semiotic conditions (‘stimuli’) and options for response (‘constraints’) outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, they are more likely to construct a common sense (‘cognitive governance’) around rapid labour market attachment, individual responsibility, and conforming to the market. These are all ways of thinking and acting which elide structural causes of precarity, pay no attention to the experience of unemployment, and quickly drive people back in the labour market (reducing their chances to find suitable employment), thus benefiting flexible accumulation and a lean state.

Analyzing Components Close Reading

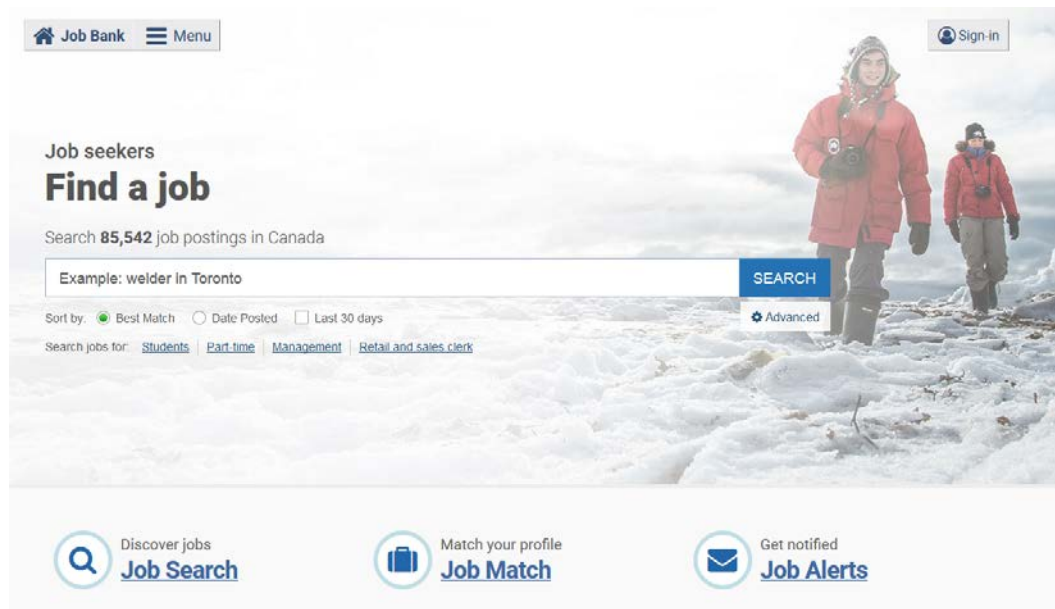
The three programs above were chosen because they are fully accessible to this analysis, are everyday policy instruments, and importantly, *are encouraged* by the previous case study, EI: job search systems were explicitly encouraged, while LMI is frequently attached to them. Skills *reflection* (e.g. ‘thinking about what skills you have or should develop’) was also encouraged, and is central to programs such as Ontario’s ‘Skills Passport’. The interaction effect between labour market programs is significant as it is a form of exogenous repetition which facilitates the internalization of a consistent schema. Further, while training programs are relevant and everyday policy mechanisms, analyses of what those programs teach have been conducted (albeit not from a psychological perspective) while no other analyses have been conducted on front-end ‘basic’ resources such as the ones I will analyze (Herd et al 2009; Morden 2016; Wood & Hayes 2016; Vosko 2011). Job search systems, LMI, and career and skills discovery are seeming technical and functional programs, but may articulate particular understandings of the way workers should act and view themselves, the labour market, the role of the state, and relationships between them.

I will examine the Job Bank (job search system), LMI, and the OSP (career and skill discovery) in terms of whether they employ mechanisms conducive to automatic cognition (Chapter 2) and what they communicate. While the mapping exercises above revealed greater variety of ALMP programs and approaches other than rapid labour market re-entry espoused by EI – a good thing, certainly – I expect these programs to have a strong supply side focus, encouraging individual solutions and effort in understanding the market, adapting to it, and focusing on skills.

Again, as with engagement with the EI program, I assume a moderate level of motivation and attention on the part of applicants because, in the absence of high savings or private support (i.e. family), unemployment in a context of retrenching social supports is materially, psychologically, and socially arduous (Vosko 2011; Finnie & Irvine 2011). In these conditions, the unemployed are driven to whatever resources they can utilize and to look to the labour market for survival, regardless of the conditions therein.

Job Search System – the Federal Job Bank

Ontario’s front-end ALMP system directs to the Federal Job Bank as its job search system, and it has three major components, one for ‘job seekers’, another for employers, and another for LMI – I focus on the first as Ontario has its own LMI. There are two sides to ‘job seekers’, one is accessed through the main page and the other through a menu at the top left. Via the main page, the first thing individuals will see is the job search bar against a backdrop of two individuals walking across what looks like a snowy tundra with cameras – connoting exploration or seeking out. Variants on ‘job search’ and ‘find a job’ appear 24 times on this page alone, and although that is not surprising for a job search system, it is a consistent and repeated theme *made starker* by the absence of other themes and information. The other ‘components’ on the main page include a job search tool, an email alert system for new job postings, and a tool which ‘matches’ your profile to available jobs.



Job Match

Find jobs that match your skills and experience

Job Match links current job openings to your job seeker profile. It also increases your visibility to employers as they can see your profile and invite you to apply to their jobs. Signing up with Job Match is free and only takes a few minutes.

[Sign up](#)

Job Alerts

Never miss a new job posting again

Job Alerts is a free email notification service that sends you job postings twice a day. This is a fast and easy job search tool that anyone can use. All you need is an email address!

[Subscribe](#)

Job Search

Search Canada's job board

Find jobs in Canada by entering keywords or locations. Whatever industry or field you are interested in, the Job Bank search engine enables you to filter and search for the perfect job. Thousands of new jobs are advertised every day.



[Search](#)

Finally, the Job Search tool has a quick search function (e.g. ‘welder in Toronto’), an advanced search with filters (‘Discover Jobs – Job Search’), and once on the advanced page, a category navigation (by region and industry) can also be used. There is *very* limited text and little direct framing. However, what is included is significant: there are *hierarchies* for type of work and job type, with ‘full-time’ and ‘permanent’ the highest for both categories. The ranking is not alphabetical or by the number of jobs, it was explicitly done this way⁵⁵. There are also categories for employment groups (e.g. Youth, Veterans, Indigenous peoples), education, and province/territory.

⁵⁵ Most evident under ‘Job Type’: if alphabetical, ‘casual’ would be first; if by number of jobs, ‘casual’ would be right under permanent.

The screenshot shows the Job Bank search results page for the query "welder in Toronto". The search bar at the top contains the text "Example: welder in Toronto" and a "SEARCH" button. To the right of the search bar, it says "85,542 jobs found". Below the search bar, there is a "Hide filters" button. The left sidebar contains several filter categories with expand/collapse icons:

- Date Posted** (+)
- Type of work** (-)
 - Full-Time: 54,155
 - Part-Time: 9,284
 - Unknown: 20,236
- Employment groups** (+)
- Job filters** (+)
- Education or training** (? +)
- Language at work** (+)
- Job type** (-)
 - Permanent: 53,247
 - Term or contract: 1,685
 - Seasonal: 3,865
 - Casual: 6,133
 - Unknown: 20,236

The main content area on the right is titled "Explore the following options:" and contains three expandable sections:

- ▶ Top occupations advertised by province or territory
- ▶ Top occupations advertised in Canada
- ▶ Top occupations advertised by industry

Once an individual finds a job, they are taken to a page such as the one below. The right-hand panel again mentions the 'Job Match', shows occupational specific LMI, and 'similar job postings' (two sections on job search). The main job page shows the title, date of posting, who posted it, the location, compensation, job type (i.e. permanent full-time), start time, and a link to the full posting.

The screenshot shows a job posting interface. At the top left, the word "policy" is visible. A search bar with "SEARCH" and "Advanced" options is at the top right. The main heading is "Policy Clerk - Insurance", posted on June 05, 2017, by L'UNION-VIE, COMPAGNIE MUTUELLE D'ASSURANCE. Under "Job Details", it lists: Drummondville, QC; As soon as possible; \$ to be discussed for 35.25; # 5718814; 1 Vacancy; Emploi-Québec; and Permanent Full-Time. A button says "View the full job posting on Emploi-Québec". An "Important Notice" states: "This job advertisement has been provided by an external employer. The Government of Canada is not responsible for the accuracy, authenticity or reliability of the content." Below this are buttons for "Report a problem with this ad" and "Job Search Safety Tips". A link for "Important notice" is also present. On the right sidebar, there's a "Job Match" section with a "Sign up now!" button, and a list of actions: "Email", "Print", "Report", and "Share this page". Below that is "Job Market Information" for "policy clerk - insurance" (NOC 1434) in the "Centre-du-Québec Region", with a "Median wage" of "N/A" and an "Outlook" of three stars. An "Explore this career" button is at the bottom of this section. The "Similar Job Postings" section lists "Credit Clerk" in "Beaulieu Canada".

‘Job Search Safety Tips’ makes no mention of employment standards, quality of work, minimum wages, etc. and only warns individuals to not provide identity information.

Job Search Safety Tips

Warning: Legitimate Canadian job ads will not ask for any banking or personal information.

We recommend that you **do not provide** personal or sensitive information in your resume or in interviews, such as:

- your Social Insurance Number
- your age, marital status or birth date
- your driver's license number
- your health card number
- any banking or financial information, which includes credit card or bank account numbers and Personal Identification Numbers (PIN)
- money deposits

This information may be discussed with a prospective employer only after the hiring process has begun. If a job posting seems questionable please do not hesitate to contact the job site where you found it. If you suspect that you may be a target of fraud, or if you have already sent funds, [report it](#).

Tips:

- Get familiar with [common scam types](#)
- Learn to recognize [identity theft](#)
- Create [strong passwords](#)

Next, I look at the second part of the 'job seekers' page, which can be accessed via the top-left menu of the Job Bank. The menu has a drop-down with three columns corresponding with the main components of the job bank: job seekers, employers, and LMI. Under 'job seekers', it has links to 'job search', 'job alerts', 'job match', and also to something called 'how do I get a job?' and finally 'job seeker support'⁵⁶.

'How do I get a job?' has three major components: how to search for jobs, apply for jobs, and prepare for an interview. On the right hand side are four boxes: 1) job search; 2) explore careers by occupation, education, wages, outlooks, and skills and knowledge (link to LMI); 3) employers; 4) job market trends (another link to LMI). The first line of 'how do I get a job' emphasizes 'research' to learn about 'job opportunities' to find the 'one that is right for you'. However, this is the only instance *on the site* in which the needs or wants of the individual are spoken to.

⁵⁶ 'Job Seeker Support' is frequently asked questions and technical support for using the Job Bank, and under 'general information', is the only place on the website which mentions financial supports ('scholarships and grants', 'employment insurance', and 'other government programs and services').

How do I get a job?

Researching your occupation will help you learn about job opportunities and find the one that is right for you.

- [How do I search for jobs?](#) - Finding a job can take time. Learn about job postings, networking and the hidden job market.
- [How do I apply for a job?](#) - Applying for a job involves three steps: a résumé, a cover letter and company/job research.
- [How do I prepare for an interview?](#) - An employer will often interview several qualified applicants for a job. Learn about the steps to prepare for an interview.

‘How do I search for jobs’ informs people about job postings, networking, and ‘the hidden job market’. The suggestions are to research employers directly, work with recruiters, look for job fairs, use job boards – like the Job Bank – ‘explore the hidden job market’ (i.e. internal postings that), and networking.

‘How do I apply for a job’ provides instructions for researching a company/job, creating a resume, and creating a cover letter as *the* steps involved in applying for work. The emphasis is on learning about the position and company to determine what *they* require and are looking for. The only aspect which might pertain to the wellbeing of an employee (but could also pertain to the likely success/future of the organization) is ‘what kind of reputation does the employer have?’

Step 1: Researching the company or job

Before you begin to send out your resume and cover letter to an employer, it's important to learn about the company and the job you are applying for. Doing some research can help you write your resume, cover letter and prepare you for an interview. Try to find answers to questions such as:

- What does the company do?
- What are the duties involved in the position you are applying for?
- What qualifications do you need for the position?
- What skills are required?
- Who are the customers or clients?
- What kind of reputation does the employer have?

Step 2: Creating a resume

A resume is an important tool when applying for any job. A resume tells an employer who you are, what you've accomplished, your qualifications, and why you want the job. It should generally include details such as your contact information, objective, work experience, education and credentials.

You can sign up with [Job Bank](#) to access the Resume Builder and create a professional resume. If you wish to build a resume without creating a user account, we invite you to try the [Manitoba Resume Builder](#).

For more information on how to write a good resume, you can read the [do's and don'ts of writing a good resume](#).

Step 3: Preparing a cover letter

A cover letter is your introduction to a potential employer. It should be concise, well written and tailored to the company and job you are applying for. Your cover letter should give the employer an idea of who you are and highlight what skills you have to offer. You may need to prepare a different cover letter for each job.

Finally, ‘how do I prepare for an interview?’ begins with the sentence ‘an employer will often interview several qualified applicants for a job’, framing this last ‘step’ of the job search process as inherently competitive – individual workers competing with one another to secure employment. These sections present a complementary theme to ‘job search’, which is adapting to fulfill the needs of the market and employers, and competing to do so. The rest of the page communicates useful, functional information (as do the others) on preparing to answer questions on ‘what you did and how you did it’, what to bring, and to plan to arrive early. Step three provides explicit attitudinal instructions: shake hands firmly, smile, stand until you are invited to sit down, let the interview take the lead, make eye contact, and so on. After the interview (Step 4), applicants should expect to ‘wait days or weeks to hear if you were successful’, and in the meantime, can write the interviewers to ‘thank them for taking the time to interview you’ while you restate your interest in the position. If they did not get a job, applicants are encouraged to ask ‘what would have made me a better candidate?’ and to remember, again, to thank the employer for considering you – ‘be professional and polite’.

Step 3) Interview

Here are some suggestions to help you succeed in an interview.

- Greet the interviewer or panel members. Introduce yourself and shake hands firmly. Smile. A sincere smile will help to put you, and the interviewer, at ease. Stand until you are invited to sit down.
- Let the interviewer or panel members take the lead and set the tone. Make eye contact, and answer the questions in a firm, clear, confident voice. Relax and sit naturally. Be prepared to tell the interviewer more about your education, training and skills, work experience, and the personality traits that make you right for the job.
- Ask for more explanation if you do not understand a question. It is better to ask for clarification than to answer inappropriately.
- During the interview, you may be asked if you have any questions. This is where the research completed in step 3 of the section [How do I apply for a job?](#) will be useful. Prepare a couple of questions that show you are informed about the company. Ask for more information about the position for which you are being interviewed.

Step 4) After the interview

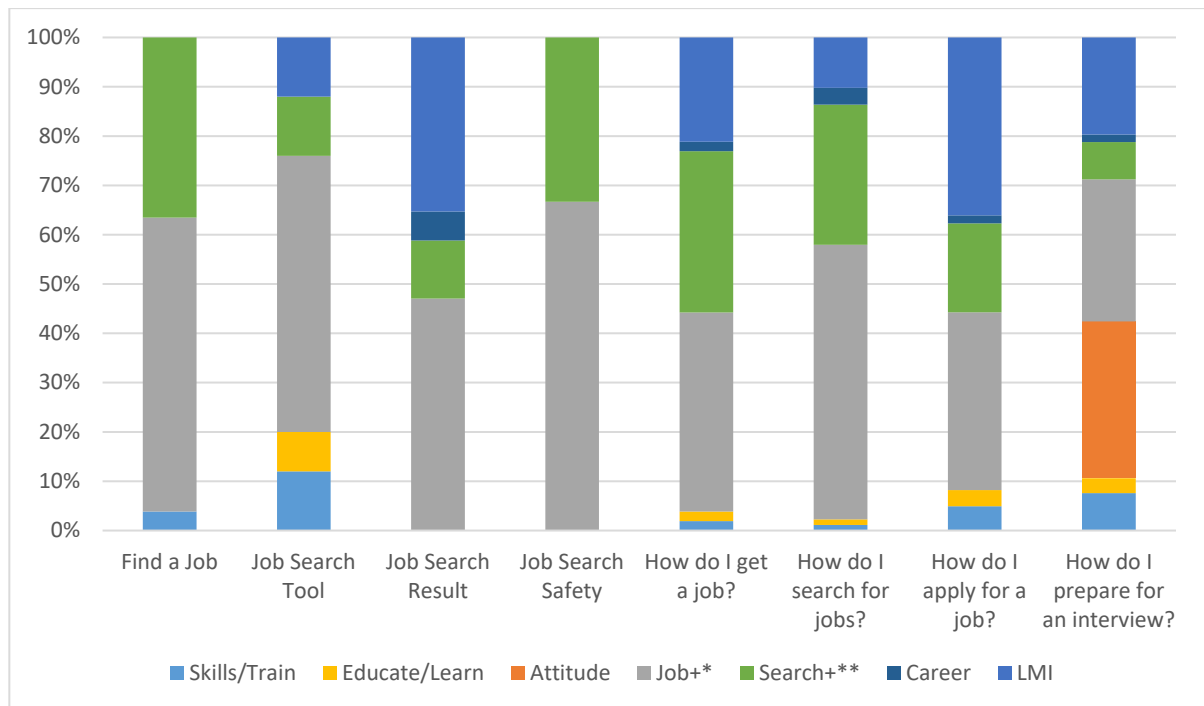
After an interview, you may wait days or weeks to hear if you were successful. What can you do in the meantime?

- Write a letter to the interviewers: Thank the interviewers for taking the time to interview you. Restate your interest in the job and remind them of your qualifications. If possible, mail or e-mail the letter the same day as your interview.
- Go over the interview in your mind (Reflection): Consider what parts went well and did not, what you feel worked and what did not, what you would say or do differently the next time. This will help you learn from each interview.
- Follow-up call: If the employer is supposed to call you on a certain day, be available to take the call. If you are not called at the specified time, make a follow-up call. If you agreed to call the employer back, be sure to do it on the agreed-upon day. If you did not make any arrangements, and you have not heard from the employer in about two weeks, call to find out the status of the hiring process.
- Ask questions: If you find out you did not get the job, you can ask why. "Can you tell me what would have made me a better candidate for the position?" Ask if the employer knows of any other job openings in your line of work. Always thank the employer or personnel manager for considering you. Be professional and polite. Even if you do not get the job, you never know when the employer may be hiring again.

What is Said and How

Three associations emerged from the ‘job seekers’ part of the Job Bank site: an emphasis on job search, conforming to market/employer needs, and attitudinal adjustment. The first theme is unsurprising – the Job Bank is a job search tool, first and foremost – but it is consistently repeated *within* (endogenous) the Job Bank but also *outside* (exogenous) in the EI program and Ontario’s ALMP. Further, all of the themes *are* functionally useful to achieving employment, and therefore survival, in a liberal market economy such as Canada’s, increasing the likelihood of becoming ‘automatic’ ways of thinking and acting (even if they are regressive, ignoring an individual’s circumstances and the structural aspects of life outcomes).

Figure 6: Terms by Ontario ALMP Content, the Job Bank



This quantitative analysis covers nine pages and tools of the Job Bank that were discussed above.⁵⁷ Overall, the most repeated variables were 'Job+' and 'Search+' at 168 and 84 occurrences respectively - higher than any other variable and together accounting for 83% of all occurrences in the Job Bank. These two variables were repeated on everyday page and also had the highest consistency (repetitions per page exceeding the average number of occurrences of all variables across all sections) at 87.5% and 62.5%, respectively. The next highest variable was 'LMI', occurring 64 times (21% of all), repeated on every page, and consistent across 50% of the pages. 'Skills/Train' and 'Educate/Learn' occurred only a total of 23 times together and were not consistent on any page. Unlike EI, 'Career' actually was mentioned, but only 7 times in total. These three variables only accounted for 10% of all occurrences in the Job Bank. 'Search+' occurred 265% more than 'Skills/Train' and 'Educate/Learn' while 'Job+' occurred 630% more. 'Job+' also occurred 2300% more than 'Career' (168 vs. 7). 'Attitude' only appeared on the interview preparation page, but represented 32% of all variables repeated on that page, more than any other. The Job Bank, unsurprisingly, consistently repeated the job search theme. However, LMI - both in the form of labour market variables and encouragements for individuals to conform to market demands - was also highlight prominent. All three themes were strongly interwoven and repeated in the last four 'how do I...' pages. Although skills training, education, and 'career' came up, all were inconsistent and repeated minimally on the pages they appeared on.

⁵⁷ A discussion of the variables, measures, and calculations can be found in Chapter 4, page 12.

As outlined above, the ‘Job Search’ was repeated heavily across all pages and was consistent throughout each (not concentrated at the beginning or end). Further, a ‘job search’ box appears on the right hand side of every page in ‘how do I get a job’. With the filters in the job search, individuals will learn or be reminded that there are different types of employment and job types (i.e. full-time vs. part-time; permanent vs. casual, etc.), and even in the absence of framing this is important and positive. Through the first category of ‘how do I get a job’, applicants are told different ways to search beyond and including the job board, and they are first introduced to the idea of researching employers to determine their needs.

The second theme – conforming to market/employer needs – will be prevalent in the subsequent section on LMI, but in the Job Bank, is apparent in ‘how do I get a job’ (11) and ‘how do I search for jobs’ at the beginning (9), in ‘how do I apply for a job’ (22), and in ‘how do I prepare for an interview’ (13), consistent throughout the second and third categories. Further, ‘explore careers and ‘job market trends’ boxes appear on the right hand side of every page. In the first two categories, prospective applicants are encouraged to study a job and employer (and in LMI, the market itself) to find what is in *demand* and then, how to conform themselves to those demands through the resume, cover letter, and interview. This is continued in the third category but with the addition of attitudinal adjustment.

Finally, ‘attitudinal adjustment’ was explicit in the last step - ‘how do I prepare for an interview’ - wherein interpersonal communication and affective expression were significant in the interview: smile, be polite, if you do not get the job ask what you could have improved, be thankful *for the opportunity*, and other variants appeared 21 times consistently, but only in the bottom half (Steps 3 and 4). Individuals are encouraged to apply their ‘research’ of a prospective job/employer in the interview, being ready to *deferentially* answer questions about themselves, their cover letter/resume, and why they would fulfill the needs of the employer (‘let the interviewer...take the lead and set the tone’, ‘stand until you are invited to sit’).

The dominant associations are intertwined, at times explicitly (i.e. search for work by researching firms, and apply research to the interview where you are polite), and implicitly include survival and individual effort: survival is contingent on individual efforts to look for work, research the market/employers, understand how you can conform to employer needs, and deferentially communicate this to them in a resume, cover letter, and interview. Operant conditioning is consistently latent – there is no ‘stick’ in the Job Bank, but the counter-implication of the associations is that if people *do not* utilize the resources and follow the ‘advice’, they risk continued unemployment and a threat to survival.

These tools require a consistent level of participation (active learning): an individual must navigate the site, potentially sign up for matching and alerts, go through the job search system, apply filters, go through results, and so on. This also shows a high level of component training, as the tools and ‘advice’ (‘how do I get a job?’) can only be approached through separated and repeated steps. While the ‘advice’ had clear instructions and framing, this was absent in the job search tool and may limit the ‘message’ communicated through the steps and participation.

Priming becomes the most important cognitive mechanisms in the absence of a great deal of instruction, text, or framing (job search side), but also has the most ‘stimuli’ when there is more content (the ‘how do I get a job’ side). For the former, the consistent repetition of the job search theme will likely ‘activate’ existing schemas *tied* to job search, and the more often individuals encounter the theme, the more likely those schemas transition from ‘activated’ to ‘loaded’ into short term memory. These are schemas which could have developed from going through the EI program, from reading provincial or federal LMI, from the ‘how do I get a job’ page, or other sources. Similarly, the consistent repetition of market conformation and attitudinal adjustment in ALMP and culture - and the implication that these are individual responsibilities - will make them more easily activated and more closely linked with its immediate network. Individually and together, these schemas *likely* prime prior schemas encountered in other ALMP programs (such as EI or LMI), everyday interactions and culture.

What is Elided & Outcomes

Although the ‘job seekers’ section does show applicants that there are different types of employment, it misses a great deal of relevant information. There was no mention of training, financial supports, or other resources except two entries buried under the help files – nothing on any of the actual pages. On one hand, this is not surprising as the Job Bank is a job search system, however, other ALMP programs *consistently* direct users to job search systems: EI constantly referred users to the Job Bank, as does Employment Ontario, Ontario’s LMI, Ontario’s ‘employment programs for people under 30’, and the Ontario Skills Passport. This furthers the idea that job search systems are always a *preeminent* step in the process toward finding employment, suggesting that many of the unemployed and transitioning encounter or complete other programs – and therefore develop schemas from them – *before* engaging with systems such as the Job Bank, lending more credence to the analysis of priming above.

Despite the routine appearance of LMI indicators and discussions of market conformation, there is *no information* on quality of work, employment standards,⁵⁸ what standards or expectations workers should have, or how market trajectories *affect* individuals. Even the robust LMI side of the Job Bank is completely depoliticized – employment and wage trends, when available, make no commentary about how they would affect workers.⁵⁹ The market is presented as a kind of natural phenomenon to which workers must adapt themselves to for survival, rather than a set of institutions crafted at the intersections of material and discursive power. Further still, workers must be *thankful* and *polite* in their job search efforts, amounting to the vulnerable (the unemployed and transitioning) prostrating themselves before employers and the market in general.

⁵⁸ ‘Job Search Safety Tips’ only warned people against identity theft and scams, nothing on employment standards.

⁵⁹ In this way, a weather report is more political in that it at least discusses the nature of a weather pattern and how to respond to it to protect yourself.

The three themes – job search, market conformation, and attitudinal adjustment – are consistently repeated and mutually associated. Based on these themes, the Job Bank models an applicant who does not ask questions of the market or its relations, is not concerned about quality of work or employment standards, has no particular expectations, who diligently researches and molds themselves to the needs of the market, and who is *thankful* for the opportunity to do so. Active learning was weaker than component training in the Job Bank. The only interactive component was the job search tool, but the rest of the job bank consistently translated the three major themes (with attitudinal adjustment appearing prominently only on one page) into steps and instructions (i.e. ‘how do I X?’), going from ‘abstract’ to ‘procedural’ knowledge, which is more conducive to automaticity. The themes were distinct but consistently interwoven when they appeared, likely leading to separate but related schemas which would likely prime others developed across other ALMP programs (e.g. job search in EI) or those in an individual’s environment.⁶⁰ Repeatedly encountering these schemas will strengthen each, reinforce their connections, and increase their level of automaticity (‘common sense’).

The themes articulated by the Job Bank also speak to the material-semiotic conditions (‘stimuli’) and limited options for responding to them (‘constraints’) outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. With rising aggregate precarity and increasingly retrenched and market facilitating public policy, people have fewer options beyond immediate labour market re-attachment. Should they turn to ALMP (in this case, the Job Bank), they will encounter an automaticity which encourages them (‘cognitive governance’) to take individual responsibility to conform to the market – regardless of the conditions therein – look for a job quickly, and show deference and appreciation. Again, such a ‘common sense’ is complementary to flexible accumulation (in producing docile workers) and a lean state (in minimizing expenditures).

Labour Market Information in Ontario

Labour Market Information (LMI), when presented as an everyday front-end ALMP tool for individuals, is generally about ‘helping people’ “find out which jobs are in demand and where they’re located” (Government of Ontario 2016). Ontario’s LMI is featured on the ‘Jobs and Employment’ page of Ontario.ca and is called ‘choose a career’, with the description provided above. Overall, the tool has three major components: 1) an overview, instructions, and framing of the tool; 2) ‘searching occupations’ for LMI related to them; 3) access to general ‘labour market reports’.

The LMI page is called ‘Job trends and outlook – get the current trends and future outlook for roughly 200 kinds of jobs, as well as current labour market reports for Ontario’. This is followed by a five point table of contents for the page and the ‘overview’:

⁶⁰ e.g. neoliberalism, activation, entrepreneurialism, responsabilization, and austerity in terms of self-reliance, self-discipline, and potentially reduced expectations when conforming to the market (Chapter 2).

Overview

The job market is always changing. When you know about job trends in Ontario such as what jobs will be needed tomorrow, the skills and training needed to get them and the facts on the job market, you can plan your career today.

Start planning now:

- search roughly 200 kinds of jobs, or occupations
- read current labour market reports for Ontario

[Search occupations](#)

A theme appears throughout LMI on understanding and preparing for the future while the market conforming theme from the Job Bank appears as well – overall, individuals must conform to market needs, but to do so they must understand how it changes so they can plan accordingly. The terms ‘career, skills, and training’ do appear, indicating a broader approach to the labour market than pure rapid-re-entry (prevalent in EI and the federal Job Bank).

The next section on the main page outlines instructions for searching occupations (quick search, by category, alphabetical), and then a section on ‘what you get back’ from occupational LMI:

What you get back

Each search result gives you detailed information for an occupation. This includes:

- description of the occupation and some common job titles
 - employment prospects (e.g. job openings) to 2017
 - each occupation rated as above average, average or below average
 - rise and/or fall in number of people employed between 2001 and 2011
 - new jobs versus replacement jobs (e.g. vacated through retirement) between 2013 and 2017
 - comparisons, such as
 - average annual income
 - types of businesses and organizations that employ these types of workers
 - where people in these occupations work
 - required skill level (e.g. education, training and licensing)
 - types of skills needed to carry out the work
-

While all the information is functionally useful in outlining the possible outlook for a field, six of eight are on employer demand for labour, skill and education, and location (75 percent, excluding the description of the occupation). Only ‘average annual income’ speaks directly to quality of labour (12.5 percent). Finally, the last section on the main page is on general labour market reports:

Read labour market reports

Current labour market reports offer you another way to look at job trends in Ontario.

Using [Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey](#), these reports include things like:

- provincial unemployment rate
- cities with highest and lowest unemployment
- job gains by occupation

When clicking on ‘search occupations’, an individual is taken to a Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development page with links on the left-hand side (see the ‘Mapping *within* Ontario’s ALMP’ section above). This ‘find an occupation’ page provides instructions for the different ways to search for an occupation, but nothing more (i.e. no information on what people would receive, why they would search for occupations, etc.). I conducted a search for ‘policy analyst’ in ‘quick search’ as an example, and came to the following:

Labour Market Information

Economists and economic policy researchers and analysts (4162)

Economists and Economic Policy Researchers and Analysts conduct research, monitor data, analyze information and prepare reports and plans to resolve economic and business problems and develop models to analyze, explain and forecast economic behaviour and patterns. They advise on matters such as finance, fiscal and monetary policy, international trade, agricultural and natural resource commodities and labour and industrial markets. They are employed by government departments and agencies and throughout the private sector in associations, unions, research organizations, banks and investment firms.

Employment Prospect rating

Current (2013-2017): Below Average
Previous (2009-2013): Average

- [What do the employment prospects ratings mean?](#)
- [What are the employment requirements for this occupation?](#)
- [How quickly has employment grown for this occupation compared with others?](#)
- [How are job openings for this occupation expected to compare with those in other occupations from 2013 to 2017?](#)
- [How do wages for this occupation compare with others?](#)
- [What is the general make-up of the workforce for this occupation?](#)
- [What industries employ this occupation?](#)
- [In what areas of Ontario is this occupation found?](#)
- [What licensing bodies or associations are important for this occupation?](#)
- [How current is the information provided here?](#)
- Read about the main duties, common titles and other information for this occupation at the [National Occupational Classification](#) website

The output is a paragraph describing responsibilities, knowledge areas (e.g. for this position, ‘finance, fiscal and monetary policy’ etc.), and what types of employers hire. The next section outlines the employment prospect in the past four years and in the four years before that, scaled ‘below average – average – above average’. The definition is somewhat nebulous (first link), and seems to include wage growth and employment. There are eleven links for further information: the last two are static (how current the information is and more information via NOC), four are directly related to demand (requirements, growth, openings, and location), and two are directly related to quality of employment (‘make-up’ of the workforce and wages). Again, all of the information is *functionally useful* to job seekers, but focuses more on demand side information which encourages market conformation, and less on metrics regarding quality of employment. Finally, the last major section includes the general monthly labour market reports for Ontario.⁶¹ The information included covers:

⁶¹ There is too much information to include as an image, but the April 2017 report which I am referencing can be found at: <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/labourmarket/currenttrends/docs/monthly/201704.html>

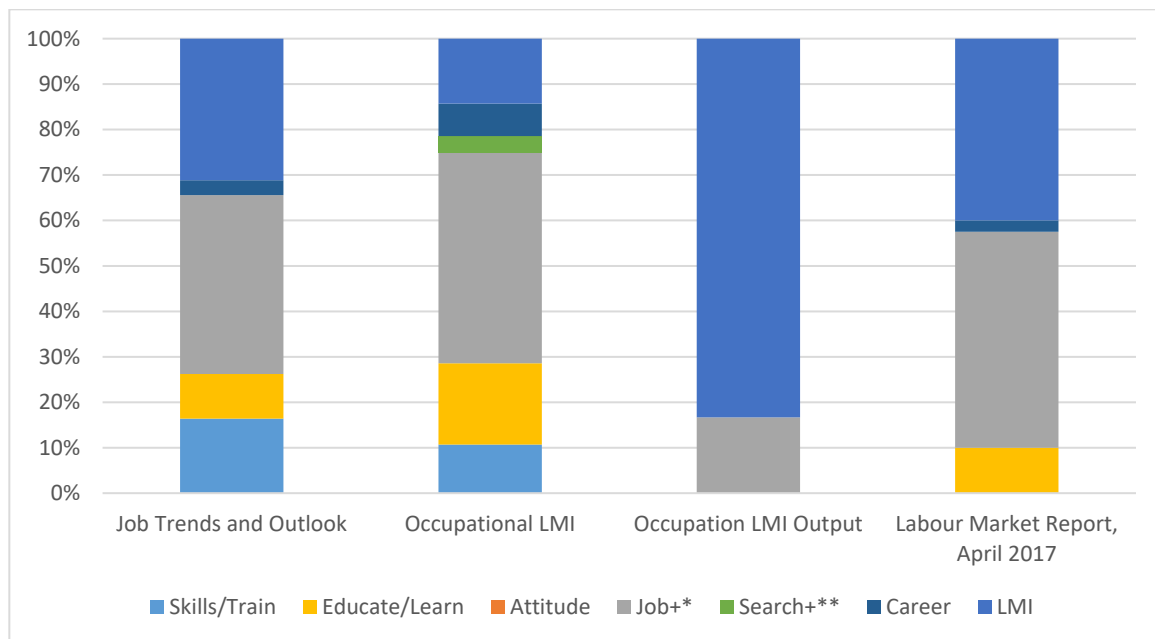
- Population 15 years or older;
- Number and percentage looking for work or working (labour force);
- Number employed and percentage holding a full time job;
- Unemployment rate and number
- Changes to employment: graph showing January 2012 – April 2017; total employment change in April and March (Canada as well); Full time vs. Part time employment changes; Youth employment in April and March; employment change for prime working age adults (25-54) vs. 55 and older
- Changes to unemployment: graph January 2012 – April 2017; unemployment rate change in April and March (Canada as well); Youth unemployment rate in April and March; Unemployment change for prime aged vs. 55 and older
- Lowest and Highest unemployment rates by census metropolitan areas
- Year-over-year employment growth by educational attainment; occupation area (e.g. health vs. management)
- Long term unemployment (27 weeks+ as share of total unemployment) April 2009 to April 2017; average duration of unemployment in 2017 compared to 2009

Overall, the reports are not framed and without instructions, all categories have a graph showing a trend, and all information is provided in bullet points.

What is Said and How

Overall, the bulk of the instruction and framing for Ontario's LMI occurs on the main page – general and occupation based LMI is highly decontextualized by comparison, with the former offering no context and the latter providing only instructions on how to search occupations.

Figure 7: Terms by Ontario ALMP Content, LMI



Four pages and tools of Ontario's LMI were analyzed: the main page 'Job Trends and Outlook', a page on occupational LMI, the output for the page, and a labour market report. 'Job+' was the most prominent variables at 58 occurrences and 41% of all, with 'LMI' second at 49 occurrences and 35% of all. These variables were repeated across all pages and were consistent (repetitions per page exceeding the average number of occurrences of all variables across all sections) across 75% of all pages. 'Search+' only occurred once. 'Career' was not very prominent, appearing a total of 5 times and accounting for 4% of all occurrences. Conversely, 'Skills/Train' was repeated 13 times and 'Educate/Learn' 15 times, together accounting for 20% of all occurrences. However, these variables were repeated across fewer pages (50% and 75%, respectively) and were less consistent (25% and 50%, respectively). 'Job+' was again repeated far more than 'Career', occurring 1060% more. LMI was also repeated 75% more than 'Skills/Train' and 'Educate/Learn'. 'Attitude' was not mentioned a single time in Ontario's LMI. As will be discussed in the qualitative analysis, the skills training and education themes were deeply interwoven with market conformation (via the LMI variable) so as to increase employability and get a *job*.

On the main page, variations of 'job trends, outlook, market' appeared 19 times *throughout*, while 'career' was mentioned twice, and 'skills/training' 10 times, while the summary of outputs for occupation LMI privileged employer demand for skills, labour, and location (75 percent) with only average income speaking to quality of labour directly (12.5 percent). This was reflected in occupational LMI, where the output described responsibilities, knowledge areas, and employers with 4/11 categories on demand (requirements, growth, openings, location) and 2/11 on employment quality (wages and make up). While it is absolutely positive that the quality indicators are present, the framing in LMI overall directs attention primarily to demand indicators. General LMI on the main page was summarized through three examples, all of which were tied to

employer demand and were headline, superficial indicators: the unemployment rate, municipal unemployment, and job growth by occupation. In the report itself, 2/35 statements were on employment quality (5.7 percent, on full time and part time work and growth), nothing on wages or other indicators of employment quality⁶², and excluding four statements on the long-term unemployed, one on the working age population, and another on the labour force, 27 statements were on employment demand and were headline indicators (77 percent). Almost all indicators were generalized and much more useful to analysts interested in the overall state of the economy. Finally, the *consistent* appearance of the ‘job bank’ (left hand column of occupational LMI, and as mentioned above, many other Ontario ALMP pages) and job search tools across provincial and federal ALMP programs likely primes the rapid re-entry schema.

Ontario’s LMI - mostly through the main page - articulates a schema for how to understand the self in relation to the market through several associations: market conformation, futurity (projecting the realization of current efforts/experiences to the future, e.g. ‘present sacrifice for future gain’), skills, and individual responsibility (embodying ideas rooted in employability, entrepreneurial subjectivity, and human capital). As the ‘overview’ on the main page states, employment is never secure (‘the job market is always changing’) and individuals are responsible for investigating the *needs* of the market (demand, futurity, market conformation) so as to prepare themselves to meet them (‘skills and training’). Thus, employment programs other than rapid re-entry (e.g. job search) are mentioned far less frequently and completely subsumed within market needs. With this schema developing, the occupational and general LMI particularly with their *lack* of framing – may be read in this way as well, as the information they provide supports this. This is of course not to say that individuals are automatons ‘programmed’ to only read certain information - individuals will certainly look at wages and other quality indicators, but they are *taught* through LMI to understand their relationship with the market as a subservient one.

Active learning components are relatively minimal in provincial LMI, with some clicking through pages and entering search terms. Component training was relatively stronger, as LMI was broken into steps, categories, and expandable sections. The main LMI and occupational LMI pages also offered instructions, while the former also framed the entire tool.

In terms of operant conditioning, LMI cannot directly reward or punish individuals, but articulating the associations above as the key to success in the market (and therefore, survival) implies that failing to live by those themes and to conform to the market would result in unemployment, cycling, or poor employment. In this way, the numerous (26 in general LMI and four in occupational LMI) indicators on employment

⁶² e.g. permanence, employment standards violations, incidence of own account self-employment, precarious employment, labour market cycling, control over work, unionization density and coverage, average hours worked per week, work intensity, labour market polarization, working poverty, wages by education/age/identity characteristics, wage growth compared to inflation and cost of living, low income incidence, income inequality, etc. – 19 indicators on employment quality.

and unemployment speak to demand, but also act as a latent reminder of the implied *consequences* for failing to take the necessary, individual actions to enhance employability in accordance with market needs.

What is Elided & Outcomes

Similar to the Job Bank, Ontario's LMI does show users that there are different forms of employment (here mostly part time and full time) and remuneration levels. Despite this, most indicators were on market demand or were very broad, headline indicators. As illustrated in footnote ten, there are *many* indicators which provide a deeper picture of the labour market, but much more importantly, provide information which is *directly pertinent* to workers. The unemployment rate in an occupation may certainly help an individual decide whether or not they wish to pursue work in that field (if they have the choice), but what about quality of work in the field? What about permanence, unionization rates, low income incidence, and so on?

The associations between futurity, market conformation, and individual responsibility are *the only* themes which frame the available data. Even though the occupational and general LMI cover long-term unemployment and some data on part-time vs. full-time employment, there is no discussion whatsoever as to the possible causes of these outcomes, how and why labour market trajectories are moving in particular directions, and crucially, what the effect is on workers. The concern is overwhelmingly accommodating the needs of capital, reinforced by the absence (again) of indicators or information on employment standards. The existing data, coupled with the framing above, is consistent within LMI and across other ALMP instruments (e.g. the Job Bank) in the themes it communicates. Again, the market is presented apolitically, a 'natural' phenomenon which we must adapt to.

The themes above are mutually associated, frequently repeated across pages and components, and consistent with the Job Bank, EI, other ALMP programs, and socially salient discourses. As a result, these themes – based on their consistent repetition – are likely to develop into schemas (or augment existing schemas on those themes) but also prime related schemas from other ALMP programs and social discourses like 'individual responsibility for life outcomes'. If a person has those schemas and they are primed, then each individual schema is strengthened (as a result of activation), the connections between them are reinforced, and consequently, their automaticity is increased. Active learning was relatively weak, with few interactive components. That said, component training was strong with the 'abstract' message of market conformation at the beginning of the LMI page being translated into 'procedural' steps and instructions for how to research the market so as to shape yourself to it. Ontario's LMI models an individual who has little concern for employment quality or standards, who understands employment is never secure and that they have an individual responsibility to understand the needs and wants of the market *so as to* fulfill them through 'career planning, skills development, and training'. These ideas, through the cognitive mechanisms outlined above, communicate a way of thinking and acting which facilitates flexible accumulation.

Like with the Job Bank, the themes in Ontario's LMI speak to the material-semiotic conditions ('stimuli') and limited options for responding to them ('constraints') outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. For the unemployed and transitioning, retrenching and market facilitating policies reduce their options while unemployed, and should they turn to ALMP, they will encounter an automaticity which encourages them ('cognitive governance') to take individual responsibility to conform to the market. This kind of common sense is beneficial to capital and a lean state (in making minimal investments in ALMP).

The Ontario Skills Passport

The Ontario Skills Passport (OSP) is a combination of career and skill discovery, but does not have actual training embedded in it. The program is deeply intertwined with 'career education and life planning' in public school, and was developed jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development. The flagship policy document is called 'Creating Pathways to Success: an education and career/life planning program for Ontario Schools – Policy and Program Requirements, Kindergarten to Grade 12'. Overall, the program's everyday front-end apparatus is expansive: there are 29 links to elements of the program *on the main page alone*, and there are a plethora of decision trees in each link.

The OSP is also reached through the 'Jobs and Employment' Ontario.ca webpage, titled 'The skills you need – learn about the skills needed for different careers, and track the skills you already have'. On the left hand side is the same set of links as was present in Ontario's occupational LMI (post-secondary education, employment programs, the job bank, and LMI). The OSP main page for job seekers contains a welcome paragraph and six categories of links (29 in total): 1) about the OSP; 2) skills in the OSP; 3) search for tasks; 4) for job seekers and learners; 5) for employment counsellors, job developers and literacy practitioners; 6) for employers. Given the breadth of the content, I will focus on the framing of the program via the main paragraph and 'about' section, what work habits and skills are articulated and how, and the skill and work habit tracker and reflection sheet. Overall, there are 32 *distinct* teaching mechanisms in the OSP, again making it impractical to conduct a fully comprehensive analysis in this chapter. The 'tracker' and 'reflection sheet' are chosen because they appear most frequently: prominently on the main page under the 'for job seekers and learners' category, within the 'search for tasks' section, and in the 'Skillszone', which is the main portal for teaching mechanisms.

Welcome To OSP

The Ontario Skills Passport (OSP) provides clear descriptions of Essential Skills and work habits important for success in work, learning and life. Job seekers and learners can use the OSP tools and resources to **assess, build, document** and **track** their skills in training programs, volunteer activities and the workplace. The career development process, as outlined in [Creating Pathways to Success](#), is a four-step inquiry process built on the following questions: *Who am I? What are my opportunities? Who do I want to become? What is my plan for achieving my goals?* These questions are relevant to job seekers and learners at any age or stage of life. The OSP tools and resources provide job seekers and learners with information that can assist them develop meaningful answers to these questions as part of their education and career/life planning process.

The introductory paragraph to the OSP frames the overall program, and explains that it provides ‘tools and resources’ for individuals to see all activities – “in training programs, volunteer activities, and the workplace” - in terms of skills and work habits as part of “their education and career/life planning process”. Noticeably, the framing of the paragraph and its ‘four-step inquiry’ intertwine the labour market and ‘life’.

The OSP and Our Purpose

The Ontario Skills Passport (OSP) provides clear descriptions of Essential Skills and work habits and includes videos and tasks that show how people use these skills in everyday life and on-the-job. Job seekers and learners can use the tools and resources to **assess, build, document** and **track** their skills and **transfer** them to further education, training, the workplace and everyday life. These skills can be demonstrated in training programs, volunteer activities and the workplace.

The OSP was developed by the Ministry of Education (EDU) and the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (AESD). The Ministries continue to sponsor OSP enhancements and the development of OSP resources to support its use in a wide range of educational and training contexts.

Job seekers and learners can use the tools and resources to **assess, build, document** and **track** their skills and **transfer** them to further education, training, the workplace and everyday life. These skills can be demonstrated in training programs, volunteer activities and the workplace.

The ‘about us’ page repeats much of the same information. Again, the focus is on individual skill and habit assessment across all activities (“in everyday life and on-the-job”) and resources to individually track, transfer, document, build, and assess skills and habits. Consistently, everyday life, training, education, skills, and the self are interwoven with the workplace. Next, the skills that the OSP refers to are defined as follows:

Essential Skills (ES)

The skills in the OSP are the Essential Skills that enable people to perform tasks required by their occupation and other activities of daily life. These skills provide people with the foundation for learning other skills, such as technical skills, and enhance their ability to adapt to change. Skill levels are provided for each skill.

- [Essential Skill Levels](#)
- [Compare Essential Skills in the OSP to HRSDC's Essential Skills](#)
- [Compare HRSDC's Essential Skills to the Canadian Language Benchmarks](#)

Again, ‘occupation’ and ‘daily life’ are interwoven, and the discourse situates skills at the center of successful labour market and life activities. The skills themselves include communication skills (the first set), numeracy, and thinking. Interestingly, social skills are elided.

Essential Skills in the OSP	
Reading Text	The comprehension of text consisting of sentences and paragraphs.
Writing	The preparation of written materials for a variety of purposes.
Document Use	The use of labels, lists, signs, graphs, charts, tables, forms, and other similar materials
Computer Use	The use of any type of computerized technology.
Oral Communication	The use of speech for a variety of purposes.
Numeracy	
Money Math	The use of mathematical skills in making financial transactions, such as handling cash, preparing bills, and making payments.
Scheduling or Budgeting and Accounting	Planning for the best use of time and money, as well as monitoring the use of time and money.
Measurement and Calculation	The measurement and calculation of quantities, areas, volumes, and/or distances.
Data Analysis	The collection and analysis of data in numerical form.
Numerical Estimation	The production of estimates in numerical terms.
Thinking Skills	
Job Task Planning and Organizing	The planning and organization of one's own work.
Decision Making	The making of any type of decision, using appropriate information.
Problem Solving	The identification and solving of problems.
Finding Information	The use of a variety of sources, including written text, people, computerized databases, and information systems. (See also Reading Text, Document Use, Computer Use, and Oral Communication above).
Critical Thinking	Making judgments by using criteria to evaluate ideas and information and the related consequences.

Next, ‘work habits’ focus only on the market, and are framed as complimentary to skills: “it is important for everyone in the workforce to have good work habits as well as the appropriate skills”:

Working Safely

- Working in a manner that prevents injury to self and others
- Reporting unsafe conditions
- Participating in health and safety training, as required
- Using and wearing all required protective equipment and devices

Teamwork

- Working willingly with others
- Showing respect for the ideas and opinions of others
- Taking responsibility for his or her share of the work
- Contributing to the team effort by sharing information, resources, and expertise

Reliability

- Being punctual
- Following directions
- Giving attention to detail
- Using time effectively and producing work on time
- Acting in accordance with health and safety practices

Organization

- Organizing work priorities when faced with a number of tasks
- Devising and following a coherent plan to complete a task
- Revising the plan when necessary to complete a task or to make improvements

Working Independently

- Accomplishing tasks independently
- Independently selecting, evaluating, and using appropriate materials, tools, resources, and activities
- Using prior knowledge and experience to solve problems and make decisions

Initiative

- Beginning and completing tasks with little prompting
- Approaching new tasks with confidence and a positive attitude
- Seeking assistance when necessary

Self-advocacy

- Asking questions and seeking clarification, where appropriate
- Identifying and making use of appropriate resources and support when needed
- Being proactive regarding individual rights and responsibilities, where appropriate

Customer Service

- Listening effectively to determine and meet clients' needs
- Interacting positively with both co-workers and clients/customers
- Endeavouring to meet and exceed expectations
- Creating a positive impression of the company or organization

Entrepreneurship

- Recognizing and acting on opportunities
- Showing perseverance
- Being innovative and creative
- Being versatile and resourceful

In terms of teaching mechanisms, the OSP is overflowing with them (32 distinct mechanisms), but I focus on what appear to be the most prominent ones in the Tracker and Reflection Sheet (included in the Appendix). These mechanisms are worksheets which are meant to be used repeatedly in conjunction with the questions articulated on the main page: ‘who am I? What are my opportunities? Who do I want to become? What is my plan to achieve my goals?’. The OSP ‘Tracker’ starts with the following statement which repeats the themes from the main page and about us:

Track and plan your skills development!

The Ontario Skills Passport (OSP) offers tools and resources to **assess, build, document** and **track** your skills so you can **transfer** them to everyday life or the next place you go – whether it's further education, training or the workplace.

The tracker also provides a table with all the ‘essential skills’ highlighted above and five columns for ‘skill levels’, 1-5. There is then a smaller rectangular box for individuals to ‘check off’ the nine work habits outlined above, and the worksheet directs individuals back to the OSP website for full descriptions of the skills and habits. The second page of the worksheet directs individuals to more mechanisms they can use to ‘develop, assess, and build’ their skills, and a description of the IPP:

Individual Pathways Plan (IPP) Areas of Learning

Knowing Yourself

Complete an OSP self-assessment to learn about your Essential Skills and work habits. Identify the skills you are demonstrating inside and outside of the classroom.

Exploring Opportunities

View OSP Occupational Profiles and videos to see how people use these skills to perform tasks in the workplace and in everyday life.

Making Decisions and Setting Goals

Identify the skills you have and those you need to further develop for the kind of work and lifestyle that interests you.

Achieving Goals and Making Transitions

Identify the courses, programs, volunteer opportunities, part-time work and extracurricular activities that can help you develop these new skills.

Next, the ‘reflection’ worksheet provides a simpler framework: spaces for an individual’s name, the date, and the experience they are ‘reflecting on’, and then a table with the four questions above and brief explanatory questions for each with space for writing in between them. Individuals are then asked to ‘save this reflection’.

What is Said and How

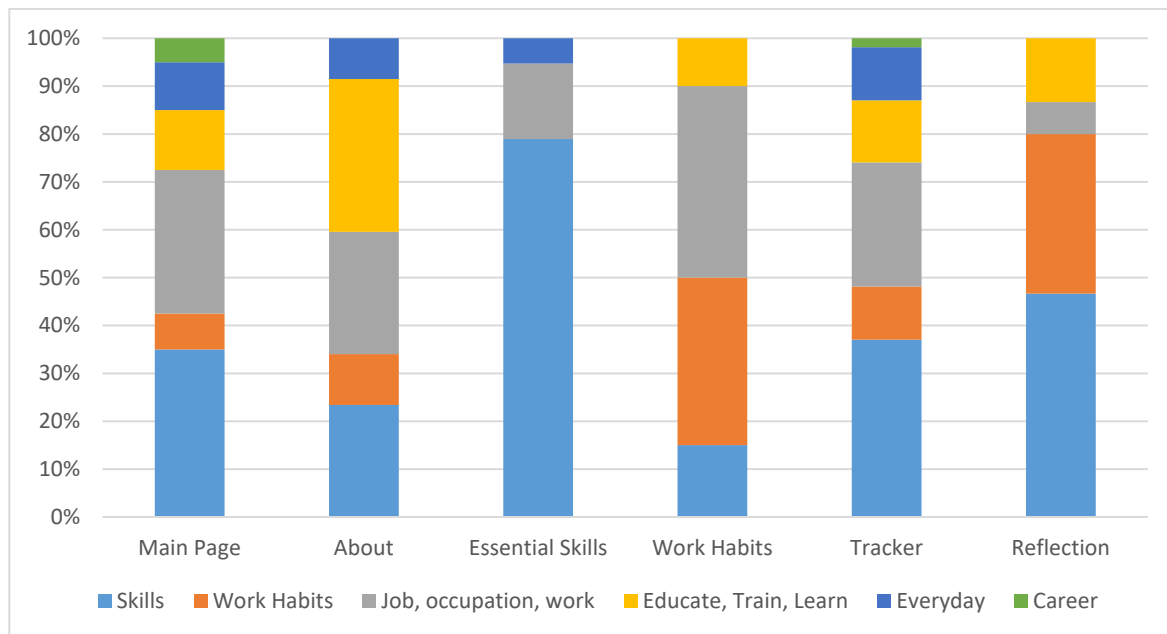
The OSP provides resources for individuals to ‘assess, improve, and track their skills and habits in everyday life and the workplace’, associating individual responsibility, self-work, attitudinal adjustment (work habits), skills, and market conformation. These associations converge on the human capital, employability, and entrepreneurial subjectivity frameworks, which encourage individual responsibility for cultivating skills and attitudes not only as the primary means of surviving the labour market, but as a way of being. The OSP, therefore, mirrors a statement made by British Columbia’s Ministry of Advanced Training and Technology in 1999 (McBride & Mitrea 2017):

You are in charge of your career all the time, every day, in every situation. Workers can rely on “skills security” rather than long-term job security. Career self-management means not relying on any business, organization, government or union to look after your interests.

These associations were consistently repeated across the OSP main page, ‘about us’, the ‘essential skills’ page, and the tracker by repeatedly tying everyday life, the market, and skills together.

Overall, there was significant consistency and repetition across the analyzed components of the OSP. Semantically significant variants of ‘skills’ occurred 70 times *across* the main page, about us, essential skills and work habits pages, the tracker, and the reflection, and occurred in each *throughout*. Variants of ‘job, occupation, and work’ appeared 50 times across all pages, and work habits 26 times, but not on the essential skills page.

Figure 8: Terms by Ontario ALMP Content, the Ontario Skills Passport



However, in the ‘work habits’ page and reflection worksheet, the emphasis was on cultivating habits and skills for the market. Of the nine categories and 33 overall points of work habits, only six relate to the wellbeing of workers (all of ‘working safely’ and the last points of ‘self-advocacy’ and ‘reliability’), accounting for 18 percent of the points. The rest of the categories are certainly functional for work and everyday life, but in the context of ‘the workforce’ and ‘work habits’ are tied to the labour market and *what the worker does for capital*. Most categories are on individual efforts (29/33, or 88 percent) to improve functioning as a worker: reliability (e.g. ‘using time effectively and producing work on time’), working independently, initiative (e.g. ‘approaching new tasks with confidence and a positive attitude’), customer service (e.g. ‘meet clients’ needs’ and ‘endeavouring to meet and exceed expectations’), and entrepreneurship. Labour market outcomes were also explicitly privileged in the reflection sheet, which expanded on the four questions of the main page. *Every* question was framed in terms of how essential skills and work habits were demonstrated or could be improved, and more importantly, how they can be used to ‘prepare me for they types of occupations that I have identified in my goals’.

Operant conditioning was the most latent in the OSP compared to other ALMP programs, such that while the implications are similar – failure in the market and life (unemployment, poor employment, a threat to survival) are a result of not cultivating skills and habits which the market needs – LMI and the Job Bank provided data on unemployment through active learning components (individuals would consistently encounter this data while utilizing the programs) which reinforced this implication.

The Tracker and Reflection sheets are good examples of mechanisms which have different steps (component training) and require active participation and reflection (active

learning) but also have framing and instruction. Both required individuals to reflect on and document their ‘essential skills’ and ‘work habits’, having them continuously work with those themes and their valences of individual responsibility, attitudinal adjustment, skills, and market conformation.

The range of themes in the OSP would prime schemas developed through other ALMP programs or everyday life. Crucially, while skills and habits are *mostly* framed as central to both work and everyday life in the OSP, when these themes come up in other mechanisms (i.e. EI with finding a job, LMI and the Job Bank with market conformity), they are *purely* framed in terms of market conformity. This is also reinforced within the OSP as particularly work habits are overwhelmingly oriented toward market conformity.

What is Elided & Outcomes

While the OSP’s themes are not *completely* subsumed under market conformation or oriented exclusively toward rapid labour market (re)entry, they are *overwhelmingly* individual and pay lip service to choice as there is no implied or stated room for ‘choice’ in the ‘essential skills and work habits’. There were no ‘interpersonal’ or social skills (other than ‘oral communication’) articulated in ‘essential skills’, and in ‘work habits’ was subsumed under ‘teamwork’ in a market conforming way (‘working with others’, ‘taking responsibility for share of work’, ‘contributing to team effort’).

In the framing, content (skills and habits), and teaching mechanisms there is no discussion of structural aspects of life and labour market outcomes, of the role of laws, policies, regulations, and institutions in those outcomes, of social supports, or even of training and career development. While the terms ‘education, training, and learning’ came up in five of six analyzed components and 31 times, they never directed individuals to *actual* training programs, rather, the terms encouraged individuals to *learn* skills and habits individually. Further still, ‘job, occupation, and work’ came up 92 percent more than the above terms, 233 percent more than ‘everyday life’, and 1567 percent more than ‘career’. Unlike the Job Bank and LMI, the OSP does not even superficially mention labour market trajectories, outcomes, and challenges.

The OSP’s associations intersect significantly with the other ALMP programs analyzed, and the intense and consistent repetition of the associations across the site and 31 teaching mechanisms have the potential to create a potent network of schemas from an early age (as that is the goal) which cultivates an individually responsible, entrepreneurial, and market conforming way of thinking and acting. These themes, as has been mentioned, speak to other ALMP programs and to socially salient discourses (e.g. of individual responsibility and entrepreneurialism). Encountering the messages and ‘teaching mechanisms’ in the OSP would prime any schemas developed in other ALMP programs (like the Job Bank or EI) and from people’s environments, and because these messages/concepts/schemas have been shown to be interrelated, would strengthen each schema, increase the connections between them, and thereby contribute to the automaticity of all of them. There was strong active learning in the tracking sheets, which required participation. Likewise, the OSP translated abstract messaging (evident on the ‘about’ and main page) into steps and instructions via the trackers and ‘skills’ and ‘habits’

pages, increasing the odds of automaticity developing. The themes above are closely tied to responsabilization, activation, neoliberalism, entrepreneurialism, and austerity, as the OSP models an individual who is completely focused on *their* (self-reliance, self-discipline, activation) skills and habits and how to develop them so as to improve their future performance and outcomes in the market.

As with the previous subcomponents, the OSP responds to material-semiotic conditions ('stimuli') and limited options for responding to them ('constraints') outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 by encouraging an automaticity based on conforming to the needs of the market, individually, with no particular expectations of the market or the state. With decreasing investment in longer term (and more beneficial) ALMP interventions, individuals have fewer recourses but to return immediately to the market. If they happen to utilize ALMP, they will encounter a common sense which benefits capital and a lean state over their needs.

Conclusion

Ontario's front-end ALMP, overall and in the cases analyzed, does represent a broader range of programs in the everyday. While EI was overwhelmingly focused on rapid-labour market re-entry by tying benefit receipt to job search efforts and linking almost exclusively to job search services, Ontario's ALMP introduced or reminded individuals that there are supports available (EI and Ontario Works, the provincial social assistance program), that there are training programs, that there is information about the market, and that there are career and skill discovery tools as well. Among the case studies, there were positive aspects, such as including some information on employment quality relevant to workers.

However, in the Job Bank, Ontario's LMI, and the OSP, new associations emerged between market conformation, attitudinal adjustment, individual responsibility, and a focus on skills. The job search theme was also very potent in the Job Bank, and was implicit in all other programs through links to job search systems and the implicit message that labour market information and the OSP were resources to facilitate labour market attachment. All of these programs also had strong associations with EI, which connected to job search systems and encouraged market conformation and attitudinal adjustment in the process of searching for work, increasing repetition and consistency.

The strong intersections across different ALMP components, the broader social and labour market policy trajectory toward retrenchment and market facilitation ('constraint'), economic trajectories toward flexible accumulation, and material-semiotic conditions resulting from both ('stimuli') represent a level of overall consistency, repetition, and complementarity that is conducive to the development of automaticity – particularly if an individual turns to ALMP an encounters the automaticity encouraged therein ('cognitive governance').

Ontario's ALMP portrayed the market as a kind of 'force of nature' which is not to be altered or questioned, but merely responded to for survival. Individuals are meant to understand the market and conform their attitudes and skills to meet its demands ('employability'), without any particular expectations of employment quality or

consideration of structural forces in labour market outcomes. The result is a way of thinking and acting ('common sense') which is depoliticized, instrumentally rational, and which serves the needs of capital, facilitating immiseration.

Chapter 6: British Columbia

Chapter 6 is the last case study and the second on provincial active labour market policy (ALMP), which are the main set of public programs available to the unemployed and transitioning other than federal EI. As with Ontario and other provinces, BC has a wide variety of ALMP resources, including job search systems, targeted programs (e.g. for youth, people with disabilities, newcomers and immigrants, and indigenous peoples), training and education, employer resources, and a very deep labour market information system which offers general/occupational/regional breakdowns for the province. Because of the range of ALMP programs, I maintain the hypothesis that the ‘rapid re-entry’ message that was consistently repeated through EI regular benefits will not be as predominant, if only because there are so many other options to engage with the labour market. The framework for developing automaticity will be applied to unpack what is communicated to policy recipients and how in the everyday of BC’s ALMP. These ‘front-end’ or ‘everyday’ elements are the *direct* interface by which people interact with ALMP (beyond the ‘indirect’ effects from ‘backend’ policy changes which affect the market and options to enter it), and so are a clear avenue for articulating understandings of the self as a worker, understandings of the market, the state, and what the individual should expect from both and how to interact with them. Should BC’s ALMP explicitly or implicitly encourage workers to be flexible with their expectations on location, type of employment, quality of work, and wages, then it encourages a way of thinking and acting which benefits a post-Fordist accumulation regime based on a depoliticized, low wage, and flexible – ultimately immiserated – labour force.

In the previous chapter, I analyzed Ontario’s front-end, ‘everyday’ ALMP programs, focusing on those which had the strongest connections to the first case study, Federal Employment Insurance (EI). Chapter 6 continues in that vein, exploring BC’s job search systems, labour market information (LMI), and career and skill discovery resources. As outlined in Chapter 2, case studies in this project are not chosen on the basis of explaining difference or selected through the ‘most similar’ or ‘most different’ paradigms, but to explore everyday ALMP programs in several sites to examine what is communicated to policy recipients and how. Differences and similarities will be discussed more in the concluding chapter, but the goal is not to explain how each case arrived at its particular positions.

The chapter begins with a brief review of trends in BC’s ALMP from the 1990s to the present. As with the last chapter, I then map how the province’s ALMP are situated in everyday relation to one another and any federal programs, looking at how BC’s ALMP ‘presents’ itself to policy recipients. Next, I map relations between the case studies of this chapter: job search, LMI, and career and skill discovery before examining each individually. Should these everyday policy subcomponents (of Ontario’s ALMP) encourage automaticity around market conformation and individual responsibility for labour market outcomes (among other schemas), they will cultivate a common sense

which benefits flexible accumulation and a lean state over workers. If what is communicated through everyday ALMP's cognitive mechanisms is consistent with policy recipients' material-semiotic conditions ('stimuli', i.e. material precarity) and options for responding to those conditions ('constraints') then the chances of those messages developing into common sense is increased ('cognitive governance').

The Development of Canadian Active Labour Market Policy, 1990s to the Present

This section continues Chapter 5's overview of ALMP, which began with a brief overview of Canadian ALMP *until* the 1996 devolution, before shifting to a review of Ontario's ALMP from the 1990s onward. I will speak to the devolution and post-devolution period in Canadian ALMP before looking at BC's experience from the 1990s. To briefly recap, until 1996, Canadian ALMP experienced growth in federal programs and offices and similar efforts in wealthier provinces until the mid-1980s. At that point, during and after a brief neo-corporatist experiment involving labour and capital in ALMP, retrenchment and a supply-side orientation focused on market 'efficiency' objectives came to dominate. These trajectories parallel and responded to changes in the real economy under the umbrella of post-Fordism (and neoliberalism), which had an overall program of flexibilizing labour and other costs to business.

The federal government committed to withdraw from ALMP administration in late 1995, ostensibly in response to a Quebec sovereignty referendum and to localism (the idea that policy solutions designed and implemented locally lead to better outcomes) arguments by other provinces (Haddow & Klassen 2006, 83). This took the form of devolving EI Part II, Employment Benefit and Support Measures (EBSM) to the provinces by creating Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs), enabling them to broadly design and deliver active measures to EI clients.⁶³ Despite this devolution, the federal government retained decisions about funding levels and client eligibility, an expression of asymmetrical federalism (Haddow & Klassen 2006, 83; Wood & Hayes 2016, 6; Morden 2016, 9). In 2007, the federal government introduced the Labour Market Agreements (LMAs), expanding provincial ALMP programs for non-EI recipients (Wood & Hayes 2016, 6; Morden 2016, 9). In 2013, 60 percent of LMA funding (\$300mn) was appropriated to create the Canada Job Fund Agreements (CJFAs), and where the LMAs focused on helping unemployed and low skilled workers (i.e. those who lacked high school diplomas, literacy, and essential skills) with targeted, public programs, the CJFAs focused on providing public funding (\$15,000 per qualify worker, with the federal government responsible for 2/3) for workplace training – focusing on those already employed (6).

⁶³ A total of ~\$2bn, 2600+ civil servants, and over 1,000 contracts with community service providers. See Wood & Hayes (2016) for a full list of services (5). Although Ontario did not sign an LMDA until 2005, their ALMP trajectory unfolded similarly to the other provinces, following the trends outlined in this Chapter and Chapter 3.

While Canadian ALMP in 2016 spanned 52 bilateral federal-provincial and 84 federal-Indigenous agreements worth over \$3.3bn (funded mostly through mandatory EI premiums), Canada ranked 27 of 31 in the OECD in ALMP spending at only 0.22 percent of GDP in 2014 (OECD average of 0.6)⁶⁴ (Wood & Hayes 2016, 7; Morden 2016, 6). The 1996 devolution was considered retrenchment by many scholars (Cameron 2006; Banting 2006; Vosko 2011; Finnie & Irvine 2011) and ALMP expenditures dropped 50 percent from 1996-2014 through federal and provincial austerity, as the cuts to transfers by the former elicited austerity in the latter (Morden 2016, 6).

On average, four percent of the labour force in OECD states participate in active measures, while in Canada it was under one percent in 2014 despite an unemployment rate of 7 percent (Morden 2016, 7). In 2014-15, the LMDAs accounted for 57 percent of total federal ALMP expenditures (~\$2.075bn in 2016-17) and the CJFs at 15 percent (~\$550mn), which means 72 percent of all ALMP programs in Canada – which have shrunk by more than 50 percent since the 1996 devolution – are accessible only to EI recipients (the number of which has also dropped to around only 40 percent of the unemployed around 2015) or mostly to the already employed (Morden 2016; Wood & Hayes 2016).

While EI's own evaluations and the international literature confirm that training (classroom, on the job) and skill development are more effective in the long term, Canadian ALMP is shifting increasingly toward cheaper “short-term interventions for quicker returns to work”, rising by 47.9 percent since 2006-07 and making up a larger proportion of overall interventions (Morden 2016, 7; Employment Insurance 2016). These interventions take the form of job search assistance and related services, effective in achieving rapid labour market re-entry, but often with earnings losses and less stable employment outcomes (Morden 2016, 7; Employment Insurance 2016). This was also reflected in the (short) response to the 2008 financial crisis, where only 3 percent of stimulus went to labour market retraining and skills development (Bernard 2014, 34).

British Columbia's Active Labour Market Policy

Taking a step back in time to British Columbia in the 1990s and early 2000s reveals a competitive LME, market oriented welfare state, and highly polarized party system, with the centre-right Social Credit party ruling from 1952-1991 and the centre-left NDP having a brief rule in between from 1971-74 (Haddow & Klassen 2006, 153). As with Ontario, there was a brief moment of what was considered centre-left politics in BC, as the NDP ruled from 1991-2001, promoting a collaborative and equity/efficiency ‘balanced’ agenda with more spending on ALMP. Again as with Ontario, these changes

⁶⁴ The 2015 Liberal Government promised to increase funding to the LMDAs by \$500mn and \$200mn to programs targeting non-EI recipients, with budget 2016 committing \$125mn and \$50mn, respectively (Morden 2016, 6).

were forcefully reversed by a centre-right party in 2001 (here, the Liberals) (153). The BC NDP platform for 1991 promised LMP reforms, improved programs for women, reduced poverty, a sustainable environmental policy, improved health and education, addressing aboriginal land claims, and a balanced budget over the business cycle. The NDP won again in 1996 by appropriating centre-right discourses on ‘middle class’ tax cuts, ‘eliminating waste’, tough on crime measures, and fighting welfare fraud (154-155). The 1991 NDP continued the LME trajectory of favouring post-secondary education over industrial training until 1993, when they expanded job creation and industrial training with an equity focus (166). For instance, ‘Skills Now!’ in 1993 committed 20mn over two years to active measures for those unlikely to attend university, including industrial apprenticeship, expanded technical education for high school students, and training for welfare recipients (167). Later in the 1990s, the NDP launched several job creation projects aimed at youth and continued industry related measures, such as the Industrial Adjustment Service, which helped workers in declining industries find new opportunities (167). Despite the investments, total ALMP expenditures in 1995-96 were approximately \$110mn, compared to around \$2bn for post-secondary education (168). Like Ontario, BC undertook measures aimed at fostering collaborative ALMP programming, including the BC Labour Force Development Board (BCLFDB, closed in 1996 due to internal frictions, particularly non-cooperation by business) and the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC), which was opened in 1997 (168).

Economic decline heralded the fall of the BC NDP, as GDP/capita fell from above the national mean until 1990 to 89.4 percent of it in 2002. The economy was ‘widely perceived to be in crisis’, with provincial Conservatives blaming NDP policies (ignoring structural declines in resource sectors outpacing growth in services) (155). In this environment the right-wing Liberals argued for radical solutions and that a ‘poorer province could no longer afford such high levels of public spending’ (156). The Liberal platform – like in Ontario with the PC Harris government – was developed in consultation with the business community and by 2002 made significant cuts to corporate and personal taxes (with more on the way), reversed bargaining rights for public sector unions⁶⁵ (which were also legislated back to work in the health sector), initiated a spending freeze in health and education (effectively a cut given inflation and rising costs), a reduction in government spending of 35 percent, and the elimination of 31 percent of public service employment (11,700 jobs) (157).

The Liberals focused on maximizing efficiency, expenditure restraint, and free market approaches, and so terminated all active measures (e.g. youth employment and industrial adjustment) other than industrial training and programs for welfare recipients and crafted a (largely rhetorical) strategy with the business community to meet skill shortages as their flagship ALMP (169). Collaborative ALMP was abandoned, as ITAC

⁶⁵ Reversing two NDP initiatives, requiring a vote for union certification and eliminating a limited for of sectoral bargaining introduced by the NDP (Haddow & Klassen 2006, 160).

was closed in 2002, along with 16 regional offices, and replaced by the Industry Training Authority (ITA) which would focus on skills shortages and flexibilized apprenticeship training (reducing the aptitudes essential for a recognized trade), with 8/10 representatives from the business community (170). While Ontario's apprenticeship training reforms exempted the construction trade in 2000, no such exceptions were made in BC.

During the NDP reign, ALMP was more attentive to equity objectives, industrial relations were more favourable to unions than before or after the NDP, worker's compensation was extended, employment standards and enforcement were strengthened, and policy making was collaborative (at least attempted) – all measures running counter to the cultural and institutional path dependence of an LME. Public opinion and powerful interests were frequently against the NDP, but not against the Liberals and their policies. The 2001 Liberals reversed the NDP's trajectory, relying on informal collaboration which favoured capital, reduced union powers, retrenchment in ALMP and worker's compensation, and weakened employment standards and enforcement (176). However, while in Ontario the 2003 Liberals largely restored the pre-1990s ALMP trajectory, the BC Liberals may have gone further by eliminating programs, like industrial adjustment, which had been operating for decades.

BC's ALMP development is consistent with Canada's and the trajectories discussed in Chapter 3. All of the above are defined by austerity, retrenchment, and a reorientation toward market facilitating in social and labour market policy. This shift toward driving people back into the labour market means ALMP limits the options the unemployed and transitioning have ('constraints') for responding to their material-semiotic conditions ('stimuli'). If these individuals turn to the ALMP case studies examined, they will work with everyday front-end policy components which encourage an automaticity ('cognitive governance') complementary to the trajectories above: a common sense of individual responsibility for rapid labour market re-attachment and market conformation (among other schemas). Such a common sense benefits a flexible accumulation regime (by cultivating docile workers) and a lean state (reducing expenditures on the unemployed).

Mapping British Columbia's ALMP in a Broader Policy Context

Here I analyze British Columbia's overall front-end ('everyday') ALMP architecture in terms of how it is connected to different levels of government ('vertical') and with the other BC ALMP components ('horizontal') not including the case studies (which will be examined in the next section): job search, labour market information, and career and skill discovery. WorkBC has six major categories and 37 subprograms, each with a handful of programs or aspects within. WorkBC is separate from other Government of BC sites, and there are no direct connections to Ministerial pages or to centralized resources for things like benefits. However, post-secondary education is featured on WorkBC, under 'Training & Education' and has information on post-

secondary education, trades training, co-op, targeted programs, BC's 'skills for jobs blueprint' (a tool to organize different ALMP resources), 'blueprint stories', and 'finance your education' (Province of British Columbia 2017).

The rest of WorkBC's main page is fairly dense, with six categories at the top of the page and in small boxes, a job search widget, a rotating panel of 'featured' programs, five 'popular topics', and 'explore more' at the bottom of the page, including labour market data, a 'spotlight', feedback, the 'career toolkit', 'find your fit tutor', and contact us.

The largest box on the page is at the top left, promoting job search first and foremost. To the right are varied 'popular topics' including targeted programs and ALMP assistance. Next are six boxes for the categories which organize WorkBC's ALMP:

The screenshot displays the WorkBC website interface, organized into several key sections:

- FIND A JOB:** A dark blue header section featuring a search bar with fields for "Keyword(s)" and "City or Postal Code". Below the search bar are radio button options for "Job Title" (selected), "Job Description", "Employer", and "Job Number". A "Find a job now" button is positioned at the bottom of this section.
- POPULAR TOPICS:** A light blue vertical sidebar on the right containing five clickable items: "Trades Training", "Employer Resources", "Employment Services and Supports Program", "Find a WorkBC Centre", and "Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants".
- EMPLOYMENT SERVICES:** A section titled "GET IN PERSON OR SELF-SERVE HELP" with a sub-header "EMPLOYMENT SERVICES". It includes text about 84 WorkBC Employment Services Centres and over 100 satellite offices, a "Find a WorkBC Centre near you" button, and an "En français" button.
- EMPLOYER RESOURCES:** A section titled "THE WORKBC ACCOUNT CREATION PROCESS WAS EASY...THE LEVEL OF SERVICE WAS OUTSTANDING AND THE POSTING WAS FREE FOR EMPLOYERS." featuring a quote from Robert Ashbourne, CFO of Scott Plastics, and a "See WorkBC Job Board benefits" button.
- JOBS AND CAREERS:** A section titled "BROWSE CAREER PROFILES" with a sub-header "JOBS AND CAREERS". It offers details on 500 jobs and includes a "Find your career fit" button.
- LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION:** A section titled "VIEW JOBS IN DEMAND" with a sub-header "LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION". It provides information on job needs based on skill level and job openings, with a "Discover opportunities" button.
- EDUCATION AND TRAINING:** A section titled "ACCESS EDUCATION & TRAINING" with a sub-header "EDUCATION AND TRAINING". It describes post-secondary options like apprenticeships and university programs, with an "Access resources" button.
- RESOURCES FOR SPECIFIC AUDIENCES:** A section titled "FIND CONTENT FOR SPECIFIC AUDIENCES" with a sub-header "RESOURCES FOR". It lists resources for Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, newcomers, parents, teachers, mature workers, and women in trades and communities, with a "View resources" button.

As with Ontario, WorkBC’s ‘everyday’ presentation demonstrates that provincial ALMP is more varied, including job search resources, varied LMI, training programs and education, targeted programs, and employment counseling, which share space quite equally. However, there is no mention on the main page of income supports such as EI or provincial welfare, thereby limiting the scope of how individuals can understand the labour market and the role of the state from what is *presented* through WorkBC (e.g. fewer options are presented or repeated, leaving the few that are to be more prominent and more likely to be understood as the only or ‘right’ options).

That being said, the broader shift in Canadian ALMP toward rapid (re)entry is reflected in the order of categories and segments of WorkBC's main page. 'Jobs & Careers' is the first category at the top of the page and 'find a job' is the first of the boxes on the page. However, when the six categories are made in boxes, Employment Services (counselling and self-service) and employer resources come before 'Jobs & Careers'. Taken together, WorkBC's main page articulates a broader schema on how to understand the labour market, the self as a worker, and the role of the state, with only a single category dedicated to job search. However, other sections connect to 'job search' and lead toward it, and it is embedded in LMI and employment services. While like Ontario, a range of ALMP programs are outlined, WorkBC even connects directly to education (in addition to training) on its main page. That said, the continued prominence of 'job search' and LMI still reflect a rapid re-attachment and market conformation orientation.

Mapping *within* BC's ALMP

The connections *between* the cases studies (job search, LMI, and career and skill discovery) are also significant to automaticity. All are in WorkBC, but information is often repeated in different ways across different pages, particularly for LMI. BC's job search service is the 'WorkBC Job Board', and a basic search function is prominently displayed on the WorkBC main page (Province of British Columbia 2017). The full feature and accompanying pages is under 'Jobs & Careers' -> 'Find Jobs', with six sections and a description focused exclusively on job search:

Home > Jobs & Careers > Find Jobs

FIND JOBS

WorkBC is committed to helping British Columbians successfully navigate B.C.'s labour market. If you're searching for a job, check out the WorkBC Job Board. Find your next job now!

TOPICS IN THIS SECTION

Find a job using the WorkBC Job Board

Browse thousands of jobs on B.C.'s most comprehensive job postings database. Apply today!

Discover the WorkBC Job Board advantage

Are you a job seeker? Find out how the WorkBC Job Board can help, and why you should care about the NOC. This information is available in 14 languages.

View B.C. industry job boards

View an index of B.C. industry job boards. Select an industry and view job postings available.

Apprentice Job Match

Sign up to gain access to the Apprentice Job Match to create a profile if you're a job seeker or to post a job if you're an employer.

Know your rights as a job applicant

Find essential information on appropriate interview questions, evaluating your offer and more.

Power up your job search

Land a job using WorkBC's tips and tricks for creating a great resume, preparing for interviews, developing your networking skills and using social media.

RELATED TOPICS

- [Find Blueprint Builder resources](#)
- [Learn about Jobs in Demand](#)
- [Access WorkBC Centres](#)
- [Find programs to help you find work](#)

WORKBC JOB BOARD

[Find jobs now](#)

On the right hand side of the page are 'related topics' including links to 'learn more about jobs in demand' (LMI) and 'access WorkBC centres'. There is a large, separate box on the right with a link to the Job Board, which is also the first 'topic' on the page and is first on the main page and the page above the current one ('Jobs & Careers'). The 'job search' theme does not stand alone – on the 'Find Jobs' page are links to LMI (also present federally), employment counselling, training (under the apprentice subsection), and an entire subsection on employment standards. Although the Job Board does not link out as much as is linked to it (e.g. there are several links to the job board on the main page and repeatedly in the LMI section), there is still more of an acknowledgement of other aspects of ALMP than in the federal Job Bank, articulating a broader schema.

As indicated above, BC's LMI is quite ubiquitous. Career Compass mostly reformats information presented in the main LMI section, and will be analyzed more closely later. BC's LMI has six sections and 15 subsections, including on shifts in the provincial economy (e.g. 'the green economy'), demographics, projections, 'top occupations' (featuring health and natural gas), and general/regional/occupational/industry LMI. The main LMI page has no other links, but there are boxes to the Job Board within some of the pages and other links within as well. Within 'Explore Careers' under 'Jobs and Careers' (which features occupational LMI),

there are links to career planning, types of employment, self-employment, the career compass, jobs in demand, and regional and industrial profiles.

Lastly, the ‘Career Compass’ is BC’s career and skills discovery, and the only link outside of the tool is to the ‘education planner’ at the end of its reformatted occupational LMI outputs.

BC’s case studies did not consistently connect to each other. Many connected to the Job Board (including within job search pages and LMI), but others, like the Career Compass, did not. The most consistent connections were through repeated LMI, as ‘explore careers’ under ‘jobs and careers’ as well as the ‘career compass’ had occupational and other LMI. While Job Search was *a* prominent theme, it did not stand alone, and rapid (re)entry was *not* the only response to unemployment and labour market transition, constructing a multifaceted schema on the relationship between the worker, market, and state.

If there is consistency across WorkBC’s ALMP, other ALMP programs, the material-semiotic conditions (‘stimuli’) and options for response (‘constraints’) outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, and the automaticity encouraged by the three subcomponents analyzed below, than what is articulated by the subcomponents is more likely to become common sense (‘cognitive governance’). If WorkBC encouraged policy recipients to conform to market expectations and seek out work quickly with no or limited consideration for their long-term outcomes, it is constructing a common sense which benefits a flexible accumulation regime and a lean state.

Analyzing Components Close Reading

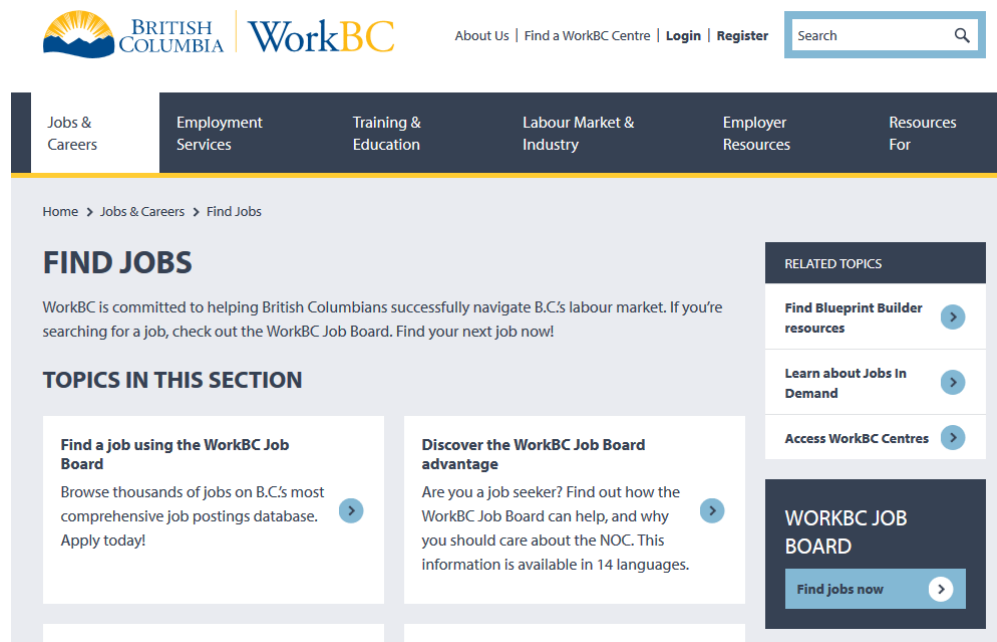
As with Ontario, the three case studies are chosen because they are accessible to this analysis, are everyday policy mechanisms, were encouraged by the first case study, EI, and are among the ‘short term interventions’ increasingly deployed and most widely used by recipients (Morden 2016; Wood & Hayes 2016). Job search systems were consistently reinforced by EI and are prominent in Ontario and BC, with LMI strongly interwoven. Career and skills reflection (e.g. ‘thinking about what skills you have or should develop’), but not training, was also presented as part of job search and LMI as an individual activity to achieve employability. These seemingly technical and rational programs articulate ways of understanding the labour market, the role of the state, and the self as a worker, how to act, and are unexamined as compared to training programs.

I will analyze BC’s job search system (WorkBC Job Board), LMI, and career and skill discovery (the ‘Career Compass’) as to what they communicate and whether they employ mechanisms conducive to automatic cognition which were outlined in Chapter 2. Despite the broader scope of ALMP programs, activities, and therefore, of the schema around the labour market, I expect a similar orientation as Ontario: a strong supply side focus marked by individual responsibility for employability. Should this kind of schema be communicated, it would benefit post-fordist accumulation by shifting focus to the individual and how they can adapt to market needs and away from individual expectations of the market or state.

As with the previous chapters, I assume a moderate level of motivation and attention on the part of applicants because, in the absence of high savings or private support (i.e. family), unemployment in a context of retrenching social supports is materially, psychologically, and socially arduous (Vosko 2011; Finnie & Irvine 2011). In these conditions, the unemployed are driven to whatever resources they can utilize and to look to the labour market for survival, regardless of the conditions therein.

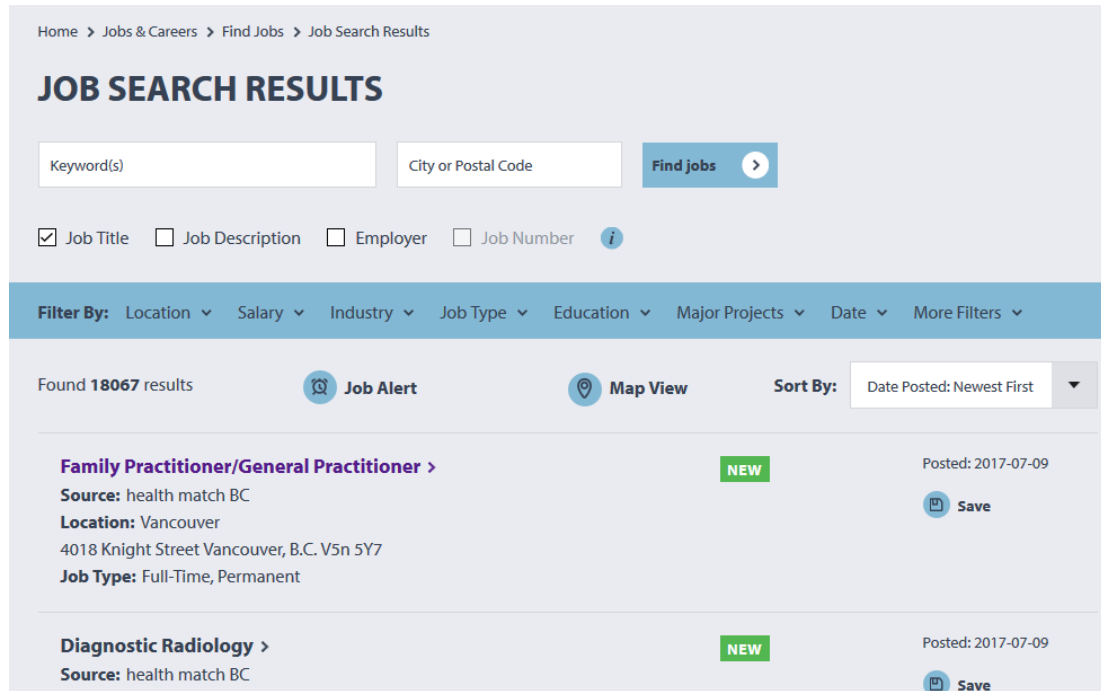
Job Search System – WorkBC’s Job Board

Unlike Ontario, BC’s front-end ALMP has its own job search system called the ‘WorkBC Job Board’, accessed through the first and largest box of the main WorkBC site, the first link under the first category of WorkBC (‘jobs and careers’ -> ‘find jobs’), or through another large box on the ‘jobs and careers’ page (Province of British Columbia 2017). As with Chapter 4 and 5, job search is the most prominent system. The ‘Find Jobs’ page states that:



There are six other sections under this page, the first link is to the job board, then how to use it, industry job boards, a job matching system for apprentices, ‘your rights as a job applicant’, and ‘power up your job search’ (resume, interview, and networking advice). On the right hand side are links to ‘blueprint builder resources’, labour market information (‘learn about jobs in demand’), WorkBC Centres, and a large box for the ‘WorkBC Job Board – Find jobs now’. I will focus on the job board itself (since its contents contain the information found in the instruction page), applicant rights, and the ‘power up your job search’ pages, mirroring the analysis of Ontario’s job search system - the Federal Job Bank.

The job board itself allows individuals to search by keywords and location, along with multiple filters including, ‘major projects’ (e.g. ‘3 Civic Plaza in Mainland/Southwest’), and for disadvantaged groups such as ‘aboriginal people’ and ‘people with disabilities’:



There are also a range of job types available:



The board also allows individuals to search by salary, from hourly to annually. Conversions are based on a full time (40 hours/week) position.

Filter By: Location ▾ **Salary** ▾ Industry ▾ Job Type ▾ Education ▾ Major Projects ▾ Date ▾ More Filters ▾

Enter a minimum amount

Minimum amount (CAD \$) Annually ▾ **Apply filter** >

Other Types of Pay:

Commission Per Mile Per Load Piece Rate

▲ **How is salary calculated?**

When you select a value from the salary drop-down menu, that figure is automatically converted to the equivalent annual salary even when a pay period other than Annually is selected.

The conversion is calculated as follows:

- Hourly - hourly rate is multiplied by 2080 (approximate number of work hours in a year)
- Weekly - weekly rate is multiplied by 52 (number of weeks in a year)
- Bi-Weekly - bi-weekly rate is multiplied by 26 (half the number of weeks in a year)
- Monthly - monthly rate is multiplied by 12 (number of months in a year)

A job posting results page provides information on salary, job type, language and education requirements, logistical information (e.g. NOC groups/titles, expiry, last update, views), location, and job description. On every results page, on the right, there is a box for ‘explore careers’ and for ‘jobs in demand’ – both forms of labour market information in WorkBC.

Home > Jobs & Careers > Find Jobs > Job Search Results > Job Posting

Job Search Results

DIETARY AIDE

CARECORP Seniors Services >
Salary: \$12.00 - \$13.00/Hourly
Job Type: Part Time, Casual
Start Date: As soon as possible

Language: English
Minimum Education: None
Positions Available: 3

NOC Group: Food Counter Attendants, Kitchen Helpers and Related Occupations (6641)
NOC Job Title: Food Counter Attendant

Expires in 51 days
 Expires: 2017-09-30
 Posted: 2017-08-10
 Last Updated: 2017-08-10

1 views
 Job Number: 418250

[Save](#)
[Print](#)
[Share](#)

Job Location(s)

Coquitlam, British Columbia

Job Description

CareCorp Seniors Services is a contracted services provider to the senior care community in complex care and assisted living settings, providing services including nursing, personal care & support, recreation, professional therapies, food services, housekeeping, laundry and maintenance.

Location: Cartier House in Coquitlam

CAREER PROFILES

EXPLORE CAREERS

Get the details you need on 500 jobs - including duties, education required, salary and employment outlook.

[View Career Profiles >](#)

LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

JOBS IN DEMAND

Discover occupations that are expected to have above average opportunities over the next decade.

[View Jobs in Demand >](#)

Next, I look at the page detailing job applicants' rights. The page is quite extensive, covering minimum wage and working conditions (no employer can provide less than these, even if an employee agrees to less; this information is available in multiple languages), that individuals cannot be charged to apply for work or request employer information, and discrimination. There is a link on the top right with more information about workplace rights.

Home > Jobs & Careers > Find Jobs > Know your rights as a job applicant

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AS A JOB APPLICANT

As a job seeker in British Columbia, you have some rights and protections.

- No one can offer you work that does not meet B.C.'s minimum wage and working conditions.
- No one can charge you a fee for submitting a job application.
- You have a right to be free from discrimination.

These protections apply to all workers, whether they are B.C. residents or temporary foreign workers.

Topics on this page

[Minimum Wage and Working Conditions](#)

[Job Application Fees or Costs](#)

[Discrimination](#)

RELATED TOPICS

[Learn more about workplace rights](#) >

The last and most content-rich section is ‘power up your job search’. Which includes multiple paragraphs for each of the following: resume writing, interviews, networking, and utilizing social media. On the right hand side are links to targeted labour market programs, online WorkBC resources, industry information, and targeted WorkBC services. There is no information directly relevant to an employee’s wellbeing on this page, and no links to their rights.

Home > Jobs & Careers > Find Jobs > Power up your job search

POWER UP YOUR JOB SEARCH

Write a compelling resume and employ these strategies to power up your job search.

Topics on this page

[Write your resume](#)

[Prepare for interviews](#)

[Develop your networking skills](#)

[Using social media in your job search](#)

RELATED TOPICS

[Find programs to help you find work](#) >

[Find job search resources online](#) >

[Check out industry profiles](#) >

[Find job search supports](#) >

The resume information is broken into categories (personal information, work and volunteer experience, skills, education) and within each individuals are told to only include ‘relevant / related’ information to the job being applied for (this statement was repeated three times in each category) – encouraging them to research an employer and mold themselves to their needs (market conformation).

Write your resume

A well-written resume will help to sell your skills and abilities, giving you the best chance of getting the job you want.

Market conformation comes up repeatedly in interview preparation – individuals should research the organization (‘to show your interest in working there’), know the job requirements (so they can ‘show how you can be of value’), and prepare for interview questions. Applicants should ‘project the image [they] want through [their] clothes, [their] speech, and [their] manners’, again they should ‘show [their] interest’. After the interview, applicants should show their ‘appreciation’ and take another time to remind employers why they are a ‘particularly good fit for the job’, all examples of attitudinal adjustment.

Prepare for interviews

Once your resume has caught the attention of an employer, you may be asked to meet for a formal interview.

By presenting yourself well, highlighting your experience effectively and communicating clearly, you'll ensure that your interview is a success.

Before the Interview:

- **Research the organization** to show your interest in working there. Learn what they do, who they serve, how many offices and employees they have and how long they've been in business.
- **Know the job requirements**, including skills, tasks and education. By relating them to your own skills and experience, you can show how you can be of value.
- **Prepare for common interview questions** by understanding what employers are looking for. Think about how you would answer the questions posed in these sources:
 - [Behavioural Interview Questions – BC Housing](#)
 - [Common Behavioural Interview Questions – UBC](#)
 - [Competency-Based Interview Questions – BC Public Service](#)

At the Interview:

In many cases, you'll compete with several candidates for the job. How you present yourself will affect your chances of success.

Project the image you want through your clothes, your speech and your manners. Be neat and professional, polite and friendly. Shake hands firmly and make eye contact. Answer questions clearly and show your interest by asking questions about the organization and the position.

After the Interview:

Send a [thank you note](#). In addition to expressing your appreciation, you can use the note to mention something you didn't say in the interview, or to remind the employer of ways in which you are a particularly good fit for the job.

The third section is on networking skills and is extensive, with nine paragraphs and strategies for volunteering, job clubs, 'groups of interest', community groups, social media, and job fairs. All strategies conform around unpaid efforts on the part of individuals to develop skills and experience which may be relevant to employment. While functionally useful, there is no consideration paid to the experience of unemployment, including limited finances and time which may not allow for volunteering or clubs.

Develop your networking skills

Statistics show that 80% of job vacancies are not advertised. In some regions, that percentage is higher. Networking is a vital way to identify work opportunities and connect with potential employers in the “hidden” job market.

Your current social circle, both online and offline, is a good place to start to expand your network of acquaintances, but you’ll find other excellent networking opportunities listed below. Whatever networking strategies you employ, expanding your network will expand your prospects.

Networking for career development

Volunteer – This is a fine method for broadening your network and allowing prospective employers to discover your abilities. You can gain experience, make connections, demonstrate your skills and get noticed. Volunteering provides an opportunity for word to spread about your talents and availability. And sometimes paid employment grows directly out of volunteer activities.

Join a job club – For those who are eligible, job clubs have many advantages: you quickly find out you

With ‘job fairs’ market conformation comes up again. As this would be a direct interaction with a potential employer, an individual should show ‘obvious interest and preparation’ (another example of attitudinal adjustment). The networking section concludes with an emphasis on building relationships and ‘thanking’ people for their time.

Attend Job Fairs – Job fairs are another great opportunity to connect with people: employers who are seeking workers, employment service providers and other job seekers. Even if a company isn’t looking for someone with your background, they may know of someone else who is. They may be happy to pass on your resume or keep it for their own future needs. Be proactive and do some homework on the companies you plan to approach at the job fair (participating companies are usually listed in advance event notices). Your obvious interest and preparation will increase your chances of winning an interview.

When networking, always thank the people who have given you advice or contacts by emailing or mailing them a thank-you note. Networking is all about building relationships. Showing that you appreciate the time of a person who helps you is your investment in a relationship that may ultimately benefit both of you.

Finally, the last section of ‘power up your job search’ is on social media, which emphasizes its usefulness as a job search tool (‘spread the word that you’re looking for work’) and to demonstrate appropriateness, molding profiles to show ‘professionalism and good taste’.

How to effectively use a social media network

The key reason more people are using social media to help with their job search is because it's a great way to connect with people. Whether you use Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn, it's important to spread the word that you're looking for work.

If you don't let anyone know that you're searching for jobs, then the potential to network and advertise your skills is wasted. The next time you're on your favourite social media site, make sure you let your friends and followers know that you're looking for a job. Your friends may not know of any immediate job openings, but if any come up, they'll definitely think of you if they know you're looking.

Social media is all about spreading the word, so be sure to spread your message as far as possible.

Create a Professional Profile

Many employers are now using social media to help screen potential hires, so if you applied for a job recently, there's a good chance that your profile has been looked at by someone in the company you applied to.

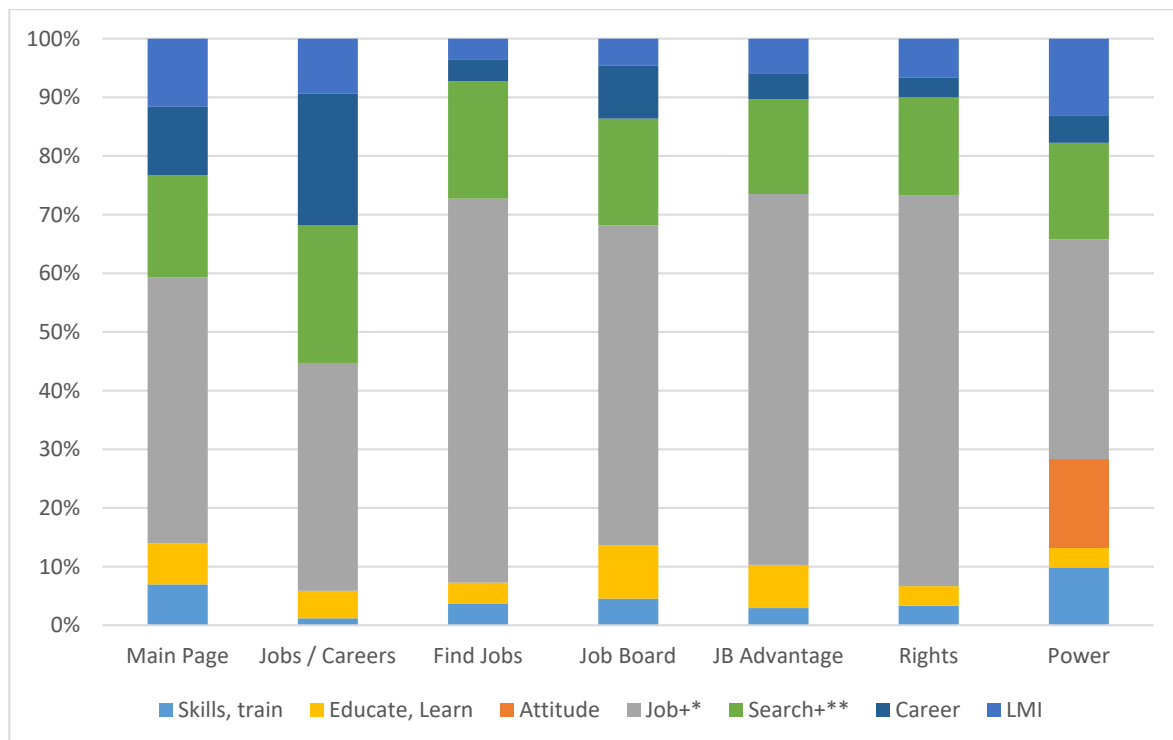
For this reason, it's very important that you tidy your online profiles by removing any questionable photos or messages before you start looking for work. It's also a good idea to replace your profile picture with one that shows your professionalism and good taste.

If you'd prefer to keep your profile private, make sure that you update the privacy settings on any of the sites you use to ensure that only your friends can view your content.

What is Said and How

WorkBC's job search system articulated and repeated two major themes: an emphasis on job search (unsurprisingly) and conforming to the needs of employers. Secondary themes were on attitudinal adjustment and worker's rights, as both were concentrated to individual pages. The first three themes are highly functional to finding employment in a liberal market economy where labour market outcomes are increasingly devolved to the individual, and so the themes are complementary to labour market and policy systems and to lived experience, increasing the likelihood they will be internalized to the point of automaticity.

Figure 9: Terms by WorkBC Content, Job Search



Seven pages were examined for term repetition and consistency, including the ‘parent pages’ of the job search system. ‘Job+’⁶⁶ (260 times across all pages) and ‘Search+’⁶⁷ (96 times) appear much more frequently than the other terms (LMI was third at 49 times). They are the most consistent (terms which appeared close to ten times or more per page and were distributed throughout a page) across pages at 100 and 86 percent, respectively, with ‘LMI’ coming in a distant third at 46 percent of all pages and ‘career’ at 29 percent. ‘Job+’ accounted for 54 percent of all terms, and when combined with ‘Search+’, together accounting for 74 percent of all terms. In this way, variants of ‘job’ and ‘search’ were repeated more frequently and consistently than ‘career’ and skills training or education. In fact, ‘Search+’ was 12.3 times more consistent than ‘skills/train’ and ‘educate/learn’ together. ‘Job+’ appeared 478 percent more than ‘career’, 373 percent more than ‘educate/learn/skills/train’, and ‘Search+’ appeared 75 percent more than ‘educate/learn/skills/train’. The job board is the most prominent ‘box’ on the WorkBC main page and ‘Jobs & Careers’, and has a link to it and one on the right hand side of ‘Find Jobs’. However, the rest of WorkBC does not as consistently connect to the job board. For instance, there are no links to the job board from the main labour market information (LMI) page, LMI under ‘Jobs & Careers’ (called ‘Explore Careers’), or on the main page of the WorkBC career discovery system, ‘career compass’.

The job board itself stands out for outlining ten different job types, spanning the standard and non-standard employment relationships – this is very important in reminding

⁶⁶ ‘Job, occupation, work’. Including ‘WorkBC’.

⁶⁷ ‘Search, apply, find, notify, browse’.

applicants these types of employment exist and giving them the option to choose around them. That being said, there is *no* framing or information on their effects. Conversely, the salary information is calculated on the assumption of full-time employment, which at once affirms this as a kind of normal, but also obfuscates increasingly prevalent precarious employment.

Market conformation was strongly tied to LMI in WorkBC, and came up in suggestions to research employers, articulate ‘related and relevant’ skills and experience in the resume, and research and understand the labour market to determine what is ‘in demand’. This ‘LMI’ theme appeared most on the main page (10), ‘jobs & careers’, (8), and the ‘power up your job search’ page (20), and on the right hand side of ‘find jobs’ / every job posting (e.g. ‘explore careers’ and ‘jobs in demand’). The association articulated is that job search (and hiring) is contingent on studying a job, employer, and the market to determine their *needs* and learn how to conform to them through attitude, framing, or skill development.

Attitudinal adjustment is also a form of market conformation, in which individuals are encouraged to modify their behaviour to articulate a ‘deferential professionalism’ – the employer is not an equal, there is a hierarchy, and they expect you to act in a reserved and useful manner. Again, this is highly *functional* advice, but it restates the idea that employment, and ultimately survival, are contingent on conforming the self to the demands of the market, regardless of what those may be. This theme was not consistent across pages, appearing in only the ‘power up your job search’ page. However, it was consistent *within* the page, appearing throughout the ‘interview’ section and also in the networking and social media sections. Applicants are encouraged to ‘show [their] interest in working there’, ‘show [their] value’, and to ‘thank’ interviewers and people they network with.

A crucial fourth theme – which did not appear in the Federal Job Bank – was on the rights of the job applicant. While this page was oriented toward job (term appears 40 times) search (10 times), it is crucial in articulating that the job search and employment relationship is not one sided – applicants have rights in their search and in employment that they should be aware of. The page is not *linked to* from any other pages analyzed, meaning it is less prominent than other pages (such as WorkBC’s LMI, Career Compass, or Job Search System), and therefore less likely to be seen by policy recipients.

The major themes are associated with one another and communicate a core association: survival is implicitly contingent on the labour market and employment, and success therein is contingent on a job search informed by market conformation and attitudinal adjustment. All of the above are further associated with individual efforts – to go through the site, utilize the resources, research employers and markets, apply, and perform in cover letters, resumes, interviews, etc. While these associations are frequently tied together through WorkBC’s job search system, attitudinal adjustment and employee rights are isolated to one page each. Like with the federal Job Bank, operant conditioning is latent. There is no explicit disciplinary mechanism, but the counter-implication of the associations above is that if individuals do not heed the ‘advice’, they risk continued unemployment, and therefore, a threat to their survival.

WorkBC's job search system demonstrates a high degree of component training, with the job board and all resources behind separate pages in a hierarchical organization (along with cross linking). Likewise, there is a consistent level of participation required to navigate through the pages, utilize the job board, understand its functioning, apply filters, interpret and select from the results, and so on. Similar to the federal Job Board, there was no framing or instructions *in* the job board, but there was a page dedicated to how to use it with very little framing (information on some filters and on National Occupational Classification codes). The more explicit instructions and framing of 'power up your job search' are better forms of component training, and therefore increase the likelihood of that information becoming internalized through automaticity.

The consistency and repetition of 'job' and 'search' term variants prime and may then activate schemas which may have developed around those themes, perhaps from previous encounters with ALMP (e.g. federal EI) or from interpersonal interactions, culture, and so on. The more often an idea or term is encountered, the more likely the schemas tied to them are 'activated', with higher chances to transition to 'loaded' in short term memory, thereby 'reinforcing' them (a feedback mechanism) in the schema, increasing the likelihood of future activation. The strong association between 'job' and 'search', and later with 'attitude' and 'market conformation' tie those schemas together in a network, and are already often bound together in ALMP and broader culture with strong valences of individual responsibility.

What is Elided & Outcomes

The WorkBC job search system provided functional information on finding and acquiring employment, as well as information on applicant rights (albeit on an isolated page) and different types of employment. However, there was less and less mention of training and education as I proceeded further into the job search system (from twelve entries on the main page to three on the job search page), and no mention of financial supports. There were, however, links on the right hand side of 'find jobs' and 'power up your job search' for other job search resources, supports (not financial), and other programs – again notably excluding cross-links to training and education.

Although a range of standard and non-standard employment types are listed as filters in the job board, none are explained in terms of their characteristics, proportion of the labour market, or root causes⁶⁸. In the absence of such information (and any framing), these are presented apolitically, as if they are equally 'normal'. Finally, although basing salary calculations on full time working hours positions that as the normal, it obfuscates real shifts in the labour market which see increasing prevalence of part time work and multiple jobs at once.

WorkBC's job search system includes a section on employment standards, but still elides quality of work, what standards or expectations workers should have, or how employer expectations and market trajectories affect workers. the three major themes in

⁶⁸ Although there is a page in WorkBC, buried under 'Jobs & Careers' -> 'Explore Careers' which attempts to do this.

WorkBC's Job Search System is the same as Ontario's (the federal Job Bank): job search, market conformation, and attitudinal adjustment. All were heavily repeated across all the pages analyzed and consistent.

With WorkBC's content, these themes model an applicant who should be aware of minimum employment standards, but not concerned about quality of work, who consistently researches and molds themselves to market and employer needs, and who is deferential (polite, thankful, etc.) when interacting with capital. Active learning was weaker than component training, with the only interactive component being the job search tool. The rest of the subcomponent, however, did consistently translate the major themes (with attitudinal adjustment appearing prominently only on one page) into steps and instructions (i.e. 'power up your job search'), going from 'abstract' to 'procedural' knowledge, which is more conducive to automaticity.

The themes were distinct but consistently interwoven when they appeared. This makes it more likely that they would develop as separate but related schemas (or build on existing ones, e.g. advice from a family member on how to behave in an interview), likely priming others developed across other ALMP programs (e.g. job search in EI) or those in an individual's environment. The themes in WorkBC's job search system reflected ways of thinking and acting tied to neoliberalism, activation, responsabilization, entrepreneurialism, and austerity (in terms of self-discipline and self-reliance) insofar as an individual was encouraged to individually take action in researching the market and conforming themselves to it. Repeatedly encountering these schemas will strengthen each, reinforce their connections, and increase their level of automaticity ('common sense').

The themes in WorkBC's job search system are also consistent with the material-semiotic conditions ('stimuli') and limited options for responding to them ('constraints') outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. Retrenchment and market orientation in social and labour market policy increasingly limits the options the unemployed and transitioning have for dealing with their precarity. Should they turn to ALMP (i.e. WorkBC's job search), they will find everyday policy components which encourage an automaticity ('cognitive governance') based on individual responsibility to conform to the market. Although WorkBC includes a limited discussion of worker rights, it is not at all sustained and not prominent. As such, the unemployed and transitioning are encouraged to not be focused on quality of work, but to look for a job quickly and show deference and appreciation for the opportunity. Again, such a 'common sense' is complementary to flexible accumulation (in producing docile workers) and a lean state (in minimizing expenditures).

Labour Market Information in British Columbia

When deployed with everyday, front-end ALMP, Labour Market Information (LMI) is a tool for individuals to understand what jobs are in demand, how much they pay, where they are located, and so on. For instance:



WorkBC's LMI is diffuse, appearing in multiple sections (Province of British Columbia 2017). For instance, there is a dedicated 'Labour Market & Industry' parent section (pictured above) with five first-order subcategories and a total of 16 second-order subcategories. Beyond this, is a first-order subcategory of 'Jobs & Careers' called 'Explore Careers', which is the primary portal for occupational LMI. Finally, the last section of this chapter – on career discovery via the 'career compass' – utilizes the same occupational system and a light version of regional profiles. I chose components because they frequently appeared in other components, WorkBC overall, and because they were 'higher' in the web hierarchy (accessibility), bringing me to occupational LMI, regional profiles (as general LMI – the WorkBC LMI Snapshot appears once and is less accessible), and the guides to the BC economy and to utilizing LMI.

The 'Guide to Using Labour Market Information' states the following to frame all LMI resources:

How can labour market information be of use to me?

If you are a job seeker, an employer, a researcher, a student, a parent or a career counsellor, you'll find value in our labour market information.

The right labour market information will help you make the best decision, if you are:

- looking for a job
- planning your career or considering a career change
- interested in hiring new workers

Curiously, this page is a second-order subcategory (deeper in the web hierarchy) – not appearing with 'top occupations', projections, and industrial/regional LMI - where it parallels a brief overview on provincial shifts, the LMI snapshot, and other targeted snapshots. On the right hand side of the guide are links to the snapshots and 'top occupations', as well as a separate box linking to the job board.

This articulates the main theme of ‘everyday LMI’ for workers – understanding the labour market so as to make choices to conform to it (‘planning *your...*’). The rest of the page explains how to use three headline indicators – wage and salary data, labour demand and supply, and worker demographics. The page ends with several paragraphs on other sources of LMI (but not crosslinks).

	A Job Seeker	Planning your career	An employer
Wage & Salary data can help you to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Know how much you can expect to earn in a job - Know how high a salary you can reasonably request from a potential employer - Decide where to look for work, by identifying which regions offer the highest pay in your field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decide which careers will meet your earning expectations - Decide if it is worth investing in upgrading your education to pursue a certain career 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine the amount you will need to pay to attract applicants with the skills and experience you require - Map out your organization's human resources budget
Labour Demand and Supply statistics can help you to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decide where you're most likely to find your Dream job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make informed decisions about your field of Study and training - Assess the likelihood that your passion will evolve into a lucrative career - Choose a career and a region where demand for workers is expected to be relatively high 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan ahead to ensure you can meet your Human resources needs
Demographic information can help you to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Determine where your best job opportunities lie - Assess your competitiveness against others in your field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learn about trends (e.g., education levels) to assess whether you are prepared to compete in a chosen field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Predict upcoming trends in your industry and plan ahead to ensure that your workforce continues to meet your needs

While the information above is functionally useful, it constructs an individually responsible and entrepreneurial actor who interprets the needs of the market and changes themselves to meet them. Of twelve bullets for job seekers (first two columns), eight are on employment demand, location, and educational requirements (67 percent), and four are on wage and salary data, which are directly relevant to employment quality.

The page on ‘British Columbia’s Economy’ is a short page outlining changes to the provincial economy and what they mean for workers. There are links on the right to ‘outlook reports’, snapshots, and regional profiles. There is no discussion as to the ramifications on employment quality of these changes, merely where ‘demand will be’ and an encouragement to develop the skills to meet it.

BRITISH COLUMBIA’S ECONOMY

B.C.’s economy is constantly evolving. And these changes directly affect the number and type of jobs available.

How is B.C.’s economy changing?

Our province is:

- developing the liquefied natural gas (LNG) sector and attracting major project investment throughout the province
- becoming increasingly focused on small business and services, with the service sector providing almost four-fifths of our jobs
- strengthening our ties with Japan, China, Korea and India to become a trade hub for goods, services and people travelling between Asia and North America

What do these developments mean for B.C. workers?

Over the next decade, the demand for workers is expected to surpass the supply.

Several industries are expected to offer particularly strong job opportunities:

- green technology, digital media and life sciences
- traditional industries such as natural resources (expected to grow through innovation)
- service industries including health care, high-tech and retail sales

Overall, workers have good reason to be optimistic. By developing the necessary skills, you’ll be poised for success in a broad range of careers.

BC Jobs Plan

Learn about the [BC Jobs Plan](#) and read the [5-Year Progress Update](#).

To reach occupational LMI, an individual would to navigate to ‘Jobs & Careers’ -> ‘Explore Careers’ which allows individuals to search ‘career profiles’ by job title, education/salary, and categories. The page has subsections for career discovery tools (‘plan your career’), two on self-employment, and one on ‘types of employment’, which discusses the benefits and drawbacks of standard and non-standard employment relations – something not found in Ontario or federal ALMP . However, this discussion is isolated to this page and not linked to from any other page or section, making it less prominent and less likely to be seen (and thereby, less likely to contribute to automaticity). Finally there are links on the right for ‘jobs in demand’, career discovery, and industry and regional LMI. Again, this page is framed as providing individuals with employment data to determine preferred employment and what is in demand.

EXPLORE CAREERS

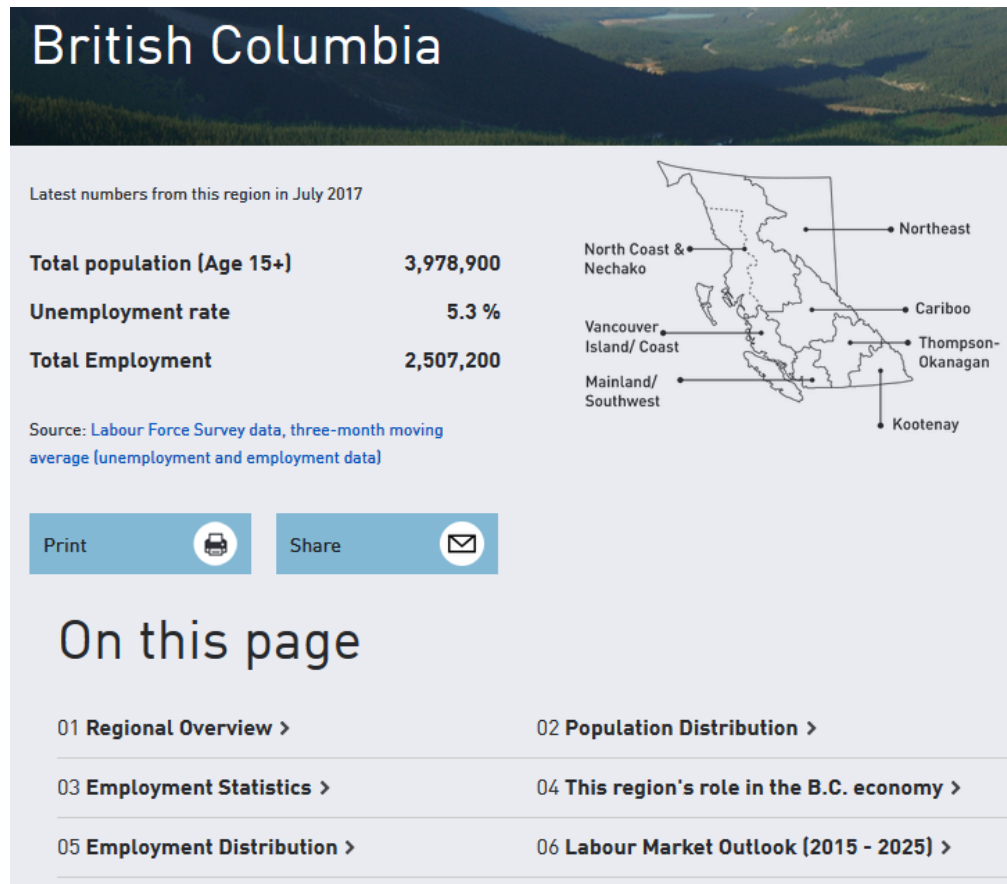
Discover the career of your dreams. Explore 500 career profiles and get all the details you need, from job duties and wages to projected demand in your region.

As with Ontario’s ALMP, I searched ‘policy analyst’ and the closest category was ‘economists and economic policy researchers and analysts [NOC 4162]’. The page has a lot of information: a video by WorkBC’s ‘career trek’ summarizing the page, related careers, common industries, career discovery, and recent openings on the right, and nine categories of information on the page.



The summary graph at the top right is split between employer-centric (growth and occupation size) and employment quality (salary and stability). The nine categories have 24 subsections/points, of which 70.8 percent were employer-centric, encouraging individuals to draw on this information so as to conform to market demand and needs.

Finally, the most accessible and repeated form of general LMI is in the form of regional profiles, and the one for BC as a whole has a great deal of data: headline indicators on total population, the unemployment rate, and total employment, on the right are top industries and careers for the region, occupational LMI, WorkBC resources, the job board, recent openings, and all job openings. The six categories have 34 subsections/points, of which 76.5 percent are employer-centric.

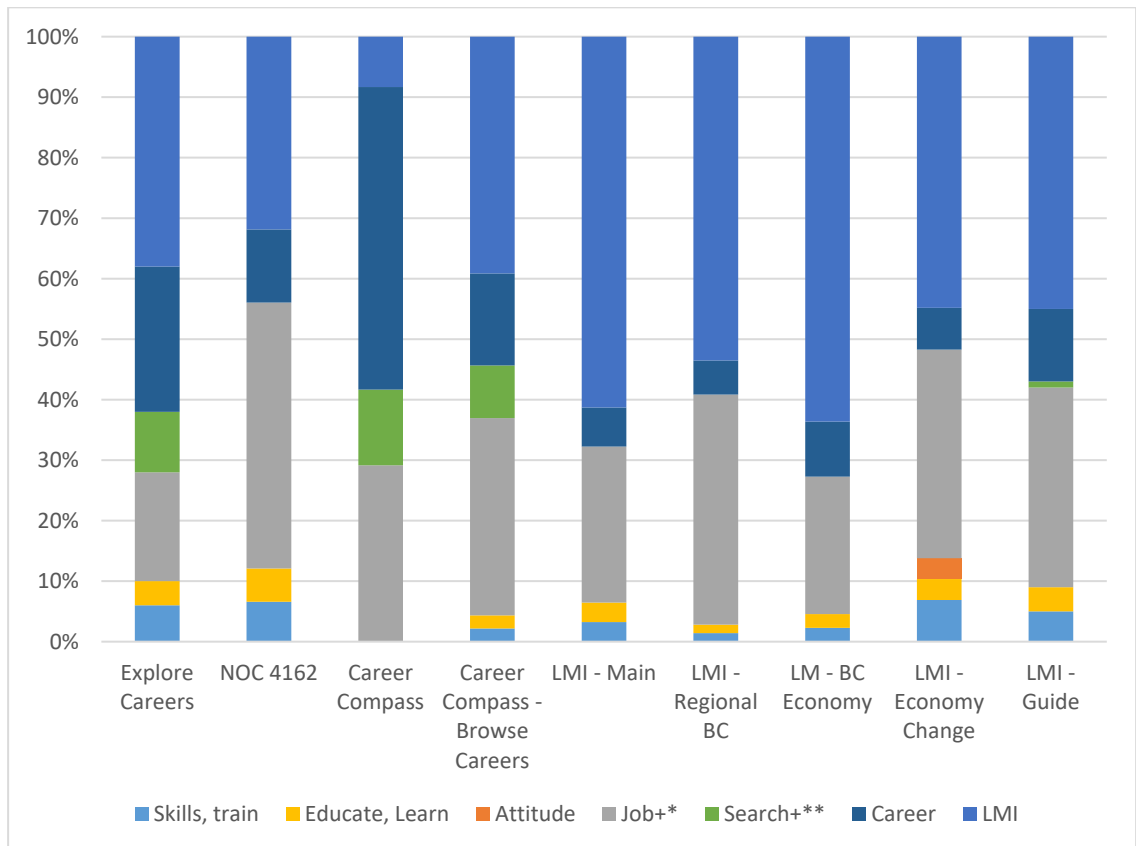


What is Said and How

The majority of the framing of LMI in WorkBC is found in the guide and the ‘changing economy’ page, while occupational and general LMI are quite decontextualized and articulate meaning mainly through what is included/omitted and repeated. The major associations are between market conformation, skills, futurity (the externalization of present conditions to the future, e.g. ‘present sacrifice for future gain’), and individual responsibility.

Coding for LMI was highly contextual. At times, ‘learn’ and ‘find’ were associated with education or job search, but here were ‘learning about or finding’ labour market data. Likewise, any terms, categories, or paragraphs related to ‘profiles/demands/duties/wages/environment’ were counted as LMI. However, not all of those were employer-centric.

Figure 10: Terms by WorkBC Content, LMI



LMI accounted for 43 percent of all terms in these pages, actually exceeding ‘job+’ at 33 percent and ‘career’ at 14 percent. Many terms appeared at least once on 8/9 or 9/9 pages, but ‘skills, train / educate, learn’ only appeared a total of 36 times *in total*, averaging 2.2 and 1.8 times per page, respectively. Conversely, LMI appeared 23.4 times per page on average and ‘career’ appeared 7.3 times. In terms of consistency – if a term appears close to 10 times or more per page and if it is somewhat evenly distributed throughout the page – only LMI, career, and Job+ had above zero percent consistency; LMI was the highest, at 89 percent. Overall, LMI appeared 486 percent more than ‘skills, train’ and ‘educate, learn’ *combined*. It is unsurprising that LMI dominates its own section, however it is telling that there are *very few* linkages to skills development or education, at the very least indicating that not much attention was invested in relating an understanding of employer needs to actual resources for meeting those needs. As will be demonstrated below, when skills and education came up, they were mostly evocations toward individual responsibility to account for them while meeting employer needs. Most links on the right hand side of pages connected to more LMI rather than to education or financial supports. Similarly, ‘search+’ only appeared 13 times in total related to actual job search. While ‘career’ came in more often proportionally than in the job search systems, most

incidences of the term occurred in ‘explore careers’ and ‘career compass’, both of which have the term in their titles.

The LMI guide and ‘changing economy’ pages heavily frame the resources. In a table meant to breakdown the usefulness of LMI to immediate employment and career planning, 67 percent of the points related to market conformation, such as ‘learn about trends (e.g. education levels) to assess whether you are prepared to compete in a chosen field’ or ‘make informed decisions about your field of study and training’. The remaining 33 percent dealt with employment quality and the interests and needs of the worker, with statements such as ‘know how high a salary you can reasonably request’.

Similarly, the ‘changing economy’ page outlined how the provincial economy is changing (growth in natural gas, the service sector, and regional trade), that these changes should increase worker demand, and ends by stating ‘by developing the necessary skills, you’ll be poised for success in a broad range of careers’. There is no commentary on the quality of employment or how it will change, nor on resources to aid workers in their quest to ‘develop the necessary skills’ – i.e. conform to market needs.

Occupational and general LMI had similar distributions between employer-centric and worker-centric LMI data. Ignoring miscellaneous categories and points (e.g. a description of an occupation or of British Columbia and its population), occupational LMI had 70.8 percent dedicated to employer-centric concerns such as demand (employment/unemployment, openings, job growth, regional demand, etc.) and only 16.7 percent on worker-centric concerns such as work environment and earnings (again assuming a 40 hour work week, eliding trajectories in non-standard work and earnings). General LMI had 76.5 percent of all points dedicated to demand concerns, with only 1 point – 2.9 percent – on employment quality, and that was the proportion of full time work in the province.

Overall, WorkBC’s LMI constructs a schema for how to understand the labour market, the state, and the self in relation to institutions through several associations. Explicitly, LMI provides individuals with employment data so that they can understand what employers and the market *expect and need*. At times this is explicitly framed in terms of ‘planning’ education, skills, and relocation to match these needs (futuraity, human capital, and entrepreneurial subjectivity), while at other times it is implicit. By focusing *very* minimally on employment quality or standards and not at all on educational and financial supports, the dominant associations are individual responsibility to understand and prepare to meet the needs of the market so as to survive.

These associations were articulated in the federal job bank, EI (in the context of rapid labour market re-entry), and WorkBC’s job search system, particularly ‘power up your job search’. As such, encountering them in LMI likely primes these already established schemas, increasing the likelihood of their activation, strengthening their connections, and increasing their automaticity. The lack of framing in occupational and general LMI means that the terms themselves likely directly prime (and perhaps activate) the schemas above, rather than offering a different framing which *might have* disrupted

them. As stated before, this is not to say that individuals are automatons ‘programmed’ to only read certain information - individuals will certainly look at wages and other quality indicators, but they are *taught* through LMI to understand their relationship with the market as a subservient one.

LMI demonstrated a similar level of active learning to job search systems – mostly clicking through pages and searching terms. However, these are indicative of component training. Further, LMI was organized into hierarchies, sections, bullets, steps, categories, and expandable sections with instruction pages. As with job search, the associations LMI articulates implicitly constructs the ‘punishment’ and ‘reward’ (operant conditioning) for not following or following the advice given: utilizing LMI to conform to the market will increase the chances of employment, and therefore, survival. Failing to do so decreases the chances of survival. Thus, the frequent employer-centric indicators serve to reinforce the associations above as well as consistently remind individuals of the implicit consequences for failing to heed the demands of the market.

What is Elided & Outcomes

Somewhat surprisingly, WorkBC’s LMI was less concerned about employment quality than its job search system, which outlined 10 different job types along the standard/non-standard employment spectrum. Similarly, WorkBC also featured full pages dedicated to employment quality and employment standards, even if they were isolated and not crosslinked. However, general LMI had only *one* worker-centric metric, and that was the proportion of full time employment in the province, while occupational LMI had very brief sections on work environment and earnings data which assumed full time employment. There was no discussion and barely any metrics tied to quality of employment, and as illustrated in footnote seven of chapter five, there are *many* indicators which provide a deeper picture of the labour market from the perspective of those working in it. As I stated in that chapter:

The unemployment rate in an occupation may certainly help an individual decide whether or not they wish to pursue work in that field (if they have the choice), but what about quality of work in the field? What about permanence, unionization rates, low income incidence, and so on?

In the absence of connections to education, financial supports, worker-centric indicators or a discussion of how employer-centric indicators affect workers, the market conformation, futurity, skills, and individual responsibility associations frame LMI and are reinforced. These ideas reflect socially salient discourses on responsabilization, neoliberalism, entrepreneurialism, activation, and austerity. These ideas and the overall themes of market conformation and individual responsibility are frequently repeated within and across each page in a consistent way. Job search and attitudinal adjustment are implicit, as the purpose of market conformation is to find employment and the process by

which it is achieved is by shifting attitudes toward market conformation. These themes are also consistent with the WorkBC's job search system, EI, and other ALMP programs. Based on this consistency and repetition, the themes in WorkBC's LMI are likely to develop into schemas (or expand existing ones) and prime related ones from other ALMP programs and salient discourses. If a person has those schemas and they are primed, then each individual schema is strengthened (as a result of activation), the connections between them are reinforced, and consequently, their automaticity is increased.

Active learning was quite weak, as interaction was limited to going between pages and at most, searching for LMI information by occupation. However, component training was strong as the 'abstract' messages of market conformation and individual responsibility were configured into 'procedural' steps and instructions for how to research the provincial labour market and conform to it. WorkBC's ALMP models an individual who understands that employment is never secure (through the constant repetition of 'changes' in employment demand), and that it is their individual responsibility to understand the needs of the market and adapt to them through *their own* efforts in education, training, and planning.

WorkBC's LMI overwhelmingly focuses on accommodating the needs of capital, and are consistent with other ALMP resources in this study. The market is framed apolitically as a kind of 'natural' process which workers must study so as to conform to, but with no commentary on how they are affected. There is no acknowledgement that the market is the result of institutions which are developed and maintained by intersections of material and discursive power.

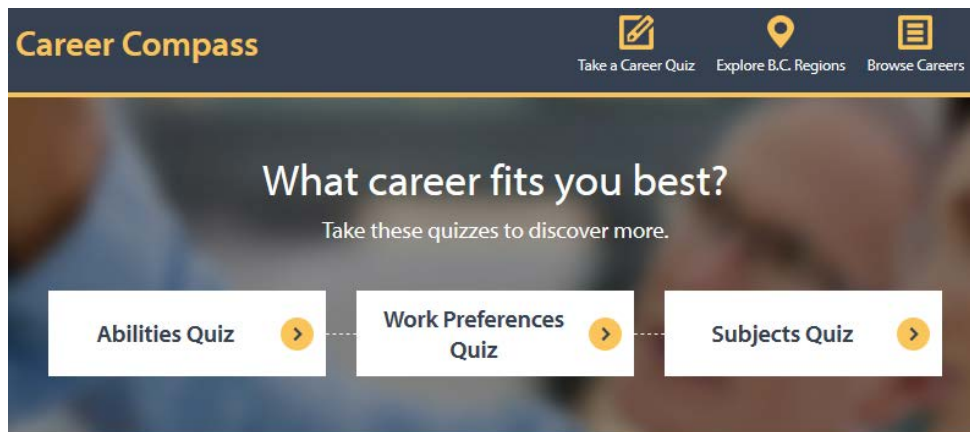
Similar to WorkBC's job search, the themes in the LMI subcomponent are consistent with the material-semiotic conditions ('stimuli') and limited options for responding to them ('constraints') discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. As ALMP retrenches and becomes more market facilitating, the unemployed and transitioning have fewer recourses but to return to the market. Should they utilize BC's ALMP, they will encounter everyday policy components which encourage an automaticity ('cognitive governance') based on individual responsibility for market conformation. These ideas, through the cognitive mechanisms outlined above, communicate a way of thinking and acting which facilitates flexible accumulation.

Career Compass

'Career Compass' is WorkBC's career and skill discovery system (Province of British Columbia 2017). Similar to Ontario's Skills Passport (OSP), there is no training embedded, however, 'Career Compass' is a more minimalist tool. WorkBC has several 'career tools', but they are either organizational (i.e. 'blueprint builder', which allows individuals to 'save' pieces of labour market and education information), a cost of living calculator, or a set of videos on different career option (which summarize occupational LMI).

Career Compass can be reached in several ways: 1) The WorkBC Main Page -> ‘Career Toolkit’; 2) ‘Jobs & Careers’ -> ‘Career Toolkit’ / 3) ‘Explore Careers’ -> ‘Plan your career’, indicating a prominent, repeated, and accessible tool. The Compass has four components: 1) framing via the main page, ‘about this tool’, and ‘resources for teachers & parents’ (which are in small font at the top of the page); 2) career quizzes; 3) ‘explore BC regions’ (regional LMI); 4) ‘browse careers’ (occupational LMI). Of the functional parts of the Compass, two are reformatted LMI discussed in the section above, again illustrating its diffusion and integration throughout WorkBC.

It is worth noting that a great deal of effort was put into a clear, simple, and aesthetically consistent presentation for the Compass, which stands in contrast to the older and information-dense presentation of the OSP.



Which of these best describes you?

<p>"I need to know what types of jobs I'd enjoy and be good at."</p>	<p>"I want to live in B.C. and find a career or job based on my location."</p>	<p>"I want to learn more about a certain career."</p>
<p>Take a Career Quiz ></p>	<p>Explore B.C. Regions ></p>	<p>Browse Career Listings ></p>

The image above is of the main page. Right above are links to WorkBC, the ‘about this tool’ and resources for parents and teachers. Below are quizzes and infographics and links to regional and occupational LMI under the titles ‘have you found YOUR place in BC? See where other people want to work and learn about the types of jobs available in your region’ and ‘which careers are in demand in BC?’

About Career Compass

Career Compass is the provincial government’s interactive online resource that helps youth identify and explore potential career options. The tool was designed to address a range of needs, by providing three pathways to exploration:

- Three interactive quizzes that lead to customized lists of matching careers
- A regional approach to exploring industries and career opportunities
- Searchable infographic career profiles that provide key information such as salary, job prospects and education requirements

Career Compass will help you navigate career and labour market information more easily. You can use Career Compass to:

- Explore your subjects of interest and discover potential career options
- Learn more about careers of interest
- Investigate in-demand careers and liquefied natural gas (LNG) career opportunities
- Examine choices about where to live based on where the jobs are
- Consider post-secondary education options
- Learn about current job openings
- Set realistic goals for work and/or learning, based on solid labour market information

Career Compass for teachers & parents

Career Compass is an easy-to-use, yet comprehensive, tool that informs students about careers and the labour market, expanding their awareness of career options. Students can use it to quickly explore the world of work. Or they can use Career Compass to focus their attention on a particular career to plan their transition into the workplace or post-secondary education.

Career Compass lets students explore career information through three avenues. They can:

- [take a career quiz](#)
- [explore B.C. regions](#)
- [browse careers](#)

From these pages, the goal of the Compass is to encourage youth to utilize LMI based on their needs and preferences. The framing is heavily geared toward a human capital and entrepreneurial subjectivity orientation, with futurity mixed in: youth are meant to ‘set realistic goals for work or learning, based on solid labour market information’, thus tying in market conformation.

There are three types of quizzes, all of which outline potential career paths tied to them – by ability, work preferences, and subjects.

Discover potential career paths

If you're having trouble choosing a career, our Career Quizzes are here to help. By taking each quiz, you'll be able to identify your strengths, work preferences and interests and then see which careers might suit you best.

Abilities Quiz

Assess your talents and discover occupations that match.

Take Abilities Quiz



Work Preferences Quiz

Identify how you like to work and find careers that align with your preferences.

Take Work Preferences Quiz



Subjects Quiz

Select your strongest subjects and see which careers might suit you best.

Take Subjects Quiz



It is worth noting that the Compass does take individual preferences into account, not just recommending careers based on aptitude.

Abilities Quiz

Every career requires different activities that use various levels and combinations of aptitudes. Take this quiz to help assess your abilities and find careers that match. From "very easy" to "very difficult", identify your level of ability.

Quiz reproduced by permission of Province of Ontario. © Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2010

These 39 questions should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Questions

	Very Easy	Easy	About Average	Difficult	Very Difficult
1. Learn and understand things quickly?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. See fine details in objects?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Draw things accurately?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Work Preferences Quiz

Select your work preferences and interests to find careers that offer the kind of work you would enjoy.

Quiz reproduced by permission of Province of Ontario. © Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2010

There are 50 questions which should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Questions

	Describes me completely	Describes me fairly well	Unsure	Doesn't describe me very well	Doesn't describe me at all
1. I like to work at the same thing for a long time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I like to build things and/or repair them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I like to dig deeply into topics to solve problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I like to finish one job before I start the next.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Subjects Quiz

Let's take a look at your best subjects by selecting your five strongest subjects from the list below. Click again on a subject to deselect it.

Applied Skills

- + Business
- + Information Technology
- + Family Studies
- + Food and Nutrition
- + Textiles
- + Industrial Design
- + Automotive Technology
- + Carpentry and Joinery
- + Drafting and Design
- + Electronics
- + Metal Fabrication and Machining
- + Tourism

Arts

- + Dance
- + Drama
- + Music
- + Visual Arts

English Language Arts

- + Communications
- + English Literature
- + Writing

All the quizzes lead to an output page of occupational LMI featuring different careers based on quiz results, which individuals can click through and see a somewhat simplified occupational LMI page for each.

Abilities Quiz Results

Would you like to view and save all three Career Compass quiz results in one place? Create a profile in Blueprint Builder to add your results to your Blueprint.

Create Blueprint Builder Profile

View Results On Blueprint Builder

Based on your answers, here are up to 10 careers that align with your aptitudes and abilities.

Print quiz results Email quiz results

Take another Quiz

Retake this Quiz

Careers matching your results

Dentists	Other professional occupations in health diagnosing and treating	Biological technologists and technicians	Geoscientists and oceanographers	Biologists and related scientists
Other professional occupations in physical sciences	Specialist physicians	General practitioners and family physicians	Chemists	Specialist physicians

Dentists (NOC 3113)

The results can be saved to the ‘blueprint builder’, and ten careers are presented. When each career is selected, an NOC infographic is displayed which is even more skewed toward employer-centric data (87.5 percent, compared to 70.8 percent in the full occupational LMI of WorkBC). Again, this kind of data may be useful to the unemployed, but is overwhelmingly focused on demand characteristics which do not give any indication on employment quality.

The regional LMI (‘explore BC regions’) in the Compass is heavily watered-down. Individuals cannot see province-wide data, only regions.

Explore B.C. Regions
Mainland / Southwest

← Back to Regions

Mainland / Southwest

About Careers Industries Outlook

The Mainland/Southwest region is home to well over half of all British Columbians. The region is known for its vibrant internationally-focused economy and ethnic diversity. It also offers a mild coastal climate and a stunning natural environment.

Lifestyle

- This region offers big city amenities and varied outdoor activities from ocean to beaches to mountains.
- Residents work in many sectors, including trade and financial services, transportation, education, manufacturing, tourism and agriculture.

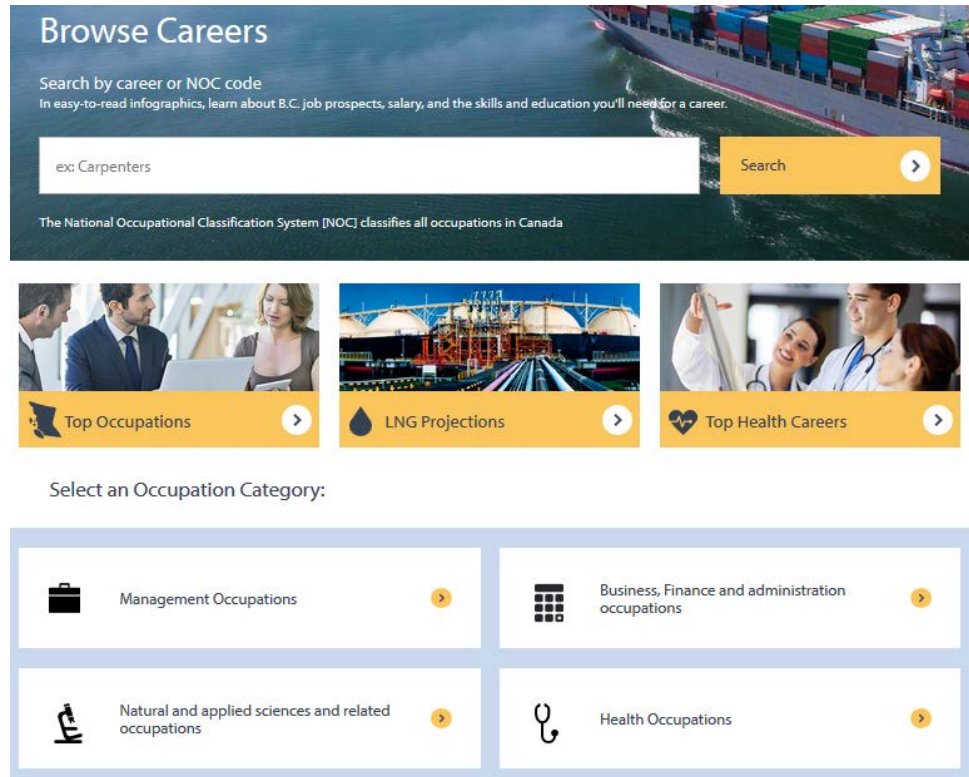
Key Cities

Metro Vancouver, including Vancouver, Surrey, Burnaby, Richmond, Coquitlam, Langley, Delta, North Vancouver, Maple Ridge

Harvesting Labourers (Vegetable Packer)
Chilliwack
Find out more >
Share this job

There is a map on the left with current jobs, indicating an integration with job search systems. There is general information about the region, the major careers represented in it (by NOC code), major industries, and the total jobs expected in 2025 (‘outlook’) – much less data than the regional LMI analyzed in the previous section.

‘Browse Careers’ has a search tool for occupational LMI which produces results in the same infographics which are presented at the end of a career quiz.

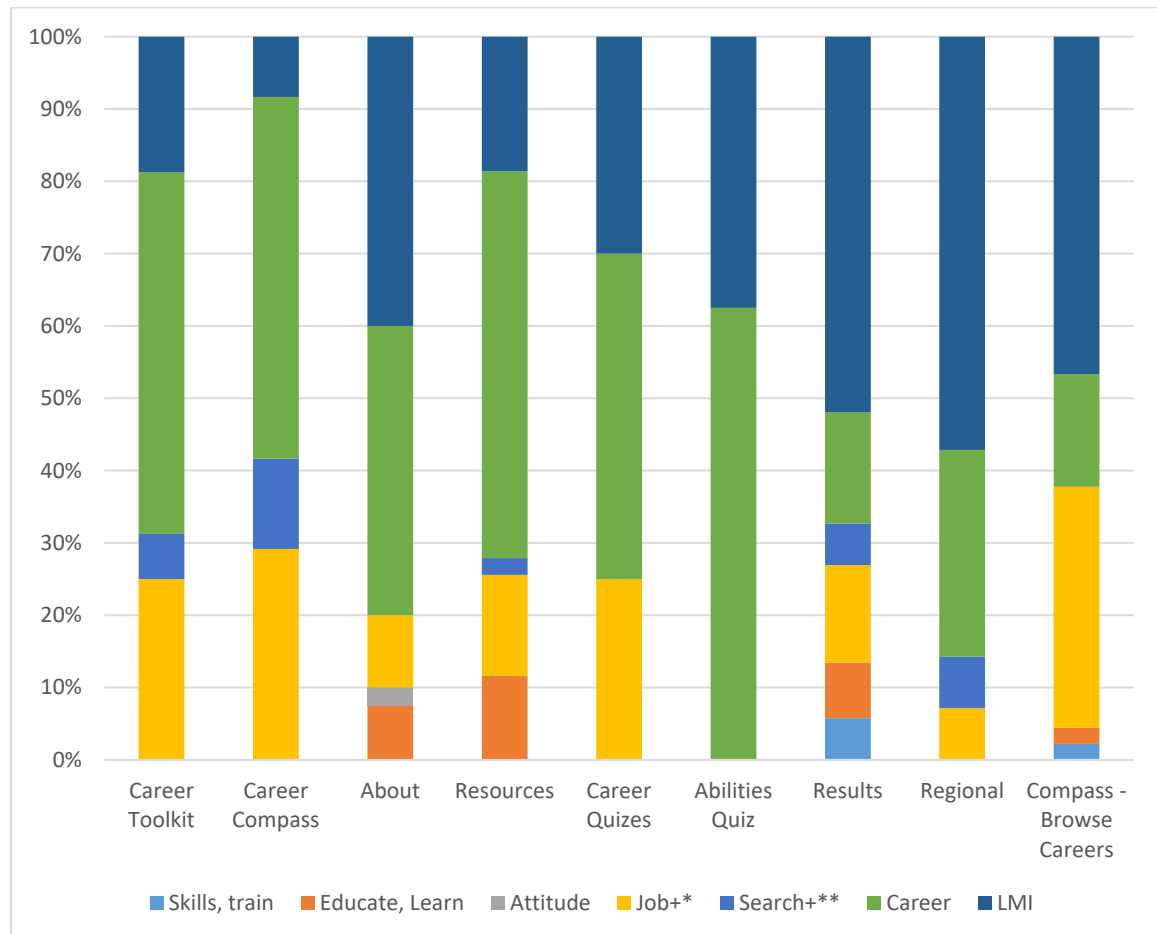


As with ‘explore careers’ – the occupational LMI hub in WorkBC explored previously – individuals can search by term, code, or browse by categories. The Compass also integrates ‘top occupations’, which appear elsewhere in WorkBC as ‘jobs in demand’. ‘LNG’ (liquefied natural gas) appears here, on the main page, and in the ‘about’ page, indicating a concerted push for employment in that field.

What is Said and How

The major themes in the Compass were very similar to LMI: market conformation, self-development and planning, futurity, and individual responsibility for labour market outcomes. Youth, in this case, are meant to understand their employment outcomes as their responsibility, and to make *choices* in their training and education so as to meet market needs.

Figure 11: Terms by WorkBC Content, the Career Compass



Curiously, the term ‘career’ is not the most frequent in the Compass, occurring 92 times (35 percent of all terms) while LMI related terms occurred 94 times (36 percent), but ‘career’ did exceed ‘jobs+’ at 19 percent of all terms. ‘Skills, train’ and ‘educate, learn’ only appeared inconsistently and 17 times in total. Conversely, LMI and ‘career’ appeared *an average* of 10.4 and 10.2 times a page. ‘Career’ was actually more consistent than LMI (67 vs. 56 percent of pages), and the only other term that registered any consistency was ‘jobs+’ at 11 percent. Surprisingly, LMI was more prominent than ‘skills, train’ and ‘educate, learn’ even in this subcomponent, appearing 453 percent more than those categories combined. This is even more surprising given that the Compass repeatedly connects understanding the labour market to making choices in training and education. Actual links to education programs only connect to another tool at the bottom of the occupational LMI outputs, imploring individual responsibility for seeking out training and education.

The quantitative repetition and distribution of terms is also reflected qualitatively in the ‘about’ and ‘resources for teachers & parents’ pages. The ‘about’ page states that the Compass is meant to ‘help youth identify and explore potential career options’,

however, other than one of three quizzes on work preferences, the rest of the Compass focuses overwhelmingly on employer-centric metrics. Even in the ‘about’ page, the elaboration has ten bullets, 70 percent of which are on topics like regional and industry demand, education requirements, job openings, and the page concludes by saying that the Compass can be used to “set realistic goals for work and/or learning, based on solid labour market information”. ‘Realistic’ suggests that, regardless of an individual’s career preferences, they should conform their employment and employability goals to market demands. Similarly, the resource page for teachers and parents states that students can use the Compass to ‘plan their transition into the workplace or postsecondary education’.

Of the quizzes, the ability and subjects quizzes determine careers based on skills and education oriented toward the market. Only the ‘work preferences’ quiz – in all of the Compass – is heavily worker-centric. The framing is very light for each quiz – one to two sentences above the questions themselves. All the quizzes go to the same type of output: a ‘top 10 careers’ selection with an occupational LMI infographic for each. Individuals are encouraged to add their activities to a digital folder (the ‘blueprint builder’) of ALMP and educational resources – a simple tool which aides in the ‘self-work’ of entrepreneurial subjectivity and employability. The infographics are similar to the occupational LMI pages analyzed in the previous section, but they have 33 percent fewer components. All the ‘miscellaneous’ components (e.g. duties, occupational description) are removed as well as the worker-centric ‘work environment’ information. What is left are two work-centric components (median and hourly salary – the former assuming full time employment) and 14 employer-centric components (e.g. occupation size, 10 year trend in growth, regional demand, skills and education required, etc.), with the latter constituting an overwhelming 87.5 percent of the infographic.

Similarly, the watered-down regional LMI has ten total points across four tabs (including available jobs on the map), 70 percent of which are on employment demand, and the remaining three are miscellaneous (e.g. ‘key cities’, lifestyle, regional description). Lastly, the ‘browse careers’ section, which also leads to occupational LMI, has no connections to training, education, financial supports, or any other ALMP tool, driving the market conformation and entrepreneurial subjectivity themes further (‘learn about BC job prospects, salary, and the skills and education you’ll need for a career’).

WorkBC’s career discovery system appears to be a variant of its LMI system, focusing *very* little on actual skills or education (and not at all on ‘work habits’ like Ontario’s equivalent did). Thus, the schema it articulates is through associations which are very similar to LMI: data on the labour market is provided so that individuals (here, youth) can take it upon themselves to understand market and employer needs (market conformation) and plan (futuraity) their self-work in education and training (human capital, entrepreneurial subjectivity, employability) to meet them. Given that LMI is highly diffused throughout WorkBC these associations are *the most likely* to be primed and to transition to ‘activated’ in short term memory. Further, the association associations above were prevalent in the federal job bank and EI, and if individuals encountered those

ALMP components, it would again increase the strength of the schemas, connections to related schemas that may be primed, and therefore their level of automaticity. Again, this process of priming-activation strengthens the schema, its connections (i.e. between individual responsibility, market conformation, and futurity), and thereby increases automaticity.

Active learning was stronger in the Compass than in job search and LMI, which involved clicking through pages and searching terms, while the Compass includes that and quizzes, which elicit a higher level of engagement and reflection from individuals. Similarly, the Compass was organized into hierarchies, sections, categories, steps, and clear instructions, which are key elements of component training. The very strong LMI strains in the Compass replicate the latent operant conditioning from the previous section: the implicit consequence of not utilizing the Compass to understand market demands and plan to adapt to them is unemployment or underemployment, both a threat to survival.

What is Elided & Outcomes

The Compass is, in some ways, the most regressive of the three WorkBC programs examined. Whereas the job search system outlined standard/non-standard employment (even if it did not elaborate on them) and had a page dedicated to employment standards (which was isolated and not crosslinked), and LMI had (minimal) data on work environment and the proportion of full time employment (as well as a page on the pros/cons of non-standard work), the Compass *only* speaks to earnings and only in occupational LMI. By using only the Compass, youth - who likely have less labour market experience and knowledge - are not exposed to the concept or content of employment standards, employment type, or metrics of quality employment.

Just like LMI, the Compass has next to no connections to education, financial supports, or worker-centric indicators. The only exception is a link to an ‘education planner’ at the end of each occupational LMI infographic. The prominence of employer-centric LMI and the absence of the above makes the market conformation, futurity, skills, and individual responsibility associations more prominent and reinforced. Again, connecting everyday ALMP to socially salient discourses around neoliberalism, responsabilization, activation, entrepreneurialism, and austerity. In this way, the Compass models an individual – in this case, a young worker – who *only* understands the labour market as a series of expectations to which *they* must respond. The Compass does have one quiz on ‘work preferences’, but otherwise is an LMI dominated tool which overwhelmingly reflects employer-centric metrics.

These themes are heavily repeated throughout the Career Compass, WorkBC, and other ALMP components (in addition to society). As such, the themes are meet the criteria for developing into independent, but related schemas. The more they are repeated, the more they are strengthened, the connections between them reinforced, and the more likely they are to prime related schemas encountered in other ALMP programs and

society. Active learning was the strongest here of all WorkBC's subcomponents analyzed. The Career Compass is a substantially interactive tool between the quizzes, regional LMI, and occupational LMI all requiring user input and reflection, thereby increasing participation and the likelihood of the information being internalized to the level of automaticity. Similarly, component training was high, as the themes and ideas above ('abstract knowledge') were translated into steps, instructions, and interactive components in the Career Compass ('procedural knowledge'), which are important criteria for facilitating automaticity.

Like the rest of WorkBC, the Career Compass speaks to material-semiotic conditions ('stimuli') and limited options for responding to them ('constraints') outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. Despite increasingly limited options for the unemployed and transitioning as a result of retrenched and market oriented public policy, if the unemployed and transitioning turn to WorkBC, they will encounter the everyday policy components analyzed above. These components encourage an automaticity ('cognitive governance') based on individual market conformation with no explicit expectations of the market or state (reflecting the 'reduced expectations' aspect of austerity). This kind of common sense benefits capital and a lean state over the needs of workers.

Conclusion

Similar to Ontario's front-end ALMP, WorkBC does represent a broader range of programs in the everyday. Rather than focusing almost exclusively on rapid-labour market re-entry via job search (EI), WorkBC included training, education, ALMP assistance (i.e. in person or online assistance), career discovery, and targeted programs in addition to job search and LMI. WorkBC also stood out for having a relatively robust employment standards information page in their job search system, and one on employment quality where occupational LMI was featured. However, *within the cases analyzed* (and the web hierarchy necessary to arrive to them), WorkBC made no mention of provincial income supports (i.e. workfare or training supports) or federal ones (i.e. EI). Further, the pages on employment standards and quality were isolated, as no other pages linked *to them*.

As with Ontario, the dominant associations in WorkBC were between market conformation, attitudinal adjustment, individual responsibility, and skills. Job search was not consistent across all cases, but taking individual responsibility for understanding market and employer needs, planning for them (i.e. futurity), and fulfilling them were central to all cases. Yet, despite the reduced prominence of 'job search', the other associations were featured strongly in EI, increasing overall repetition and consistency *across* ALMP programs.

Consistent repetition of ways of thinking and acting across multiple aspects of a person's existence increases the likelihood of automaticity developing around those ways of thinking and acting. This is true for the messages articulated in WorkBC, which were consistent across the components analyzed, with other ALMP programs, and with broader

social and labour market policy trajectory toward retrenchment and market facilitation ('constraint'), economic trajectories toward flexible accumulation, and material-semiotic conditions resulting from both ('stimuli'). If the unemployed and transitioning turn to ALMP, they will encounter everyday policy components which encourage an automaticity ('cognitive governance') based on rapid labour market re-attachment, individual responsibility, and market conformation (along with attitudinal adjustment explicitly or implicitly).

Consistently, the market is depoliticized – framed as a kind of 'natural phenomenon' which cannot be altered, only responded to. WorkBC consistently modeled individuals who are focused on understanding and adapting to the market through their individual efforts in research, planning, attitude, and training or education, and not concerned nearly as much about employment quality or their rights. WorkBC did not encourage any consideration of the structural and power dynamics which shape the labour market and labour market policy. These ideas, through the cognitive mechanisms outlined above, communicate a common sense which facilitates flexible accumulation.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This dissertation began with a broad question in the public policy and political economy literatures: how can institutions, actors, ideas, behaviours, and processes form and maintain sufficient cohesion to function. The past six chapters have explored this issue at the intersection of political economy and public policy in Canada, namely, the maintenance of an accumulation regime based on liberal market economy principles examined through active labour market policy (ALMP).

Chapter three explored the policy and economic trajectories in Canada from the late 1960s to the present, illustrating the growing role of global competition, financialization, and their effects on the flexibilization of production and labour. At the same time, the role of the state in the economy – and certainly in mitigating the externalities of economic trajectories – has retrenched and shifted. Increasingly, the state has become ‘market facilitating’, cutting spending on social policy and programs while re-regulating economic, social, and labour market policy to benefit an accumulation regime based on flexibility. Broadly speaking, there are deep interactions between the state and the economy, as legislation, regulation, and policy mediate the actions of economic actors and institutions (Harvey 1990; Pierre 2015). These phenomenon are thoroughly explored in the varied political economy and public policy literatures, and macro and meso interactions and trajectories. Such approaches, however, elide a deep consideration of how people think and act, and how those thoughts and actions came to be formed. In other words, a missing component in explaining the maintenance of an accumulation regime is cognition.

The primary research question asked in the first chapter was “what does Canadian active labour market policy teach policy recipients about the labour market, themselves as workers, the role of the state, and how does it do so?” I explored this question through an examination of everyday ALMP – the front-end elements that policy recipients are much more likely to encounter and utilize as compared to interactions with caseworkers or training programs (Morden 2016). My cases were employment insurance (EI) at the federal level and job search systems, labour market information (LMI), and career and skill discovery in Ontario and British Columbia. Overall, the findings of the empirical chapters indicate that Canadian ALMP articulates varied, but complementary, messages regarding how workers should conceive of themselves, the market, and the state. These messages were predicated on conformation to market needs, immediate market re-attachment, attitudinal adjustment, and individual responsibility for labour market outcomes. Equally significant is that every program, intentionally or otherwise, deployed mechanisms which aid in the development of automatic cognition – in other words, these messages are more likely to stick and shape the ‘common sense’ of policy recipients. Further still, there was consistency and complementarity between the material-semiotic conditions (‘stimuli’) and options for responding to those conditions (‘constraint’) outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. As aggregate indicators of financial and employment

precarity rise and the state retrenches social programs and becomes oriented toward pushing people back into the market, the unemployed and transitioning have fewer options for responding to their conditions. If they turn to any of the ALMP case studies examined in this analysis, they will find everyday policy components which encourage an automaticity (together with stimuli and constraints constituting ‘cognitive governance’) around individual responsibility, rapid labour market re-attachment, attitudinal adjustment, and market conformation. In this way, Canadian ALMP constructs a common sense which is beneficial to a flexible accumulation regime and a lean state, all based on an immiserated workforce.

This chapter concludes the dissertation by returning to the conceptual framework outlined in the introduction, comparing the findings between Chapters 4 through 6, and introduces new considerations based on the findings and discusses the consequences, recommendations, and future questions based on the research conducted.

The Dimensions of Cognitive Governance

As discussed in Chapter 1, the literature on accumulation regimes outlines the role of different institutions, actors, and processes in cohering the interactions between consumption, production, and accumulation (Harvey 1990; Berry 2016; Vidal 2013). In every accumulation regime, interests and resources coalesce around maintaining (and in other cases, altering) a particular configuration which is materially or discursively beneficial for certain actors and institutions. What emerges, then, are efforts to insulate that configuration from change. My work studies these processes, broadly in line with McBride & Mitrea (2017a). While they analyzed how policy trajectories were insulated from democratic change through supra-national rules (‘new constitutionalism’, e.g. multi-lateral trade agreements or top-down regionalism), I worked toward what Berry (2016) and Harvey (1990) implicitly *identified* – but did not explore – as the other side of that spectrum: the thoughts and actions of workers in maintaining an accumulation regime. To be clear, this project was the first step: examining what public policy communicates and whether it does so in a way which is conducive to automaticity. The next step would be confirmatory, subject-based work on what policy recipients internalized (if anything) after utilizing ALMP. For instance, for an accumulation regime predicated on labour and production flexibility, if individuals would *understand themselves* as workers who should be flexible, who should not expect employment security, who should expect to be geographically mobile and work in non-standard employment relations, than those individuals internalize a ‘common sense’ which is beneficial to firms which seek a flexible and docile workforce and to governments which have been devolving greater responsibility for survival to individuals.

The concept of power articulated in Chapter 2 which drives this project is understood as relations which shape how we think, talk, act, when and where, and which emerges from the dialectical interaction between the material (i.e. institutions,

experiences), semiotic (i.e. ideas, discourses, cultural notions), affective, and social across multiple scales (i.e. from the global to the national, subnational, local, etc.), but manifests in the everyday where people live, experience, think, and interact (Willmott 2005; Law 1999). Based on this definition, the power of cognition is to naturalize particular configurations in an accumulation regime, particular ways of living, thinking, acting, and experiencing the world. Cognition, therefore, *pre-empts* change not from top-down rules, but from bottom-up cognitive processes which govern how we understand our world – again, if workers come to understand non-standard employment as ‘natural’ or ‘inevitable’, they are less likely to politicize it, to articulate it as a result of power-relations between the market and state, and to try to change it.

From here we must consider *how* cognition can be molded at all, and that leads to what I have termed ‘cognitive governance’: a lens which examines the *processes* (or the ‘how’ question) by which automatic thought and action are molded toward particular ends. This concept emerges out of the insights of socio-cultural psychology, which systematically incorporates the role of socio-historical factors in conceptualizing and studying how people think and act. To that end, cognitive governance examines *how* material, semiotic, and affective dimensions interact and emerge (or are mobilized) to shape how people think and act in the world. Thus, cognitive governance focuses on the interaction between material-semiotic conditions which act as ‘stimuli’, how the environment in which those stimuli exist is mediated to shape how people can respond (‘constraint’), and how a *particular* way of thinking and act in response to those stimuli might be encouraged through the use of cognitive mechanisms. Our brains naturally process stimuli to determine patterns and responses, but this processing has stages and requirements to ensure optimal internalization, and can be instrumentalized: intentionally or not, the deployment of cognitive mechanisms can *encourage* the development of automaticity around particular ways of thinking and acting. The definition of power above compels us to think of who benefits and suffers as a result of particular ways of thinking and acting.

This project examines what ALMP articulates through everyday, front-end elements (such as forms, websites, applications, and so on) and *how* it does so. I focus specifically on processes by which public policy *is likely to* shape automatic cognition, which are the thoughts and actions which occur faster than deliberate ones, are resilient to change, have strong emotional associations, and can inform deliberate thoughts and actions (Holt & Rainey 2002; Burdein et al 2006; Lodge 2005). The material, semiotic, affective, and social dimensions above manifest through the three key elements mentioned above, whose relations to one another are central to cognitive governance for this project: material-semiotic conditions which require a response from individuals (‘stimuli’, e.g. financial insecurity), the ways that people are limited in how they can respond to such stimuli (‘constraints’, e.g. retrenched social policies), and what kind of automaticity is encouraged through cognitive mechanisms (deployed intentionally or not) identified in the psychology literature. While the primary focus of the dissertation is on

'encouraged automaticity', the first two elements are well documented in the literature, examined through primary data in chapters 3 (for stimuli and constraints, also somewhat in chapter 4) and 4-6 (for constraints), and are key to the effectiveness of encouraged automaticity: without complementarity between an individual's material-semiotic conditions, their scope for action, the messages they receive for how to act, and the delivery of those messages, automatic cognition is less likely and less effective.

In this case, 'stimuli' refers to the well-documented shifts in material conditions for Canadian workers toward wage stagnation (for decades), employment insecurity, and rising debt to disposable income ratios (among other concerning metrics) all of which are conditions of precarity which require a response from individuals (Dunk 2002; Vrankulj 2012; Lewchuk et al 2013). Further still, semiotic elements such as salient discourses in a time and place intersect with material conditions and constitute the other aspect of 'stimuli' (e.g. discourses of individual responsibility for labour market outcomes) (McBride & Mitrea 2017b; Mitrea 2017; Little 2001; Collins 2005). 'Constraints' refers to the multi-scalar interactions between public policy and economic trajectories which encourage or constrain particular actions. In the case of this analysis, it refers particularly to 1) the retrenchment of social support for unemployment and training, devolving responsibility for survival to the individual; 2) the organization of components within and across programs for the unemployed and transitioning, together driving those policy recipients either to their own private supports, immediately back to the market, or to limited and increasingly conditional social supports (which also drive them to the market). In addition, highly salient cultural discourses in Canada on the value of work, individual responsibility, and the denigration of 'dependency' act as stimuli imploring action and constraints on that action (Mitrea 2017; Mitrea & McBride 2017b). Thus, before the unemployed and transitioning even encounter ALMP, they live in an environment which may be unsustainable ('stimuli') and in which there are limited options to respond ('constraints'), already driving them into the market as the primary recourse. Lastly, 'encouraged automaticity' may occur through cultural discourses and social interactions (e.g. the repetition of the idea of employability in the everyday) which apply cognitive mechanisms, but in this project centres on ALMP. The complementarity between stimuli, constraints, and encouraged automaticity is the key to the smoothest process of internalization, wherein all aspects of a person's lived experience cohere around a particular way of thinking and acting, repeated over time (Snow 2006; North & Fiske 2012; Holt & Rainey 2002; Bargh et al 2012). The 'potency' or 'power' of ideas articulated through ALMP is not inherent or just empowered through mechanisms, but because they *respond* to material-semiotic conditions and constraints in the accumulation regime. For instance, individual responsibility for conforming to market needs, regardless of your skills or desires, may be regressive, but it is a response which 'fits' with the constraints and trajectories of that regime.

While theories such as 'new constitutionalism' describe how policy trajectories are insulated through institutions, *cognitive governance* examines how those trajectories

are insulated through the management of the automatic cognition of a population. Automatic cognition is a particularly useful point of analysis because it describes the subconscious processing system which precedes and informs deliberate thought – the realm of ‘gut reactions’ on topics like race, gender, political parties, and expectations of work, the market, and the state (Burdein et al 2006; Lodge 2005; North & Fiske 2012). In this way, automatic cognition describes a phenomenon similar to Gramscian common sense, described as a spontaneous, naturalized way of experiencing and living in the world - "a way of thinking that is itself rarely thought about" (Knight 1998, 106; Hall & O'Shea 2013, 8). As I have argued throughout this project, examining how automatic cognition develops explains how ‘common sense’ emerges and is maintained, thereby giving insight into how public policy might cognitively contribute to maintaining an accumulation regime.

Together, material-semiotic stimuli, constraints, and encouraged automaticity form cognitive governance, which, in the case of Canadian ALMP, has meant that the unemployed and transitioning – who have fewer and more conditional resources from the state – turning to ALMP will repeatedly receive messages which cultivate a common sense around conforming to market needs, expecting no particular level of quality of work or wages from the market, and having low expectations of the state in this realm. Yet, the most crucial component is not the messages themselves but their deployment through cognitive mechanisms which facilitate automaticity, and the consistency and repetition of that deployment across multiple sites and a person’s environment. As ‘new constitutionalism’ securitizes accumulation through supra-national rules, cognitive governance securitizes accumulation through common sense.⁶⁹

(Mis)Match

Finally, (mis)match is an analytical lens to examine the distribution of benefits and burdens in a context. For instance, what actors, institutions, and ideas are affected by the economic shift toward flexible accumulation? How are each of those points of analysis affected by the shift? Are the effects beneficial or detrimental and in what ways? Based on the current state of the literature and my hypotheses, I expect several (mis)matches in ALMP and its cognitive governance. First, I expect them to ‘match’ (benefit or be complementary to) an accumulation regime based on flexible labour, with public policy trajectories based on devolution, retrenchment, and individualization. Conversely, I expect ALMP and its cognitive governance to ‘mismatch’ (burden) with people’s material and psychological wellbeing and positive labour market outcomes: flexible accumulation, a lean, market facilitating state, and ALMP which encourages

⁶⁹ Of course, both forms of securitization are imperfect and fragile, but cognitive governance is certainly more tenuous. Nevertheless, if enough workers espouse market conforming ideas *naturally* (see McBride & Mitrea 2017b and Mitrea 2017), it will temper the possibility of change.

automaticity around individual responsibility for rapid labour market re-attachment and market conformation result in worse material conditions (as documented in Chapter 3), limited options to respond to those conditions, and the naturalization of those conditions as ‘common sense’.

Comparisons across Cases

This section compared the three case studies – Federal Employment Insurance (EI) and Job Search Systems, Labour Market Information (LMI), and Career and Skill Discovery in Ontario and British Columbia. As was explained in Chapter 2, these cases did not follow a traditional ‘most-similar’ or ‘most-different’ comparative framework, and were selected based on two factors. First, that the experience of unemployment transcends federal-provincial jurisdiction. The provincial programs are comparable in offering the same services and systems, but federal EI is completely different (although the federal government does offer a job search system and LMI). Nevertheless, to a person who is unemployed or transitioning⁷⁰ from training or education into the labour market, they will access whatever programs are available to help them with their situations. Second, Ontario and British Columbia – which share similar programs – were chosen because they had different political governance during the 1990s⁷¹ which converged to some degree in the early 2000s (Haddow & Klassen 2006; Marks & Little 2010). Ultimately, this dissertation has been exploratory, focusing on the ways public policy can shape automatic cognition, and so the choice of which provinces was driven more by interesting and potential differences which would underscore how ALMP articulates itself in different contexts (Halperin & Heath 2012). Cases were compared in terms of connections across programs (‘process mapping’), within programs, what is communicated, and how. These comparisons discussed the repetition and consistency in messaging and mechanisms across the cases, as that is central to the development of automaticity.

The two provinces shared a similar ALMP landscape, offering training, income supports, co-ops, job search systems, LMI, career and skill discovery, and more. Ontario’s ALMP is organized on a page called ‘Jobs + Employment’, and has connections to federal EI and to Ontario Works (social assistance), and a link on Employment Standards. The other nine links covered employment offices, job banks (the federal one and one for the Ontario Public Service), LMI, several targeted programs (i.e. for students and people with disabilities), career and skill discovery, and financial support for skills training. British Columbia’s ALMP is centralized on a dedicated site called ‘WorkBC’. There are six categories and 37 subprograms, which run left to right as ‘Jobs & Careers’,

⁷⁰ These individuals would not have access to EI, however.

⁷¹ Ontario had a brief NDP rule and then several years of Progressive Conservative Governance, followed by a ‘centrist’ Liberal Party. Conversely, BC was governed by the NDP from 1991-2001, followed by a right Liberal Party government.

‘Employment Services’, ‘Labour Market & Industry’, ‘Training and Education’, ‘Employer Resources’, and ‘Resources For (particular audiences)’. Unlike Ontario, ‘Jobs & Careers’ – along with job search boxes – were more prominent in WorkBC, articulating a greater emphasis on labour market re-attachment. Another difference is that ‘Training and Education’ were on a different page altogether from Ontario’s ALMP, with no direct connections to it. Conversely, Ontario explicitly linked to income supports on the main page (for training and for social assistance), as well as linked to EI, while these connections were not on the main page of WorkBC. Thus, BC’s ALMP had connections to the full range of provincial education and training opportunities, potentially strengthening the association between labour market outcomes, employability, and education. On the other hand, Ontario linking to EI provides an instance of cross-program repetition, drawing an association between the two areas of ALMP, reminding policy recipients of other (federal) resources, and for those who went through EI, priming the schemas which developed therein (making them ‘ready to be activated’ in their long term memory).

The EI program was situated in the main page of a large federal department called ‘Employment and Social Development Canada’ (ESDC), and was the second link read top-down and left-right, with the first being ‘find a job’ (which leads to the federal job bank, which is what Ontario’s ALMP links to as its job search system). ‘Education and training’ was the sixth link, with other social programs in between and after. At this stage, there were no connections to provincial ALMP programs on the ESDC main page. The association between EI and ‘find a job’ was repeated from the highest point in the web hierarchy (above), all the way down to the EI main page and within its programs. Within EI were sparse references to training programs which referred to literacy or essential skills and highly targeted federal programs (i.e. for ‘aboriginal and northern people’).

The dominant messaging across both provinces’ job search systems, LMI, and career and skill discovery were on market conformation, attitudinal adjustment, individual responsibility, and a focus on skills. Rapid reattachment themes were also present in both, particularly in job search systems (unsurprisingly) and LMI. In both provinces, these messages were repeated heavily and consistently, creating an association between employment, survival, and the themes above.

Operant conditioning was implicit, as the clear inverse of the themes above is that for those who do not take individual responsibility to adjust their attitudes and conform to market needs, they will not fare well. Most programs had strong elements of active learning and component training, wherein policy recipients needed to ‘participate’ in driving forward the content they were reading, and that the content was divided into steps. All of the programs required participants to think – however briefly – about what jobs they wanted, where, and more importantly, what the market wanted. In this way, the ‘abstract’ knowledge of the broad themes in each case studies (i.e. market conformation) were translated into steps, instructions, and tasks – all forms of ‘procedural’ knowledge which is more conducive to automaticity. The ‘job search’ theme was repeated quite

consistently throughout Ontario's ALMP, either directly in a program or through consistent links to the job search system – this was not the case in BC.

Unlike the provincial cases, EI has very clear associations between benefit receipt and job search (rapid reattachment) which are repeated throughout the program, across its components, and down from the highest web hierarchy. The two dominant themes were the contingency of benefit receipt on past labour market participation, truthfulness and on the second theme, consistent job search activities. Unlike provincial programs with implicit operant conditioning, the conditionality of benefit receipt with EI meant that there was an explicit disciplinary mechanism for individuals who did not follow its instructions to constantly search for work, document, and report on that process. Further still, EI did not link to provincial resources, which offer a variety of ALMP programs. The effect is to limit the scope of associations EI recipients will develop between survival, the labour market, and the state: survival is contingent on rapid labour market re-entry, and skill development, the experience of unemployment, and individual expectations of employment are irrelevant. Further, the role of the state is to provide minimal support and continuously supervise the unemployed as they search for work.

While EI provided a focused, singular message on labour market re-attachment, the broader scope of provincial programs did outline different ways for the unemployed and transitioning to engage with the market, the state, and their status. That being said, in both the provincial cases, the market was depoliticized as a kind of 'natural phenomenon' which cannot be altered, only responded to for survival. Individuals are meant to take responsibility to adjust their attitudes and skills to meet the demands of the market ('employability'), with no particular expectations of employment quality or consideration of the structural processes and trajectories which led to current labour market configurations and outcomes. EI made no mention whatsoever of employment standards, categories, or outcomes, while Ontario had a link to basic employment standards on the main page (and nowhere within the programs analyzed), and BC had an effective discussion of non-standard employment buried in a page tangential to the programs analyzed. The lack of prominence for these pages which directly benefit workers make them less likely to be seen, and the lack of repetition reduces the odds of them being internalized.

There was also repetition and consistency across the three ALMP cases in terms of market conformation, attitudinal adjustment, individual responsibility, and job search. The themes in all three cases were distinct but consistently interwoven within each case, and for many, across all the cases (i.e. market conformation and individual responsibility). This distinct but interwoven quality makes it more likely that each would develop into a separate schema (or build on existing ones, for instance, advice from a colleague on how to construct a better resume by translating your skills into what the employer is seeking) and prime others developed across other ALMP programs or in an individual's environment. These themes evoke multiple concepts from the coding spectrum in Chapter 2, including responsabilization, neoliberalism, entrepreneurialism,

activation, and austerity. This models a worker who sees their labour market outcomes as solely their responsibility, who activates him or herself to utilize ALMP and other resources to expand their skills and employability, who maintains self-discipline in these pursuits (as it is all on them), and who reduces their expectations of the market and state (because little is offered by the state other than encouragements to re-enter the market, and because they must conform to the market, no matter what they find in it). Repeatedly encountering these schemas will strengthen each, reinforce their connections, and increase their level of automaticity ('common sense').

These themes in Canadian ALMP are also consistent with the material-semiotic conditions ('stimuli') and limited options for responding to them ('constraints') outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. Market facilitating and retrenched social and labour market policies increasingly limit the options the unemployed and transitioning have for dealing with their precarity. If these policy recipients turn to ALMP (i.e. WorkBC's job search), they will encounter everyday policy components which encourage an automaticity (with stimuli and constraints, culminating in 'cognitive governance') based on individual responsibility to conform to the market and to rapidly re-attach to it. This kind of common sense 'matches' with a flexible accumulation regime and a lean state by shaping docile workers who do not think to expect support from the state (thereby allowing them to reduce expenditures and interventions).

Ontological Considerations

This section will consider the broader implications of the data gathered and analyzed through this project. Approaching public policy through a cognitive governance approach attempts to provide a more holistic understanding of the role of ideas and cognition⁷² in analyses of power. This analysis has kept broader cultural discourses⁷³ in the 'background' through secondary sources, and has provided secondary and some primary evidence for the significance and role of material-semiotic conditions (stimuli) and the organization of public policy and market trajectories ('constraints') to limit and encourage particular responses. Being unemployed or transitioning in the labour market in the absence of substantial savings or private support constitutes a state in which an individual must seek out a recourse to survive, and with public policy retrenching and directing them back to the market, that becomes their primary option. Should they turn to ALMP, they will encounter everyday policy components which encourage an automaticity (together with stimuli and constraints constituting 'cognitive governance') based on the same message. Overall, these elements coalesce in their interactions to

⁷² Little attention was paid to the role of emotion or affect in this analysis because of feasibility concerns. However, the cognitive psychology literature agrees that strong affective associations increase the automaticity of a schema.

⁷³ Such as the broad salience of the stigma of unemployment and dependency, individual responsibility for life outcomes, and the primacy of the market and its logics (i.e. entrepreneurialism, 'human capital') (Mitrea 2017; McBride & Mitrea 2017).

‘securitize accumulation from the bottom up’ – to, in this analysis, converge on a common sense (automaticity) which depoliticizes markets, shifts responsibility for labour market outcomes to the individual, and lowers individual expectations of the state and the market. This section will explore several considerations based on the findings above: the idea of ‘secular internalization’, its combination with cognitive governance, and their effects in atomizing subjects, colonizing imaginations, and depoliticizing.

Secular Internalization & Cognitive Governance

The term above is used to capture the material and functional interactions which shape thought and action. Even without utilizing ALMP, it is likely common knowledge among Canadians that survival requires employment, and when public policy explicitly (through its messaging) and implicitly (through its programs and their scope) replicates that message along with cultural discourses and expectations, an individual is likely to internalize the ‘rules of the game’ in order to survive and thrive.

With the retrenchment of the state in social supports and re-regulation of labour markets toward flexibility, the conditions offered in the market become naturalized. People must learn to become experts in functioning according to the demands of flexible accumulation in Canada, to be individually responsible for ‘activating themselves’ and conforming their skills and attitudes to the market so as to be employable. In effect, contemporary flexible accumulation in Canada has defined the conditions of life regardless of an individual’s politics – even radical Marxists, anti-capitalists, and others must internalize at least a *functional* understanding of how to succeed in an increasingly precarious labour market to survive. Crucially, as this becomes an everyday exercise – particularly given the shift from ‘employment security’ to ‘skills security’ signalling shortening job tenures – the thinking and acting associated with success in the market becomes more naturally internalized (automaticity) and as this project has repeatedly highlighted, automatic cognition precedes and informs rational cognition (Holt & Rainey 2002; North & Fiske 2012; Bargh et al 2012; Snow 2006).

This phenomenon is accounted for in cognitive governance through the ‘material-semiotic stimuli’ and ‘constraints’ components. Labour market precarity, either through unemployment, transition, or increasing non-standard employment, are material conditions which demand a response from the individual so as to survive (stimuli). Similarly, socially salient discourses around individual responsibility for labour market outcomes, the importance of being entrepreneurial in shaping your human capital, and the stigma of dependency act as semiotic stimuli (Mitrea 2017; McBride & Mitrea 2017b). The organization of public policy and the market as well as salient cultural discourses on work and dependency, constrain the range of response available to this individual to survive (constraints): as social supports retrench and become conditional on market re-attachment efforts and the labour market increasingly utilizes non-standard employment, the individual has little choice but to accept minimal state support (ALMP) and/or turn to

the market, regardless of the conditions offered. With retrenched state support, this individual has less time and resources to find work appropriate to their skills or even which can support their needs, and so many ‘reduce their expectations’ and ‘make do with less’, reflecting the ‘austere’ theme in the coding spectrum from Chapter 2 (Vrankulj 2012; Lewchuk et al 2013; Dunk 2002). Finally, should this individual turn to ALMP, they will encounter messages which implore them to return to the market, conform to it, and take individual responsibility for their outcomes. Further still, ALMP – intentionally or not – deploys mechanisms (‘encouraged automaticity’, the last step in ‘cognitive governance’) identified in cognitive psychology which improve automaticity, including consistency, repetition, association, operant conditioning, priming, active learning, and component training. Ultimately, the consistency and repetition *within and across* ALMP programs, material-semiotic conditions, and the organization of public policy and the market (constraints) all coalesce toward the same common sense, which, although regressive, does respond to those conditions, also improving the odds of automaticity. With secular internalization, this interaction between material-semiotic stimuli and constraints can be applied to the functional imperative for supporting tax cuts (regardless of politics, as costs of living rise while wages remain stagnant, people need more money) or shopping at low-wage, small business destroying retailers such as Walmart because costs of living are rising and it is difficult to do otherwise. Thus, whether those experiencing labour market precarity turn to ALMP or not, they are still driven toward the market for survival, with the implicit need to understand it and conform to it to succeed. Secular internalization has a mix of ‘consensual’ (insofar as people are not ‘forced’ to work) and ‘disciplinary’ (in the psychology literature, this is often termed operant conditioning) elements. In terms of the latter, there is explicit discipline in the form of conditionalities for social support (such as for EI) and implicit discipline in *an individual’s knowledge of the conditions of unemployment or precarious employment*.

Secular internalization provides the material, functional, and disciplinary backdrop for cognitive governance, and consistency and repetition between it and encouraged automaticity (like with ALMP) significantly increases the likelihood of ‘common sense’ developing. The interaction between economic and policy trajectories outlined in Chapter 3 define secular internalization, and the material pressures it puts on people and limited options for response at their disposal. Again, these dynamics benefit capital and a lean state in driving people into the labour market, regardless of the conditions therein.

Atomized and Contained Subjects

The effect of the automaticity encouraged in the case studies particularly in the context of secular internalization⁷⁴, is likely to result in the atomization and ‘containment’

⁷⁴ With the two components of secular internalization – stimuli and constraints – and encouraged automaticity together constituting cognitive governance.

of individuals. Put differently, contemporary material-semiotic conditions, options for response, and the common sense constructed by ALMP are isolating and drive people to be ‘self-contained’. Various literatures on the social determinants of health link employment precarity to negative physical, mental, and emotional health as well as strained social and familial relations (Lewchuk et al 2013; Vrankulj 2012; Benach et al 2014; Caron & Liu 2011). The enormous effort devoted to survival leads people to neglect their health and relationships, while the stress of material insecurity causes strain on both. Discourses of ‘self-activation’, ‘self-reliance’, and ‘individual responsibility’ are contemporarily salient⁷⁵ and diffuse across culture and policy, leading people to internalize risk and retreat inward, focusing on individual solutions for survival rather than on collective ones (Dunk 2002; McBride & Mitrea 2017b; Fournier et al 2011). For instance, an unemployed Canadian in a study said "I'm not very happy with myself. I feel like I'm not doing anything worthwhile, I feel useless" (Fournier et al 2011, 322). In another instance, an individual said that "life is what you make it if you can. Like nobody's going to give you anything [...] Like they should give me a job [...] It doesn't work that way" (Dunk 2002, 888). Materially and cognitively, people experiencing economic precarity often reduce their consumption and must rely on themselves and whatever creative survival strategies they can manifest as state support continues to retrench. For instance, an individual experiencing economic precarity in Canada stated that:

“before I knew I had a job, I went and did it, I came home and I had a life. Now it’s like, okay what are we going to sacrifice so we can all go to the dentist, what are we going to do? ... There has to be sacrifices made, do you know what I mean? And it’s like this precarious work crap ... it changes you as a person” (Lewchuk et al 2013, 68).

Another dimension, particularly for those who do utilize social supports, is self-discipline and exposure to surveillance, wherein policy recipients are expected to fill out forms, follow procedures, and consistently and willingly document all parts of their job search or economic situation (see Chapter 4, also Little 2001; Collins 2005). For example, mothers enrolled in Ontario Works spoke of "daily humiliations from government agencies" and felt as if they lived “under a giant microscope,” which added to the “stress, guilt, shame, and self-blame about living on inadequate income” (Collins 2005, 10, 18). Secular internalization and cognitive governance have physical, psychological, social, political, and cognitive effects in individualizing people (and their circumstances), leading them to retreat inward for survival, internalize risk, reduce their consumption, and expect

⁷⁵ And, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, are interrelated. This makes it more likely that encountering a single concept would prime others related to it, increasing the strength of each schema, the connections between them, and their automaticity.

surveillance. These factors lead to increasingly atomized and ‘contained’ subjects, who are heavily focused on their circumstances and survival and thereby have less time and energy to politicize their experiences and mobilize against them. Atomization and containment result from the interaction between stimuli, constraints, and encouraged automaticity, and again result in a mismatch: capital and the state benefit from docile and vulnerable workers who do not turn to the state, while individuals suffer as outlined above.

Colonizing Imaginations

Beyond the more clearly demonstrable effects outlined above, the automaticity encouraged by Canadian ALMP in the context of secular internalization may also constrain the ‘range of the possible for people’. While atomization and containment describe material, semiotic, and social processes by which people become isolated, ‘colonized imaginations’ refers to the ways that cognitive governance (in this case) constrains the scope of what people believe is normal or possible. The first instances of this are outlined in the section above, wherein people are caught in a kind of ‘double burden’ between material-semiotic conditions and constraints which lower their quality of life and limit their range of actions, and a kind of self-punishment which emerges from those conditions in the context of cultural discourses which denigrate dependency, poverty, and unemployment as individual failings (Mitrea & McBride 2017b; Fournier et al 2011; Mitrea 2017; Collins 2005; Little 2001). When so much mental and physical energy is devoted to survival (as illustrated in the previous section), and then more is devoted to negotiating with ideas (and their subsequent affects) which suggest that the individual should feel shame for their suffering, how much energy is left for organized resistance? Further still, internalizing the shame articulated by salient cultural discourses clearly situates responsibility for suffering onto the individual, and should those ideas be internalized to varying degrees (again, as illustrated above), an individual may be less likely to see the structural contributions to their circumstances and organize against them (McBride & Mitrea 2017b; Collins 2005). In the context of the empirical work of this project, Canadian ALMP deploys cognitive mechanisms (intentionally or otherwise) to articulate several messages: that the individual is responsible for either immediate re-attachment or conforming their attitudes and skills to market needs. This constitutes a narrative which outlines a set of relationships between the worker, the state, the market, and survival in which the worker meets market needs and that the state provides minimal support (and at times surveillance). Most significantly, the cognitive development mechanisms deployed *to deliver* these messages are more likely to result in automaticity (‘common sense’), particularly as they are complementary to secular internalization.

Because ALMP teaches market conformity and rarely (and minimally) discusses workers’ rights, inequality, work-life balance, employment quality, and many other important metrics, it teaches a common sense which constrains an individual’s

expectations and assumptions of their lives, the market, and the state – a more limited imagination. As material conditions, discursive-affective regimes (i.e. of shame and undeservingness), and ALMP drive people to see their circumstances as solely their making, to conform to the market, to assume the state provides limited support, and to barely consider their rights and needs in the market, they may end up reducing their expectations. For instance, contemporary – and increasingly successful – social movements around living and minimum wages in Canada are not about sharing the spoils of capitalism based on a moral or ethical framework, they are about *raising the minimum* provided by the labour market to catch up to rising costs and provide basic needs (Miller & Nicholls 2013; Bernhardt & Osterman 2017). In more specific instances, individuals end labour market precarity and limited options (secular internalization) tend to have decreased expectations and aspirations for control over work, let alone gratifying work (Dunk 2002; McBride & Mitrea 2017b). With decreasing investment in ALMP and more pressure to return to the market, precarious employment and unemployment led Canadian participants in a three year longitudinal study to “accept jobs for which they are overqualified and which offer little or no social protection (e.g. retirement plans, health insurance), a low and/or irregular wage, unfulfilling, and precarious” (Fournier et al 2011). An individual from this study said:

"I'm feeling down, disappointed, lost. This is what work has become for me: I'm going to get a job I won't hate too much for the next 15 years and that's going to put money in my pocket, PERIOD. (...) Before, I was passionate about work, it fulfilled my need to give and create" (Fournier et al 2011, 322).

Reduced expectations and imagination may result from the stimuli-constraint dynamics of secular internalization, or also from the encouraged automaticity of Canadian ALMP (if an individual utilizes it). The consistency between material conditions, options for response, and an encouraged common sense constitute cognitive governance, and part of the automaticity encouraged is the constrained imagination outlined above. As with atomization and containment, colonized imaginations benefit flexible accumulation and a market facilitating state by producing docile workers who do not require significant expenditures by the public policy.

Depoliticization

The effect of poor material conditions, limited available responses, self-punishment (i.e. shame), and social supports which individualize and drive people back into the market is to depoliticize their struggles – to frame the market and its conditions as a ‘force of nature’. ‘Depoliticization’ may be a significant impediment to developing ideas, coalitions, and responses to flexible accumulation and the state actors and institutions which facilitate it, and it emerges from the encouraged automaticity of

Canadian ALMP in a context of secular internalization. First, as discussed above, secular internalization is the combination of increasingly precarious material conditions and limited responses to those conditions (i.e. return to the market), yet stable and sufficient material conditions are necessary for sustained social and political participation (Lewchuk et al 2013; Little 2001; Collins 2005; McBride & Mitrea 2017b). Those experiencing secular internalization may find it more difficult to develop the political understandings, networks, and activities which are necessary for change.⁷⁶ One of the impediments to the *Occupy* movement was that people could only maintain a physical protest for so long before needing to return to or find work so as to pay for the necessities of life (Miller & Nicholls 2013).

The colonized imaginations which may emerge from cognitive governance and secular internalization also lead to a kind of ‘historical deafness’ wherein people may not connect present suffering to historical, structural, and political trajectories (Jameson 1991). This is exemplified in the isolated and self-punishing subjects above, but also in social movements around living and minimum wages – all of which focus on basic economic conditions and justice, which is about distributing the material benefits of capitalism (Miller & Nicholls 2013; Bernhardt & Osterman 2017). However, as was discussed above, even these popular and increasingly successful movements are about the ‘bare minimum’ for survival, and neither adopted a broader concept of justice which takes into account more aspects of a better life, the structure of work, and why poverty and precarity exist amid contemporary wealth and productive capacities. Encouraged automaticity via Canadian ALMP in a context of secular internalization shifts focus toward individual responsibility for market conformation, a step removed from even basic considerations of employment standards, conditions, and wages. In this context people have to, through their own efforts and relations, develop a politics around those basic considerations, and so are even further removed from a more expansive and ambitious progressive politics. Should what is communicated by Canadian ALMP be internalized by recipients, it would empower and politicize individually while disempowering and depoliticizing collectively: responsibility for life outcomes are highly individualized and the market becomes akin to a ‘force of nature’ which must be responded to, but implicitly, cannot really be changed. Current market and policy trajectories (constraints) have inferred political effects in individualizing labour market and life outcomes. This shifts the state-market-worker relationship from ‘people at risk’ (protecting them from the exigencies of capitalism) to ‘people as risk’, which leads to policies meant to ‘launch’ them back into the market – a hallmark of the market facilitating state (see Chapter 3).

The consistency and complementarity between encouraged automaticity in Canadian ALMP and the broader stimuli and constraints that make up secular internalization constitute a cognitive governance which benefits flexible accumulation. Individuals are meant to understand the market and conform their attitudes and skills to meet its demands (‘employability’), without any particular expectations of employment quality or consideration of structural forces in labour market outcomes. The result is a way of thinking and acting which is depoliticized, instrumentally rational, and which

⁷⁶ We might term this a form of ‘secular depoliticization’.

serves the needs of capital, facilitating immiseration. The ultimate effect – and some have argued, the original purpose of social and labour market policy – is to inculcate a level of docility about political economy and public policy trajectories, inuring people to repeated deprivation (Struthers 1997; Greshner 2008; Dolson 2015).

Reconfiguring Time and Space

The final significant effect of Canadian ALMP's encouraged automaticity in the context of secular internalization is a reconfiguration of time and space (at least as compared to periods defined by the standard employment relationship). Discussions of temporality highlight a spectrum between futurity⁷⁷ and presentism⁷⁸, and while there were instances of futurity in the cases examined – particularly in the context of acquiring skills and continuous learning – most discussions focused on the present: immediate market re-attachment and immediate measures to conform attitude and current skills to the market. There was, overall, more of a focus on immediate activation and market conformation than on skills development for the future. With depoliticization, Canadian ALMP individualizes the present and the future, inculcating a kind of 'chrononormativity' based on present and future individual efforts toward conformity and *tacitly accepting* market conditions which increase non-standard work, increase hours, and decrease steady work or schedules (Freeman 2010). This disrupts what feminist political economists and other scholars originally referred to when deploying the concept of 'chrononormativity': the temporal dimension of heteronormative social reproduction – *when* people engage in normative activities like establishing a career, a monogamous relationship, buy a home, and have children (Cameron 2006; Freeman 2010). The fragmentation of space is the normalization of existing market expectations of 'moving to where there is work' or undertaking commutes, and there was no explicit reflection on this topic in ALMP (i.e. on finding work close to where you live, where your children and spouse learn and work, or how long a commute is acceptable). That being said, many of the LMI tools and job search systems did break down data by region, enabling people to limit their searches. Crucially, however, ALMP never encouraged people to focus on working close to home (or where they would *like* to work) or investing in the present or future for anything more than market conformation.

The encouraged automaticity of ALMP and the stimulus-constraint interactions of secular internalization in Canada reconfigure time and space around the market: individuals are meant to take responsibility for finding employment *quickly* – with little regard for *where* or under what conditions – and conforming to the market, whether that is immediate or longer term (e.g. 'building your skills in line with market needs'). This kind of common sense is functionally *useful* to workers, but does not prioritize their wellbeing. Conversely, capital benefits enormously from an immiserated, docile, and cognitively flexible workforce.

⁷⁷ Which projects focus onto the future and externalizes the realization of material-semiotic-affective-political and other outcomes to it.

⁷⁸ Which elides the future and focuses on current conditions.

(Mis)Match Applied

This section responds to the call issued in the introduction for an explicit discussion of the distribution of benefits and burdens as a result of cognitive governance. ‘(Mis)Match’ is a way of conceptualizing how the processes examined in this project ‘match’ with or benefit particular actors, institutions, and trajectories while simultaneously ‘mismatching’ with others, burdening or disadvantaging them. Encouraged automaticity in a context of secular internalization together constitute cognitive governance and result in ‘containment and atomization’, ‘colonized imagination’, and ‘depoliticization’. These effects on subjects match up with the flexible accumulation of the Canadian liberal market economy and a market facilitating state (see Chapter 3). At the same time, these effects mismatch with progressive outcomes for workers, including better quality of work and life. This distribution of benefits and burdens is also complementary to flexible accumulation through the concept of immiseration: poorer labour market conditions in terms of wage stagnation, cycling, and/or nonstandard work, shifts the distribution of power further from labour to capital, allowing the latter to maintain flexible practices with less organized resistance. This has been the thrust of this chapter: to illustrate how secular internalization, perhaps even without encouraged automaticity, creates the material conditions and constraints through which capital is empowered and workers disempowered, individualized, and depoliticized.

Overall, encouraged automaticity and secular internalization illustrate a consistent and repeated complementarity (which is key to developing automaticity) between the micro (messaging through cognitive mechanisms in everyday, front-end ALMP), meso (the organization within and across ALMP), and macro (the organization within and across broader policy areas and economic trajectories), resulting in cognitive governance. The unemployed and transitioning who engage with ALMP will repeatedly and consistently encounter a common sense which implores self-sufficiency (a kind of austere subjectivity – do not rely on the state for survival), that they should be individually responsible for conforming to the needs of the market through their attitudes and skills (employability and entrepreneurial subjectivity), that their labour market outcomes are completely individual and not structural, and that they should have no particular expectations of quality of work or wage growth. This common sense constructs workers with low expectations of the state and the market, but who are materially, functionally, and cognitively driven to develop their productive capacities at the same time, making them docile, flexible, and focused on expanding their human capital. In this common sense, capital has decreasing claims on it: framed as a natural force which must be responded to, the common sense emerging from Canadian ALMP places the onus completely on the individual for their labour market outcomes. Combined with market facilitating actors and institutions in the state, supra-national disciplinary and ideational mechanisms, and complementary cultural norms, the market can proceed further and further with a flexible accumulation regime in Canada. For a market facilitating state, the common sense discussed in this project delegitimizes it as a progressive economic actor

or one that will intervene on behalf of workers (‘protecting citizens from the market’). Rather, it can continue to devolve responsibility for survival to the individual and drive them back into the market.

This research has shown that there is a mismatch between who Canadian ALMP benefits and burdens, but also between what it communicates and offers: ALMP emphasizes market conformation and human capital development, yet ALMP spending is at a 30 year low, with increasing emphasis on ‘short-term’ measures such as job search assistance (OECD 2016; Employment Insurance 2016). Thus, cognitive governance mismatches with positive labour market outcomes *and teaching workers to seek them out or expect them*. This mismatch between the cognitive-discursive and material dimensions of policy and recipients’ lives (considering rising indicators of labour market precarity, as discussed in Chapter 3) may contribute to poorer long-term labour market outcomes by undermining policies which mitigate economic shocks (training programs and transfers), which lead to greater dependence on the state, poor social determinants of health, psychological distress, strained social relations, and reduced political participation (Dunk 2002; Vrankulj 2012; Lewchuk et al 2013; McBride & Mitrea 2017b). ALMP begins and stays with market needs and getting people off benefits, not with the needs of workers. Addressing current/improving labour market outcomes, mental and physical health, social and political relations, meaningful work, employment security, and better lived conditions are not central. Indeed, ALMP rarely and tangentially addresses basic employment standards, and does not address inequality, wage stagnation, or precarious labour. Further, it does not encourage resistance to or the politicization of these conditions.

The ultimate effect of (mis)match in these cases is to securitize accumulation from ‘the bottom up’ by shaping automatic cognition. Depoliticized and atomized subjects internalize a common sense which results from and is complementary with the stimuli-constraints outlined in Chapter 3 (secular internalization) and the automaticity encouraged by ALMP (together constituting cognitive governance).

Recommendations

Based on the discussion of (mis)match above and the findings of this dissertation, this section will outline a series of recommendations for policy makers, NGOs, labour organizations, and the public. The following recommendations are two fold. The first set of recommendations deal with changes to the funding, structure, and delivery of ALMP to improve labour market outcomes, resulting from the analysis in this dissertation and the academic and policy literature. These recommendations are directed to the state, while the second set are oriented primarily toward non-state actors and their ability to respond to the current state of Canadian ALMP *as well as* the cognitive dimensions analyzed in this dissertation.

First, the government should create a federal-provincial portal which centralizes information on all ALMP resources available to people. This would enable the landscape to articulate a clear message and ensure that individuals do not fall through the cracks and miss accessing a program they could benefit from – remember that federal EI did not connect to any provincial programs, nor did WorkBC connect to EI. At the very least,

provincial and federal policy makers should lead a review (and could start with the findings of this dissertation) to fill in the gaps of cross-program information.

Another recommendation deals with fiscal policy. Chapter 3 documented the trajectory of structural austerity at the federal level (which is significant because a great deal of provincial ALMP programs receive federal funding), and showed that spending on ALMP as a percentage of GDP is at a multi-decade low. This has led to a concerted shift toward low-cost and short-term interventions which have been shown to have poorer long term labour market outcomes (Employment Insurance 2016; Wood & Hayes 2016; Morden 2016). Federal (and provincial) policy makers should look to reverse this trend in ALMP spending, perhaps starting with raising more revenue (through different taxation schemes, closing loopholes or ‘tax expenditures’, and cracking down on tax evasion).

Building on the above, with greater investment in ALMP, it would be able to refocus on training, skill building, and wage subsidies, private sector partnerships, and other initiatives which build policy recipients’ skills, labour market experience, networks, and labour market demand – all of which lead to far better long term outcomes (Morden 2016; Wood & Hayes 2016).

ALMP should consistently and repeatedly provide information to workers on employment standards, minimum wage regulation, and information to help them understand the current state of the labour market, such as the rise of non-standard work (and what regulations cover it and what recourses are available). WorkBC provides something on the latter suggestion, but it is insufficiently prominent. Perhaps the least realistic recommendation is for ALMP to reverse its current commitment to capital over workers. I recommend that ALMP politicize the role of the state and market in shaping lived experiences, as an individual’s efforts do not lead to the aggregate structural phenomena which are discussed in Chapter 3 and beyond.

For NGOs, labour organizations, and the public, I first recommend that they engage, however much they can, with critical literatures on political economy and public policy. There are resources produced by labour organizations (such as the Canadian Labour Congress) and progressive think tanks like the Broadbent Institute (and their media arm, ‘PressProgress’), the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), Canadians for Tax Fairness (CTF), and blogs like the progressive economics forum. The encouraged automaticity of Canadian ALMP constructs a common sense which is based on regressive concepts (such as neoliberalism, activation, and responsabilization) that benefit capital and a lean state. Critical approaches to political economy and public policy would provide an alternative, and exposure to such alternatives is a necessary (but rarely sufficient) step in disrupting an established common sense.

Second, I recommend NGOs and labour organizations continue to politicize public policy and political economy trajectories, but also the front-end, everyday elements of policy design and implementation which are often assumed to be neutral and technical. These elements, in the form of applications, websites, forms, and more, are what the unemployed and transitioning engage with when they turn to ALMP, and this analysis has shown that they are highly political and articulate a regressive common sense through cognitive mechanisms. Further, to politicize – that is, be attentive to relations of power, what is permitted/discouraged, and who benefits and suffers – is key to developing

reflective capacities and disrupting the kind of regressive common sense documented in this dissertation.

Third, these organizations should provide resources for the public to counter mechanisms which contribute to automaticity. The most important tool in such an endeavour is deploying rational thought to question what was assumed to be true or natural – i.e. problematizing common sense. For instance, the previous recommendation is to politicize public policy and political economy trajectories, but also front-end policy elements, which are commonly thought to be neutral and technical forms. In some literatures this process is called ‘frame reflection’ and in others ‘reflexivity’ or ‘self-reflexivity’, which generally describes processes by which we question more and more of our assumptions about the world and ourselves (Schon and Rein 1993; Yanow 2000; Yanow 2003). When it comes to automaticity, there are several approaches to destabilizing this. One is a ‘frame break’ or ‘discursive break’, which refers to the Derridian theory of language in which meaning is constantly differed (we understand concepts by what they are not) and deferred (we understand concepts by deferring to our understanding of other concepts). In this process, as a discourse is communicated, there is the possibility for different decoding by an individual and recoding into schemas. This is evident in activities such as ‘myth busting’ or ‘flipping scripts’ in which a hegemonic discourse is appropriated and its underlying meanings and assumptions laid bare (sometimes hyperbolized) to illustrate the power relations embedded in the process. Since automaticity is predicated on consistency and repetition – in meaning structures and other areas – a ‘frame break’ may begin to destabilize someone’s common sense (Derrida 1982; Butler 2009).⁷⁹

Another example of ways to counteract encouraged automaticity is in the design and organization of public policy. Grune-Yanoff & Hertwig (2016) explore the landscape of heuristics (subconscious decision making mechanisms similar to schemas) in behavioural psychology, and contrast the ‘heuristics and biases approach’ (from which nudging theory and practice originated) with the ‘simple heuristics approach’, which “believes that policies should aim to extend the decision making competencies of laypeople and professionals” (152). In this way, public policy should focus on ‘boosting’ decision making: empowering individuals with the skills, knowledge, decision making tools, and environment in which they can engage with public policy and make reflective choices. The authors summarize this by stating that “‘boost’ assumes a decision maker whose competences can be improved by enriching his or her repertoire of skills and decision tools and/or by restructuring the environment such that existing skills and tools can be more effectively applied” (152). This is a recommendation for both NGOs and the state – to work on expanding the reflective capacities of individuals and create environments in which they can apply them.

Finally, Bracher (2012) discusses a form of therapy called ‘schema criticism’ which is deployed in the clinical treatment of depression and phobias, “which are resistant to

⁷⁹ This process, however, is highly subjective. The ‘boomerang effect’ highlights how, in some cases, efforts to destabilize the automaticity of a schema network actually strengthens it, as it can be resistant to new knowledge (North & Fiske 2012).

traditional forms of therapy relying on insight, clarifications, and/or confrontation” (94). Traditional approaches can help a person see that their feelings are unfounded and irrational, yet the perceptions, feelings, and behaviours (all forms of automatic cognition) often remain unchanged – similar to people who have strong stereotypes. Schema therapy works through the repeated enactment of ‘more adequate versions of the multiple forms and types of knowledge which constitute a schema’, and is applied in two complementary ways: 1) developing a person’s metacognition – their ability to be aware of their own cognitive and emotional processes, including when a ‘faulty schema’ (or common sense) is operating, and then interrupting and overriding it with a new schema; 2) help a person acquire a more adequate replacement schema by identifying what the faulty one excluded, memorizing and repeatedly encountering crucial information (such as of the consequences of the old schema, its faulty assumptions, etc.), and developing and practicing new routines which seek out information excluded by the faulty schema. Schema criticism is perhaps the most robust of the options above because it utilizes the process of automaticity itself to a) replace an old common sense; b) develop the metacognition to be increasingly reflexive of our assumptions and of how our common sense develops.

Finally, NGOs and labour organizations can articulate new narratives and common senses. However, they must tarry with the ethical choice of whether to employ the tools outlined in chapter two to build a common sense (thereby manipulating people’s cognition if they are not experienced in metacognition and reflection) or to destabilize these processes (as outlined above) and push for rational deliberation. These narratives should operate at multiple levels, finding salient discourses which can make everyday impact, but which are in some ways compatible with existing economic and policy trajectories – i.e. the ‘business case’ for living and minimum wages increasing aggregate demand, morale, and productivity. However, we should not elide grander narratives and projects which focus on more ambitious dimensions of lived experience, like moral engagements with the effects and distribution of capitalism.

Overall, the state, NGOs, and individuals should work toward developing the reflective and metacognitive capacities of citizens so as to be less vulnerable to ‘encouraged automaticity’, and consequently, less likely to accept current economic and policy trajectories as ‘natural’ or ‘inevitable’.

New Questions and Future Directions of Research

This project has opened up new directions for research and new questions for engagement. The first and most obvious is confirmatory, subject-based research on the intersection of public policy and cognition. This dissertation addressed the policy side of the phenomenon, whether public policy even deployed cognitive mechanisms, in what form, with what message, and with what interactions within and across policy structures. A subject-based analysis would ask whether and under what conditions public policy can shape automatic cognition. Such research would need to utilize an experimental method and approaches designed specifically to test for pre-conscious cognition, such as an

‘attitude priming test’ (Burdein et al 2006, 362; Lodge 2005; North & Fiske 2012; Snow 2006; Halperin & Heath 2012).

Another possibility is a comparative analysis of what ALMP communicates in countries with different political economy and public policy trajectories and interactions. Going by the varieties of capitalism framework, social democratic states with coordinated market economies (i.e. the Nordic countries) – which have much higher spending on ALMP as a percentage of GDP – may have programs which communicate different messages and which may employ different cognitive mechanisms, or employ the same ones differently. A broad metric may be attitudes toward poverty and unemployment, which are quite negative in Canada (as of 2011, 57 percent of Canadians agreed with the statement ‘people who don’t get ahead should blame themselves, not the system’) (McBride & Mitrea 2017b). Spuriousness would surely be a concern, and so any such study would require careful design to determine the relationships between material-semiotic conditions (including socially salient discourses), constraints, and encouraged automaticity.

A third option is an exploratory study of the perspectives of the unemployed and transitioning on these ideas and issues (i.e. market conformation, individual responsibility), and whether they agree with it just functionally – to survive and thrive – or also normatively. Such a study should be relatively unstructured and open (ala Dunk 2002), which is the opposite of the exceptionally structure methods which measure automaticity.

Fourth, the growing field of ‘cognitive narratology’, which studies the effect of narrative structure on cognition, may be fruitful. This study has demonstrated that the messages articulated by ALMP not only ‘match’ with broader economic trajectories and benefit capital, but they are also complementary with each other – they form a narrative as much as they do a common sense. Examining whether narrative structure is more effective at developing schemas and automaticity could provide interesting information.

Conclusion

Economic and policy trajectories result in different configurations between production and consumption and between the citizen-worker, state, and market. These configurations or ‘accumulation regimes’ inform our everyday lived experiences, determining our material-semiotic conditions, how we can respond to those conditions, and what ways of thinking and acting are encouraged. As such, these regimes distribute benefits and burdens to different actors and institutions in a given time and place. Consequently, the ways they come to be, change, or are maintained are crucial to peoples’ wellbeing and to democracy (in terms of peoples’ capacities to engage with and change conditions which affect them through a political process). Many studies and theories across Political Economy, Post Structural Criticism, and Contemporary Policy Studies have analysed the ‘macro’ and ‘meso’ of how economic and policy trajectories develop and contribute to the formation, maintenance, or change of accumulation regimes. However, none have seriously looked at how automatic cognition, cultivated in the everyday, is another avenue in cultivating and maintaining accumulation regimes. This

study has examined how automatic cognition – which precedes and informs conscious thought and action – can be cultivated or ‘encouraged’ by everyday front-end policy components in Canadian ALMP (targeting the unemployed and transitioning in the labour market). In the first chapter I asked what *and how* does Canadian ALMP communicate to workers about how they should conceive of themselves, the market, and the state. My approach has drawn insights from cognitive psychology on automatic thought, socio-cultural psychology on the role of a person’s environment on their cognitive development, and combined them with interpretive policy analysis. Together these insights culminated in a lens I termed ‘cognitive governance’, which examines how material-semiotic conditions (‘stimuli’), the options people have to respond to those conditions (‘constraints’), and what kind of automatic thought and action is encouraged in a context (‘encouraged automaticity’) come together to shape a common sense which benefits certain actors, institutions, and processes over others.

In the preceding chapters I looked at how global and Canadian economic and policy trajectories in the late 20th century have moved toward flexible accumulation (defined by intensified financialization, globalization, and flexibility in production and labour) and a lean and market facilitating state. As a result, aggregate indicators of financial and employment security have worsened in Canada, salient discourses stigmatize ‘dependency’ and individualize suffering (material-semiotic conditions, or ‘stimuli’), and social and labour market policies have retrenched and become focused on driving people back into the market (‘constraints’ on how people can respond to their conditions). If the unemployed and transitioning turn to ALMP in response to their conditions, they will encounter everyday policy components which encourage an automaticity based on rapid labour market re-attachment, attitudinal adjustment, and market conformation. These ‘schemas’ (networked blueprints for thought, action, and feeling) were communicated – intentionally or not – through cognitive mechanisms conducive to the development of automaticity (Chapter 2), which responded to material conditions and constraints and were consistent across the three case studies, their broader policy ecology, and socially salient discourses such as entrepreneurialism, activation, responsabilization, and neoliberalism. This consistency within ALMP, across it, and across the broader environment in which it and policy recipients exist is a necessary condition for the development of automaticity.

The ultimate effect of cognitive governance in Canadian ALMP is to encourage a common sense which ‘matches’ with flexible accumulation and a lean state and ‘mismatches’ with the wellbeing of citizens and workers. Canadians who turn to ALMP⁸⁰ will encounter an automaticity which encourages them to take individual responsibility for their labour market outcomes and to conform their skills and attitudes toward market needs. Little to no mention is made of labour market precarity (framing all employment as ‘equal’), worker’s rights, or data on employment quality such as employment

⁸⁰ As discussed earlier in this chapter, the combination between material-semiotic conditions and constraints in constituting a person’s environment is overwhelmingly important in shaping automatic cognition. As such, ‘encouraged automaticity’ in concentrated instances such as Canadian ALMP are very significant in driving a coherent and specific automaticity, but are not completely essential if the broader environment is organized to communicate a similar way of thinking and acting.

categories, unionization rates, average hours worked, and so on. The consistent repetition of these messages within and across ALMP and the broader economic and policy trajectory in Canada and their deployment through cognitive mechanisms increases the likelihood that they would develop to the point of automaticity. For workers, this atomizes and depoliticizes them, making economic and policy trajectories which contribute to rising precarity seem ‘natural’ and reducing their expectations of the market and the state. This common sense benefits capital in legitimizing flexible accumulation and cultivating docile workers inured to immiseration (the progressive decline in employment quality to increase profits). For a lean and market facilitating state, this common sense conditions workers to not expect the state to intervene in their relations with the market beyond increasingly flexible employment standards, legitimizing retrenched and increasingly ‘short term’ interventions in social and labour market policy.

While policy reforms and supranational agreements secure accumulation regimes from the ‘top down’, cognitive governance in Canadian ALMP supports a flexible accumulation regime from the ‘bottom up’ – from everyday, automatic cognition. This analysis has shown that everyday policy components are not neutral or technically rational, rather they are political artefacts which have significant potential to shape how people automatically think and act about themselves, their environment, and their expectations of both.

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