

The Work Programme: Making Welfare Work?

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Abstract

This thesis provides a review of the United Kingdom's 'Work Programme' as it was operating in 2014. The Work Programme was a welfare-to-work scheme rolled out nationally across mainland Britain in 2011. It was the flagship welfare programme of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government that was formed following the UK's general election of 2010. Welfare-to-work, alternatively known as 'workfare', is an approach to welfare provision which, in theory, mandates strict 'reciprocal activity' in return for receiving state benefits. Welfare-to-work is also increasingly associated with 'payment-by-results' schemes operated by private 'providers'. Welfare-to-work has been described by numerous theorists, politicians and social commentators as a positive and revolutionary transformation of the UK's benefits system that will re-build long-term welfare claimants' self-esteem, re-train them via 'tailored help and support', and subsequently re-integrate them into the active labour market. Such claims are also often associated with the belief that past welfare systems were too generous, thereby prompting the emergence of a pathological, intergenerational underclass. Welfare-to-work is therefore argued by many to be the best solution to a crisis of social exclusion, cultural degeneration and excessive national welfare costs. However, critics characterise welfare-to-work as an essential aspect of a 'neoliberal' crackdown on former social democratic states. Such critics claim that this New Right 'hardening' of welfare policy is designed to force the UK's labour markets to adapt to conditions of global competitiveness, lower-wages, less rights, and onerously 'flexible' working conditions. This thesis explores these broad and seemingly contradictory themes in both theory and also practice. More specifically, it assesses the degree to which either of these competing claims could be said to be valid for the Work Programme as it was operating within two welfare-to-work centres in the north of England in May, 2014. The thesis is based on 68 interviews with Work Programme staff and 'customers', foodbank managers and one anti-workfare activist. In addition, it draws on full-time fieldwork conducted over four weeks in May 2014 within two Work Programme centres. The main findings are that the Work Programme did not support the long-term unemployed into work, but also that it did not act as a punitive forced work scheme. Rather, it provided only limited contact with, and support to, claimants, and was essentially pointless in terms of improving a claimant's chances of finding work.

Dedication:

For my parents, who always worked.

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List of acronyms used in this thesis:

AFDC	Aid for Families with Dependent Children.
ALMP	Active Labour Market Policies.
CESI	Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion.
CETA	Comprehensive Employment and Training Act.
CWA	Civil Work Administration.
CWTP	Community Work and Training Program.
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions.
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance.
ET	Employment Training (scheme).
FERA	Federal Emergency Relief Administration.
FND	Flexible New Deal.
GAIN	Greater Avenues for Independence.
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.
HTC	Help Towards Work.
IMF	International Monetary Fund.
JCP	Jobcentre Plus.
JOBS	Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (program).
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance.
MPL	Minimum Performance Level.
NAO	National Audit Office.
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
PCOS	Public and Commercial Services Union.
PRWORA	Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act.
W2	Wisconsin Works (program).
WCA	Work Capability Assessment.
WEP	Work Experience Program.
WIN	Work Incentive (program).
WP	Work Programme.
WPA	Works Programme Administration.
WRAG	Work Related Activity Group.

Chapter One:

Introduction

1. *General Introduction*

This thesis presents an analysis of the United Kingdom's 'Work Programme' [henceforth, 'WP'] based on observation and interviews within two Work Programme centres. The WP was a social welfare policy introduced into England and Wales in 2011 by the then Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government (Department for Work and Pensions [henceforth, DWP], 2012). The WP was intended to provide 'tailored help and support' to long-term unemployed welfare claimants in order to help them achieve 'sustained employment' (DWP, 2011a; Grayling, 2011). The thesis researches the efficacy and day-to-day operations of the WP. It compares the data gathered with claims and predictions made regarding the WP, and other welfare-to-work schemes, by welfare scholars, politicians and social commentators. The thesis draws primarily upon full-time fieldwork and interviews conducted over four weeks within two separate WP centres in the north of England in May, 2014.

2. *Background*

The WP is an example of what welfare scholars broadly refer to as 'workfare'. Workfare is sometimes also called 'welfare-to-work' or 'active labour market policies' (Quaid, 2002; MacLeavy, 2009). The term 'workfare' will be used throughout the thesis. In its simplest sense, workfare means making the receipt of welfare benefits conditional upon the performance of mandatory reciprocal activities (Dwyer, 2000; Lodemel, 2001). This is often referred to as 'conditionality' (White, 2005; Galston, 2005). Unemployment welfare conditionality most commonly includes training, compulsory work experience, closely monitored 'job search' activities and regular attendance at workfare centres for 'caseworker' interviews (Trickey and Walker, 2000; Jordan, 2013). Conditionality is to be contrasted with generally unconditional social or liberal welfare systems in which benefit allocation is determined primarily by a claimant's need and eligibility (Westergaard, 1995; Dwyer, 2000). Proponents of conditional welfare argue that unconditional unemployment benefit receipt encourages passivity, thereby leading claimants to cease active job seeking (Mead, 1986; Layard *et al.*, 1994). It has also been argued that passive welfare systems undermine social

cohesion by exempting claimants from active community participation (Arendt, 1973; Etzioni, 1998; Wax, 2003; Mead 2005b; see also Hill, 1992; Dwyer, 2000). Proponents of conditional welfare also contend that passive welfare receipt encourages the formation of ‘underclass’ enclaves where pathological values promote ‘cultures of poverty’ and concomitant rises in criminality, welfare dependency, anti-social behaviour, hopelessness and teenage pregnancies (Moynihan, 1965; Dawkins, 1976; Mead, 1986; Brown, 2008; Blair, 1997a, 1997b; Smith, 2011).

Conditional welfare has been gradually introduced into the UK since the 1980s (King, 1987; Dwyer, 2000), with the first national workfare schemes – the ‘New Deal’ programmes – being introduced by New Labour from 1998 (Sunley *et al.*, 2001). The roll-out of the UK’s first full workfare scheme for the long-term unemployed – New Labour’s ‘Flexible New Deal’ [henceforth, ‘FND’] – occurred in 2009. The FND used private contractors, known as ‘providers’, to administer conditional welfare/workfare schemes. FND providers were paid primarily on a payments-by-results basis, i.e. by how many long-term unemployed ‘customers’ were placed back into work (Vegeris *et al.*, 2011). The FND programme was a significant failure, achieving only around a 5% success rate (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion [henceforth, CESI], 2012: 1; Jordan, 2014). In 2010, the newly-elected Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government cancelled all FND contracts, replacing this scheme with the WP (DWP, 2011a). The coalition government proposed that in order to restore fairness to the welfare system, a workfare programme was required that would “ensure that receipt of benefits for those able to work is conditional on their willingness to work” (HM Government, 2010: 23). According to Dwyer (2000: 210), however, “The increasing application of a principle of conditionality once again marks the formal acceptance and approval of deserving/undeserving distinction within public welfare arrangements.” Workfare, and its role, fairness and practical mechanisms, are therefore deeply contested and controversial sites of sociological investigation. As Holmes (2013: 1) puts it:

This mixed evidence has led to two extreme points of view regarding the use of workfare. Some groups would like to see workfare being the standard model of welfare provision in the UK. Others see it as exploitative and would prefer to see workfare dropped completely.

This thesis uses empirical data to investigate and assess these two polarised perspectives, particularly as they pertained to the WP.

3. My Interest in Workfare

My interest in workfare began in 2009. I had been running a small business as a painter and decorator but trade was lax and I needed to find alternative employment. I was offered a chance to work at an FND centre, initially for a trial period of a few months, to see if I liked it and was capable of performing the role of ‘caseworker’. I witnessed the practical side of the FND as a staff member, including its many failures. I was particularly shocked by its shoestring operations, chaotic administration and what I felt to be exploitative activities. However, I also gained invaluable experience, both of workfare and also of being a staff member in a workfare centre. This involved coming to identify with the other staff. This did not only include absorbing ‘culture of poverty’ beliefs about ‘clients’,¹ although that did occur. It also involved the bonding experience of sharing time, boredom, jokes, humorous incidents, beverages and mutual support in an often hostile and generally stressful environment. The FND centre had developed what Goffman (1961) describes as an ‘echelon authority’: one ruling group, ‘us’, had formed and bound together through a daily interaction with, and need to manage, ‘them’: the unwilling, unemployed, ‘clients’.

However, I lasted at this centre for only five weeks. In my view the centre operated a bullying and exploitative regime. Shortly afterwards I began a Master’s degree in the sociology of globalisation. I began to understand the significance of workfare in an international context, and moreover, the growing importance of ‘New Right’ economic policy in the UK. I completed a Master’s degree dissertation based on my FND employment. This focused on the FND centre’s disorderly administrative operations. FND contractors made profits by placing the long-term unemployed back into work. In my first briefing as a staff member the manager explained to me that the company had now accepted that this was not possible. To avoid financial collapse, management had instead decided to attract as many ‘referral fees’ as possible. These were small fees paid by the government when a new long-term unemployed welfare

¹ Welfare claimants who attend workfare centres are often described as ‘customers’ or ‘clients’. According to Goffman (1961), who makes a detailed analysis of mental asylum patients being described as ‘clients’, the use of such terms masks that the ‘client’ is really the ‘thing brought in to be fixed’, while the real ‘clients’ are the authorities.

claimant started at the centre. Referrals were made by letters sent from the Jobcentre plus [henceforth, JCP].² In theory, the FND centre would then call the claimant in to take part in the centre's workfare programme. This programme was supposed to include caseworker interviews, three days per week training and weekly monitored 'job search' sessions in a computer room. However, to break-even from referral fees meant that the company had to accept as many new referrals as the JCP was prepared to make. So many referrals were made each week - at times up to 80, according to the manager - that the company ceased even opening the letters. The letters were dumped in a spare room, eventually forming an enormous pile. The centre consequently descended into chaos. The chaos reached a peak during my employment and my dissertation related the causes and effects of this process. (See Jordan, 2013).

Research for my Master's degree dissertation indicated that direct fieldwork within workfare centres was rare. This provided an opportunity for a potentially important contribution to knowledge. Following the successful completion of my Master's I won funding to undertake PhD research into the WP. I was able to build on my practical experiences within the FND centre, plus my Master's degree syllabus, to lay the groundwork for this PhD research.

4. The need for research

The WP was buoyed by a combination of discourses, including: welfare's alleged unaffordability, the superiority of privatised provision, the need for 'global competitiveness', and the necessity of ending an intergenerational welfare-funded underclass (Grayling, 2009, 2011; Cameron, 2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b; Smith, 2012; DWP, 2011b). The 'marketisation' of welfare through privatised payments-by-results schemes has been further described as either the key to successful welfare reform (Quaid 2002; Mead 2005), or else as a punitive 'neoliberal' project designed to force workers in formerly prosperous industrial nations to accept 'poor work futures' in a globally competitive/exploitative labour market (Jessop, 1993; Peck, 2002; Byrne 2005).

Taking into account these competing narratives, the rationale for this PhD research was to investigate the practical implications, empirical results and wider consequences of the marketisation of welfare in the UK, specifically as it occurred

² UK job centres are named 'Jobcentre plus'.

under the WP. Little empirical research existed in this area, and particularly in the UK where nationwide privatised welfare provision only began in 2009. Moreover, where scholarly output did exist, this tended primarily to be either theoretical (e.g. Jessop, 1993; Deacon, 1994; European Union, 1995; Eurofund, 1997; Gans, 1995; Lodemel, 2000; Peck, 2002; Craig, 2003; White, 2004; Byrne, 2005; Pateman, 2005; Schwartz, 2005; Wax, 2005; Galston, 2005; Beem, 2005; Dostal, 2008), philosophical (e.g. Attas and De-Shalit, 2004; Goodin, 2004; Wax, 2003; White, 2004; King, 2005; Wacquant, 2010, 2012; Centre for Social Justice, 2011), based on statistical analysis (e.g. Sunley *et al.*, 2001; Dingledey, 2007; Kreiner *et al.*, 2005; Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, 2012); Hohmeyer and Wolff, 2012; conducted on now obsolete schemes (e.g. Piven and Cloward, 1971; Spicker, 1984; King, 1987; Digby, 1989; Trickey and Walker, 2000; Peck, 2001; Daguerre, 2004); or else conducted in a non-British context (e.g. Mead, 1986); Handler, 1995; Bryner, 1996; Burgess *et al.*, 2000; Goldberg, 2001; Quaid, 2002; Dahl, 2003; Michaud, 2004; Herd *et al.*, 2005; Weitz-Shapiro, 2005; Sanger, 2006; Drahokoupil, 2007; DWP, 2008b; Chan, 2009; Kobayashi, 2010; MacLeavey, 2009, 2010; Nybom, 2011). Research was therefore needed in order to provide empirical field data, and subsequent analysis, of this important and ongoing restructuring of the British welfare system. Research conducted within workfare centres was particularly rare. At the time of the project's inception, no research had been conducted into the WP that involved a researcher being embedded within delivery centres with full access to staff, customers, senior managers and observation of day-to-day activities on a full time basis. (See Newton *et al.*, 2012 for the closest thing: qualitative interviews and some participant observation conducted for the government after the WP's first year.) It was and is hoped that the results of this study will provide clear insights into an important but currently obscured arena of welfare policy implementation, thereby helping to inform future social policy.

5. *Research questions*

This research project began with nine questions:

1. What are the empirical realities of day-to-day life in a Work Programme centre for staff and attendees?
2. What practices and processes are used within such centres?

3. How do these practices and processes affect the employment outcomes of Work Programme attendees?
4. Does a benefit claimant's experience of the Work Programme vary by age, gender or ethnicity?
5. If so, is this also affected by geographical location?
6. Are there ways in which the aim of 'successful outcomes' is being modified by Work Programme centres to mean something other than employment?
7. For example, social control, life-style re-training or encouraging claimants to leave welfare despite not finding employment?
8. Is the Work Programme effectively addressing the issue of long-term unemployment?
9. To what extent can the Work Programme be said to be a 'neoliberal' welfare regime?

As discussed in the methods chapter (Chapter Four) not all of these questions could be addressed. For instance, the diversity of respondents' ethnicity was not broad enough to answer question 2 in any detail.

6. The structure of the thesis

The thesis is composed of nine chapters. The present chapter has outlined the general aims, scope and need for research. This will be followed in Section 7 by an overview of WP operational practices, rules and regulations. Chapter Two reviews the historical development of workfare as a policy paradigm. This review commences with Roosevelt's 'New Deal' before tracing key workfare policy developments, first in the USA, and then in the UK, up to the present day. Chapter Three presents a review of literature and theory pertaining to work, welfare and workfare. This chapter has two sections. Section 1 is divided into specific themes, presenting key theorists and perspectives in particular schools of thought ranging from supporters of workfare through to its critics. Section 2 presents summaries of empirical research projects conducted into workfare in practice from around the world. Chapter Four reviews the methodology used for the fieldwork phase of the research. This includes a discussion of the fieldwork processes followed, the biographical data of participants, an account of the interviewing process and a discussion of ethical considerations.

Chapter Five is the first of three data chapters. Chapter Five presents the views of workfare staff and ‘customers’ under the overall heading of ‘views and attitudes of staff and customers pertaining to the Work Programme and its participants’. This heading refers to staff and customer opinions on the WP, the WP’s rationale according to the government, and on the people who attend it. Chapter Six presents staff and customer perspectives on the day-to-day practices and primary activities of the workfare centres researched for the thesis. This includes monthly interviews, job seeking activities and training. Chapter Seven is divided into two sections. Section 1 provides staff and customer perspectives on aspects of the WP that were generating public controversy at the time of research, such as ‘sanctions’, work experience placements and alleged bullying. Staff and customer perspectives on these matters are both considered. Section 2 of Chapter Seven reviews important aspects of centre practice that remained largely hidden from public view or discourse, such as pressures on the staff to meet targets, personal safety and the ways in which staff modified their views on the ‘successes’ of the programme in the face of poor outcome results. Chapter Eight provides a discussion of the data, linking key points back to the literature and themes reviewed in Chapter Three. This is followed by a brief concluding chapter. This conclusion includes policy recommendations and the thesis’s primary contributions to knowledge.

7. Work Programme regulations, procedures and operational structures

This section provides a detailed review of the formal regulations, procedures and operational structures under which each of the centres researched for this study conducted their activities. This section is divided into three themes, namely: a brief overview of the contract and subcontracting structure of the WP, details of the WP’s formal operational regulations, and finally, some brief biographical data on WP attendees.

The contract structure of the Work Programme

The UK government divided WP administration into 18 ‘contract package areas’ covering the entire British mainland. (Northern Ireland operated a different programme (Newton *et al.*, 2012)). In 2011, 18 major organisations, known as ‘prime contractors’, or more usually just ‘Primes’, were awarded contracts by the UK government to administer the WP. Sixteen Primes were private companies and two

were charities (National Audit Office [henceforth, NAO], 2012). The matching figures of 18 contract areas and 18 Primes is a coincidence: 40 Prime contracts were awarded nationally (CESI, 2013a). Each contract area had at least two Primes operating within it. Five had three Primes (Newton *et al.*, 2012). Where a Prime, or other company, administered the WP directly, these companies were known as ‘service providers’, or more usually, simply as ‘providers’. Primes were permitted to subcontract to other providers. Approximately 900 WP providers were subcontracted to Primes nationally (CESI, 2013b: 4).

National rules, regulations and government expectations for all Work Programme providers

The official WP provider guidance notes were extensive. A detailed review of these is beyond the scope or relevance of this study. However, they are publicly available (DWP, 2014a), as is a usefully detailed review of their rationale and expected implementation (Newton *et al.*, 2012). In this section I will highlight only eight key government regulations, rules and operating structures. These give essential context to the empirical data presented in subsequent chapters.

Work Programme rationale and expected performance levels

According to the British government, the WP’s policy rationale was:

to increase employment [for the long-term unemployed] compared with previous schemes, decrease time spent on benefit, increase time employed for those coming off benefits, and narrow the performance gap between easier and harder to help claimants. (NAO, 2012: 5).

Providers were remunerated primarily according to how well they achieved these aims. The most important measure of success was how many WP customers achieved ‘sustained employment’ within their two years of programme attendance (Newton *et al.*, 2012: 6). A ‘Minimal Performance Level’ (MPL) for the WP was set by the government. However, according to the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion [henceforth, CESI] (2012), the government engaged in various modifications of this target, and has not always been transparent regarding its actual MPLs. The government’s expected MPL was initially 5.5%, with the actually achieved MPL in the WP’s first 14 months possibly being as low as 3.2% (CESI, 2012: 4). However, the

MPL changed year by year. For 2014, the year in which I conducted fieldwork, CESI estimate that the MPL was 25% (CESI, 2014). CESI also estimate that most providers did not achieve the MPL in 2013, with the average provider MPL being 23.3% (CESI, 2014: 1). However, the government claimed that all providers did achieve the 2014 MPL (DWP, 2014b: 2).

There are significant debates over the validity of the government's statistical methods (CESI, 2015; NAO, 2012). Analysis by the Public and Commercial Services Union [henceforth, PCOS] (2012: 1) suggests that the WP might have achieved only a 2.3% success rate in its first 12 months, and only 3% between 2011 and 2014 with 48,000 out of 1.5 million programme participants achieving 'sustainable employment' (PCOS, 2014: 1). With poor performance levels, WP providers planned to cut their spending on provision for the "hardest to help" categories by 54% from 2014 (NAO, 2014: 8).

Expected Practices

According to the British government, WP providers enjoyed "freedom to develop [their] own processes to support participants, plan activity and manage their experience whilst on the Work Programme in line with [their] delivery model and contract terms and conditions" (DWP, 2014c: 1). In pursuance of this aim, government initially permitted providers to set their own minimum service delivery standards. By 2013, government had revised this decision. With 212 minimum service standards in total set by 18 Primes, assessing compliance had proven impossible (NAO, 2012: 34). The government's performance monitoring processes were tightened, but Primes retained autonomy in specific service design. Each Prime's promised minimum service provision was listed in public contracts. All were generally similar. For 'Igneus', for instance (not the Prime involved in this study), minimum service provision was listed as:

- 1) A flexible service that is convenient and accessible.
 - 2) A personalised package of support that is tailored to individual needs.
 - 3) A professional In Work Support service which will help customers develop and progress in the workplace.
 - 4) Access to job vacancies and labour market information.
 - 5) Treating customers with respect at all times and enabling them to be active participants in setting their own goals.
- (Quoted directly from DWP, 2013a: 1).

All Primes promised to deliver services similar to this list (DWP, 2013a).³

The UK government also expected providers to form close working relationships with the DWP, JCP and other stakeholders (DWP, 2014d). The government also insisted that information pertaining to claimants, their activities and their progress, would be carefully recorded and transmitted, securely stored and accessible to individual claimants upon request. Customers were also required to be fully briefed on their expected levels of cooperation and activity and the mandatory nature of the programme - and also to have access to a clear complaints procedure that had been formally explained to them (DWP, 2014a).

The two types of welfare benefit and claimant: JSA and ESA

WP claimants were divided into two groups: those who claimed 'Job Seeker's Allowance' (JSA) and those who claimed the 'Employment and Support Allowance' (ESA). JSA was the standard unemployment benefit for able bodied individuals who were currently and immediately available for work. ESA was an incapacity benefit for claimants with health problems that affected their ability to work. ESA claimants on the WP had been deemed close to being capable of work, but in need of intensified support from WP providers.

JSA claimants could be mandated to do whatever, within lawful and contractual reason, the WP provider felt was appropriate in order to get them back into work. This commonly included training, regular meetings, work experience placements and tasks to be completed at home (Newton *et al.*, 2012; NAO, 2014). How often a JSA claimant was asked to attend the centre was at the discretion of the provider.

ESA claimants underwent a 'Work Capability Assessment' (a medical assessment), with a private medical company (DWP, 2013b; Atos Healthcare, 2013).⁴ ESA claimants could be placed into one of three categories based on the outcome of this assessment. Category 1 was for claimants found 'fit for work'. In that case, claimants were transferred to JSA. Claimants then became eligible for the WP in the same way as other JSA claimants. Category 2 consisted of claimants found currently incapable of work. These claimants were placed into a 'Support Group'. Support Group

³ In order to protect anonymity I cannot give the precise minimum service provision that the centres researched for this thesis followed. Hence, I have provided a generalised account.

⁴ Atos has now ceased its association with Work Capability Assessments.

claimants were not mandated to attend the WP but could volunteer for it. Category 3 consisted of the 'Work Related Activity Group' (WRAG). WRAG claimants were assessed as being potentially employable, but requiring additional tailored support to achieve this outcome. WRAG claimants were mandated to the WP once they reached the relevant criteria (detailed below). WRAG status was reassessed after one year. The national figures for ESA Work Capability Assessment outcomes in 2013 (the year before the fieldwork for this thesis was conducted) were as follows:

1. Attached to Support Group (no need to attend the WP or work): 35%.
 2. Found fit for work and must attend the WP: 42%.
 3. Attached to Work Related Activity Group and must attend the WP: 23%.
- (Litchfield, 2013: 20).

In other words, 65% of former Incapacity Benefits claimants who underwent the Work Capability Assessment in this period were placed in a category that rendered them subject to mandatory WP attendance.

The relative percentages of ESA and JSA on the WP altered continuously between 2011 and 2014. This was due to continual changes to the programme and its access requirements. However, in 2014, ESA claimants made up around one-quarter of total referrals to the WP nationally (up from 3% in 2011), and JSA claimants, three quarters (DWP, 2014e).

Benefit Levels

Benefit levels in each claimant category depended upon an individual's circumstances and the particular benefit being claimed. At the time of research, JSA was set at £57.35 per week for 18-24 year olds, and at £72.40 per week for the 25+ age group (HM Government, 2014a). Those claiming ESA for the first time had to wait 13 weeks (an 'assessment period') on JSA. If an ESA claim was unsuccessful, and the applicant judged 'fit for work', then the applicant was placed onto JSA immediately. Barring a further assessment or appeal the applicant would then remain on JSA permanently (assuming that they did not find work or leave benefits) (Litchfield, 2013). Support Group claimants received £108.15 per week, while WRAG claimants received up to £101.15 per week (HM Government, 2014b).

Claimants could not end up out of pocket by being on the WP. Providers had to provide travel fares to and from mandated activities. Providers could not force their customers to take work that would leave them worse off financially (DWP, 2013a).

Payment Groups and Eligibility

Benefit claimants were permitted to volunteer for the WP, but were more usually mandated by the DWP. Volunteers could not disengage from the programme once signed up. In either case, claimant eligibility was determined by a range of factors including: age, length of time unemployed, prior work/claim/probation history, and benefit claimed. Eligibility was primarily triggered by reaching a certain number of months claiming welfare. (When the WP was introduced, all long-term unemployed claimants had by definition already reached this point.) This varied between one day and twelve months, depending on the category of claimant. The categorisation of claimants and their subsequent eligibility followed an extremely detailed set of criteria. A comprehensive table listing all of these criteria can be found at DWP (2014f). However, Table 1 below provides details of the eligibility criteria of the groups most commonly mandated to the WP. Each category attracted a different ‘outcome payment’ for the provider, if and when the claimant achieved sustained employment.

Duration of mandated period

Assuming a claimant did not find employment, they were then expected to attend the WP for 24 months. If claimants did find employment, they remained entitled to further help from the WP centre until their initial two-year completion date was reached. Support was also available beyond this period in order to ensure a claimants’ successful completion of six months in work. However, claimants returned to the programme immediately if they became unemployed again during their two year mandatory period and re-claimed benefits.

Upon completion of two years on the WP, unemployment welfare claimants were then mandated to the ‘Community Action Programme’. This was a compulsory,

full-time version of the WP utilising compulsory work experience placements (DWP, 2011c), administered by a “hit squad of specialist advisers” (HM Government, 2013c).⁵

Table 1: Primary Work Programme Categories and Mandation⁶ Criteria

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Access/Entry Point (Months on benefits before becoming eligible)</i>	<i>Voluntary or Mandatory</i>
JSA claimants aged 18 to 24	Required from 9 months	Mandatory
JSA claimants aged 25 and over	Required from 12 months	Mandatory
JSA 18 year old, not in education, employment or training.	Required from 3 months	Mandatory
JSA Repeaters (In a regular cycle between work and claiming benefits)	Required from 3 months	Mandatory
JSA Ex-Incapacity Benefits (Used to claim IB, now moved over to JSA)	Required from 3 months	Mandatory
JSA Prison Leaver	Required from day one of release from prison or the first date of claim if made within 13 weeks	Mandatory
ESA WRAG participants	Eligible from Work Capability Assessment	Mandatory
ESA Support Group	Optional from WCA outcome	Voluntary
Pension Credit Claimants	Optional after 12 months claiming the benefit	Voluntary

Source: DWP (2014f).

The referral process

WP Providers in any one area had ‘customers’ referred to them by the JCP. Referral occurred when the claimants reached the required point of eligibility. Providers could not recruit, attract or entice claimants in any way on their own behalf. The JCP did not discriminate between providers: in any given contract area, each month’s new referrals were divided equally between all providers (DWP, 2014b).

Claimants were informed by letter of their mandatory requirement to attend the WP. This letter detailed the date and time of a compulsory initial interview. This letter also warned that failure to comply with the WP would result in a suspension of benefits.

⁵ According to welfare minister Mark Hoban: “The Work Programme is getting some of the hardest to help claimants into work despite a tough economic climate. We always knew that there would be some who would require further support after the Work Programme, which is why we’re introducing this intensive and uncompromising regime. We’ll be stepping up the pressure on claimants, who will be expected to attend the Jobcentre more frequently, with rigorous monitoring to ensure they are doing everything they can to find work.” (HM Government, 2013c: 1).

⁶ ‘Mandation’ is not a real word. However, it is the standard term used in UK government guidelines pertaining to the Work Programme.

Providers received electronic files from local JCP offices detailing the personal details and claim histories of claimants. In 2014, numbers of referrals to the WP were down by 45% nationally on the same weeks in the previous year (CESI, 2014: 1).

Sanctions

Each welfare claimant's compliance with the WP was enforced via the threat, or use, of a 'sanctioning' system. Sanctions meant the withdrawal or suspension of benefits payments. If a claimant failed to comply with lawful WP requests, provider staff completed a digital 'WP08' form detailing the 'offence'. The WP08 was then sent to the claimant's Jobcentre office electronically. The JCP made the final decision on whether a sanction was justified.

The DWP enjoyed some discretion in awarding sanctions. For serious offences, such as violence or voluntarily giving up employment, a claimant's benefits could be suspended for 13, 26 and then 156 weeks for a first, second or third offence (HM Government, 2013a: 1). Other 'sanctionable offences' included tardiness, non-compliance, failure to be 'available for work', inappropriate behaviour or language and refusal to accept a reasonable offer of employment. Between August 2013 and April, 2014, in the 8 months leading up to the period researched for this thesis, 162,400 sanctions were levied against claimants nationally for failure to fully participate in the WP (DWP, 2013c: 1). Claimants could sometimes claim a minimal emergency payment from the DWP while 'on' a sanction (DWP, 2014g). Sanctioned claimants also became eligible for foodbank vouchers.

While on the WP, JSA claimants continued to claim/sign on at the JCP. JCPs could also levy sanctions. Some claimants might therefore have been subjected to a sanction from the JCP while attending a WP centre. Sanctioned claimants had to continue to attend the WP and comply with all mandatory WP activities. Failure to do so meant that they could lose their entitlement to benefits entirely. In total, including both claimants mandated to the WP and also those only signing on at the JCP, 918,600 sanctions were levied in the fiscal year 2013-2014 (DWP, 2014h).

Attachment Fees and Outcome Payments

WP providers were paid an ‘attachment’ fee when a claimant joined the programme. Attachment fees ranged between £400 and £600 (DWP, 2013d: 5). To win contracts, Primes were permitted to negotiate ‘discounts’ on the attachment fees that they were prepared to accept (DWP, 2013d), so the exact figure is not known. By 2014, around £538 million worth of attachment fees had been paid (DWP, 2014i: 3). (See Table 2 for details of attachment fees).

Providers received nothing from the government just for getting a claimant into work. An ‘outcome payment’ (see Table 2) was only triggered when claimants remained in work for six months. Or, in the case of some more difficult categories, three months (DWP, 2012b). This six or three month period was classed as ‘sustainable employment’ by the government (DWP, 2013d). By March 2014, outcome payments paid out nationally since the commencement of the WP amounted to £332 million, with £177 million paid out for the 12 months 2013-2014 (DWP, 2014i: 3).

Once a claimant was in employment, a provider could claim a ‘sustainment’ payment every four weeks, based on a sliding scale (see Table 2). By March 2014, sustainment payments paid out nationally since the commencement of the WP amounted to £503 million, with £369 million for the year 2012-2014 (DWP, 2014i: 3). Job outcomes from JSA claimant categories were three to four times higher than those from ESA categories (DWP, 2012b: 1). Providers could also win ‘incentive payments’. These were awarded to the highest achieving providers (CESI, 2013a).

Table 2: Maximum payments available over 2 year attachment period/Payment Groups

<i>Payment group</i>	<i>Max year 1 attachment fee</i>	<i>Max year 1 job outcome fee</i>	<i>Max year 1 sustainment fee (monthly)</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. JSA aged 18-24	£400	£1,200	£2,210	£3,810
2. JSA aged 25+	£400	£1,200	£2,795	£4,395
3. JSA Early Access	£400	£1,200	£5,000	£6,600
4. JSA Ex-Incapacity Benefit	£400	£1,200	£5,000	£6,600
5. ESA Volunteers	£400	£1,000	£2,300	£3,700
6. New ESA claimants	£600	£1,200	£4,700	£6,500
7. ESA Ex-IB	£600	£3,500	£9,620	£13,720

8. Incapacity Benefit/Income Support	£400	£1,000	£2,300	£3,700
9. JSA Prison leavers	£300	£1,200	£4,000	£5,500

Source: HM Government (2013b).

WP Biographical details up to 2014

This section provides a brief review of WP biographical data drawn from tables in the DWP (2014e). Up to 2014, just over two thirds of the 1.5 million WP participants nationally were male. Just under one third were female. Job outcomes closely matched this pattern. Just under half of ESA claimants were female.

Around half of those referred to the WP were under 34 years of age. Two thirds of ESA claimants were over 34. The 18-24 age group achieved 36% of all WP job outcomes. Tables 3 and 4 list referrals and job outcomes as percentages of all referrals, by age, between 2011 and 2014.

One in ten WP participants self-described as ‘White’; one in five as ‘Black/Black British’; and one in twenty as ‘Asian/Asian British’. These figures were replicated in job outcome figures.

Table 3: Referrals and job outcomes as percentages of all referrals, by age, between 2011 and 2014: Male

<i>Age</i>	<i>18-24</i>	<i>25-34</i>	<i>35-44</i>	<i>45-49</i>	<i>50-54</i>	<i>55-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
Number of referrals to Work Programme (rounded % of approximate 1.5 million total)	19%	16%	15%	8%	6%	5%	2%
Job Outcomes (Rounded % of approximately 295,079 total outcome payments)	24%	17%	13%	6%	5%	4%	0.5%

Table 4: Referrals and job outcomes as percentages of all referrals, by age, between 2011 and 2014: female

<i>Age</i>	<i>18-24</i>	<i>25-34</i>	<i>35-44</i>	<i>45-49</i>	<i>50-54</i>	<i>55-59</i>	<i>60+</i>
Number of referrals to Work Programme (rounded % of approximate 1.5 million total)	9%	6%	9%	4%	3%	2%	0.5%
Job Outcomes (Rounded % of approximately 295,079 total outcome payments)	12%	4%	8%	4%	3%	2%	0.01%

8. Conclusion

This chapter introduced the WP and emphasised its importance as a social policy. The origins of my interest in workfare were reviewed and my previous work on the FND was outlined. I noted how my work on a Master's degree dissertation laid the groundwork for the current research.

This chapter also reviewed the importance of researching the WP, and the lack of detailed fieldwork inside WP centres at the commencement of my research. The primary research questions were listed, followed by an outline of the subsequent chapters.

Section 7 of this chapter provided details of the official rules and regulations under which WP centres were expected to operate at the time the research took place. This included a review of expected practices, the categories of claimants, and the ways in which WP centres earn income. This was followed by some basic biographical data on WP customers nationally at the time the research was conducted. The next chapter will consider the historical development of workfare as a social policy paradigm.

Chapter Two:

The historical development of workfare in the United States and the United Kingdom

1. *Introduction*

This chapter outlines the development of workfare as an unemployment welfare policy paradigm from its origins in the US through to the rollout of the UK's Work Programme in 2011. Following the example of Mead (2005a) and Bryner (1998) the chapter places the main subject of this thesis, the WP, in historical, social and economic context by listing the major events that led up to its inception.

The time periods presented in this chapter have been chosen because they pertain most directly to the emergence of modern 'workfare' policies. British and American 'poor law' discourse has a significantly longer history than that which is presented here.⁷ Moreover, not all relevant events could be included in this chapter even for the decades covered. Hence, only the most significant developments are noted. The chapter focuses on the US and the UK in order to chronicle the emergence of a pro-workfare consensus across and between the political landscapes of these two countries. The US section covers a longer time period. This is due to the significant influence of US unemployment welfare policy and experimentation on British welfare systems (Peck, 2001; Daguerre, 2004).

⁷ Poor law history is ancient, and the influence of this provenance should not be discounted. Grabham *et al.* (2009) speak of an 'institutional memory' that passes on prejudices over long periods. In this sense, both the US and UK have long institutional memories, with poor law systems that date back hundreds of years.

The chapter is structured into two primary sections. The first section reviews the historical development of workfare policy in the US from Roosevelt's 'New Deal', initiated in the 1930s, through to modern US unemployment welfare policy. The second section reviews the development of UK workfare policy from the late 1970s up to 2013. This year has been chosen because the subsequent year was the period researched for this thesis. In both sections, key political, legislative and policy developments are listed, and the wider economic contexts of those developments outlined.

2. The Development of Workfare in the United States

This section reviews the development of unemployment welfare policy in the US from Roosevelt's 'New Deal' through to modern workfare schemes. Key developments are contextualised by reference to wider social, political and economic events.

In 1929, the global economy suffered a crisis of unprecedented proportions, now known as the 'Great Depression' (Hoover, 2003). US Gross Domestic Product dropped by 30% (Fishback, 2012: 222) and almost a quarter of the US adult male labour force was eventually rendered unemployed (Frank and Bernanke, 2006: 98). The US economy threatened to collapse as businesses, shareholders and entrepreneurs were each drawn into the same structural crisis (Hoover, 2003). President Hoover attempted to avoid, or at the very least mitigate disaster by instituting controls on working hours, union demands and wage levels (Ohanian, 2009). However, with businesses going bankrupt, the workless organising into mass protest groups and mass social unrest spreading across the nation, the US political landscape had shifted (Hoover, 2003). The view, popular in American and European welfare discourse for centuries, that unemployment was the product of idleness, vice, or 'lack of gumption' (Spicker, 1981; Foucault, 1991; Handler, 1995), while not abandoned, nevertheless became untenable as an electable political platform (Hoover, 2003). A cross-party acceptance of the reality of structural economic crises saw the terrain of political discourse shift to a polarised debate over the appropriate role of the state in providing relief (Hoover, 2003). In 1930, President Hoover was resisting the establishment of federal unemployment agencies, arguing that:

No special session is necessary to deal with employment. [...] The spirit of voluntary service has been strong enough to cope with the problem for the past year, and it will, I am confident, continue in full measure of the need. (Hoover, 1930: 1).

However, Hoover's belief in voluntary and charity based relief failed to capture the support of the US electorate. The Democratic Party, led by Franklin D. Roosevelt, seized the political initiative by proposing wide-scale federal government relief. The idea won mass support from the desperate unemployed (Hoover, 2003).

Upon winning the 1933 presidential election, Roosevelt introduced the first federal welfare policies under what is now referred to as the 'New Deal' (Hoover, 2003).⁸ This included legislative instruments - most significantly the Civil Works Administration (CWA) Act - permitting the federal government to create work for the unemployed, and the establishment of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA)⁹ (Fishback, 2012) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (Crouch, 2010). In 1935, the Works Programme Administration (WPA) was established under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act. At an eventual cost of \$7 billion (unadjusted figures), WPA saw the US federal government become the US's largest employer, hiring men across the country to complete major public works, including schools, parks, roads and bridges (Crouch, 2010: 2; Kliman, 2012). Workers' wages on these schemes "were roughly as generous as a share of regular wages as modern unemployment benefits while adding a work requirement" (Fishback, 2012: 223). Also in 1935, the 'Wagner Act'¹⁰ strengthened the legal basis of trades unions, but bound them into tripartite alliance with government and business (Hoover, 2003).

Roosevelt's social welfare programmes did not go unchallenged. In 1937 a longstanding dispute over the rights and limitations of the US government, as set out by the constitution of 1789, came to a head in two famous legal challenges. Two Supreme Court judgments subsequently established the constitutional legitimacy of federal unemployment welfare schemes.

⁸ These schemes were not all known as the 'New Deal' at the time.

⁹ This federal scheme replaced the Emergency Relief Administration set up by Hoover in 1932.

¹⁰ Named after Senator Robert F. Wagner, but more properly titled the "National Labor Relations Act of 1935 (49 Stat. 449)."

Gender and marriage status each affected New Deal experiences and outcomes differently. The New Deal was established under the assumption that men worked while their wives remained at home (Murray, 1984). However, under the influence of Eleanor Roosevelt, and more significantly senior FERA administrator and unemployed women's rights advocate Ellen Sullivan Woodward, the New Deal was extended to create 'socially useful' make-work schemes for women, often in sewing or 'domestic' related industries (Swain, 1995). By 1933, around 300,000 women had passed through CWA, and by 1936, around 500,000 had passed through WPA (Swain, 2014: 1). Providing low wage work for women, and particularly through the use of traditional sewing methods in industries such as mattress making and garment manufacturing, thereby undercutting conventional, often male, industrial workers, prompted widespread anger amongst unemployed men. One WPA director, Holger Cahill, later joked darkly that tensions were so high that "there was a dead cat coming in the window every few minutes" (Swain, 1995: x).

To ensure the welfare of widows with dependent children the Roosevelt administration established what was to become, in time, the most famous, criticised and long-lasting (up to 1995) New Deal programme: Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) (Bane and Ellwood, 1994; Handler, 1995). AFDC modified and amalgamated a number of older 'Mother's Aid' schemes, some of which had been enacted into state laws - in Missouri and Illinois, for example - as early as 1911 (Bortz, 2012a, 2012b).

Female experiences of the New Deal also varied considerably according to ethnicity. The employment of black women on make-work schemes, and particularly in the southern states, was the most notable precursor of modern workfare according to Handler (1995). In the lead up to the Second World War, the southern US states experienced a substantial increase in the demand for cheap, female labour. According to Piven and Cloward (1971) this demand was met by a deliberate state policy of refusing AFDC to black women, most usually under the spurious pretence of 'immoral household' rules. Such rules barred women from receiving aid if they were suspected of having lovers or illegitimate children (Handler, 1995). By 1942, more than half of all US states, mostly in the south, had instituted immoral household rules (Piven and Cloward, 1971: 319). Women subjected to immoral household rules were left with little

option but to undertake agricultural work for below market average incomes (Handler, 1995).

Following the Second World War, southern US states experienced a period of sustained and exponential economic growth (Acquaye *et al.*, 2003), leading to a substantial programme of agricultural mechanisation and modernisation (Mize, 2006). While migrant Mexican workers found themselves subjected to a new ‘Fordist’ regime of agricultural production (Mize, 2006), the labour market for black workers, male and female, collapsed. A mass and desperate black migration to the industrial northern states followed (Piven and Cloward, 1971). Met with racism and deep resistance from local inhabitants, unions, welfare officials and business owners, black people who could not find work in the northern states had little choice but to settle into ghettos and makeshift encampments. These ghettos rapidly became subject to widespread crime and disorder (Piven and Cloward, 1971; Murray, 1984).

By 1957, when a new economic crisis struck the US economy (Dobb, 1959), black riots had become a favoured Republican exemplar of the putative social and personal crises precipitated by overly generous state welfare (Piven and Cloward, 1971; Bryner, 1998). This view was disseminated into the wider public consciousness via overtly racist political, social and media discourse (Cox, 1959; Murray, 1984; MacNicol, 1994). Longstanding conservative critics of Roosevelt-influenced policies used this racist milieu to question the New Deal’s efficacy, cost, socially catastrophic consequences and ‘un-American’ socialist trajectory (Bryner, 1998; Hoover, 2003). In 1960, US Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater stated that: “Indeed, this is one of the great evils of Welfarism – that it transforms the individual from a dignified, industrious, self-reliant, *spiritual* being into a dependant animal creature without his knowing it” (Goldwater, 1960: 68).

In 1958, the Douglas-Payne act was passed, increasing federal aid to economically depressed areas of the US (Kremen, 1974). Nevertheless, the theory that welfare might itself paradoxically cause personal dysfunction and poverty was achieving mainstream support (Mead, 2005a). This view was supported by the work of a previously little known (Harvey, 2007), but increasingly influential (Turner, 2011) group of European conservative economists, led by Friedrich Hayek (1980), Wilhelm Ropke (1948) and Ludwig von Mises (1951), known as the ‘Austrian School’

(Nicholas, 2011). A racially inflected version of the Austrian School's rejection of 'welfarism' captured cross-party attention (Bryner, 1998) and in 1962, the incoming Democratic administration placed 'welfare reform' high on its legislative agenda, with newly elected President Kennedy stating that: "Today, in a year of relative prosperity and high employment, we are more concerned about the poverty that persists in the midst of abundance. The reasons are often more social than economic, more often subtle than simple" (Kennedy 1962: 1). In 1962, the Public Welfare Amendments Act was passed. This act restructured federal welfare towards 'active' employment oriented programmes, and was followed in the same year by the Manpower Development Training Act, which mandated the retraining of unemployed welfare claimants in order to improve their employability (United States Department of Labor, 2010). Also in 1962, the federal Community Work and Training Programme (CWTP) was introduced (Kremen, 1974). CWTP was an experimental workfare scheme that mandated some claimants to work for their benefits (Hill, 1992). CWTP also permitted individual states to modify federal welfare schemes, improvising novel forms of 'conditionality', including work experience and retraining (Hill, 1992). However, provision was made to ensure that placements were 'meaningful' (usually employment in local public service roles), that a minimum wage was paid, and that workfare 'employees' did not displace other workers (Hill, 1992). The latter provision was included to avoid the disastrous and controversial local workforce displacement caused by a Canadian workfare scheme in 1958 (Stapleton, 2008). Under CWTP, 27,000 workers took part in US federal workfare between 1962 and 1968, receiving a total of \$195,000,000 in 'wage' payments (Library Index, 2012: 1).

However, the Democrat administration's interpretation of poverty as "more social than economic" (Kennedy, 1962: 1) did not go uncontested. In 1962, Michael Harrington's influential study *The Other America* was published, arguing that fifty million US citizens lived in structurally induced poverty. Nevertheless, the new 'workfare paradigm' - using 'conditionality' to alter claimant behaviour - had begun to create policy momentum (Bryner, 1998). A major shift in US federal policy occurred in 1964 when Title V of the Economic Opportunity Act extended the freedom of US states to experiment with work experience programmes, utilising funds separate from AFDC budgets. By 1967, when this scheme ended, \$300,000,000 had been expended under this directive, creating 72,000 work experience jobs (Library Index, 2012: 1).

The US economy emerged from a further structural crisis in 1961 (Labonte and Makinen, 2002). While unemployment in this year remained high, it was nevertheless similar across both black and white ethnic populations (Murray, 1984). However, following the Kennedy reforms, and up to 1976, black male labour force participation plummeted 271% more than the white drop (Murray, 1984: 76). Furthermore, much of this drop in black workforce participation occurred as overall US unemployment rates fell from 7.1% in 1961 to around 3.4% in 1969 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013: 2). Criticism of federal unemployment welfare intensified (Mead, 2005a), and once again, political and media discourse focused primarily on putative black social dysfunction (Murray, 1984). In 1965, sociologist (and later, Democratic senator) Daniel P. Moynihan published an influential US government report detailing the supposed effects of welfare on black communities (Bryner, 1998). In *The Negro Family*, Moynihan argued that a “tangle of pathology” was responsible for wide-scale and intergenerational black social dysfunction (Moynihan, 1965). This tangle, argued Moynihan, was comprised of welfare dependency, illegitimacy, substance abuse, unemployment and male feminisation. (Moynihan blamed the latter on racist suppression, alienation and female headed households.)

From the mid-1960s, welfare was the key electoral issue for the US Right (Bryner, 1998). In 1966, Ronald Reagan, then seeking election as Republican governor of California, argued for the need to “eliminate welfare freeloaders” (Digby, 1989: 17). Reagan articulated the concerns of many Republicans by noting that, despite significant efforts to contain unemployment and social breakdown, the numbers of female headed households in the US had increased by 24% (Digby, 1989: 17). However, ignoring Republican calls for the rollback of welfare, the Democratic Johnson administration (in office 1963-1969) continued to legislate workfare-based social welfare policies. In 1967, the Federal Work Incentive (WIN) programme (originally, and controversially, known as WIP (Bryner, 1998)) was enacted via the Social Security Act Amendments Bill and launched nationally (Hill, 1992). WIN mandated the federal registration of all AFDC claimants and granted individual states leeway in deciding which claimants in their legal jurisdictions should be referred to re-training programmes (Hill, 1992). WIN provided basic education and job skills preparation and began the now longstanding workfare association with mental health improvement (Peck, 2001) by instituting mandatory counselling sessions (Mead, 1986).

The ability of local states to arbitrarily decide who should be mandated to WIN saw Mississippi, according to Piven and Cloward (1971), again launch the wide scale exploitation of black women, many of whom were sent to private entrepreneurs and set to hard or menial exploitative work under the guise of work experience. Across the US more widely, WIN's provision for selection, which was based on 'appropriate behaviour' rules, allowed states to slash welfare bills by dropping clients under revived immoral household bylaws (Handler, 1995).¹¹

In 1968, Richard Nixon followed Reagan's example by making welfare reform a key rhetorical centrepiece for his presidential campaign, arguing that:

For the past five years we have been deluged by government programs for the unemployed; programs for the cities; programs for the poor... I say it is time to quit pouring billions of dollars into programs that have failed [...]. (Nixon, 1968: 8).

By 1969, the term 'workfare', which was probably coined by black Republican civil rights activist James Charles Evers (Peck, 2001), had migrated into senior political discourse, with now President Nixon stating that: "What America needs now is not more welfare, but more 'work-fare'" (Time Magazine, 1969). In 1969, Nixon established a 'family assistance' basic workfare scheme, noting that "The investment in these proposals is a human investment; it also is a "start-up cost" in turning around our dangerous decline into welfarism in America" (Nixon, 1969: 1). In 1973, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) was passed. CETA was a federally funded workfare scheme that provided re-training and work experience placements (Sanger, 2003). CETA provided cheap workfare labour to local businesses and state and federal services (Peck, 1998, 2001).

By the late 1960s, the US economy had begun to suffer "the most severe recession in postwar [sic] history" (1976 Economic Report of the President, quoted in Macavoy, 2003: 213), prompted partly by the cost of the Vietnam War, and partly by emerging structural crises in the global economic system (Kiely, 2005). According to Macavoy (2003: 213): "From November 1973 to June 1975 domestic industrial production had declined 12.9 percent, consumer prices rose 19.5 percent, and the unemployment rate increased from 5.6 percent to 8.7 percent." 'Stagflation', meaning

¹¹ In addition to immoral household rules, claimants were regularly dropped for 'obnoxious behaviour', which included arguing with welfare staff (Piven and Cloward, 1971).

simultaneous unemployment and inflation, struck the US economy in the early 1970s (Hoover, 2003). According to Keynesian theory, stagflation was not possible, or else was at least highly improbable (Blanchard and Johnson, 2013). Hence, the erstwhile Keynesian orthodoxy that had theoretically underpinned New Deal welfare economics began to lose credibility, even amongst many Keynesian economists (Rothbard, 1982; Blanchard and Johnson, 2013).¹² One influential response to the stagflation crisis was to blame individual choices amongst workers, and particularly demands for higher wages and welfare induced work avoidance (Gilder, 1982; Rothbard, 1982; Friedman, 2002). This idea drew some legitimacy from Oscar Lewis's (1976) anthropological study of 'five Mexican families'. Lewis proposed that a 'culture of poverty', at times, helped to perpetuate indigence.

However, according to Devine (2000), stagflation is not 'the crisis' itself, but the means via which profitability is initially restored to failing capitalist production. For example, according to Harvey (2007: 15), by the 1970s the position of the economic elites in Europe and the US had become precarious. Growth was collapsing, real interest rates were negative and the share of wealth of the richest 1% of US citizens had fallen to 8%, from a pre-war high of 16% (Harvey, 2007: 15). The 1970s witnessed a subsequent 'neoliberal' reorientation of the US and European economies. One significant aspect of this change was the attempted reversal of collapsing capitalist profitability through drastically reducing the real value of wages (Dumenil and Levy, 2004; Harvey, 2007, 2011).

For those who could find work, in 1975 the US Federal Government established the Earned Income Tax Credit: a welfare benefit that diverted taxes from middle income earners to subsidise low-wage employment (Mead, 2005b). For those who could not find work, workfare experienced a phase of exponential growth in this period. Schemes were established in Utah, New York, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Connecticut, Seattle and Denver, providing local businesses with welfare funded, or ultra-cheap, labour (Peck, 2001; Willetts, 1998).

¹² In this period major US businesses and employers' organisations began providing significant funds to 'neoliberal' academics and think-tanks to promote 'New Right' ideas (Jones and Novak, 1990; Aune, 2001). Bourdieu (2005) describes this as 'leaderless orchestration' - action on behalf of power interests, but without direct instruction.

Nevertheless, economic problems persisted and in 1979, Paul Volker, president of the US Federal Bank under President Carter, attempted to end US double-digit inflation by deliberately engineering a recession (Harvey, 2007). Volker hiked the nominal rate of interest, causing it to reach 20% by 1981 (Harvey, 2007: 23). As a consequence, the US unemployment rate rose from 5.8% in 1979 to 9.7% in 1982 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012: 1).

In 1981, as the crisis worsened (Moy, 1985), the Omnibus and Budget Reconciliation Act was passed, marking a major step towards pan-US workfare by mandating reciprocal work related activity for all federal unemployment benefit receipt (Quaid, 2002). This act saw 408,000 families expelled from welfare and 299,000 individuals experience severe benefits cuts (Midgley, 2007: 16). These measures were justified by President Reagan in 1982 when he argued that, under previous rules, “welfare goes to the greedy not the needy” (Hill, 1992: 4).¹³

Influenced by the writings of key neoliberal thinkers such as Gilder (1982), Murray (1984) and Mead (1986), and faced with mass cross-ethnic unemployment, the Republican right began to promote the concept of a welfare-dependent ‘underclass’ that stretched well beyond black and Latino communities, now corrupting white, working class neighbourhoods (Gans, 1995; Bryner, 1998; Aune, 2001). In 1986, as the official US unemployment rate dropped to 7% and labour force participation rose by 2.1 million people (Shank and Haugen, 1986: 3), President Reagan announced that the success of US welfare would no longer be judged by how many claimed it, but by how many became independent of it (Hill, 1992: 4).

Following Reagan’s lead, in 1987, newly elected Wisconsin governor Tommy Thompson announced the creation of Wisconsin Works (W2): a strict workfare regime targeting Wisconsin’s 100,000 welfare claimants (Quaid, 2002: 72). Support grew in mainstream political discourse for the establishment of similar, ultra-strict, federal workfare schemes (Bryner, 1998; Peck, 2001).

By the late 1980s, with workfare now widely accepted as necessary by both major US political parties, the terrain of social policy debate shifted. The new dispute was over which form of workfare was most effective (Bryner, 1998). In general,

Republicans argued for ‘work-first’ programmes that forced claimants to accept low-paid work, while Democrats called for ‘human capital’ based schemes that re-trained the unemployed and thereby increased their value on the labour market (Bryner, 1998; Quaid, 2002). A committee chaired by Bill Clinton negotiated a compromise position. This resulted in the Family Support Act of 1988, and the subsequent creation of the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) workfare scheme (Quaid, 2002). JOBS required all states to enrol a proportion of their unemployed welfare claimants on training based workfare schemes, but only on the understanding that they would take work as soon as it was available (Peck, 2001).

Assessments of JOBS vary. Mead (2005b) cites JOBS as the primary reason for a significant drop in welfare rolls in the 1990s. Peck (2001), however, argues that a significant upturn in the US business cycle in this period was the most likely explanation of JOBS’ apparent successes.¹⁴ Quaid (2002) characterises JOBS as an almost total disaster, except for the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) programme: a workfare scheme operating in Riverside County, California. According to Quaid (2002), the ubiquitously unsuccessful ‘human capital’ approach was abandoned by GAIN staff, who instead employed a strict and successful ‘work-first’ regime. Peck (2001), however, describes Riverside’s approach as a ‘co-stabilisation’ of welfare and exploitation, constituting a system of ultra-low wage, non-unionised forced labour that ultimately left most of its ‘success cases’ financially no better off than they were on welfare.¹⁵ Regardless, Riverside went on to become a globally iconic workfare scheme, even setting up a visitor centre and gift shop (Peck, 2001).

In 1991, William Weld demonstrated the growing electoral appeal of workfare by being elected Governor of Massachusetts on a strong anti-welfarist platform. Weld’s administration promptly initiated a strict workfare programme that was partly based on GAIN (Peck, 1998). Like GAIN, Weld’s scheme also became an icon of ‘welfare reform’ (Peck, 2001), but would later be found to have dropped welfare rolls without creating equivalent levels of employment (Quaid, 2002). This phenomenon was partly

¹⁴ According to Peck (2001: 344), most economic surveys in the US indicated that somewhere between one and two thirds of US welfare caseload reductions in the 1990s were the direct result of the business cycle upturn.

¹⁵ A survey conducted over three years found that the absolute best sample group that passed through Riverside was only \$52 a month better off than the control group, which had not been on workfare – indicating that the ‘workfare lifts people out of poverty’ thesis was simply not true (Handler, 1995).

achieved by paying claimants an up-front cheque for six months' worth of welfare, removing these claimants from the rolls on a technicality (Bryner, 1998).¹⁶

Between 1989 and 1991, the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, plus China's opening to the global market, added around two billion workers to the world's labour force (Harvey, 2011: 16). Increasingly 'globalised' production, combined with an exponential growth in financial capitalism (Kiely, 2005a) that diverted most of the world's investment capital away from production (Dicken, 2007), saw the poorest sectors of the US labour market experience significant pressures (Harvey, 2007; Wilson, 2011). In 1989, the AFDC caseload was 3,771,000. By 1993, this had increased by around one third, to 4,981,000, with the federal expenditure on AFDC increasing 18%, to \$16,212 million (Chan, 2009: 23). By 1994, the US federal food stamp programme was providing aid to 10% of the population (Handler, 1995: 45), while 14.4 million people were surviving with the aid of AFDC welfare (Mead, 2005a: 20). Between 1989 and 1994, US welfare rolls had increased by 30% nationally due to recession (Bryner, 1998: 5).

According to Gans (1995), in the early 1990s many US states began to run down or otherwise underfund their own welfare infrastructures in order to write them off as expensive failures, thereby justifying sub-contracting them out to cheaper, private providers. Whether this is true or not, from the 1990s the subcontracting of welfare services to for-profit companies working under payments-by-results contracts became increasingly common (Sanger, 2003; MacLeavey, 2010). Subcontractors included major firms, such as Maximus and Lockheed, but also numerous small charities who had converted into for-profit workfare providers as lucrative contracts enticed trustees into the open market (Sanger, 2003).

In 1995, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani introduced New York's 'Work Experience Program' (WEP): a workfare programme so strict, and so dedicated to the use of welfare claimants as workers, that it would go on to overtake Riverside as the global icon of workfare (Quaid, 2002). Amongst other practices, WEP mandated the fingerprinting and drug testing of claimants (Piven, 1998). By 1997, 100,000 claimants had passed through WEP (Quaid 2002: 119). WEP workers took over a range jobs previously held

¹⁶ Other techniques for cutting rolls included time-limiting assistance and penalising families for truancy, failure to get children immunised, having extra children, or minor transgression of administrative rules (Piven, 1998).

by public sector workers, including cleaning the streets and emptying trashcans. WEP allowed Mayor Giuliani to reduce New York's public sector workforce by 36,000, replacing them with un-unionised, minimum-wage workers (Giuliani, 2012: 2; Quaid, 2002). According to Giuliani (2012), New York's welfare claimants suffered from a generational, welfare induced erasure of work ethic. Giuliani claimed that WEP was inspired by "love", and by the desire to re-introduce an entrepreneurial and inspirational culture to New York (Giuliani, 2012).

In 1996, President Clinton, in a forced compromise with Republican House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich (Giuliani, 2012), passed the watershed Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), ending AFDC and introducing what Daguere (2004) describes as the 'second phase' of US workfare policy: a political consensus supporting work-first, New York style schemes.¹⁷ Peck (2001) and Handler (1995) argue that this phase of US policy was intended to create a 'flexibilised' job market by undercutting wage values and creating an un-unionised, casual workforce. According to McCall's (2001) extensive study of the US labour market in this era, for instance, the 1990s saw a substantial 'casualisation' of employment roles, including significant increases in involuntary part time work, temporary work, subcontracting and informal self-employment.

In 1999, Tommy Thompson announced that his 'Wisconsin Works' (W2) workfare scheme had dropped welfare rolls by 91%: from 100,000 in 1987, to 9,000 in 1999 (Quaid, 2002: 72). However, Quaid (2002) argues that there is little evidence that claimants who were dropped from Wisconsin's rolls actually found work, and moreover, that there was substantial evidence that the rolls would have been significantly higher if administrators had not made it all but impossible to open a new claim.¹⁸ For Quaid, a conservative politician, W2, although hailed internationally as a successful example of workfare, was, along with many similar US schemes, an exercise in making people disappear, either into crime, into other states, or else into absolute

¹⁷ In 1989, British economist John Williamson coined the term 'the Washington Consensus' to describe an emerging neoliberal cross-party support for tight fiscal discipline, with virtually no public budget deficit, an end to subsidies, with strict limitations on welfare, education, and infrastructure spending, plus tax cuts, financial liberalisation, free floating exchange rates, trade liberalisation and unified low tariffs, openness to foreign investment, privatisation, deregulation and more secure property rights (Birch and Mykhnenko, 2010).

¹⁸ In 2001, Wisconsin's rolls rose by 13% as the US entered an economic downturn. However, according to Peck (2002: 348), there was little acknowledgement of this in pro-workfare reporting.

poverty or even death. King (2005: 66), for instance, states that by 2002 an estimated one million low income US citizens were receiving welfare services without being registered on any official welfare rolls.

By 2001, New York had 45,000 workfare labourers, mostly women, who cleaned parks, swept streets, cleared snow, and who worked for sub-poverty wages with no union protection (Piven and Cloward, 2001: ix).¹⁹ Many other states were also benefitting from cheap, un-unionised workfare labour (Peck, 1998, 2001).²⁰ However, it was not only state and federal agencies that were benefitting financially from workfare. Some indication of the profitability of workfare for private contractors is given by the fact that in 2001, major US workfare provider Maximus saw its revenues reach \$487.3 million dollars: an annual growth of 36.8% from its 1995 revenues, 56% of which came from workfare related contracts (Sanger, 2003: 79). Workfare continues to be the primary US welfare paradigm.

3. The development of workfare in the United Kingdom

This section reviews the development of unemployment welfare policy in the UK, from the economic crises of the 1970s, up to and including the rollout of the WP in 2011. Key developments are contextualised by reference to wider social, political and economic events.

As in many European social welfare democracies, UK unemployment relief in the post-war period was based solely on entitlement (Esping-Anderson, 1990). By the late 1970s, incipient globalisation, including rapid developments in shipping containerisation, transportation, communications technology and global finance, had begun to significantly restructure trading and labour-market relationships across the world market (Castells, 1997; Held *et al.*, 1999; Dicken, 2007; Robertson, 1994). The longstanding practice of developed nations ‘exporting’ unemployment to underdeveloped countries (Mandel, 1968) via Keynesian domestic market protectionism (Jessop, 1993) and tripartite labour, business and government cooperation (Dahrendorf, 1959), became increasingly difficult for governments to

¹⁹ In one instance, a group of sacked New York sanitation workers were made to go back and perform the same roles as workfare labourers (Attas and De-Shalit, 2004: 319).

²⁰ ‘In Alberta, Canada, nursing assistants paid \$12 per hour were fired and replaced by workfare labour paid \$6 per hour under ‘ACEP’ - Alberta Community Employment Programme’(Attas and De-Shalit, 2004: 319).

maintain as businesses began to exploit easier access to foreign labour markets (Jessop, 1993; Held *et al.*, 1999). With developed world manufacturing beginning to shift operations to the global south (McLaughlin, 1994; Held *et al.*, 1999), the acute unemployment crisis in the underdeveloped world began to rebound into the already crisis ridden economies of developed Western nations. This helped to form into an integrated global crisis of unemployment, jobless growth and economic instability (Godfrey, 1986; Esping-Anderson, 1990; Kiely, 2005). By the mid-1970s, the UK government led by Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan was failing in its efforts to navigate through the British end of this protracted global crisis. Callaghan was forced to accept a £3.9 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund in 1976 (Talbot, 2005: 4). In return, Callaghan abandoned Labour's 1974 election commitments to increased spending on welfare, and instead reoriented British government policy towards 'monetarist' economics, including a series of swingeing public spending cuts (Talbot, 2005).²¹

Monetarism – a strongly right-leaning economic theory that argues for free market economics and the careful control of both the money supply and also inflation (Friedman, 2002) - introduced two key new concepts to UK economic practice: the 'accelerator principle' and the 'NAIRU'. The accelerator principle proposed that artificially high levels of unemployment (i.e. levels caused by welfare propping up wage values) were inflationary (King, 1987). The NAIRU (non-inflationary rate of unemployment) was proposed as a nominal and 'healthy' rate of employment that was thought to keep wages competitive (King, 1987; Layard *et al.*, 1994).

In the late 1970s, as unemployment and labour militancy spread throughout the UK, Margaret Thatcher, guided by mentor Keith Joseph, began to win support for neoliberal and monetarist principles in mainstream Conservative circles (Harvey, 2007), including the idea that the post-war tripartite commitment to full employment was leading to unmanageable and damaging levels of inflation (Hoover, 2003).

By 1980, all OECD countries began to experience what Jenkins (2010) describes as a 'synchronised downturn', as global oil prices doubled. In the same year, an OECD conference entitled *The Welfare State in Crisis* concluded that a clash had

²¹ Callaghan used his 1976 Labour Party conference address to warn that: "We used to think that you could spend your way out of a recession, and increase employment by cutting taxes and boosting Government spending. I tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists" (Callaghan, 1976: 8).

emerged between economic necessity and the expensive and outdated social policies of the developed world. Workfare, or ‘active labour market policies’, were the recommended solution (OECD, 1981).

In the early 1980s, the British Conservative Party, which had swept to power in 1979, commenced a steady reorientation of UK government policy towards monetarist theories of inflation control, NAIRU, and a tightening of the money supply (King, 1989; Hoover, 2003). The wages of the lowest-paid British workers dropped below the minimum for supporting a family and diseases associated with poverty began to return to the UK (Smart, 2003). The UK’s unemployment rate rose from 5.6% in 1980, to 10.1% in 1982, and peaking at 11.2 in 1985 (Castro and Soukiazis, 2008: 93).²² However, it should be noted that in 1982 the UK government modified its method for calculating unemployment to include only those people claiming unemployment benefit. This statistical modification removed between 170-190 thousand people from the official figures overnight (Godfrey, 1986: 23).

The Thatcher administration reduced inflation from 18% in 1980 to 4.5% in 1983, albeit by creating 3.3 million unemployed (Hoover 2003: 213). By 1986, the proportion of UK long-term unemployed (jobless for one year or more) had risen to 40%, from 20% in 1979 (Layard *et al.*, 1994: 59).²³

Between 1982 and 1989, an increasing number of ‘conditionalities’ were attached to welfare, including the testing of availability for work, compulsory interviews and making re-claims more difficult (King, 1989; Peck 2001: 294). This period also witnessed a significant rise in the media and political stigmatisation of welfare claimants, and particularly around the issue of supposed fraud (Spicker, 1984; Westergaard, 1995; Jordan, 2013).²⁴

In 1987, Keith Joseph’s (1974) once unthinkable - according to Watt (2010) - argument that the Conservative Party should focus on social conservatism more than economics, became a reality: the 1987 general election was the first in UK history in

²² Slightly different figures are given in different sources due to differences in methods of statistical calculation.

²³ The structure of employment in this period also changed, with around two million full time female jobs being replaced by part-time work (King, 1987: 193).

²⁴ In an article written in support of workfare entitled ‘Purge of the Parasites’, journalist P. Potts reported in 1986 that: “Mrs Thatcher recently became interested in workfare after watching a television programme about it. The next morning she dispatched a note to ministers asking for their thoughts” (Potts, 1986).

which the rhetoric of ‘social values’ took precedence over the state of the economy (Digby, 1989). In the run up to the election, Conservative MP Peter Lilley headed an influential media campaign to persuade the public that benefits were too high, and moreover, corrosive to social integration (Trickey and Walker, 2000). Conservative Secretary of State for Social Security John Moore introduced the term ‘welfare dependency’ to UK public discourse following a fact-finding trip to the US, arguing that “a welfare state worthy of the name aims [...] to widen the understanding that dependency is debilitating and that the best kind of help is that which gives people the will and ability to help themselves” (Dolowitz, 1998: 9).

The 1988 Social Security Act tightened welfare eligibility, raising the minimum age for claiming income support from 16 to 18, and mandating young people to accept training scheme places in order to maintain benefit eligibility (HM Government, 1988). However, claimants mandated to the programme far exceeded available places, leading to thousands of young people being automatically disentitled to benefits, and thereby disappearing from the welfare rolls (Trickey and Walker, 2000). Also in 1988, the parliamentary white paper *Training for Employment* was published. This argued that the unemployed faced a complex problem-set, including a ‘skills inadequacy’ and a benefit induced erosion of incentive (King and Ward, 1992). The Training for Employment (ET) workfare scheme followed in the same year (King and Ward, 1992). ET was intended to provide 600,000 training scheme placements for the long-term unemployed, at an estimated cost £1.4 billion (Hansard, 1988: 1). In 1989, a Social Security Act amendment introduced the iconic principle that welfare claimants must demonstrate that they were ‘actively seeking work’ (King and Ward, 1992).

By the mid-1990s, the proportion of UK citizens of working age who were over 55 and outside the labour market rose to 37%, up from 14% in 1977, with around one million of these people having moved onto sickness benefits (Trickey and Walker, 2000: 183). Sickness benefits figures, however, indicated statistically significant regional differences, suggesting the possibility that (especially in the north of England) this benefit ‘migration’ might have been a response to increasingly punitive welfare regimes (Trickey and Walker, 2000). Overall, between 1977 and the early 1990s, the numbers of full time males working in the UK economy dropped by 20% (McLaughlin, 1994: 16), while across Europe as a whole nearly half of unemployed workers were now long-term unemployed (Layard *et al.*, 1994: 7).

In 1991, Layard and Philpott's *Stopping Unemployment* was published. This was an influential study, particularly amongst emerging 'New Labour' cadres (Peck, 2001), arguing that strict workfare schemes could solve long-term unemployment. In 1992, as the number of service sector jobs in the UK increased 23.8% from 1979 figures (McLaughlin, 1994: 14), the OECD published a report urging the introduction of 'active labour market policies', i.e. workfare (Lodemel and Trickey, 2000b). In 1993, Prime Minister John Major signalled a wider shift in Conservative Party thinking, towards supporting US style 'workfare' (Jones and Novak, 1999), when he stated that "I increasingly wonder whether paying unemployment benefit, without offering or requiring any activity in return, serves unemployed people or society well" (Peck, 2001: 274).

In 1995, the Jobseekers Act mandated basic conditionality rules under a 'jobseeker's agreement'. This explicitly reoriented the purpose of the unemployment welfare system away from temporary relief, and towards the active encouragement of finding work (Jobseekers Act, 1995: 167). Workstart, a workfare scheme offering £60 per week for six months to any firm employing a long-term unemployed person, followed in the same year (Chan, 2009). Workstart was significantly unsuccessful (Willetts, 1998); possibly because, as research on similar schemes in the US had found, eligibility for the £60 payment was widely viewed by employers as an indication of claimant dysfunction and untrustworthiness (Willetts, 1998).

In 1996, the UK government produced an influential report entitled *The Right to Work/Workfare*, proposing workfare as a socially beneficial policy (King, 2005). In the same year, Labour MP Frank Field argued that the UK welfare system encouraged dishonesty (Schroeder, 2000). Jobcentres were granted discretionary powers to monitor individual jobseekers, and also to compel jobseekers to take more proactive steps towards finding work (Dingeldey, 2007). A new workfare scheme, Project Work, was trialled. Project Work was a 26 week programme, divided into 13 weeks of intensive job seeking, followed by 13 weeks of mandatory work experience (Trickey and Walker, 2000). While Project Work was successful in dropping welfare rolls, nevertheless, and similarly to the US experience (Quaid, 2002), most claimants who left Project Work did not actually find work (Trickey and Walker, 2000). Many attendees found the scheme onerous and pointless, and so disengaged, while older clients with families

experienced serious psychological stress over the prospect of being ‘sanctioned’ for minor infractions (Trickey and Walker, 2000).

By the close of 1996, welfare fraud had become such a major media, political and social concern that the Conservative government considered using MI5 to investigate benefit cheats (Schroeder, 2000). The working classes, meanwhile, accounted for around two thirds of the unemployed at this time (Marshall *et al.*, 1997: 140), arguably giving some credence to Harvey’s (2007) argument that OECD changes to welfare were part of a wider reassertion of capitalist class power.²⁵

In 1997, the European Union’s *Luxemburg Jobs Summit* proposed workfare as the new, essential European welfare paradigm, concluding that member states should take measures to target a minimum of 20% of the unemployed with ‘active’ welfare policies (workfare) as a first phase of policy reorientation (Lodemel and Trickey, 2000b: 14).

By 1997, a sea-change had occurred in UK political and economic thought, with the Conservative Party creating what Trickey and Walker (2000) describe as a pro-workfare ‘policy environment’ that even Labour had accepted (Crompton, 2008).²⁶ However, monetarist principles had been largely discredited, not least through the promotion of an alternative Right-leaning view, headed by iconic social conservative theorists George Gilder and Irving Kristol. This view argued that inflation and unemployment were not inversely linked, that inflation was not necessarily a bad thing, that the ‘NAIRU’, even if true, offered no practical policy use (Gilder, 1982; Stelzer, 1995; Hoover, 2003), and that so-called monetarists could not even provide a clear definition of what ‘money’ was (Hoover 2003; Nicholas, 2012). Moreover, as Kristol pointed out, the ‘NAIRU’ had no empirical or mathematical means of detection, allowing governments to assert that *any* amount of unemployment was the necessary NAIRU of that period (Stelzer, 1995). Milton Friedman, the architect of one influential branch of monetarism, had himself earlier denied that he had ever even argued that mass unemployment could control inflation long-term (Layard *et al.*, 1994).

²⁵ Several authors, notably Jurgen Habermas (Pusey, 1987), Andre Gorz (1989) and Ulrich Beck (1992) made similar claims regarding changes to European welfare in the 1980s.

²⁶ According to Crompton (2008), New Labour deliberately distanced itself from social class models and politics, hence its focus is on ‘social exclusion’ via training, skills, parenting, and a retreat from structural redistribution.

The Labour Party, seeking a new economic ‘third way’ between monetarist and old socialist thinking (Giddens, 1998), embraced a new economic paradigm, known as ‘Endogenous Growth Theory’ (Willetts, 1998; Dolowitz, 2004). This theory proposed that national economic success could be generated by ensuring that the skills and entrepreneurialism of the native workforce were continually improved in line with rising economic growth. This would prompt technological and productive innovations, thereby boosting the growth rate in a ‘virtuous circle’ (Crafts, 2007). This economic mechanism was argued to prevent the international outsourcing of jobs, and to exponentially increase the domestic base of national wealth (Porter, 1990; Romer, 1994).²⁷ This theory does not necessarily recommend workfare, but influential New Labour advisor Richard Layard had proposed utilising workfare as a mechanism of mass re-training (Layard *et al.*, 1994), and New Labour proponents viewed workfare as a potential cut-price stimulant of ‘endogenous growth’ (Willetts, 1998). As key New Labour architect Peter Mandelson put it: “[the] welfare-to-work programme makes the labour market flexible... It increases the supply of labour in the economy, its quality and its employability” (Dostal, 2008: 28). This idea drew partly upon successful Scandinavian active labour market policies (Daguerre, 2004).

Following electoral victory in 1997, New Labour fulfilled its manifesto pledge to levy a £5 billion windfall tax on previously privatised state utilities (Labour Party, 1997).²⁸ Around £3.5 billion of this windfall cash was used to establish the UK’s first full workfare policy suite, the ‘New Deal’ - named for Roosevelt’s iconic programme. However, unlike the American New Deal, the rationale of the UK version was not based on the notion of assuaging a structural crisis, but on endogenous growth theory combined with a ‘cultural’ theory of ‘worklessness’ and ‘social exclusion’, partly drawn from modern US workfare discourse (Daguerre, 2004; Crompton, 2008). As newly elected Prime Minister Tony Blair put it in 1997: “Social exclusion is about income but it is about more. It’s [...] damaging to self-esteem, more corrosive to society as a whole, more likely to be passed from generation to generation than material

²⁷ Drahokoupil (2007), labels this the ‘Porterian’ workfare model, after the work of key endogenous growth theorist, business guru Michael Porter, who views innovation and training as the key to economic growth (see Porter, 1990).

²⁸ “We will introduce a Budget within two months after the election to begin the task of equipping the British economy and reforming the welfare state to get young people and the long-term unemployed back to work. This welfare-to-work programme will be funded by a windfall levy on the excess profits of the privatised utilities, introduced in this Budget after we have consulted the regulators” (Labour Party, 1997: 15).

poverty'. (Blair, 1997c: 1)." New Labour's 'social exclusion' theory²⁹ had philosophical, sociological and economic roots. Philosophically, Blair was deeply influenced by social philosopher John McMurray's theories of a communitarian, active and engaged citizenry, and sociologically, by Amitai Etzioni's theories of a moral community of citizens bound together by both duties and benefits (Heron and Dwyer, 1999). Economically, social exclusion theory proposed that certain low income sectors of the UK population had become so distanced from the labour market that the funds invested in benefits were no longer alleviating poverty. Nor were they even propping up wages, as some previous theories of unemployment had argued (Layard *et al.*, 1994); they were simply maintaining a welfare funded section of the population in hopeless, 'workless', socially dysfunctional isolation (Blair, 1995, 1997b; see also Byrne, 2005). New Labour's election manifesto had promised that "Labour's welfare-to-work programme will attack unemployment and break the spiral of escalating spending on social security" (Labour Party, 1997: 16). This new approach to welfare was presented as a radical break with failed Conservative policy, "refocusing public welfare towards policies that emphasize reciprocity rather than monadic individualism" (Heron and Dwyer, 1999: 92). The new policy focus was to promote an inclusive, communitarian approach to wealth and welfare, transforming hitherto 'excluded' sections of society into social 'stakeholders'. Citizens, including welfare claimants, would now be expected to fulfil duties in order to be part of the communitarian state (Heron and Dwyer, 1999). Pursuant to this change, Gordon Brown announced that the £3.5 billion earmarked for workfare would be spent over four years to create an 'enabling state' (Atkins, 2010).³⁰ Combined with the introduction of a minimum wage, this money was intended to stimulate growth, end welfare dependency, tackle the chronic expansion of 'workless households', re-train the long-term unemployed, reduce income inequality, generate sustainable growth and eventually release funds previously spent on welfare for re-distribution to other social policies (The Labour Party, 1997; Blair, 1997a, 1997b; Willetts, 1998).

²⁹ Skeggs (2004) argues that 'social exclusion' is ideologically represented as a state rather than a process - something people do, rather than is done to them. Through this term, argues Skeggs, being unemployed is presented as the problem, not the economic processes causing that unemployment.

³⁰ Gordon Brown described the New Deal as an "onslaught against the unacceptable culture of worklessness that grew up in some of our communities in the 1980s and 1990s" (quoted in Chan, 2009: 23).

In 1998, the Minimum Wage Act was passed. However, fear of displacing casual workers prompted the legal exemption of any person engaged in training, work experience or temporary work (HM Government, 1998: Section 3) - the primary forms of work created by welfare programmes (Peck, 2001). A series of 'New Deal' welfare programmes followed: for young people, for lone parents, for partners of the unemployed and for disabled people (Atkins, 2010).³¹ New Deal was intended to be an "imaginative welfare-to-work programme to put the long-term unemployed back to work and to cut social security costs" (Labour Party, 1997: 13). According to welfare minister Peter Hain, speaking in 2003: "we must push forwards with further reform [...] focusing on the 4.5 million people of working age on out-of-work benefits." In fact, only 5.6% of New Deal participants ever matriculated into employment (CESI, 2012: 1). Moreover, the 'training' offered on the New Deal proved to be woefully inadequate. Drawing on the work of economics professor J Heckman, political analyst Lewis Baston calculated that for endogenous growth theory to achieve its predicted effect, even to the minimal standard of reducing UK income inequality levels back to their 1979 level, an investment in training closer to £240 billion than to the New Deal's £3.5 billion would have been required (Willetts, 1998: 56; also Leblanc, 2004).

The New Deal was criticised in its early stages for focusing on youth unemployment, thereby avoiding the more intractable problem of long-term worklessness amongst middle aged workers displaced from the manufacturing sector (Willetts, 1998). Nevertheless, the government appeared to have achieved a major success when the New Deal for Young People's client group dramatically shrank, almost immediately, from 241,000 in 1997 to 172,000 in 1998 (Peck, 2001: 309). However, later analysis indicated that most of this fall was due to improved economic circumstances and the resultant expanding labour market (Peck, 2001). Moreover, in those areas most blighted by youth unemployment - major northern cities - the New Deal was found to aggravate unemployment and insecure working conditions by flooding the market with cheap, temporary labour (Sunley *et al.*, 2001).

³¹ The New Deal for Partners (of claimants) was rolled out in April 1999. In 2000, the New Deal 50 Plus was rolled out for fifty years or older claimants who had been claiming JSA or Income Support for six months or more. In 2001, the New Deal 25+, for claimants in this age category unemployed for 18 months or over, was introduced. The New Deal for the Disabled was rolled out in July 2001, targeting disabled benefit claimants (Atkins, 2010).

By the late 1990s, a third of the UK's unemployed were long-term (12 months or more), while 20% of UK households were 'workless', compared to only 9% in 1979 (Trickey and Walker, 2000: 182, 184). UK economic growth fell from 3.5% in 1998, to 2.5% in 2002 (World Bank, 2015: 2) the proposed end date of the New Deal's first phase (Peck, 2001).

By the end of the 1990s, 14 out of 21 OECD countries had introduced some form of workfare (Bradbury, 2004: 2). However, these schemes did little to stem the tide of growing European Union unemployment (Bret, 2003; Kreiner and Tranoes, 2005), which by 1999 had reached the unprecedented figure of 15.7 million (Ditch and Roberts, 2002: 9). In 2002, 'jobless recoveries' emerged as a significant aspect of global financial restructuring (Harvey, 2011), and the average weekly pay of a production worker in the West was 12% below its maximum level in 1972 (Dumenil and Levy, 2004: 47). In the same year, the OECD urged member states to move forwards with intensified workfare programmes to 'activate' the unemployed (Daguerre, 2004).

In the UK, as the windfall money ran out, so did belief in endogenous growth theory. The New Labour government shifted back to the age-old practice of redistributing middle-income tax revenues to fund low-paid workers (Byrne, 2005). The Tax Credits Act (2002) offered low-paid workers a top-up benefit, propping up steadily declining real wage values (Harvey, 2011) and masking New Labour's wider economic policy failures (Byrne, 2005). In 2003, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Andrew Smith, insisted that "we know that work is the best route out of poverty, so we are determined to give people the help and support they need to move from welfare to work" (DWP, 2003: vii).

Public attitudes towards the unemployed hardened significantly in this period, partly due to the failure of the government to stem poverty and unemployment, and partly because 'welfare reform' and benefit fraud received increasingly belligerent and high-profile media coverage (Jones, 2011). Although endogenous growth theory had been largely exorcised from Labour Party policy (Steger and Roy, 2010), the notion of pathological welfare dependence remained, with Tony Blair going so far as to suggest that government programmes should target the 'underclass' while they were still foetuses (Ward, 2007).

In 2006, a British Social Attitudes survey found that the percentage of the UK's population who felt that poverty was caused by laziness or lack of willpower had risen to 27%, up from 19% in 1986 (Jones, 2011: 37). In 2007, the Welfare Reform Act³² was passed. This act sought to reduce the large numbers of sickness benefits claimants by replacing incapacity payments with the Employment Support Allowance: a conditional benefit mandating, where possible, active efforts to seek work. This act also laid down basic provisions for bringing lone parents back into the employment market through workfare schemes.

In 2008, Labour minister James Purnell³³ began calling for strict workfare to eradicate benefit fraud and idleness and to save taxpayers' money (Jones, 2011). In fact, in 2008 an estimated £16 billion worth of benefits went unclaimed in the UK, compared with around £1 billion estimated welfare fraud and £70 billion estimated tax fraud (Jones, 2011: 31).

By the close of 2008, there were 438,000 long-term UK unemployment benefits claimants (Office for National Statistics, 2009: 3). In the same year, a UK government report that had assessed workfare schemes in the US, Canada and Australia, concluded that "there is little evidence that workfare increases the likelihood of finding work" (DWP, 2008a: 5). Nevertheless, the UK government continued to support 'welfare reform', with increased support from the UK public (Jones, 2011). In 2009, the Welfare Reform Act made lawful such terms of conditionality as the government might see fit to apply to the receipt of unemployment benefit, including mandatory attendance on workfare schemes. In the same year the New Deal policy suite was reorganised into a new, national workfare scheme: the 'Flexible New Deal' (FND). The FND mandated benefits claimants of all ages who had been out of work for more than a year to attend private workfare centres for retraining and intensified job seeking (DWP, 2008b). The FND was initially trialled in selected areas, including Manchester, before being rolled out nationally in 2010 (Daguerre, 2004). In a new experiment in public-private sector cooperation, the FND was franchised to private, for-profit firms who operated on a payment-by-results basis (DWP, 2008b; Jordan, 2013). FND 'providers' received an initial 'service fee' (referral fee) based on contract size (numbers on programme),

³² Many general UK welfare bills are entitled "Welfare Reform Act", being distinguished by year of passing.

³³ Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, 2007-2009.

followed by incremental outcome payments when ‘clients’ achieved, and remained in, employment for 13 and then 26 weeks (Atkins, 2010: 416). According to Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the FND was intended to lift individuals out of poverty while simultaneously improving the UK economy’s international competitiveness (DWP, 2008b). The FND granted for-profit firms some discretion in how to achieve these aims (Atkins, 2010), but core practices insisted upon by the government as minimum service provision included regular workfare centre attendance, compulsory retraining, regular interviews/contact with a ‘caseworker’, closely monitored ‘job search’ and a four week ‘mandatory work related activity’, which would ideally be a work experience placement (DWP, 2009).

In 2009, a major economic crisis again struck the global economy. The IMF estimated that \$50 trillion worth of assets had been wiped from global markets (Harvey, 2011: 6), and the International Labour Organisation predicted that twenty million jobs would be lost globally in a subsequent economic depression (Steger and Roy, 2010: 131). In the UK, Conservative Shadow Home Secretary Chris Grayling claimed that welfare dependency was leading to an “urban war”, a “culture of violence” and the “collapse of civilised life” (Grayling, 2009: 1). Confusing fiction and reality, Grayling claimed that dystopian US television drama series *The Wire* presented a genuine representation of ‘underclass’ life in the UK, and that the only feasible solution was the Conservative Party’s “radical plans to transform our benefits culture” (2009: 2 and 6).

In May 2010, David Cameron’s Conservative-led coalition took office. While the new government cancelled the FND, ‘welfare reform’ was still firmly at the top of the Coalition’s domestic policy agenda (Smith, 2011), with David Cameron arguing that there were 120,000 exceptionally dysfunctional ‘underclass’ families in the UK who alone cost the country £9 billion per year. These families were, argued Cameron (2012c: 1), “sealed in their circumstances with a weekly welfare cheque [and so required] help to turn their lives around and heal the scars of the broken society.” The coalition government replaced the FND with its own flagship welfare scheme, the ‘Work Programme’ in 2011 (DWP, 2012a). The WP was intended to deliver training and intensive support to aid the long term unemployed back into work (Grayling, 2011). According to David Cameron, the WP would end “a welfare system that trapped millions in dependency” (Cameron, 2011c: 7). Cameron added that “welfare began as a life-line. For too many it's become a way of life. Generation after generation in the

cycle of dependency - and we are determined to break it” (Cameron, 2011c: 8). In 2012, the number of UK citizens unemployed for over *two* years reached 405,000 (ONS, 2012: 1).

The government’s initial benchmark success rate for the WP was set at 5.2% of long-term unemployed being moved back into work (CESI, 2012a: 1). Early in 2012, the NAO (2012) warned that the government had overestimated the ability of the WP to get people back into work, and that private companies were likely to struggle to achieve profitability.

By mid-2012, female, over-50s long-term unemployment increased 41% on the previous year (Cooper, 2012: 1), and by the end of 2012 the official unemployment figure, including males and females, was 2,510,000 (CESI, 2012b:1). The national unemployment rate was 7.8% and there were approximately 5.2 unemployed people per available vacancy (CESI, 2012b: 1). In November 2012, the first government report into the WP was published (Newton *et al.*, 2012). This report found that a total of 31,000 job outcome payments had been achieved by WP providers, equivalent to a ‘success’ rate of 3.1% for the three primary participant groups (CESI, 2012a: 1). This was an estimated underperformance of around 56% compared to government expectations; a figure even lower than that which would have been statistically expected had there been no government intervention whatsoever (CESI, 2012a).

4. *Conclusion*

This chapter reviewed the historical development of workfare as a social welfare policy in both the USA and also the UK. Key events were listed in chronological order, and social welfare legislation was contextualised by reference to wider social, economic and political factors.

The emergence of workfare in the UK marked a profound shift of social, political and economic thought. In the 1980s, even the suggestion of workfare was controversial (Peck, 2001). By 2013, workfare was the official welfare policy of each of the major British political parties (Labour Party, 2010; Liberal Democrat Party,

2012; Conservative Part, 2012). The road to a UK workfare consensus began in the economic crises of the 1970s. Whether workfare was significantly influenced by US policy, or whether it simply mirrored US policy due to the need to face down similar economic crises, remains a subject of deep debate (Daguerre, 2004; Welshman, 2007; Dostal, 2008). Nevertheless, US workfare, from Roosevelt's New Deal through to GAIN, W2 and New York's WEP, provided the 'shock laboratory', in Klein's (2007) term, in which workfare policy was developed, honed and tested.

US workfare policy passed through multiple stages. In the first instance, the government provided aid to the masses of unemployed men and women generated by the structural economic crisis known as the Great Depression. These 'New Deal' schemes not only gave work to the unemployed, they also delivered a substantial expansion of US infrastructure. Nevertheless, the New Deal schemes failed to prevent the reoccurrence of economic crises. Moreover, Keynesian economic policies produced their own, unique form of crisis – stagflation – and subsequently proved woefully inadequate in an age of highly competitive global capitalism.

From the 1960s, New Deal welfare gave way to models of workfare drawn primarily from exploitative schemes that had previously been used to employ black agricultural labourers at below market level wages. An emerging multi-ethnic unemployment crisis was matched by a resurgent Right, and a concomitant attack on the putatively socially and economically catastrophic principles of 'welfarism'. Influenced by Austrian School economics, anti-welfarist politicians and social commentators began to call for a tightening of the welfare system to prevent 'dependency' and the emergence of a demoralised, pathological underclass. While many right-leaning politicians were suspicious of welfare *per se*, nevertheless a pro-workfare political consensus emerged, divided according to whether workfare should be training based, or work-first. By the 1990s, work-first workfare was the primary US welfare paradigm, with hundreds of thousands of welfare claimants passing through such schemes each year.

In the UK, a long tradition of social democratic welfare, supported by strong unions and the Labour Party, took time to unpick. However, the reorientation of all major political parties towards 'neoliberal' economic policies meant that by the early 1990s, the need for workfare was agreed upon by all major parties. The justification for this social policy reorientation varied over time, but included discourses pertaining to social conservatism, fairness, 'endogenous growth', social exclusion, cost saving and

economic necessity. Nevertheless, the economic, political and social reality of workfare, including increasingly strict ‘conditionality’ rules, experienced its own incremental growth, regardless of justification, and regardless of the political party in government. From the trials of early workfare schemes in the 1980s, through to the FND and the rollout of the WP, UK workfare followed a trajectory of increasing and exponential expansion. By 2013, the notion that workfare was necessary to counter the social ‘dead weight’ of a welfare dependent pathological underclass had become political common sense. Where the emergent US New Right had argued that welfare was the problem, in the UK, from the 1990s, welfare *claimants* had become the problem. Workfare was the solution. The consensus surrounding this idea, not only between political parties but also between right-leaning and many centre ground academics, the media (including news and entertainment media) and the general public, was so strong that even the significant failures of the FND, and of the WP in its first two years, were not enough to dampen continued mass support for workfare programmes.

However, the ideas that underpin, surround and/or contest the workfare paradigm are not simplistic. The following chapter therefore reviews key themes and perspectives of work, welfare and workfare, unpacking some of the ideas presented in this chapter in greater detail, and introducing the primary counter narratives. This will be followed in Part 2 of the same chapter by a review of some important empirical studies of workfare in practice.

Chapter Three:

Theories of work, welfare and workfare

1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the most significant theories of welfare, workfare and work. The chapter is divided into eight themed sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 reviews the general subject of work and economic resources, and their importance in both theory and also historical human development. Section 3 explores ‘paradoxical failure’ theories of welfare. These theories view social welfare as inherently counterproductive. Section 4 considers perspectives that promote

‘disciplinary workfare’ as the appropriate response to ‘welfare dependence’. Section 5 considers ‘hysteresis’ theory, which argues that unemployment is partly caused by welfare induced psychological disengagement with the labour market. Section 6 reviews the debate between theorists who believe that workfare should be ‘work-first’, and those who argue that it should be ‘training first’. Section 7 considers theories of workfare and citizenship. Section 8 reviews theorists who are, or who have been, critical of poor laws and workfare, and also those scholars who contend that mass unemployment is caused by structural economic failures. Section 9 provides a conclusion and review of the key points of the chapter.

Each section covers a range of theorists and perspectives, from historical times to the modern day. These ideas are generally arranged in chronological order. The major proponents of particular perspectives are highlighted, and their theories are contextualised by reference to both significant supporting views and also critical responses. Each theme has been included for its direct relevance to the primary subject of the thesis.

2. *‘Where there is a beggar, there is a myth’:³⁴ mythologies and collective representations in work and welfare*

This section outlines the importance of work and resource distribution in human culture. A brief review of the historical development of welfare is provided, followed by a consideration of welfare theories as ‘mythologies’ that are ‘circulated’ by partisan social factions. This section concludes by noting that modern theories of welfare enjoy an ancient provenance.

Determining the appropriate allocation of work and resources is the oldest and most widespread of all social policy decisions (Donham, 1990; Eagleton, 1991). However, while diverse schemes of allocation have existed over the centuries (Mandel, 1968), perspectives on alms giving have retained a noteworthy coherence and similarity

³⁴ This is Adorno and Horkheimer’s (1992: 203) paraphrase of a Walter Benjamin quote: “As long as there is still one beggar around, there will still be myth” (Benjamin, 1999: 400).

throughout much of Western history.³⁵ Most commonly, such theories indict the poor for their putative turpitude or idleness (Spicker, 1984; Digby, 1989). Some, such as Wax (2003), view this as evidence that all societies eschew ‘freeloaders’, hence, strict controls on welfare is ‘natural’. Others argue contrarily that the longstanding defamation of the poor is evidence that material divisions of wealth and poverty, particularly within advanced economies, produce predictable ideological justifications (Marx, 1887; Archer, 1989; Milward, 2000). The debate between these two perspectives is as old as organised state welfare itself (Hands, 1968).

The first known provision of aid to someone who was no longer able to care for themselves occurred around 1.7 million years ago (Green, 2003). There are several further examples of prehistoric welfare provision (Fraye *et al.*, 1988; Oxenham *et al.*, 2009; Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, 2014).³⁶ Over time, as social groups commenced primitive organised production, so resource, labour and social welfare allocation became intertwined with the formation and maintenance of power relationships within and between social fractions (Mandel, 1968; Godelier, 1977). According to Godelier (1977) and Levi-Strauss (1977), in most cases the social policy ‘theories’ of such groups were not explicitly articulated, but rather, encoded within ritual and myth. Levi-Strauss, for example, finds Winnebago Indians encoding social class inequalities in the formalised layouts of villages, with material class polarisations obscured behind ritual ideology (Leeuwen, 2005). Godelier (1977) finds labour and wealth in several Melanesian tribal groups distributed via complex systems of ritual chauvinism. Numerous mythic schemes have also been employed throughout history to rationalise profoundly exploitative forms of resource and labour distribution (Donham, 1990; Levi-Strauss, 1977; Godelier, 1977).

The development of complex class stratification in ancient, primitively monetised, large-scale commodity economies witnessed the emergence of widespread relational poverty (as opposed to poverty as a general lack of resources) (Mandel,

³⁵ A significant division existed in the classical world between Eastern and Western views of alms giving. In Eastern religion, alms giving was widely incorporated into religious and spiritual practice. In the ancient Western world, charity was more often viewed as a social policy that was necessary at times, but which nevertheless entailed the pitfall of encouraging idleness. The use of charity as a spiritual practice in the West can be traced to the influence of Eastern philosophy (Hands, 1968).

³⁶ Archaeologist Ralph Salecki discovered the remains of a disabled Neanderthal male man in a cave in Shanidar, Iraq. According to the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History (2014: 1): “He would have been considered old to another Neanderthal, and he would probably not have been able to survive without the care of his social group.”

1968). Rustow (1980) describes this as a global emergence of ‘superstratification’. Along with this phenomenon came a concomitant recognition of poverty as both a social evil, and also as a threat to social order (Rustow, 1980; Mandel, 1968).³⁷ Hands (1968: 66) thus notes that vagrancy legislation in classical Sparta and Rome sprang not from moral outrage, but from the recognition that structural unemployment was both real and also a potential stimulus of revolution. According to Simmel (1908: 121) “As soon as the welfare of society requires assistance to the poor [...] this assistance then takes place voluntarily, or is imposed by law, so that the poor will not become active and dangerous enemies of society.”

The first known government social welfare loans were thus made to aid ruined farmers in ancient Mesopotamia, circa 2,500 BCE, to prevent agricultural rioting (Mandel, 1968). However, proverbs and myths inscribed on tablets dating from this period indicate that the Mesopotamians characterised the poor much as modern ‘underclass’ discourses do (Schroeder, 2000): as deceitful parasites who constituted “the weak in the land” and who should “walk the streets in shame” (University of Oxford, 2006).³⁸ Remarkably, these ancient cuneiform inscriptions also reveal that some of the most longstanding notions in social welfare discourse are ancient. For example, the belief that poverty can be overcome by making more of an effort: “Moving about defeats poverty. He who knows how to move around becomes strong.” Additionally, that the poor are not valued members of society: “Let the poor man die, let him not live.” And even that charity encourages welfare dependency: “A vagrant

³⁷ Significant improvements in agricultural production were one of the primary causes of mass unemployment in the ancient world (Hands, 1968); just as they were in Elizabethan times (Hands, 1968) and in the post-war southern USA (Piven and Cloward, 1971).

³⁸ “The poor are the weak in the Land.”

“The word of a poor man is not accepted.”

“When he [a poor man] walks on the streets no one greets him. And when he comes home to his wife, “Bad Name” is what he is called.”

Other proverbs recorded in cuneiform include:

“Let the poor man die, let him not live. When he finds bread, he finds no salt. When he finds salt, he finds no bread. When he finds meat, he finds no condiments. When he finds condiments, he finds no meat. [...] When he finds oil, he finds no jar. When he finds a jar, he finds no oil.”

“The lives of the poor do not survive their deaths.”

“The poor man must always look to his next meal.”

“The belching poor man should not look scornfully at the rich man.”

“How can a poor man who doesn't know how to cultivate barley manage to cultivate wheat?”

“The poor man is not appreciated.”

“The poor man chews whatever he is given.”

“He didn't plough the field during winter. And at harvest time he turned his hand to carding.”

“How lowly is the poor man! The area around the oven is a mill-house to him. His torn clothes will not be repaired. That which he has lost will not be searched for.” (University of Oxford, 2006).

flays the skin of an opened hand.” The counter view that charity is essential for the survival of the poor is also recorded: “Oh my sister, if there were no outdoor shrines, and, oh my mother, if there were no river as well, I would be dying of hunger” (University of Oxford, 2006). All of these conceptions survive in what Digby (1989) describes as a modern ‘welfare mythology’.

Godelier (1977) argues that many widely believed economic notions in modern capitalist societies enjoy as little connection to material reality as do tribal myths. There is a notable similarity, for instance, between Levi-Strauss’ analysis of the structure and function of Winnebago village layouts and modern ‘myths’ surrounding ‘dysfunctional’ poor estates (Bryant 1954; Skeggs, 2004; Gidley and Rooke, 2004). Goffman (1990) even describes this peculiar phenomenon as the application of a ‘tribal stigma’.

According to Baudrillard (1981), it is the active ‘social circulation’ of myths, and not their specific content, which bind social factions together in partisan community ideologies. This idea is echoed in the work of numerous scholars³⁹ who propose that most claims regarding modern welfare are unfounded ‘myths’ circulated in order to maliciously influence public and/or political sentiment (e.g. Gilder, 1982; Spicker, 1984; Mead, 1986; Digby, 1989; Handler, 1995; Murray, 1996; Peck, 2001; Beck, 2003; Harvey, 2007; Lee *et al.*, 2008; Crompton, 2008; Jones, 2011; Wacquant, 2012; Hills, 2015). Moreover, reflecting Althusser’s (1971) claim that single words can be sites of bitter class struggle, these scholars represent a spectrum of political standpoints. For example, Handler’s (1995) criticism of ‘myth and ritual’ as a weapon of the elite can be contrasted with Murray’s (1996) attack on the ‘myth of the structurally poor’, which, Murray argues, revives past, equally false myths of the ‘noble savage’. Myths, stories and folklore surrounding poverty, idleness and unemployment recur through numerous civilizations. Using categories drawn from ancient Mesopotamian folklore, the following section will explore the key theoretical streams that inform modern workfare policy. Each section is structured to highlight the longstanding role of welfare theories as partisan collective representations of myth which nevertheless enjoy real political, social, economic and cultural consequences well beyond the Academy.

³⁹ A cursory search for welfare studies publications with the search-term ‘myth*’ in the title section returns well over 100 books and articles that use a variation of this word. This is not including journalistic or directly political literature.

3. *'A vagrant flays the skin of an opened hand': theories of paradoxical failure*

This section considers theories of social welfare that argue that alms, charity and welfare inevitably fail because they paradoxically generate or encourage further poverty and unemployment. Key theorists in this perspective are reviewed, from ancient Britain through to the modern day.

Theories of state welfare first arrived in Britain with the Roman occupation. Classical Roman patricians employed state welfare extensively in order to encourage reciprocal loyalty and maintain social stability (Hands, 1968). It has been estimated that, at times, five out of ten Roman citizens lived on public welfare schemes (Hands, 1968: 48). Already by the 1st century, Plutarch, quoting a Spartan's rebuff to a beggar, was articulating the theory that charity paradoxically encouraged poverty: "But if I gave to you, you would proceed to beg all the more; it was the man who gave to you in the first place who made you idle [...]" (Hands, 1968: 65). Eastern views of alms giving as a positive spiritual duty entered Britain with early Christianity in the 5th century, and then more influentially in the 6th century with the Romanising missions of Pope Gregory I (Feiling, 1969). Gregory was a patrician who had established widespread public support through the use of generous social welfare schemes (Ambrosini, 1970). By the 7th century, Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were committing a tenth of their yearly wealth to maintaining the clergy and the destitute (Palgrave, 1838). Writing in the 8th century, Egbert, Archbishop of York, advised that priests should divide tithes into three parts, one third of which they were "in all humility, mercifully to distribute with their own hands for the use of poor and strangers" (Webb and Webb, 1910: 2). By the reign of Aethelstan in the 10th century, safeguards against alms induced idleness were already being written into Anglo-Saxon legislation (Webb and Webb, 1910).

By the late 14th century, Anglo-Saxon slavery had transitioned into Norman serfdom (Feiling, 1969). Incremental social and economic changes had prompted the emergence of basic wage-labour markets (Wallerstein, 1974). However, famine, and a subsequent labour shortage, strengthened the wage bargaining position of peripatetic workers (Campbell, 2009). Edward III's regime responded with repressive labour legislation (Trevelyan, 1957a). First, in 1349, the Ordinance of Labourers outlawed charity outside of the Church, lest this encourage idleness. Nevertheless, according to E. M. Leonard's [1900] classic study of English poor laws, indiscriminate monastic

alms-giving still “did almost as much to increase beggars as relieve them” (Trevelyan, 1957a: 105). Then in 1351, the paradoxical theory of welfare was explicitly inscribed into English law with the passing of the Statute of Labourers. This statute stated that: “[...] giving themselves up to idleness and sins, and, at times, to robbery and other crimes, let no one [...] cherish them [beggars] in their sloth, so that thus they may be compelled to labour for the necessaries of life.”

The notion that poor relief encouraged sloth remained permanently influential in British poor law theory thereafter (Webb and Webb, 1910; Spicker, 1984). Moreover, this view experienced resurgent articulation following the institution of each subsequent major poor law ‘reform’. The expansion of workhouses following the 1723 Poor Relief Act (Slack, 1990) was criticised on this basis by Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham (Clark and Page, 2008), Franklin (1753, 1768) and Townsend (1786); the Speenhamland system of 1795 by Malthus (1798), Ricardo (1817) and Senior (1966) [1826]; and the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 by Cobden (1903) [1835] and de Tocqueville (2002) [1835]). Following the reforms of the mid-19th century, even Charles Darwin was prompted to warn that poor laws would lead to the “degeneration of the human race” (1874: 132).

However, the ‘paradoxical failure’ theory was not uncontested. Improvements in cloth manufacturing technology from the 18th century lessened the price of printing, leading to a slew of pro-labour pamphlets that challenged the official view of pauperism (Gouldner, 1976; Burnett, 1994). Moreover, practical resistance occurred in the form of riots: most notably, those inspired by Richard Oastler, a Tory turned labour radical whose ‘disciples’ attacked and even burned down many a workhouse (Flinn, 1975). Another elite dissenter, well-known art critic John Ruskin, argued in the 1860s that to blame the poor for their fate was contrary to Christ’s teaching (Hilton, 2000: 295). Later, the work of Karl Marx provided an extensive and detailed counter-argument, claiming that capitalism itself, and not poor relief, generated unemployment (Marx, 1887).

In the late 1800s, as ‘unemployment’ entered the Oxford dictionary (Burnett, 1994), mass worklessness and violent social unrest prompted a major expansion of centralised poor relief (Laybourne and Murphy, 1999; Miller, 1988). Herbert Spencer, Britain’s most influential social theorist and commentator (Lopez and Scott, 2000),

intervened in the poor law debate in 1885, with the publication of his study *Man Versus the State*. Spencer laid the foundations for all later ‘neoliberal’ anti-welfare arguments by arguing that poverty was a choice, hence, poor relief was both an illiberal extension of state power and also an unwelcome interference in the labour market that would inevitably exacerbate unemployment. Too often, argued Spencer, the miseries of the poor were presented as “the miseries of the deserving poor, instead of being thought of, as in large measure they should be, as the miseries of the undeserving poor” (Spencer, 1960: 22).

While British Liberal and Conservative politicians generally accepted the thrust of Spencer’s arguments (Hay, 1983), nevertheless, in 1906, amidst elite fears that mass unemployment might promote socialism, basic social welfare provisions known as a ‘service state’ system were introduced (Hay, 1983). This was followed in the next two decades by a series of expansions of government administered welfare (Davis, 2009).

However, a significant counter-view was developing, particularly in Austria. Here, analysis of state welfare had a long history due to the influence of social welfare programmes instituted under Bismarck’s ‘Sozialstaat’ (social state) policies in the neighbouring unified German state from 1871 (Taylor, 1955; Simmel, 1908). Thus, in 1933, adapting Spencer’s views to attack the new British ‘service state’ paradigm, and its proposed extension into more socialistic formats (see e.g. Laski, 1927), ‘Austrian School’ economist Friedrich Hayek warned that attempts to avoid communism by expanding poor relief would prove counter-productive, as state ‘welfarism’ itself implied a totalitarian expansion of government power (Hayek, 1933). The political configuration of the UK, however, was not favourable to Hayek’s arguments (Hoover, 2003).

In 1942, William Beveridge, who had long argued that full employment was the basis of a secure, socially just society (e.g. Beveridge, 1909), published his *Social Insurance and Allied Services* paper, calling for the establishment of a comprehensive unemployment insurance scheme, albeit with the proviso that after six months claimants should be mandated to training or public service work (Beveridge, 1942). According to Foucault (2008), this report provided the previously fragmented and disjointed ‘Austrian School’ with a clear adversary around which ‘neoliberalism’ could begin to cohere as a distinct economic and political project. Hayek alone produced a

significant and influential (Hoover, 2003) corpus of further works. These combined sociological, philosophical and economic arguments into a warning that centralised economic planning, including the establishment of universal state welfare systems, would paradoxically generate an eventual ‘enservment’ of subject populations by destroying the entrepreneurialism, vivacity and consequent productivity of market systems (Hayek, 1976, 1980, 1986).⁴⁰

Numerous major scholars supported Hayek’s perspective. Henry Simons (1945) argued that Beveridge’s reforms would permit workers to fix wage prices above market rates, thereby undermining attempts to create full employment. Wilhelm Ropke (1948: 163) attacked state welfare as an “aberration” that destroyed self-responsibility, eroded community support networks and transformed workers into docile state pets. Hayek’s mentor, Ludwig von Mises (1951: 484), warned that: “in the long run unemployment doles can have no other effect than the perpetuation of unemployment.”

The paradoxical failure theory was not limited to economists. Neoliberal historian Alexander Rustow⁴¹ (1980 [1957]) argued that welfare suckled a “monster” that grew hungrier with the feeding, while philosopher Ayn Rand (1964) characterised even charitable welfare as a destructive parasitism masquerading as a social good. A signal neoliberal exception was Karl Popper, who promoted universal unemployment insurance as an essential aspect of a just society (Popper, 1966: 325).

While the works of the major neoliberal economists remained largely obscure up to the 1960s, at least to Anglo-American audiences (Harvey, 2007), ‘paradoxical failure’ arguments enjoyed a populist boost in 1962 with the publication of ‘Chicago School’ theorist Milton Friedman’s *Capitalism and Freedom*. Friedman (2002) argued that unemployment benefits acted, effectively, as a minimum wage, permitting workers to refuse offers of lower pay. According to Friedman, this generated unemployment because, despite there being a vast amount of work to do, entrepreneurs could not afford to set up businesses to do it. An influential study by Benjamin and Kochin (1979) later appeared to confirm this thesis by concluding that inter-War British unemployment rose, at times, in direct proportion to expansions of unemployment benefits. Moreover, in the USA, in 1965, Moynihan’s claim that a ‘tangle of pathology’, including welfare

⁴⁰ Hayek calls this vivacity a “vitalpolitik” – a socially conscious market system that nevertheless allows people to pursue their ambitions (Rustow, 1980: 562).

⁴¹ Rustow is thought to have invented the term ‘neo-liberal’, at least in its modern sense.

dependency and substance abuse, retarded black socio-economic progress, achieved mainstream political legitimacy when it was accepted by the Democratic administration (Bryner, 1998). A consensus was emerging between American politics and social theory that welfare paradoxically vitiated poverty and unemployment (Bryner, 1998).

This idea soon achieved its own orthodoxy, and was supported by major American theorists. For instance, in 1973, Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution* positioned state welfare as contrary to the American Revolutionary values of thrift and self-reliance. Robert Nozick (1996) [1974], similarly pursuing a less economic, more philosophical neoliberalism, explored a number of possible 'patterns' of social organisation. Nozick concluded that social democratic welfare state 'patterns' undermined wealth creation by reducing the need to work; in turn leading to the extension, not amelioration of poverty.

In 1980, Milton Friedman, now writing in partnership with Rose Friedman, again emphasised the economically destructive and potentially totalitarian nature of welfare states (Friedman and Friedman, 1980). This signalled a new wave of major works in the 1980s attacking 'welfarism'. Murray Rothbard (1982) argued that welfare systems represented a totalitarian expansion of state power funded by wealth stolen from working citizens. Rothbard attacked both Nozick and Hayek for recommending basic state provision for the truly vulnerable, arguing contrarily that welfare should be entirely a matter of voluntary charity. George Gilder (1982) argued that tax was theft, poverty and unemployment voluntary, and, echoing Rustow, welfare a suckling monster to be slain by brave political action.

Arguably, however, the most sociologically significant paradoxical failure theorist to publish in the 1980s was Charles Murray (Schroeder, 2000). Murray's influential study, *Losing Ground* (1984), re-packaged Spencer's arguments into what Murray labelled 'welfare's law of unintended consequences.' This law, proposed Murray, saw welfare undermine the need to work and/or look after one's family, thereby paradoxically encouraging sloth and state dependency. The result was an 'underclass' who inevitably, and moreover rationally, avoided work, simply because an alternative income was freely given to them. The children of this underclass were then socialised into a welfare dependent value system, creating a vicious cycle of social and cultural degeneration. Only abrogation of welfare, argued Murray, could end the cycle.

However, echoing a sentiment of von Mises (1951), Murray accepted that welfare was, by the 1980s, so ingrained in Western capitalist economic structures that abrogation would constitute a major, and by then unlikely, project of socio-economic reorganisation.

In 1990, Murray claimed that the ‘disease’ had spread to the UK, and that welfare funded female-headed households were now the primary engine of underclass expansion (Murray, 1996). Support for Murray’s work has been provided by many theorists, including Miller (1988), Rees-Mogg and Davidson (1992), Buckingham (1996), Green (1996), McGee (2002) and Bartholomew (2006). This support is often tied to a belief in the declining relevance of social class as a structural cause of poverty (Turner, 1986). Signally, Pakulski and Waters (1996) deny the modern relevance of social class-based poverty, arguing contrarily that welfare systems create a poverty class by encouraging benefit dependency.

Additional support for this perspective has been provided by a vocal and prolific group of neo-eugenic ‘sociobiological’ scholars who argue that the paradoxical failure model is proven by Darwinian Theory (Woods and Grant, 2003). As Gary Becker put it in 1978: “Bioeconomics says that government programs that force individuals to be less competitive and selfish than they are genetically programmed to be are preordained to fail” (Gowdy and Krall, 2013: 138). Bartholomew (2006: 249), meanwhile, compares the behaviour of welfare claimants to “the habits of the apes.” Richard Dawkins is perhaps the most famous scholar in this field. Dawkins (1976) argues that overly generous welfare systems are likely to lead to a gene for multiple births amongst the poor, eventually overwhelming the welfare state.

Critically, the paradoxical failure theory is contradicted by several major analyses of modern welfare. Extensive research conducted by OECD statisticians, summarised and analysed by Therborn (1986), revealed no statistical link whatsoever between the size, generosity or comprehensiveness of a welfare state and its proportion of unemployed. Esping-Anderson (1990), confirming these results, finds that the proportion of pensioned elderly in a social democratic country is in fact the key determinant of the size of a welfare state. Moreover, where welfare has been abrogated, for example in developing countries subjected to ‘structural adjustment’ policies, or other territories subjected to ‘neoliberal’ economic experiments, in depth research has

found no upsurge in entrepreneurialism and employment, but rather, a chronic collapse of social welfare. In many cases this has led to significantly worsening poverty (Milward, 2000; Zack-Williams, 2000; Stiglitz, 2002; Quaid, 2002; Klein, 2007; Canale and Liotti, 2015). However, such criticisms have been dismissed by economist Jagdish Bhagwati (2004), as biased and propagandist. Bhagwati argues that such changes produce positive benefits in decades, not years, and so will prove successful in the long-run.

According to Colclough (1991), even where statistical data have been supplied to support the paradoxical failure theory, it is difficult to differentiate between causation and simple correlation. Welfare payments and poverty, for instance, will inevitably rise together as unemployment increases. Piven and Cloward (1971) make the same argument for crime, arguing that rising poverty will lead to crime and rioting, and then to a false perception that the cause was welfare, and not poverty itself. The lack of empirical support for the paradoxical failure theory leads Digby (1989) to describe it as part of a centuries old ideology of welfare.

Speaking directly of Charles Murray, pro-workfare scholar David Ellwood wrote that (1994: 1):

As many of you know, some years back Charles Murray wrote a book called *Losing Ground*. That book essentially said that the reason we stopped making progress o [sic] poverty is that we tried to do something about it. [...] In fact, there was very little evidence that welfare was an important [sic] cause of the changes in family structure. [...] The real causes of poverty are the lack of jobs, jobs that don't pay enough, one parent trying to do the work of raising and providing for children alone - a job that society thinks two are supposed to do.

4. *'The poor are the weak in the land': The 'Disciplinary Socialisation' school*

This section reviews theories related to what Lawrence Mead (1986) describes as 'disciplinary socialisation'. This term refers to the longstanding notion that pauperism stems from personal dysfunction, thus necessitating paternalistic institutional intervention to rectify the outlooks, attitudes, morality and work ethic of claimants (Schroeder, 2000). This section traces the development of this idea from Martin Luther through to its incorporation into modern theories of workfare.

The Disciplinary Socialisation School enjoys deep Reformation roots. However, this provenance is not simplistic. A century at least passed before a strict Protestant ‘work ethic’, and a concomitant anathematisation of paupers, displaced the legacy of mercy based Catholic alms giving (e.g. Aquinas, (2005) [1254]). Nevertheless, the core doctrine stems from Luther, who, claiming that God “shutteth out all slothful and idle persons” (2015 [1535]: 341), called for punitive poor relief schemes that placed paupers under the disciplinary authority of respectable local burghers (Piven and Cloward, 1971). Luther’s Reformation contemporary, Zwingli, concurred (Spicker, 1984).

The Protestant work ethic enjoyed an ‘elective affinity’ with emergent capitalism (Weber, 1985), and was adopted into British mainstream political, economic and social thought from the early 16th century (Marx, 1887; Hill, 1969). This affinity eventually evolved into a near hegemonic 17th century grass-roots conviction that forced-labour schemes were the appropriate “new medicine for poverty” (Tawney, 1927: 253). Tawney (1927: 258) describes this as the Protestant “triumph of economic virtue.”

Around 1530, early social theorist William Marshall, influenced by Protestant theology, published a comprehensive scheme for the rehabilitation of paupers in which he complained of the “heinous deeds and detestable sins” of the poor (Slack, 1990: 14). This work served as the blueprint of the Tudor regime’s brutal poor laws (Slack, 1990). Signally, in 1571, the Puritan *Homily Against Idleness* proclaimed that “A great part of the begging that is amongst the poor can be imputed to nothing but idleness” (Hill, 1969: 126) As an example of the laws introduced at this time, in 1598, a statute mandating the creation of a national forced-work scheme emphasised the encouragement of pauper ‘independence’, as opposed to mere relief, and forbade paupers to refuse any offer of work (Feiling, 1969: 514). Puritan William Perkins wrote in celebration that:

It is a foul disorder in any commonwealth that there should be suffered rogues, beggars, vagabonds [...]. And therefore the Statute made in the last Parliament for the restraining of beggars and rogues is an excellent statute, and, being in substance the very law of God, is never to be repealed. (Hill, 1969: 251).

According to Foucault (1995), real social divisions were now scabbed over by promissory spiritual reintegration: hard work, whether in formal employment or brutal make-work schemes, was justified as Godly.

In the 18th century, Puritan inspired social commentators known as the ‘Rational Dissenters’ - signally, Phillip Doddridge, Robert Price and Joseph Priestley - supported the cruel punishment of the poor as an act of Christian charity. This was, they argued, for the poor’s own moral good, and hence an act of benevolence (Plumb, 1950). However, historian J. H. Plumb (1950: 134-135) notes of these men that:

benevolence, in its widest sense, was absolutely absent from their attitude to life [...] the morals of the poor were to be more effectively controlled and, if need be, slavery should be reintroduced to help suppress crime, for a slave was obviously more useful to society than a corpse.

Much were these men hated by the poor, and Priestley’s effigy was regularly to be found atop a poor folks’ bonfire (Plumb, 1950).

While there have been numerous minor figures advocating ‘disciplinary re-socialisation’ over the centuries (e.g. Child, 1670; Lawrence, 1675; Downing, 1725; Knatchbull (2009) [1725]; and Chadwick, 1842), arguably, the most significant classic social theorists in this school were Jeremy Bentham and his student John Stuart Mill. In the 18th century, Britain suffered an immense polarisation of wealth and poverty, accompanied by famine, rising crime and rioting (Bryant, 1954; Flinn, 1975). Bentham’s solution was interning paupers in commercial workhouses that would act as social prisons-cum-enforced labour exchanges (Bentham, 2010 [1796]). Four decades later, Bentham refined his model, calling for an intensified focus on disciplinary regimes of behavioural modification, including the segregation of different categories of paupers - often members of the same family (Bentham, 1843; Foucault, 1991). Bentham’s recommendations became a widespread reality in both Europe and the US (Digby, 1989; Foucault, 1991) but failed to stem poverty or unemployment (Bryant, 1954; Plumb, 1950).

In 1859, Mill’s *On Liberty* pressed poor relief administrators to use their schemes as disciplinary mechanisms, thwarting the formation of any “nest of pauperism, necessarily overflowing into other localities, and impairing the moral and physical condition of the whole labouring community” (1998: 136). Contrary to laissez-

faire, Mill recommended an intense government centralisation of pauper control, as a “government cannot have too much of the kind of activity which does not impede, but aids and stimulates, individual exertion and development” (Mill, 1998: 136).

Bentham and Mill’s theories enjoyed a substantial and longstanding popularity, particularly in right-leaning political circles (Foucault, 1991; Standing, 2011; Mead, 1986). However, the most significant modern, neo-Benthamite⁴² theorist is American sociologist Lawrence Mead (Mead, 1986; Schroeder, 2000). Like Mill, Mead (1986) argues that welfare systems are too permissive, not too large. Drawing on fieldwork conducted in unemployment offices in the UK and the US in the early 1980s, Mead (1986) concluded that the ‘underclass’ had by then deviated so substantially from normative behaviour that welfare abolition would unleash social chaos. Blaming welfare claimants for all social ills, including crime, substance abuse and poverty, Mead (1986: 139) argued that only ultra-strict workfare schemes could “dissolve” the “welfare class” and re-socialise claimants into the expected norms and values of decent society. “Low-wage work”, Mead argued, “apparently must be mandated, just as a draft has sometimes been necessary to staff the military” (1986: 4). Mead has consistently rejected claims that post-1960s American unemployment was ‘structural’, citing the large numbers of immigrants, legal and illegal, who find work (Mead, 1986, 2012). According to Mead (1986, 1992, 1997, 1998, 2005a, 2010) strict ‘paternalistic’ workfare can mould the unemployed into the types of workers required by emergent markets, reinvigorate the underclass with normative ethics, and ‘funnel’ moonlighters and shirkers off welfare.

Mead’s theories are notably gendered (Pateman, 2005). For males, Mead (2012: 592) argues that “the best overall solution to the men’s work problem would combine mandatory work programs with higher wage subsidies.” For women, workfare is to enforce marriage norms by making pregnancy without male support unthinkable. This will, argues Mead, drop women off the welfare rolls and ensure the superior socialisation of children in two-parent households (Mead, 1986; Mead and Beem, 2005). Like Murray (1996), Mead places particular emphasis on the putative socio-pathological effects of unwed mothers. For Mead, treating childcare as real work has normalised welfare poverty, allowing single women to ‘blackmail’ society and

⁴² Mead (1986) identifies himself as an inheritor of Bentham’s work.

encouraging poor men to fail in their role as providers (Mead, 1986; Mead and Beem, 2005; Mead, 2010). Where unwed mothers refuse to work in “dirty” jobs that they feel are beneath them,” Mead (1986: 153) states that this must be viewed as “political behaviour” designed to blackmail society into providing free money, and therefore rejected as immoral conduct.

Numerous theorists support Mead’s overall position, including, Layard *et al.*, (1994); Giddens, (1998); White, (2004); Galston, (2005); Wax, (2003); Schwartz, (2005); Saunders and Oakley (2011); Doctor and Oakley, (2011); and Blumkin *et al.*, (2013). Schwartz (2005), for example, argues that disciplinary workfare can transform the underclass into decent, normal members of society, while Doctor and Oakley (2011: 20) state that giving welfare claimants ‘hassle’ helps to fulfil Mead’s key aim of funnelling people away from welfare. Additionally, Bradbury (2004) argues that workfare schemes could have some effect on weeding-out fraudsters, and Le Blanc (2004) that workfare might at least impart some basic employability skills.

Mead has argued extensively that social policy theory generally lacks empirical fieldwork support, and too often relies on abstract statistics and narrow themes rather than on practical effects (Mead, 2010, 2011, 2012). However, studies by Bane and Ellwood (1994), Gans (1995), Bryner (1998), Peck (2001), Quaid (2002), Standing (2011a) and the UK’s Department for Work and Pensions (2008), which draw on detailed empirical data, find that the types of schemes recommended by Mead have often proved largely ineffective across all of his key outcome predictions. As Schmitt and Wadsworth (2002: 26) put it: “As the data for the United States and the United Kingdom show, OECD style flexibility is not a sufficient condition for improving the circumstances facing less-skilled workers.” It is also claimed that sub-contracting workfare schemes to private companies (recommended by Mead (1986)), has led to underfunded projects (Sanger, 2003; Willetts, 1998), a withdrawal of vital social-work support (Midgley, 2006) and widespread financial and statistical fraud (Quaid, 2002).⁴³

⁴³ Bryner (1998), who is not entirely unsympathetic to Mead, uncovered a range of techniques used across the United States to mask workfare scheme failures. These included making welfare impossible to claim, paying claimants in six-month lump sums and not entering their names on the welfare rolls, counting claimants in training as employed, and dropping welfare payments so low that accepting wages below the basic level required to live became a better alternative. (Doctor and Oakley (2011) count most these as positive successes of workfare schemes.) Quaid (2002) – also a supporter of Mead - found widespread massaging of figures on workfare schemes, with hundreds of thousands of claimants across North America disappearing off all official records, with no concomitant rise in employment.

Moreover, that workfare has not led to any increase in real employment (Quaid, 2002; Peck, 2001). Bryner (1998), Wacquant (2010) and Jones (2011) have also noted that significant increases in jail populations in the US, Europe and UK respectively could be masking the continuation of poverty and unemployment under workfare regimes. Mead (2010) himself has complained that workfare has been transformed into little more than an open prison.

Pateman (2005) and Kingfisher and Goldsmith (2001) have criticised Mead's views on women as misogynist denigrations of the importance of, and hard work involved in, childcare and domestic labour. Piven and Cloward (1971), Peck (2001) and Evans (2007) also find that workfare can play a significant role in tying women to precarious, low-wage work. Nybom (2011) concurs, describing this as workfare's 'gendered logic'. King (1987) argues that the core of the New Right welfare strategy is to attack feminism and re-impose 'traditional' domestic roles on women. Sociologist Ralph Dahrendorf, meanwhile, has attacked Mead's theories as "almost totalitarian" (Keane, 1990: 1).

5. *'They walk the streets in shame': the hysteresis theory of workfare*

Mead's (1994) notion of a disengaged 'poverty personality' has also been influential in the 'hysteresis' theory of workfare (Deacon, 1994). This theory proposes that long-term welfare receipt demoralises claimants, causing them to cease active job seeking (Philpott, 1994). This is claimed to aggravate unemployment by shrinking the labour market and concomitantly increasing the scarcity price of labour (Clark and Layard, 1993). As the UK government put it in 2003: "Long periods spent out of work caused people to drift further away from the labour market, losing the skills, motivation and confidence to re-enter the market and then to progress their careers" (DWP, 2003: 6). This theory, which is a form of supply side economics, proposes that workfare can reinvigorate job seeking behaviour, depress wages and generate employment opportunities even where the job market is lean (Layard *et al.*, 1994). Hysteresis workfare theory has also been supported by scholars such as Benmarker *et al.* (2013), and to measured degree, by Jahoda (1982).

However, both McLaughlin (1994) and Philpott (1994) argue that the psychological effects of unemployment are difficult to empirically differentiate from

the consequences of poverty *per se*. Moreover, Gorz (1989), Dumenil and Levy (2004), Standing (2011a) and Archer (1989) have all argued that working poverty can undermine psychological wellbeing. Workfare, which has consistently failed to shift even its ‘success’ cases out of poverty according to Handler (1995), Bryner (1998) and Peck (2001), might therefore fail to encourage psychological wellbeing and concomitant job seeking behaviour. Moreover, Goldberg (2001), Macleavy (2010) and Gilder (1982) all argue that workfare might be psychologically damaging in itself due to shame, subordination and low-morale. Dostal (2008), for example, notes that the stigmatising reputation of workfare could put-off potential employers. Studies by Mihlar and Smith (1997), Bret (2003), Kreiner (2005) and the DWP (2008a) also indicate that the costs of training encountered in this form of workfare probably off-set any fiscal gains.⁴⁴

6. *‘He who moves defeats poverty’: making claimants work for their dole versus ‘human capital’ approaches*

This section reviews literature pertaining to two key alternative workfare paradigms: one which argues that claimants should be set to work as soon as possible after they claim welfare, and another which argues that claimants should firstly be re-trained in order to increase their employability. This section commences with the historical origins of these two perspectives and then reviews key theorists and theories in each tradition up to the present day.

Disputes over the correct approach to pauperism have existed for many centuries (Digby, 1989; Spicker, 1984). In 1853, Victorian ‘Manchester School’ economist John Bright noted that “if schools were as prominent institutions in our landscapes [...] as prisons and workhouses are, I suspect [...] they [paupers] would have much more hope of improvement” (Bright, 1853: 81). The differentiation between training-based and work-for-relief alms thus has its origins in historical attempts to force ‘sturdy’ beggars to work, while diverting pauper children into apprenticeships

⁴⁴ Mary Jo Bane (1989) states: “A *mandatory* [emphasis in original] programme sends a clear message that this is serious business and that both workers and clients are expected to perform. It also sets up a clear demand for resources: mandatory programs almost inevitably force the provision of jobs and services, including child care. (Indeed, for this reason, some conservatives are becoming less enthusiastic about mandatory programs, having observed the level of resources that California’s GAIN – Greater Avenues to Independence – program requires.”

and reformatory schools (Driver, 1993; Flinn, 1975). In modern workfare theory, this division is generally categorised as ‘work-first’⁴⁵ versus ‘human capital’ approaches (Bryner, 1998).

Proponents of work-first schemes, such as Burton (1988), Higgins *et al.* (2001), Wax (2003), Quaid (2002), Schroyen and Torsvik (2005), Holzner *et al.* (2010), Giuliani, (2012) and Philp (2013), argue that workfare is only successful when welfare claimants are forced to work as soon as possible after claiming benefits (Quaid, 2002). Proponents of the ‘human capital’ approach, such as Kennedy (1962), Bane and Ellwood (1994), Layard *et al.*, (1994), Rein (1995) and Nie and Fang (2014), emphasise raising claimants’ confidence and employability through training and personal development before asking them to apply for work (Bryner, 1998).

By the 1990s, a political consensus in both the UK and also the US accepted that workfare *per se* was preferable to old social democratic welfare (Dwyer, 1998; Lodemel and Trickey, 2000a). From the 1960s in the US, and from the late 1970s in the UK, a ‘New Right’ theory of welfare had emerged, drawing on two new theoretical perspectives that were believed to hold the key to ending ‘welfare dependency’ (King, 1987). First, Public Choice Theory proposed that welfare bureaucrats pursued professional self-interest by expanding their power, influence and operations as far as possible (Thompson, 2008). This was felt by many right-leaning politicians to explain increasing unemployment: welfare officials were tacitly or actively encouraging claimant dependency in order to build bureaucratic empires (King, 1987). As Ellwood (1994: 3) puts it:

Many things in the current system [say be a] good welfare recipient, don't try to get ahead, because if you try to get ahead, if you try to get a job, you make our bureaucratic lives complicated. Instead, we have got to count your hours and decide what your income is. These signals discourage recipients from even trying to move forward.

Secondly, Rational Actor Theory proposed that choice-making was explicable primarily through reference to individual rational economic calculations of gains and utility (Brennan, 2001), seemed to explain why welfare claimants went along with this

⁴⁵ Sometimes called ‘work for the dole’. “Work-for-the-dole” was also the name of Australia’s controversial national workfare scheme established in 1998 (Burgess *et al.*, 2000).

process: it was a rational choice to be paid for doing nothing (Murray, 1984). Echoing past notions of ‘less eligibility’⁴⁶ the ‘new’ approach was to diminish welfare bureaucracy, and the utility of welfare to claimants, thus incrementally rendering work the more rational choice (Miller, 1988; King, 1987). Moreover, the emergent field of sociobiology appeared to provide scientific evidence that this would work (Dawkins, 1976).

By the 1990s, New Right theories had seen workfare recommended by politicians across the American and British political elites (Giddens, 1998; Peck, 2001). The debated issue was which *type* of workfare was preferable: human capital or work-first. Both enjoyed strong theoretical support.

‘Work for alms’ schemes had a long provenance, being the primary form of welfare provision employed between the Reformation and the establishment of the post-war welfare state (Tawney, 1927; Hill, 1969; Davis, 2009). The chief historical theoretician of forced-work schemes was John Locke (White, 2004). Locke (1823) argued that paupers voluntarily abrogated their right to self-ownership, and so could justly be set to enforced labour. In 1697, Locke’s *On the Poor Law and Working Schools* decried “those who pretend they cannot get work and so live only by begging or worse” (Locke, 1697: 1). Proposing unemployment as by definition indicative of immorality, Locke laid the intellectual foundations of the principle that paupers might justifiably be made to work for below market average wages, arguing that as no pauper could expect employment at “twelve pence [they] must be content with nine pence or ten pence rather than live idly” (Locke, 1697: 13).

Locke’s thought has remained influential in right-leaning welfare theory (White, 2004; Cohen, 1995), particularly in the US, where work-first welfare has been the preference of much of the Republican right since the 1960s (Bryner, 1998). Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, for instance, went so far as to call for even the children of parents on welfare to be set to work (Zennie, 2011).

⁴⁶ A rule of ‘less eligibility’ had been formally introduced under the British poor law reforms of 1834, but was implicit in previous schemes. This rule was intended to make sure that claiming poor relief was less attractive to the poor than labouring. However, this rule was more ideological than practical, as the differences between the working poor and the welfare poor were marginal, and often indistinguishable (Digby, 1989). According to Cobbett (1834: 18) it was pointless, and a grave injustice, to make the poor law “so irksome and painful to obtain any relief as to prevent people from applying for it.”

However, an alternative and equally influential right-leaning view drawing on the work of Theodore Schultz, Gary Becker and Jacob Mincer (Foucault, 2008) had proposed that investing in a claimant's 'human capital' could improve their employability. According to this approach, workfare schemes needed to focus on re-training and psychological counselling before encouraging claimants to seek work (Quaid, 2002). This view was supported by many in the Democratic Party (Bryner, 1998), and by New Labour in the UK (Daguerre, 2004). By the 1990s, the debate over which workfare approach was superior reached such heated levels that in senior American government circles some Republicans were accused of Nazism, and some Democrats of wanting to transform Americans into frenzied, state-fed animals (Bane, 2001).⁴⁷

Both perspectives attempted to draw legitimacy from the successful 'Active Labour Market Policies' (ALMPs) that had been part of Sweden's welfare system since 1948 (Daguerre, 2004; Lodemel and Trickey, 2000b). Swedish ALMPs provided training and work-placements, leading to endorsement from a range of pro-workfare theorists (Clark and Layard, 1993; Daguerre, 2004). Hence, in the 1990s, first the US, and then the UK, adopted compromise programmes involving combinations of work-requirements and human capital investments (Bryner, 1998; Daguerre, 2004). However, in both cases these schemes were justified as pro-'flexibility' programmes designed to make local labour markets 'competitive' in a global environment, and not as returns to Keynesian or New Deal style make-work schemes (Piven, 1998; Peck, 2002; Steger and Roy, 2010). For example, in the UK, from 1990, the Conservative government began to replace labour-favourable work creation policies with pro-'flexibility' Training and Enterprise Councils (Steger and Roy, 2010). New Labour continued this workfare transition from 1997, but initially returned to a more human capital approach, at least in theory, with their 'New Deal' programmes (Daguerre, 2004).

⁴⁷ Mary Jo bane (2001: 191) writes: "My most vivid memories from 1996 are of moments of startling ugliness. During the Congressional debates on the final welfare bill, one Republican member held up a picture of a warning sign from the Florida everglades with a picture of an alligator and the admonition "Do Not Feed;" the not particularly subtle analogy was to welfare recipients being "fed" by the welfare system. A Democratic member responded by likening the Republicans to Nazis and accusing them of genocide. These speeches and others like them, often made to an empty chamber, were scrupulously recorded by C-Span and, with the recorded votes on welfare legislation, became fodder in the 1996 Congressional campaigns."

For Mead (1986), a compromise deal combining disciplinary re-training *and* enforced work had always been the ideal programme design. However, Bryner (1998) and Quaid (2002) argue that the term ‘human capital’ was generally deployed by governments as a euphemism for perfunctory forms of training, such as time-keeping, attitude adjustment, time-wasting exercises and basic job seeking skills. Quaid’s (2002) in depth review of North American workfare programmes found that where states had used human capital approaches (such as Alberta, New Brunswick and most of California), workfare had almost entirely failed to promote employment. However, where work-first had been used (Ontario, New York, Riverside County), Quaid discovered significantly higher success rates. Bryner’s (1998) comprehensive review of American workfare schemes also concluded that work-first was the only successful workfare model.

Peck (2001) disputes these findings. Peck’s review of work-first schemes, particularly the iconic Riverside programme, found claimants working for welfare but nevertheless rarely matriculating into non-workfare employment. Hohmeyer and Wolff (2012) similarly note that work-first schemes tend to have a ‘lock-in’ effect, as many claimants simply accept work-for-the-dole as their permanent career. Moreover, ‘success’ is a disputed concept. Handler (1995) reports that Riverside’s most ‘successful’ clients were on average only \$52 a month better off than a non-workfare control group. For most clients, the scheme led to no financial improvement whatsoever. Bane (1989) further notes that GAIN was so expensive to run that it won the chagrin of several Conservative politicians almost immediately.

Chan (2009) reports that work-first workfare under Hong Kong’s New Dawn programme constituted an ‘open workhouse’ operated under a regime of fear and intimidation. According to Chan, New Dawn provided ultra-cheap labour for local businesses, creating a permanent sector of low-wage workers as businesses became increasingly structurally reliant upon workfare labour to remain competitive.

Bane and Ellwood’s (1994) statistical analysis of American workfare schemes found that human capital approaches were superior to work-first schemes, significantly improving the employment prospects of welfare claimants, and particularly females. As many of these females had exited school prematurely, they had been unable accrue relevant employable skills. Work-first schemes thus had little effect on their

employability, and moreover, encouraged a permanent ‘cycling’ between low paid work and welfare. Bane and Ellwood propose a comprehensive social change to aid welfare claimants, including investment in human capital, education and job creation, plus reinforced marriage norms and stricter alimony requirements. As Bane (1994: 3) puts it:

I am not certain about the best way to move people forward or to give them back their dignity. I don’t think there is a perfect solution. For every person who has told me that we have got to assure that everyone gets a college education, [I] have heard somebody else say, ‘No, what really seemed to work best is getting people into the labor market fast. Then they find out that they need an education and they come back with more concern for school.’ The point, however, is that we have not focused the system on helping people become self-sufficient.

Some further support for the human capital approach is supplied by Porter (1998), who found Missouri’s ‘Welcare’ system, which trained unemployed women to be care workers, to be a signal case of workfare success.

In contrast to Bane and Ellwood, Kingfisher and Goldsmith’s (2001) study of work-first programmes in Australia and New Zealand concludes that ‘neoliberal’ workfare is designed to create a new female ‘subjectivity’ where motherhood is no longer recognised as legitimate work, but merely as a transitional phase between low-paid roles. Kingfisher and Goldsmith characterise this as a new global labour regime in which the cross-gender ‘feminisation’ of work is, ironically, undermining the cultural value once attached to ‘traditional’ female caring work.

Foucault (2008) cites ‘human capital’ as the core of ‘neoliberal’ economic theory due to its emphasis on personal over structural factors when determining the bases of success. However, according to Bruttel and Sol (2006: 70), by the 2000s, work-first workfare was the “underlying paradigm of the European employment strategy.” Underfunded schemes (Willett, 1998) could not achieve equivalent effects to the Swedish ALMP model, which provided well-funded training *and* employment at normal wages (Digby, 1989; Layard *et al.*, 1994). Moreover, according to Bourdieu (2005), institutionally prejudiced social structures powerfully outweigh the effects of human capital improvement schemes, with the ability to successfully ‘spend’ human

capital remaining acutely dependent upon an individual's class, race and gender. Bourdieu (1998) celebrates and encourages resistance to workfare 'flexploitation'.

7. *'When a poor man walks on the streets no one greets him': workfare and citizenship*

This section reviews the primary literature pertaining to the notion that workfare enhances citizenship status. Commencing with a brief mention of Simmel, and modern British policy, this section traces notions of work and citizenship from the ancient world through to modern sociological views of work/citizenship reciprocity. It concludes with some criticisms of this perspective.

According to Simmel (1950: 402) "the poor [man] is an element of the group itself. His position as a full-fledged member involves both being outside it and confronting it." Practically reflecting this sentiment, in 1997 British Prime Minister Tony Blair justified the introduction of workfare by reference to an "underclass [...] without any sense of shared purpose" (Welshman, 2007: ix). This claim signalled the beginning of a government level ideological distinction between 'workers' as social members, and welfare claimants as the 'socially excluded' (Byrne, 2005). By 2008, the poor results of New Labour's human capital workfare had led former British government minister Peter Mandelson, an erstwhile supporter of this approach (Dostal, 2008), to lament that "we are spending vast sums of money, often over and over again, on the same people through different programmes, without improving their ability to participate in the economy and society" (Mandelson, 2008: 8). Mandelson's words indicated the emergence of a new workfare paradigm, as exemplified by the Flexible New Deal, and later, the Conservative government's insistence that jobseekers perform thirty-five hours of job search per week (Wintour, 2013): Human capital and work-first theories were converging into the belief that even if welfare claimants could not be made to work, nevertheless, their days should be onerous and work *like*. As sociologist Peter Saunders explained, the "moral argument for workfare" was that:

people on welfare should never be better off than those who work. This applies financially (work should always pay better than benefits) but also in terms of time (people on welfare should not enjoy more free time than those who work). The point of workfare is to make the welfare system fairer. (Saunders, 2012: 1).

Notions of the poor as anathema date back to antiquity. An ancient Mesopotamian proverb states “When a poor man walks on the streets no one greets him” (University of Oxford, 2006), while Roman educationalist Quintilian described the poor as so physically corrupt as to be almost a different species to decent Romans (Barthes, 1988). However, in the Classical World, this view did not translate into a general perception that social membership was based on work (Hands, 1968). Plato (1978) and Aristotle (1976) both deemed physical labour to be vulgar, and according to Lukacs (1971), even the noblest classical thinkers were unable to consider slaves to be a part of society. Hesiod, whose *Works and Days* celebrates manual labour, is a notable exception (Bartlett, 2006).

The reciprocity of labour and citizenship emerged into theological-political thought with St. Paul’s admonition that: “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat” (II Thessalonians, 3: 10). Lenin (1999) lauded this sentiment as a workers’ axiom, and the principle was enacted into the 1936 Soviet Constitution: “In the U.S.S.R. work is a duty and a matter of honour for every able-bodied citizen, in accordance with the principle: ‘He who does not work, neither shall he eat’” (Bucknell University, 1996: Article 12). Marx and Engels (1990: 60) had themselves argued that under communism there would be an “equal liability of all to work.”

According to Rustow (1980), early Protestant theorists, particularly Calvin, viewed Genesis 3:19 - “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground” – as a divine codification of the duty to work. In Reformation England, hard work was preached from the pulpit as a moral value (Hill, 1969), and scripture widely employed in justification of toil, and moreover, of enforced pauper labour (Tawney, 1927). Signally, the Statute of Apprentices of 1563 “assumed the moral obligation of all men to work, the existence of divinely ordered social distinctions, and the need for the state to define and control all occupations in terms of their utility to society” (Smith and Morrill, 2015: 20).

- 1) According to Beem (2005), the modern theory that welfare claimants are not full members of society stems from a revival of John Locke’s argument that work is the entry point of citizenship. Following Nazi and Soviet atrocities, European post-war liberal theory had underlined ‘citizenship’ as a status that emphasised citizen’s rights

rather than their responsibilities or obligations (Rawls, 1999). This view underpinned the needs based welfare policies of European social democracies up to the 1970s (Esping-Anderson, 1990). However, from the late 1940s, influential British sociologist T. H. Marshall had begun to reframe the welfare debate (Mead, 1997; White, 2004). Marshall believed that inequalities generated by capitalism would be accepted as legitimate if social mobility was reasonably possible. For this to occur, social membership must at least be egalitarian in terms of a common set of citizenship privileges, including civil, political and social rights. However, with rising levels of welfare, Marshall claimed that social democratic notions of citizenship were “at war” with capitalism, creating a “universal right to income which is not proportionate to the market value of the claimant.” Allowed to grow, argued Marshall, this trend might end up converting “the skyscraper [of capitalism] into a bungalow” (Marshall, 2009: 153-154). A series of American theorists also questioned the generosity and long-term consequences of welfare. John Hospers (1974) characterised those who lived off the hard-work of others as “moral cannibals,” while Robert Nozick (1996) attacked the social democratic welfare paradigm as socially disintegrative. According to Nozick, non-workers shirked an essential moral function of active social membership. Moreover, Nozick felt that socialists since Marx had denigrated menial work as inherently psychologically alienating, whereas work, no matter how menial, was the “great leveller” that integrated all citizens, rich and poor. Hence, the lowest paid worker had more self-respect and social standing than the wealthiest idler. (However, Cox (1959) had argued two decades earlier that this theorem was a sham, justifying low wages for black people by paying them in ‘social membership’.) Signally, Philosopher Lawrence C. Becker agreed with Nozick but extended the notion in support of workfare: “I shall argue that work is a social obligation, but that the work requirement should not be enforced by law, except in cases where it counts as reciprocity for a special benefit” (1980: 1).

Lawrence Mead moulded these Lockean theories into an explicit justification of workfare, arguing that “The rich man who puts in long hours in an office on Wall Street is seen as morally equivalent to the welfare recipient on workfare who is made to clean the streets” (Mead, 1986: 237). However, Mead’s primary philosophical influence was Hannah Arendt’s (1958) argument that to be a citizen one must be ‘active’. Welfare claimants, argued Mead (1986), must be made to reject a passive life on welfare in

order to reclaim their citizenship. Mead (1998) maintains that this does not violate the liberal dictum (famously articulated by J. S. Mill) that the state should only exert power against citizens when they seek to unlawfully harm others, because workfare does what welfare claimants really *want* to do – impose discipline onto their lives - but cannot, due to welfare induced malaise.

Similarly, legal theorist Amy Wax (2003a) proposes that workfare is the logical extension of customs of reciprocal social practice, evolved over centuries, that ensure the optimal distribution of resources in a fair, well-functioning society (see also Wax, 2003b). According to Wax, with liberal notions of unconditional welfare being too often predicated upon simplistic philosophical axioms, such as ‘citizenship should be unconditional’, pro-workfare theorists must “rescue the goals of economic self-reliance and independence from those who would discredit those objectives to cast aspersions on work-based welfare reform” (Wax, 2003a: 2).

Numerous social theorists support these views. White (2004) argues that workfare socially reintegrates welfare claimants; Beem (2005) that one who does not labour is failing to perform an essential moral function of active social attachment. Beem proposes workfare as the remedy. Galston (2005) states that all citizenship, at least in the USA, is to some degree ‘conditional’. Therefore, attaching ‘work conditionality’ to benefit receipt brings claimants into line with traditional American expectations of social membership. Wax (2005) adds that it is profoundly unfair that some families work hard while others live off benefits.

However, Habermas argues that neoliberal workfare degrades citizens into the oppressed subjects of onerous bureaucracies that impair psychological wellbeing, attack family structures and pathologically colonise conduits of social affiliation (Pusey, 1987). King (2005) claims that workfare undermines the basis of social cohesion by erecting a crude ideological division between taxpayers and benefit recipients, while Standing (2011b) believes that neoliberal governments have presented workfare as socially integrative while prosecuting a venal propaganda campaign against unemployed people. This disintegrates perceptions of claimants’ social belonging. Moreover, according to Standing (2011a), workfare is itself part of a socially disintegrative economic project to create a ‘precariat’ of low-wage, ‘flexible’ workers, disciplined by the threat of falling into disciplinary welfare-to-work regimes.

Meanwhile, Pateman (2005) and Woodward (2008) have questioned the definition of work used by Lockean workfare advocates, disputing it as a logical basis for discounting childcare as valid work: a key Meadian claim.

Nevertheless, by the mid-1990s, citizenship, as a condition entailing both social membership and also social ‘duties’, had emerged as a key paradigm within British welfare policy (Dwyer, 2000). As Tony Blair put it: “A modern notion of citizenship gives rights but demands obligations, shows respect but wants it back, grants opportunity but insists on responsibility” (Dwyer, 2002: 274). Blair had been significantly influenced by the work of sociologist Amitai Etzioni (Heron and Dwyer, 1999). Etzioni (2002) challenged both the Benthamite contention that society did not exist, and also the Marxist view that, hitherto, all societies have been sites of inherent conflict. According to Etzioni (2002: 83), societies can be cohesive so long as they enjoy a) a web of mutually reinforcing “affect-laden relationships” and b) “a set of shared values, norms, and meanings, and a shared history and identity.” Etzioni’s ‘communitarianism’ rejected the self-focus of hard New Right thinking, arguing contrarily that “no economic, or moral order can survive that way” (Etzioni, 1998: 47). According to Etzioni (1998: 49) “the community is responsible for [...] ensuring the basic needs of all who genuinely cannot provide for themselves.” However, this responsibility required counterbalance from an increased sense of personal obligation. As Heron and Dwyer (1999: 96) put it: “The essence of Etzioni’s moral community - of responsibilities assuming greater prominence - is centred around the ‘moral voice’; both an inner voice (‘I ought’ as opposed to ‘I want’), and a community voice (the setting of norms and expectations).” Significant amongst these expectations was that where a community member could work, they should work, or at least engage in some form of active social participation reciprocally connected to the benefits that they received from society. Where they could not work, kin, community, and only as a last resort, government, should step in (Dwyer, 2002). Echoing neo-conservative views, Etzioni also argued that welfare should not mitigate against family and community cohesion by making welfare more attractive than work (Etzioni, 1995). Dwyer (2002: 71) thus argues that Etzioni’s priority was “moral regeneration rather than material redistribution.”

By the 1990s, Etzioni’s communitarianism had influenced a British and American political consensus, and was particularly important in new Labour’s ‘social

exclusion' concept (Heron and Dwyer, 1999; Green, 2014). According to Walker and Chase (2014: 141), New Labour's new philosophy was "predicated on work (or workfare) as a condition of citizenship and 'communitarian' principles of obligations and duties." However, New Labour's commitment to an idealism of moral regeneration has also been questioned (Bewes, 1997; Walker and Chase, 2014). Adams (1998: 152), for example, writes that: "It is true that the New Labour 'project' is concerned with attitudes, some kind of 'moral regeneration', but the overall aim is a change of society." The FND, in particular, faced criticism at the time of its roll out. As Dwyer (2003, 94) notes: "Levitas [...] argues that New Labour is guilty of defining social exclusion in very simplistic and narrow terms. [Whereas, a] simple employed-unemployed dichotomy obscures the real inequalities that continue to exist within the world of paid work." And also that "Prideaux [was] sceptical of the view that the New Deal could provide meaningful employment following the initial six-month period of work/training. For Prideaux, the New Deal amounts to false employment [...]" (Dwyer, 2004: 95).

David Byrne (2005) argues that New Labour's 'social exclusion' rhetoric was a political canard used to justify cheap workfare labour. For Byrne, social exclusion is not a by-product of welfare states, nor an underclass philosophical disengagement with an abstract sense of 'social fabric', but an imposed economic reality; an intrinsic aspect of modern capitalism, embedding low-wage workers within a neoliberal 'accumulation logic'. For Byrne, spatial exclusion in poor, run-down estates, and a concomitant denial of social membership through exclusion from capital and workfare exploitation, is implicitly tied to the 'neoliberal project'.

8. *'Let the poor man die, let him not live': structural poverty, discipline and exploitation*

This section reviews the work of welfare theorists who have argued that unemployment stems primarily from structural economic flaws. Moreover, that punitive pauper control constitutes an illegitimate mechanism of elite domination and exploitation. This section commences with a brief review of historical structural accounts of unemployment. It then reviews Marxist, left-leaning and Foucauldian analyses of poor law schemes.

Theories of structural poverty are not a modern invention. Ancient Mesopotamian welfare loans indicate that involuntary bankruptcy was recognised as early as 2,500 BCE (Mandel, 1968). By the establishment of the Roman state, economic crises were well-known, with governments regularly forced to intervene to maintain social and economic stability (Hands, 1968). Nevertheless, sympathetic views of indigence were rare in the classical world (Hands, 1968).

An early British theory of structural poverty was presented in Thomas Moore's *Utopia*. Moore claimed that the enclosures had left families no choice but to steal or beg, but "if they do this they are put in prison as idle vagabonds, while they would willingly work but can find none that will hire them" (Moore, 1516: 6). In the subsequent four centuries, numerous labour radicals, notably including Gerrard Winstanley, Richard Cobbett, Richard Oastler and Robert Owen, supported and expanded upon Moore's claim that poor laws were unjust responses to structural economic failures (Petegorsky, 1940; Flinn, 1975; Engels, 2011). However, the preeminent radical labour theorist in this tradition is Karl Marx.

Following an extensive analysis of historical and contemporary economic data, Marx (1887) concluded that pauperism was a fundamental feature of capitalism. According to Marx, capitalist profit stemmed from paying workers less in wages than the market value of the commodities that they produced (Godelier, 1977). This led capitalists to force or encourage workers to take employment at lower wages (relative to the market average price of the commodities that they produced), and also to continually modify productive processes. Improvements in manufacture, particularly mechanisation, gave individual businesses an edge in the market, and their capitalist owners a temporary increase in profits. However, mechanisation also meant that less workers were required to achieve the same level of productivity. While 'bourgeois' theorists and individual capitalists might not care about the plight of the poor and unemployed, Marx argued that this was short sighted. Accumulative mechanisation meant that the source of value under capitalism *over all* – human labour – was being incrementally subtracted from the economy (Dobb, 1973; Nichols, 2011). With capitalism being the most productive economic system ever devised, the consequences of this subtraction could be temporarily masked as the economy expanded: new industries and markets formed, allowing workers to shift to new roles. However, in the long run, the ratio of capital invested in machinery and business infrastructure to that

invested in wages was shifting in favour of the former. Marx described this process as a rising ‘organic composition of capital’ (Marx, 1887; Avineri, 1968). According to Marx, this rise “so manages matters that the absolute increase of capital is accompanied by no corresponding rise in the general demand for labour (Marx, 1887: 442). This led both to cyclical, worsening, economic crises, and also to the continual expansion of an ‘industrial reserve army’ of unemployed workers (Harvey, 2010). This industrial reserve army, although an inevitable product of capitalism, also served capitalists in three further ways: by helping to keep wage values at a minimum; by fulfilling the demand for extra labourers during upturns in the business cycle; and by providing a disciplinary warning to the currently employed to accept poor and low-paid working conditions (Avineri, 1968; Harvey, 2010).

According to Marx (1887), the industrial reserve army consists of three sections: the floating, the latent and the stagnant. ‘Floating’ labourers shift in and out of work following vacillations in labour market demand. ‘Latent’ labourers are, primarily, migrant workers who could, or do, move to new areas of employment opportunity, either as they arise or in the hope that they will. ‘Stagnant’ labourers are those whose labour-power⁴⁸ is worth least on the employment market: the ‘drudges’, basic service workers and unskilled labourers who are hired as and when needed for specific unskilled tasks. Stagnant labourers are also hired in greater proportion as technical innovations simplify the processes of production.

Many in each of these categories would, at times, become utterly destitute and thereby fall into pauperism. Marx (1887: 445) states that the “absolute general law of capitalist accumulation” is that “the more extensive, finally, the Lazarus layers of the working class, and the industrial reserve army, the greater is official pauperism.” Marx divides pauperism into three ‘levels’: firstly, those reduced to criminality, alcoholism or prostitution – sometimes called by Marx the ‘lumpen proletariat’.⁴⁹ Secondly, pauper

⁴⁸ For Marx, ‘labour-power’ was a technical term, meaning the capacity of a worker to produce, and within capitalism, to produce value. Marx uses this term in explicit distinction to the ‘bourgeois’ concept that a labourer’s wage was the ‘value’ of their labour (Dobb, 1973). For Marx, capitalism functioned by paying labourers *less* than the market value that their labour-power produced. Godelier (1977) thus says “profit is unpaid wages.”

⁴⁹ In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx speaks of a ‘lumpen proletariat’: “On the pretext of founding a benevolent society, the lumpen proletariat of Paris had been organized into secret sections, each section led by Bonapartist agents, with a Bonapartist general at the head of the whole. Alongside decayed roués with dubious means of subsistence and of dubious origin, alongside ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, lazzaroni, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, *maquereaux*

orphans and children. Thirdly, the utterly destitute, demoralised, injured, sick or infirm. Marx (1975) proposed that workhouse work was therefore no more than a slave labour scheme, used to exploit workers at the lowest possible subsistence rates.

Marx's historical analysis has been challenged on numerous grounds. Economic historian Alexander Rustow (1980: 562) states that "Marx's specific economic theses have been superseded and refuted, in particular his theory of surplus value of exploitation." Donlan (2008) argues that industrialisation brought significant opportunities to the proletariat, leading to an unprecedented rise, not fall, in wages and standard of living.⁵⁰ Bhagwati (2004) states the same for modern developing countries. Clark and Layard (1993) further note that over the past two centuries, innovations in production have led to new job opportunities, not to unemployment. The most significant responses to Marx's views on pauperism are those already reviewed as pro-workfare arguments.

Marx's primary welfare studies legacy is his implicit theorisation of the intertwining of domination and exploitation (Byrne, 2005; Althusser, 2008). As Wright (2005: 23) explains: "the material welfare of exploiters causally depends on the material deprivations of the exploited." This, Wright argues, requires the 'dominating classes' to resort to techniques of surveillance and control. This idea has been expanded upon and adapted by numerous theorists.

According to Ernest Mandel (2011), all forms of social democratic welfare are institutions of domination that steal a portion of workers' wages to fund exploitative systems of worker control. Mandel (1968) argues that these systems are particularly employed in times of periodic economic crises, where they form part of a crackdown on the behaviours, motivations and productivity of workers. Gramsci (1971) describes this as a programme of 'puritanical initiatives' prosecuted via political, media and religious attacks on proletarian morality and lifestyles. Several scholars, including Westergaard (1995), Handler (1995), Jones and Novak (1999), Parker (2010) and Jones (2011) have argued that modern workfare schemes are justified via similar offensives.

[pimps], brothel keepers, porters, literati, organ grinders, ragpickers, knife grinders, tinkers, beggars - in short, the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither, which the French call *la bohème*; from this kindred element Bonaparte formed the core of the Society of December 10" (Marx, 1852: 37-38).

⁵⁰ Kiely (2005a) argues that pro-capitalist theorists emphasise the productivity of capitalism, presenting this as the sole cause of rising standards of living. This, argues Kiely, ignores the major influence of social welfare systems in saving lives and increasing living standards.

As Standing (2011b: 35) puts it: “Giving this group [welfare claimants] denigrating epithets such as ‘scroungers’, ‘workshy’ or ‘benefit dependent’ has contributed to altering the image of unemployment from a misfortune to a ‘lifestyle choice’, and has distorted policy-making.”

Piven and Cloward (1971) provide an early functionalist/quasi-Marxist version of this argument, proposing that, historically, welfare systems have only ever been expanded in order to control social unrest. This expansion is invariably accompanied by venal attacks on the pathological idleness of welfare claimants, and particularly upon the alleged moral deficiencies of poor females. Once the poor have been pacified, and the business cycle begins its upturn, welfare is contracted, exhaling low-wage workers back onto the labour market.

From a more orthodox Marxist perspective, Miliband (1989) argues that it is not abstract systemic functions that determine welfare programmes, but the frictional dialectic between two real bourgeois factions: the ‘corporate’ and ‘state’ sectors. According to Miliband, the corporate sector seeks the constant expansion of exploitation, including the dismantling of welfare systems. This allows the intensified ‘recommodification’ of welfare claimants as they are forced back into the active labour market (see also Polanyi, 1972; Lodemel and Trickey, 2000b). The state sector is alternatively tasked with stabilising the socio-economic system. This does involve mollification and the prevention of disorder (see also Miliband, 1974; Savage and Miles, 1994), but also significantly more complex systemic requirements, such as managing the reserve labour army in order to control inflation (see also Grover, 2003; Russell, 2001) and ensuring that poverty does not overwhelm the economic infrastructure. For Miliband (1989), and also Westergaard (1995), the emerging workfarist policies of the 1980s indicated a significant post-war extension of the mechanisms of exploitation into the realm of social welfare, thereby brutally harmonising state and corporate sector goals.

Marxist theories of welfare often balance an uneasy double view of welfare, decrying it as a mechanism of control while simultaneously seeking to prevent its abrogation (Jessop, 1982; Westergaard, 1995; Savage, 2000). Barrett (1988) describes this as Marxism’s ‘schizophrenic’ approach to welfare.⁵¹ However, as Miliband (1989)

⁵¹ See Jessop (1982: 78-84) for a detailed analysis of this debate.

notes, it is Marxism's equivocation over the ratio of importance between 'domination' and 'exploitation' that has been most challenging to a coherent Marxist theory of welfare. Prior to the advent of workfare, most analyses of European state welfare, Marxist or otherwise, broadly cohered around a tripartite model of 'corporatist', 'etatist' and 'social democratic' systems (Lodemel and Trickey, 2000a). Corporatist welfare varied benefit entitlement according to status and occupation. The *etatist* model maintained partisan loyalty through welfare rewards. The social democratic model utilised liberal wealth redistribution (Esping-Anderson, 1990). Following the 'New Right' economic transformations of the 1980s (Steger and Roy, 2010), and the emergence of workfare as a key European policy paradigm (Bruttel and Sol, 2006), a significant school of thought sheared off Marxism. This school, which was strongly influenced by Michel Foucault (Harvey, 2010; Turner, 2011), foregrounded domination and 'discipline' as the primary systemic goal of New Right labour market policy.

Foucault emphasised 'governmentality' – the processes of government control and social discipline – over economic exploitation (Foucault, 1991, 2001, 2008; Danaher *et al.*, 2000). Thus, for Foucault (1973, 1991), punitive control of the poor under capitalism is not primarily an economic project, but a haphazard and ongoing construction of self-fulfilling perceptions of an 'underclass' in order to justify increasingly repressive political regimes.

Numerous left-leaning scholars followed Foucault's emphasis, viewing 'neoliberal' welfare policies as a disciplinary "reconfiguration of state intervention" (Holden, 2003: 313). According to this perspective, workfare is more about containing and controlling marginalised and increasingly impoverished populations than it is about exploiting them (Overbeek and Pijl, 1993; Kingfisher and Goldsmith, 2001; Dahl, 2003; Wacquant, 2009). Even leading Marxist sociologist Eric Olin Wright (1997) has argued that an 'underclass' is emerging in capitalist countries that has no exploitable value, and which governments would rather simply 'disappeared'.

Loic Wacquant is arguably the most explicitly 'Foucauldian' analyst of workfare. According to Wacquant (2010, 2012), the 'neoliberal' revolution of the 1970s permitted an elite global plutocracy to perpetrate an enormous and socially catastrophic arrogation of wealth from former social democratic states. This is not, primarily, a process of intensified worker exploitation, but of social theft. The resultant 'centaur

state' sees increasing numbers of impoverished citizens 'disappeared' into prisons and workfare, while at the 'top', an increasingly repressive plutocracy grows in wealth and power.

The work of Jamie Peck navigates a course between Marx and Foucault. Peck addresses the neoliberal ideology of workfare exploitation, but also the micro-regulatory practices of actually existing workfare. Peck (2002) characterises neoliberal workfare as a turbulent 'multi-scalar' event. This is not a fixed social-policy paradigm but a process of continual local adaptations to international business requirements. The application of market principles to the welfare industry, especially payment-by-results, forces the development of an 'ecological' practice arena in which individual workfare providers are forced to absorb, steal, adapt, innovate or fund research into novel practices in order to attract and maintain government funding.⁵² This process, argues Peck, leads to a 'structural congruence' between government and business imperatives, justified by the intertwined ideologies of the 'pathological underclass', 'competitiveness', 'flexibility' and 'personal responsibility' (Peck, 2001, 2002). Moreover, new workfare ideas are constantly required in order to maintain the neoliberal regime's public image of radical innovation. Hence, new workfare policies often migrate across regional and national territories well before the long-term consequences of such policies are even known (Peck and Theodore, 2010).

In the realm of policy implementation, Peck (2001, 1998) found workfare to be a combination of exploitative pauper labour, disciplinary 'micro-regulation' and crude systems of welfare denial. Micro-regulation included bullying, surveillance, intimidation and psycho-social re-education. Welfare denial occurred via onerous entitlement conditions, criminalisation, oppressive rule enforcement, intimidation and administrative legerdemain.

Following empirical fieldwork, Peck (2001) found that those mandated to workfare were routed via two policy streams: 'parking' and 'churning'. Parking occurred when certain groups, such as the middle-aged, male, or ethnic minority groups, were not wanted by the local labour market. These individuals were then 'parked' in-centre on a permanent basis and subjected to 'pacifying' disciplinary

⁵² Olicker (1994: 207), for instance, finds that as early as 1988 "large-scale independent social science organizations [were] specializing in randomised [workfare] experimental methods."

regimes. Churning occurred when those claimants who were most wanted by the labour market were sent on work experience placements, compulsory work-first schemes, or into minimum-wage roles. This fed higher demands for cheap labour during the upturn in the business cycle. These workers experienced the most extreme forms of 'flexibilisation', being 'churned' between temporary work and disciplinary regulation in workfare centres. Moreover, they had few rights and suffered low pay and poor working conditions.

However, Dwyer and Ellison (2009) warn against over-prioritising the role of 'policy transfers' when considering the formulation of welfare policy, and particularly the commonplace assumption that the US is the 'source' of British workfare policy. Firstly, Dwyer and Ellison note that 'policy' itself is a loose concept, hence, it is not clear in what senses it can be simply 'transferred' from one locale to another. Drawing partly on an 'institutionalist' perspective, Dwyer and Ellison propose that welfare policy is often 'path dependent' on context, and particularly upon strong institutional paradigms present in specific locales. While 'policy entrepreneurs' do play a significant role, a deeper understanding of welfare policy transfer and change can be gleaned by understanding both the sources of ideas and also the contexts and parameters into which those ideas are downloaded.

However, the authors also find that in a decentralised, globalised environment, the role of institutions and individuals are themselves giving way to a more complex interaction of factors:

we should not be looking for rational, carefully considered forms of policy learning and transfer but rather for a protracted series of interactions among individuals and networks, both inside and outside the formal state, in a particular policy environment in which 'policy' made at one time becomes the starting point for further iterations and redefinitions as time goes on. (Dwyer and Ellison, 2009: 31).

In the specific context of the UK, Dwyer (with Emma Heron) (1999) argues that New Labour's workfare policies had emerged from a melding of philosophical, economic and political beliefs distilled into three key concepts: 'stakeholder welfare', 'Hutton's active welfare state', and 'Field's remoralising of welfare'. Stakeholder welfare emphasised personal responsibility and the diminution of state intervention. Hutton's active welfare state shifted government responsibility away from assuaging

poverty and towards ushering claimants back into the labour market. Field's remoralising welfare tied government policy to enhancing and promoting individual responsibility, self-help and active engagement with personal welfare provision, for example through insurance schemes. However, Heron and Dwyer (1999: 101) note that, despite the socially inclusive rhetoric and the attempt to establish a "new moral order," nevertheless "harsh benefit sanctions for refusal to work or train are at the heart of Labour's strategy for the young and long-term unemployed." The authors add that:

A welfare system based largely on conditions of work, set firmly within a moral framework of self-help and individual responsibility, failed to adequately meet the needs of certain individuals in the past and it would not be surprising if it did so again in the near future. (Heron and Dwyer, 1999: 101).

Similarly to Peck and Dwyer, a range of workfare theorists have proposed that post-1970s transformations of former social democratic welfare systems must be seen as an aspect of increasing globalisation, and moreover, of intensified 'neoliberalisation' (e.g. Steger, 2002; Smith, 2002; Dahl, 2003; Jenson, 2007; Bourdieu, 1998; Bauman, 1998; 2000; Beck, 2003; Birch and Mykhnenko, 2010). Bauman (2000), for instance, accuses neoliberal ideology of ascribing to unceasing low-paid work an almost magical capacity to overcome structural poverty. Beck (2003), meanwhile, argues that former social democratic regimes use an ideology of global competition to justify intensified worker discipline and the creation of an "adaptable welfare state that pushes its citizens into work" (Beck, 2008: 798).

The phenomena of globalisation, and the emergence of workfare as its overarching labour paradigm (Peck, 2001), has also prompted a rallying of Marxist responses (e.g. Bedgood, 1999; Milward, 2000; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2001; Byrne, 2005; Harvey, 2007; Jameson, 2011; Nichols, 2011; Kliman, 2012). Jameson (2011: 149), for instance, argues that workfare, refugee camps and so-called failed states each constitute "the vessels of a new kind of historical misery." These 'vessels' intern the victims of late-capitalism within a globalised disciplinary system. However, probably the most influential Marxist analysis of workfare is Regulation School theorist Bob Jessop.

Jessop (1993) argues that economic 'bases' are 'embedded' in wider systems of social organisation and regulation rather than, as per more orthodox Marxist

theorisations, being merely determinant of them. In advanced industrial capitalist societies such modes of social regulation shift over time in order to counter capitalism's crisis tendencies.

Jessop (1982) distinguishes between 'one nation' and 'two nation' approaches to welfare. One nation approaches, such as the Keynesian Welfare State (KWS), attempt to unite populations under consensual corporatist policies (see also Dahrendorf, 1959). Contrarily, two nation policies attempt to mobilise one section of the population against another, for example in supporting crackdowns on 'benefit scroungers'. Jessop (1993) argues that under classic conditions of accumulation (as considered by Marx in *Capital*), wages, as with all variable capital costs, are kept to a minimum by capitalists. However, under the KWS a demand-led economy was served by *high* wages, plus high domestic production and consumption. The emergence of a systemic crisis precipitated by Keynesianism's failure to control inflation in the 1970s triggered the emergence of a new accumulation regime: the 'Schumpeterian Workfare State', or 'SWS'.⁵³ Under the SWS, wages return to being merely a production cost, to be kept at minimum levels. The SWS thus forms a new 'hollowed out' political shell in which a 'Post-Fordist' accumulation regime represses social democracy, transcends nationalist politics and exploits new technologies to punitively restructure local production. This is intended to make labour forces responsive to global markets. The new regime requires 'flexible' workers, disciplined within, or by the threat of, workfare regimes. With profits stemming from local exploitation and global sales, old social welfare systems are reorganised and subordinated under the technical sounding term 'structural competitiveness'. This system draws both the unemployed and also low wage workers into a homogenised 'workfare class'. This class is de-unionised, demoralised and subjected to working practices such as temporary contracts, lower wages, poor conditions and deskilling, precisely as predicted by Marx. Under the SWS, 'two nation' approaches become the norm. This is exemplified, for instance, in the claim by Prime Minister Tony Blair (1995: 4) that there were "two Britains, one on welfare, the other paying for it." Regulation of the poor thus becomes lauded as a government priority as "the job of refashioning welfare and the job of refashioning government are inseparable" (Blair, 1997c: 2).

⁵³ Named for Schumpeter's view that constant vivacity, destruction and flexibility forms the basis of a healthy capitalist system.

Critically, Wood (2002) has responded that while capital might become globalised and ‘footloose’, nevertheless, systems of control and subordination can never, by definition, escape the localised format. Hence, national regimes and local politics continue to play a far greater role in labour market regulation than allowed for by Jessop’s vague sense of ‘hollowed out states’. Moreover, Solomon and Rupert (2002), and also Beck (2003), argue that the idea of a highly competitive global economy has become a common sense ideology, leading to a mendacious self-exploitation of workers who make *themselves* more ‘flexible’. For example by working for less, in worse conditions, or even for free in internships or unpaid overtime.

9. *Empirical studies of workfare*

While theorisations of workfare are many and varied, empirical analyses of workfare in practice have been relative scarce. This section therefore reviews the main studies falling into this category, plus a small number of theoretical studies of workfare that draw on empirical data.

One of the earliest sociological investigations into a modern welfare system was provided by Marie Jahoda, Hans Zeisel and Paul Lazarsfeld’s study of chronic unemployment in the German village of Marienthal in the early 1930s (Jahoda *et al.*, 2009). At the time that the research was conducted, most of Marienthal’s 1500 inhabitants had been made unemployed following the closure of a textile factory. This left almost the entire village dependent upon on a basic welfare scheme. This scheme was structured to gradually decrease welfare payments according to how long a claimant spent out of work. The authors interviewed local welfare officials, conducted documentary analysis and spoke with claimants who were attending special activities for the unemployed, such as gymnasium training for men and sewing circles for women.

The Marienthal study identified three separate psychological states amongst the village’s unemployed: the ‘unbroken’, the ‘resigned’ and the ‘broken’. The unbroken remained optimistic about the future. The resigned had come to terms with their situation, but had also begun to have doubts about the future. The broken had given up all hope, and were likely to leave the community. Significantly, these three categories closely matched Marienthal’s three different, and decreasing, levels of benefit payment:

34 schillings (14% [of the population] Unbroken)
30 schillings (47% Resigned)
23 schillings (39% Broken)

This finding indicated that the amount of time spent on welfare was correlated to psychological state. The longer villagers claimed welfare, the more they exhibited signs of apathy and disengagement with village activities. An increase in physical health problems was also noted to correlate to the length of time claimants had spent on welfare.

The Marienthal study was an important forerunner of the hysteresis theory of unemployment. The view that extended periods on welfare can lead to psychological breakdown is even sometimes termed the 'Jahoda School' (McLaughlin, 1994). However, Jahoda, a leading expert on the psychology of work, has since argued that the relationship between psychological wellbeing and work, or alternately, welfare, is complex, and not reducible to simplistic calculations involving only the time spent claiming welfare, or time spent in work. Numerous factors could affect the psychology of individuals, including poverty, isolation, and levels of integration into wider social networks (Jahoda and Fryer, 1998).

Chad Alan Goldberg (2001) reviewed New York's WEP (Work Experience Programme) workfare scheme. WEP was initiated in 1995 following the election of Mayor Giuliani in 1994. WEP utilised work-first programmes that deployed tens of thousands of welfare claimants as New York City municipal workers.

Utilising a dual theoretical approach drawn from Durkheim and Goffman, Goldberg argues that New York's workers and unemployed existed in a manipulated 'symbolic order'. Actors serving the interests of global capital sought to 'wrap' the unemployed in symbols of profanity. By contrast, New York's elite, and those who conformed to the values determined by that elite, were wrapped in symbols of social legitimation.

The profanation of welfare claimants occurred via 'symbolic pollution'. This most often entailed accusations of welfare dependency, indolence, uncleanliness, social dysfunction and sexual promiscuity. Neoliberal agents used rhetoric and imagery to contrast these alleged 'underclass' attributes with the 'sacred' neoliberal values of self-sufficiency, bourgeois family structure, law-abidingness, cleanliness, hard work and discipline. This symbolic propaganda operated on two levels. Firstly, via elite

discourse, including political speeches, legislation and media output. Secondly, via the day-to-day authoritarian control of welfare claimants.

Crucially, the day-to-day micro-control of welfare claimants under WEP was not simply a matter of power, domination or control; it was also an active semiotic process of creating 'welfare claimant' as a symbolically polluted social category. Goldberg draws the idea of symbolic pollution from Durkheim's belief that societies tend to view 'outsiders', or lower ranking members, as unclean.

According to Durkheim, ascribing the status of 'unclean' occurred via ritual processes embedded in day-to-day social life. Similarly, as welfare claimants pass through workfare institutions, the institutional processes and staff assumptions that they are subjected to symbolically 'mark' them as polluted. To explain this process, Goldberg draws on Goffman's finding that the institutional processes and staff perceptions within asylums and other 'total institutions' moulded individuals into 'typical' inmates. Goldberg finds that, similarly, WEP 'moulded' attendees into the status of polluted individuals. WEP programmes achieved this effect by continuously treating welfare claimants as social waste.

According to Goldberg, this process of symbolic pollution occurred via an ongoing cycle of interaction between macro and micro social levels. At the macro level, politicians, legislation, media reports and documentaries demonised welfare claimants. This output was then inculcated by workfare staff, who adjusted their practices to 'treat welfare claimants accordingly'. Prejudices and assumptions regarding welfare claimants, which were drawn from elite discourse, thus became explicitly embedded within the structures and content of WEP workfare provision. This included 'training' session curricula, the language, attitudes and behaviour of workfare centre staff, and the rules and regulations of WEP programmes. For example, where welfare claimants were demonised as 'idle', workfare staff might adopt 'training' methods designed to instil a superior work ethic. As the welfare claimant now appeared to be precisely that which elite discourse accused them of being, the original macro level vilification was confirmed. Reports and feedback from workfare centre staff then informed the views of elite actors. The result was a mutually reinforcing system of ritual degradation operating on and between micro and macro levels. Moreover, this 'cycle' had an increasingly punitive momentum, leading to intensified public support for crackdowns

on welfare claimants. This served local elite interests by justifying both the cutting of welfare cheques, and also the forcing of welfare claimants into forced work schemes. This also helped to lower New York City's municipal costs, as workfare labour replaced traditionally employed workers. Opposition to using welfare claimants as cheap workfare labour was muted due to a concocted sense that forced work was necessary in order to morally 'cleanse' New York's unemployed.

Espen Dahl (2003) conducted a review of Norwegian workfare centres. Dahl's research objective was to assess contemporary political and scholarly claims that modern Norwegian workfare programmes increased a welfare claimant's self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency meant the ability to engage in the labour market, find work and stay off welfare. Prior to the research phase, Dahl reviewed relevant literature and identified three standard approaches to welfare. Dahl calls these the 'rational', 'expectancy' and 'cultural' models. The rational model proposes that claimants draw welfare because they are attempting to maximise leisure time rather than the more 'usual' social desire of maximising income. The expectancy model proposes that an individual's previous experiences of work and welfare influence their desire to find work. The cultural model suggests that deviant norms develop in underprivileged areas. Each of these models emphasises individual behaviour over structural unemployment, and all three became increasingly articulated in Norwegian political, academic and media output during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Dahl thus characterises Norway's shift towards workfare in this period as an abandonment of social democratic active labour market policies. These had emphasised structural economic failures as the causes of unemployment, and government intervention in industry as the solution. The new 'workfare' model emphasised personal failures. Hence, workfare advocates recommended a stricter, and individualised, 'work activation' approach. This meant pressurising individuals to find work, no matter how low-paid or menial. Work activation was claimed to trigger positive 'psycho-social mechanisms' in welfare recipients; chiefly, self-sufficiency, work ethic and self-esteem. This was alleged to lead to more active efforts to escape unemployment and poverty, and moreover, to impart this work seeking ethic to claimants' children.

Dahl's study utilised survey data. In total, 300 workfare scheme attendees were interviewed, drawn from 40 workfare centres. A control group of 155 welfare claimants, who did not attend workfare schemes, was also surveyed. Each participant

was claiming benefits in 1995. Dahl (2003: 278) states that fifteen 'characteristics' of workfare programmes were investigated, including:

type of sanction, whether training was a part of the programme, collaboration with the labour market department, number of weeks required to work, etc. as well as characteristics of the municipality such as population size, unemployment rates and urban/rural area.

These characteristics were then subjected to a statistical analysis. Dahl found that workfare centres had rapidly developed institutional practices that favoured the centre, and its need to fulfil bureaucratic rules and quotas, over the needs of welfare claimants. This occurred because of undue pressures placed on centres by government rules and contract expectations. The most important 'institutional practice' was 'creaming', i.e. prioritising the most 'work ready' claimants for available vacancies. Those claimants requiring more serious help were largely ignored. Some 'parked' vulnerable claimants subsequently exhibited signs of institutionalisation. It was therefore possible that workfare made finding work less likely, as the centre regime undermined the confidence and independence of claimants. Rather than increasing 'self-efficacy', this appeared to be reinforcing a sense of personal failure in some cases. Moreover, the attitudes of staff towards 'parked' claimants might also have been reinforcing this psychological state. For example, by subtly treating claimants as hard to reach, or as unemployable individuals, claimants might internalise this perspective. This could occur through face-to-face interactions, or else through in-centre prejudices that developed around particular claimants.

Public reporting of the 'successes' of workfare centres was skewed. Successful work placements were emphasised, giving an artificial sense that government policy was actively aiding difficult to employ social categories. Closer inspection revealed that for claimants who were work ready, the centre probably did little more than introduce them to potential employers. Meanwhile, pressures to appear successful meant that claimants requiring more significant help were considered too time consuming and parked. This in turn fed public and media perceptions that a certain category of welfare claimant was pathologically resistant to work, even when provided with expensive and intensive intervention.

Dean Herd, Andrew Mitchell and Ernie Lightman (2005) researched the experiences of workfare attendees in Canada. Their study focused on the Ontario Works programme, established in 1995 following the election of a new, Right-leaning state government intent on implementing 'active' welfare policies. The authors emphasise the need for empirical, qualitative study in order to explore the day-to-day experiences of workfare attendees. Their research method therefore followed a panel interview formula, with 90 workfare centre attendees questioned over two sessions in 2002 and 2003.

Drawing on a detailed analysis of the panel data, the authors argue that 'active welfare policy' was a euphemism for the micro-regulation of claimant behaviour. While the official rationale of Ontario Works was to make claimants more work focused and work ready, nevertheless, micro-regulation had become an administrative end in itself. This began with a deliberately difficult and confusing application process. This included an almost unnavigable telephone call-centre application procedure, followed by the need to complete forms filled with multiple clauses and confusing jargon. Where claims were refused, appealing the decision entailed a further layer of intensively complex bureaucracy. Hostile staff would then demand unreasonable or difficult to provide documentary proof of welfare eligibility, and would also refuse to offer advice during the applications process. This was intended to screen out and put off as many potential claimants as possible. This indicated a sea change in welfare services, with the old social democratic service mentality being replaced by a neoliberal agenda of making welfare claims as difficult and onerous as possible.

Successful claimants then faced what the authors describe as "rituals of degradation" (2005: 74). This began with face-to-face interrogations in which claimants were continually asked to justify their eligibility for welfare. The information required was often intrusive. For example, cheque stubs, evidence of domestic living arrangements or divorce settlements, insurance documents and bank statements. The authors note that individuals who were fleeing domestic abuse, or who had experienced some other catastrophic life event, often did not have all of the documents demanded by the workfare centre. This led to a dismissal of their claim.

Helping people to find work took second place to obedience and onerous administrative protocols. This permitted claimants to be intensively micro-managed

and pushed through the system in a timely manner. The micro regulation of claimants was enforced through interrogations, humiliating and unachievable case-plans, and patronising training and orientation sessions.

High staff turnovers due to the stress of working in Ontario Works centres served this administrative agenda. Claimants were unable to build alliances with staff members and were forced to repeatedly explain the same problems, and provide the same supporting documentation, multiple times, to multiple different and unknown officials. This added an extra layer of disorientation, intrusion and humiliation. Failure to follow Ontario Works' petty administrative rules and requirements were disproportionately punished with serious economic sanctions. This led to 'destabilised' claimants, who, the authors argue, were easier to persuade to exit welfare. Ontario Works is described by Herd *et al.* as an administrative extension of the policing system. This transition indicated that the priority of government was no longer to establish the eligibility of vulnerable individuals, but rather, to subject them to invasive systems of micro-surveillance.

Katrin Hohmeyer and Joachim Wolff (2012) reviewed Germany's 'Help Towards Work' (HTW) welfare scheme. HTW was introduced by the federal government in 2005, following a decade of rising German unemployment. HTW is sometimes described as the 'one-euro' scheme because it provided nominal payments of around one euro per hour for workfare labour. HTW was designed to diminish the 'utility' of welfare by limiting the excess free time enjoyed by welfare claimants. To achieve this aim, participants were sent on temporary work placements, primarily in the non-profit sector. It was hoped by the German government that these placements would boost participants' basic skills, self-confidence and work ethic. This was expected to lead to more active job seeking and a greater likelihood of accepting lower waged work. By 2012, HTW was processing around 600,000 new participants into work placements annually.

To assess the efficacy of HTW, Hohmeyer and Wolff analysed statistical data pertaining to nearly 31,000 workfare participants. All participants were in the 18-65 age group, and all were unemployed and attending HTW in 2005. The authors further subdivided the sample into East and West Germans, men and women and different age categories.

Before commencing their analysis, the authors note that it is extremely difficult to assess how much ‘utility value’ an unemployed person attaches to their ‘leisure’ time. Such a person might make the most of their free time, but still want work. This makes any empirical assessment of the power of workfare schemes to diminish free time utility extremely problematic, with the fundamental assumptions of this position existing more in the ideological than the factual realm.

Following a comprehensive data analysis, the authors found that by six months, on average, HTW made finding work less likely for all major categories of participants. The authors hypothesise that, in some cases, participants experienced a ‘lock in’ effect. Lock in involved participants coming to view their one-euro job as sufficient employment. Work placements provided social contact and an increased sense of purpose. Moreover, these benefits were achieved in low stress roles. This gave participants little incentive to seek work in the competitive and often highly stressful normal labour market. The likelihood of the lock in effect occurring increased in direct proportion to the number of temporary jobs completed by participants.

Both East and West German women were more likely than East and West German men to find work after twelve months, and West German women were more likely to find work than East German women. The authors hypothesise that this was due to a higher demand for low paid women in the West German domestic services industry. After 20 months, HTW’s success rate was 0%, as opposed to 16.9% for a non-HTW control group. Over the very long term (i.e. over two years) the numbers of males who successfully exited HTW rose slightly to 1.5% (2012: 183).

Overall, the one-euro scheme diminished a claimant’s chances of finding work. However, for those with exceptionally poor work histories the scheme provided a slightly positive effect. Age, gender and local employment markets played important roles in determining who was more likely to be employed.

Craig Brett (2005) conducted a fiscal review of European workfare schemes. Brett argues that workfare schemes need to save more in welfare non-expenditure than they cost in operating expenses in order to be fiscally viable. Brett found that this economic payoff rarely, if ever, occurred in European workfare. Moreover, claims Brett, there needed to be widely available real employment, and a high percentage of individuals refusing to work because benefits were too attractive, in order for

governments to achieve any overall fiscal gains from workfare programmes. As most European economies did not exhibit these features, workfare programmes usually transpired to be far more expensive to run than the welfare regimes that they replaced. This was due to the enormous costs involved, including monitoring and training customers, and also keeping up with complex systems of administration. Rising costs were also aggravated by the limited successes that workfare schemes achieved in terms of exiting their clients from welfare. Brett concluded that whatever workfare's justification might be, it could not be financial savings.

Jamie Peck (1998) assessed the strict workfare system introduced into Massachusetts by Governor William Weld in 1991. This scheme came to be known as 'Welfare'. Welfare heralded a clampdown on welfare claiming. This included a 'family cap' (no aid for any children born on welfare) and the refusal of welfare to teenage parents living independently. Teenage parents were also required to have, or to be working towards, a high school diploma. For adult claimants, Welfare introduced a strict system of conditionality and enforced low-wage work. Peck's analysis of Welfare drew on "just over 100 interviews with federal, state and local level policymakers, administrators, welfare advocates, recipients, community representatives, and employers" (1998: 68).

According to Peck, Welfare was based on a spurious supply side economics principle: that jobs would 'appear' if enough cheap labour was pushed onto the employment market. This "reckless social experiment" (1998: 78) ignored that the availability of jobs is always closely linked to fluctuations in the business cycle. Because of a widespread failure to realise or accept this link, welfare systems that are in place when the business cycle is in downturn become perceived as failing, and as generating 'dependency'. Proponents of workfare thus argued that dependency could be ended by forcing claimants to take work. Even low-paid work would, according to this perspective, lift individuals and families out of poverty. Reviewing the political discourses of the 1990s, Peck claims that structural poverty was being repackaged as evidence for cultures of poverty and intergenerational fecklessness. Pro-workfare politicians thus felt empowered to denigrate anti-workfare commentators as "welfare pimps" (1998: 71) who constituted anachronistic obstacles to positive welfare reforms. The true 'chronic dependency', however, was the life of intense exploitation and stress experienced by those subjected to enforced low-wage work.

Peck also found that individuals and families subjected to punitive workfare regimes were forced to develop desperate survival strategies to keep going amidst chronic poverty and destitution. At times this involved tactics that increased their likelihood of being viewed as an underclass. Claiming welfare was itself the central strategy in surviving amidst structural poverty. The ideological rationale of Welfare – that low-wage work could lift welfare claimants out of poverty - is therefore rejected by Peck. Rather, Peck presents Welfare as a “socioregulatory experiment” (1998: 80) designed to explore and develop increasingly punitive modes of disciplinary containment for the poor and super-exploited.

Peck also found Welfare to be a highly ‘localising’ phenomenon, arguing that “there is also an important sense in which the methodology of workfare requires localization, particularly with respect to the implementation of intensive forms of individualized ‘case management’” (1998: 80). Through systems of administration and welfare probation, welfare claimants were thus tied to areas of high poverty and unemployment. This not only exacerbated the problems that Welfare was set up to address, it also created localised, highly regulated, intensively supervised ghettos of economic failure.

Robert E. Goodin (2004) draws on the work of Sartre to argue that workfare is a policy that was designed, promoted and administered in deliberate ‘bad faith’. Goodin claims that while elite spokespersons regularly promote workfare as an advanced means of placing people back into work, such claims mask the deployment of a cynical policy of ‘bureaucratic disempowerment’. Bureaucratic disempowerment means funneling claimants off welfare by subjecting them to deliberately complicated and onerous administrative rules and procedures. This leads to many claimants losing benefit entitlements due to breaking petty guidelines that have little relationship to any real processes of seeking employment.

Goodin argues that while active labour market policies can be good in theory, nevertheless, in reality, underfunded programmes run by pressurised staff in the face of hostile labour markets tend to slip into ‘bad workfare’. Bad workfare involves ‘disappearing’ claimants off the welfare rolls by any means possible in order to appear successful to the government and the general public. As this occurs at local,

administrative levels, the government and the media tend not to notice, or care, that this is happening.

Goodin also challenges the ideological basis of workfare. Goodin claims that all benefits involve some form of 'conditionality', and that these conditions can be analysed to reveal the 'value premises' that inform them. The 'ethical defensibility' of workfare, according to Goodin, comes from liberal principles of self-sufficiency and individualistic entrepreneurialism. Hobbes, Locke and Grotius justified slavery by arguing that those who fell on the mercy of the state became, effectively, its property, and so had no right of complaint against anything the state chose to do with them. Goodin sees this as similar to workfare theorists who argue that workfare clients are legitimately subject to whatever conditions governments place on their benefits. This, proposes Goodin, is as false for benefits claimants as it is for slaves.

Irene Dingledey (2007) argues that welfare states are shifting towards an intensified re-commodification of labour. This marks a transition from past domestic government agendas of ensuring that citizens had sufficient income to live on, to a new policy of rendering life without work unthinkable and virtually impossible. However, although this transition is a global project of New Right reorientation, different states were attempting this re-commodification in alternative ways. The new 'normative' welfare paradigm was a mandatory reciprocity between state regimes and welfare claimants. Different 'reform paths' were being followed to achieve this effect, but nevertheless, all were based on some form of workfare. Workfare, claims Dingledey, was designed to create a new kind of relationship between the state and the individual. The state would no longer be viewed as a protector of those who fell into unemployment, but rather, as a source of coercion to force claimants back into the labour market. And if necessary, to force them to take low-paid workfare employment. Blame for unemployment was thus shifted away from structural factors, and onto the individual. This propaganda was reinforced by the activities of workfare programmes. These programmes deployed strict institutional practices designed to emphasise that claimants must make themselves more employable through training, change of appearance and attitudes, and the acceptance of lower wages.

Jenny Nybom (2012) analysed the use of workfare in Sweden during the 2000s. Nybom's primary focus was how workfare centre institutional practices and attitudes

might affect the outcomes and sanctioning rates of 'Social Assistance' claimants. Nybom analysed statistical data pertaining to 372 Swedish nationals who had claimed welfare between 2002 and 2004, and who had been sent on a new workfare scheme. The sample covered both male and female claimants, and claimants from a variety of backgrounds and age categories. Each claimant had been drawing welfare for between 6 and 24 months at the time the survey was conducted. The data were originally collected by Sweden's National Health and Welfare board. The data recorded workfare centre staff perceptions on the motivation and work readiness of specific claimants, in addition to details of any sanctions, or exemptions from sanctions, staff had given to those claimants. The data also revealed whether a claimant had been directed towards compulsory 'resource activation', meaning training, or compulsory 'job activation', meaning work placements. Claimants could also be exempted from either form of activation, being asked to perform only perfunctory activities such as attending interviews and completing job seeking quotas.

Nybom conducted a review of poor law and workfare literature prior to commencing data analysis. This review led Nybom to identify five primary 'institutional logics' that might have been operating in Swedish workfare centres. Firstly, a 'work test logic' viewed welfare claimants as unwilling to work, and likely to commit fraud. This suspicion-based perspective made sanctioning more likely. A 'creaming logic' focused centre activities on the most employable claimants. The need to show good results to government or programme managers encouraged this approach. A 'neediness logic' focused help and resources on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable claimants, leaving the more able to fend for themselves. A 'gender logic' harmonised workfare centre activities with the gendered structure of local labour markets. For example, women might be trained for domestic roles, while men might be trained as labourers. Finally, a 'policy-true logic' saw workfare centres act in precise accordance with the instructions and stated aims of the government or scheme organiser.

Employing statistical analysis, Nybom assessed correlations between claimant socio-demographic characteristics, staff attitudes, institutional prejudices and practices, and workfare experiences and outcomes. These were contrasted with the five institutional logics to assess which, if any, operated within Swedish workfare centres. Nybom found no evidence for the creaming logic, and little evidence for the policy true

logic. The work test logic was evident in sanction rates, but presented a complex picture, as many sanctions were later reversed by staff, making exemptions. The gender logic was strongly represented, with males significantly more likely to be sanctioned than females. The neediness logic was also present, although staff tended to view a weak work ethic as a psychological need, treating claimants accordingly as requiring extra help and consideration.

Claimants who were assessed as having both poor formal skills (including qualifications and work experience) and also poor 'work motivation' were more likely than any other group to be directed to 'any form of activation', meaning training *or* work placement. Claimants with poor formal skills but high work motivation were more likely to be sent on work placements. Claimants with low levels of work motivation but high formal skills were more likely to be directed towards training. Claimants with poor health were highly unlikely to be sent on work placements. Females and males had equal chances of being sent on training programmes. Under 25s were more likely to be sent on work placements. The longer any claimant was on welfare, the more likely they were to be sent on a work placement.

Around 31% of 'activated' claimants were sanctioned, as opposed to 14% of non-activated clients. This indicated that activation involved an increased risk of sanction. Lack of work motivation was significantly correlated with sanctioning for both activated and non-activated groups. Claimants with poor health were rarely sanctioned. Being female, under-25, or of immigrant background significantly reduced the likelihood of being sanctioned. Being an older man significantly increased the likelihood of being sanctioned. Length of time on welfare also raised the chances of sanctioning amongst activated claimants as a whole.

Peter Sunley, Ron Martin and Corinne Nativel (2001) reviewed the performance of the New Deal for Young People (NYDP) programme. NYDP was rolled out in the UK by New Labour between 1998 and 2000. The authors were interested in the ways different geographical locations might have affected the performance of NYDP. Unemployment, particularly long-term youth unemployment (under-25 years old), was significantly higher in inner cities and major towns according to government statistics. However, local NYDP schemes followed the same programme design regardless of area of implementation.

The authors focused their research on government data pertaining to the first seven cohorts of young people to attend New Deal schemes and also to find work.

Drawing on the government's own 'success; criterion of achieving not simply employment, but *sustainable* employment, the authors then examined the data to assess levels of job retention, 'churning' and unexplained 'exits' from welfare – i.e. persons who had left welfare but not into work.

The authors found that, under the New Deal schemes, rates of returning-to-benefits after 26 weeks of work – the government's guideline for assessing employment as 'sustained' – varied significantly with local employment geography. Poor, static labour markets in inner cities and areas of industrial decline performed much worse than areas with dynamic markets, such as London and the South more generally. The numbers of individuals who exited welfare for unknown destinations were also much higher in static markets.

The authors argue that in static labour markets, work is more likely to be temporary and short-term. Supply side labour practices, such as workfare, add yet more low-paid workers to the market, aggravating the depressed local employment conditions that they are intended to address. This explains why in areas of industrial decline, youth unemployment not only fails to improve with workfare, but can even worsen. Workfare schemes in such areas may also lead to churning, and to exiting, i.e. leaving welfare, but not necessarily towards any socially positive destination.

Peter Dwyer (2002) (also 2000) reviewed perceptions of New Labour's 'New Deal' workfare policies and the changing role of state welfare provision in the UK. The rationale for the study was to explore how service users perceived this policy, and to allow their views to enhance ongoing debate surrounding welfare and citizenship. The study was based on ten interview panels. In total, 69 individuals were interviewed. The sample was divided between 33 men and 36 women, and drawn from a range of age, ethnic and work backgrounds. The sample also including ten working participants and eight who were retired.

Participants were asked to give opinions on three themes. Firstly, who or what should provide welfare services? Secondly, should welfare be conditional? Thirdly, what factors should be considered when including or excluding individuals from welfare?

Dwyer found that participants "overwhelmingly endorsed" (2002: 280) the idea that the state should have central importance as a welfare service provider. However, this support varied according to category of welfare provision. For instance, participants were more likely to endorse a government role in health than in housing. Support for

private welfare insurance was muted, with many participants fearing that poor work or poor health histories would inevitably exclude them from such provision. However, participants also regularly expressed dissatisfaction with government welfare provision. Some argued that, at times, this did not even fulfil basic needs.

The application of ‘conditionality’ to welfare receipt was a more contested area. Applying conditionality to health care was not widely supported. However, more than half of the participants agreed with tying unemployment benefits to some form of conditionality. Responses indicated that conditionality was felt to be positive in two senses. Firstly, that compulsory work or training might improve a claimant’s employability and/or chances of finding work. Secondly, that conditionality fulfilled a civic duty to engage in some form of reciprocal activity in return for benefits. Participants who stated this tended to argue that unemployment was due to personal failings or lack of gumption. For these participants, conditionality would therefore either offer a valuable opportunity to genuinely willing claimants, or else provide a much needed fillip to idlers. However, a substantial minority argued that unemployment was largely due to structural economic failures, and that in such cases welfare should be unconditional.

Participants’ views on entitlement were intertwined with notions of authentic citizenship. A significant number argued that while welfare should be mostly unconditional for those who had ‘paid their dues’ and were proper members of society, nevertheless, for ‘outsiders’, welfare should be conditional or even unavailable. Outsiders included ‘foreigners’ in some cases, but also those who refused to contribute positively to society. A minority view, however, argued that welfare should be universalistic, and not determined by notions of group membership.

Dwyer argues that participants’ views and beliefs were drawn primarily from their personal experiences of welfare. This was highlighted by a sensitivity to the complexities of multiple aspects of the welfare system, but also by the many personal views on the potential grounds for which an individual might be excluded from welfare. There was a strong incidence of welfare claimants seeking to justify their own entitlement whilst denying or downgrading the rights of others as ‘underserving’. Whilst some participants agreed with tightening rights to welfare through conditionality regimes, nevertheless, participants also strongly argued that the government retained a significant responsibility to ensure the basic needs of citizens.

Jorg Michael Dostal (2008) divides academic analysis of workfare into two 'waves'. The first of these waves stresses policy transfer from the United States, while the second emphasises local historical and economic trajectories. Dostal is suspicious of the claim that UK workfare policy dutifully follows the US example. This is doubtful according to Dostal because, firstly, the public 'policy paradigms' popular in both US and UK political discourse have not convincingly been shown to match the empirical reality of workfare delivery in either territory. Secondly, the 'neo-diffusionist' model of policy transfer woefully underestimates the importance of local adaptation to increasingly globalised capital regimes.

Dostal divides workfare into four 'ideal types': general active labour market policies (ALMPs), as in the Swedish model; targeted ALMPs (e.g. targeting one social group, such as the disabled); market welfare; and make-work welfare. It is the latter two - market and make-work welfare, that have achieved political purchase as the primary policy paradigms of neoliberal workfare discourse. Market welfare is claimed by elite spokespersons to move people 'closer to the labour market' through direct, job-related training, work experience or working for benefits schemes. 'Make-work', on the other hand, means in-centre or 'administratively imposed' meaningless activities designed to render claiming benefits onerous, or else to give the mere appearance that 'reciprocal activity' is occurring in return for benefits. However, this 'symbolic' make-work does not give the unemployed any real skills, and may even lead to further stigmatisation.

In reality, claims Dostal, little ever changes in welfare policy, despite the regular implementation of 'new' poor relief schemes in the pursuit of 'welfare reform'. This helps to create the 'workfare illusion': i.e. a false sense of momentum and improvement in welfare policy. Dostal claims that as 'discourse' is always the cheapest aspect of government policy, it is also the aspect of welfare that governments are most likely to change. However, theorists should strive to see the difference between rhetoric and reality. Dostal therefore argues that the UK's 'New Deal' initiative was largely a sop to voters, designed to maximise 'credibility claims' made by the government. It was not, therefore, a serious attempt tackle unemployment.

Becci Newton, Nigel Meager, Christine Bertram, Anne Corden, Anitha George, Mumtaz Lalani, Hilary Metcalf, Heather Rolfe, Roy Sainsbury and Katharine Weston (2012) performed an early qualitative research study into the WP. This involved in depth interviews with service provider and Jobcentre staff, and WP

customers, plus observations. The research was conducted in 12 local authorities across 11 different Primes and their subcontracted providers.

The authors found that WP providers offered five primary services: (1) handover and initial engagement, (2) assessment, (3) out-of-work support, (4), in-work support and (5), exiting the WP. It was also found that JCP staff, despite having an important role to play in preparing customers for the WP, nevertheless often had little knowledge of it. Moreover, in some cases JCP staff were hostile to the WP and to the notion of privatised provision more generally. The authors note that:

One measure encouraged by DWP and Jobcentre Plus to enhance the referral process is the ‘warm handover’, an initial three-way meeting between the claimant, their existing Jobcentre Plus adviser and their new Work Programme adviser. Despite being envisaged in prime providers’ bids, the evidence suggested that genuine warm handovers were far from widespread. (2012: 2).

On referral to WP centres, the authors found providers conducting detailed reviews with WP customers, exploring their work history and ambitions, and then basing subsequent provision, and the customer’s ‘WP journey’, on this assessment. The services offered varied between providers, but in most cases involved assigning customers to an individual caseworker. This did help to provide some degree of ‘tailored support’. However, the authors note that: “Advisers also reported considerable (frequently cost-driven) limits on the additional support that could be offered to participants, particularly where that support might involve referrals to external, paid-for, provision” (2012: 3).

In the early months of the programme, the sanctions system was problematic, with numerous failures of communication between JCP and providers. Sanctions raised on a technicality by the JCP also often damaged the relationships between providers and customers. While most participants were found to be engaged with the idea of work, customers’ perceptions of the WP were significantly influenced by how they perceived their personal caseworker. A negative relationship with the caseworker was likely to lead to a negative view of the programme more generally. The authors also found a ‘degree’ of ‘parking and creaming’, with more ‘job ready’ customers likely to exit the programme earlier, and with less job ready customers likely to be

directed to more ‘human capital’ approaches. The authors conclude with recommendations for improved communications between service providers, and also note that “many providers are prioritising more ‘job-ready’ participants for support, ahead of those who are assessed as having more complex/substantial barriers to employment” (2012: 6).

10. Conclusion

This chapter has presented a range of theories and studies pertaining to work, welfare and workfare. The role of welfare theories as carriers of historical myths and narratives, and the often partisan nature of those myths, was emphasised. The first full theoretical perspective considered was that which indicts welfare for paradoxically generating poverty and unemployment. A historical review of the provenance of this argument was made, including the work of ancient, classic and modern social theorists. Charles Murray was presented as the most influential modern sociologist in this school. Next, the historical and intellectual provenance of the ‘disciplinary socialisation’ perspective was considered. Lawrence Mead was emphasised as the primary and most influential scholar arguing in support of disciplinary workfare. A brief review of the ‘hysteresis’ theory of unemployment, and its relationship to workfare, was followed by a consideration of the theoretical differences between ‘human capital’ and ‘work-first’ workfare. Some critical responses to both approaches were noted, including claims that only work-first worked in practice, that only human capital approaches could overcome the poor educational backgrounds of many claimants, and that work-first workfare was little more than a mechanism of exploitation. Perspectives on work and citizenship, and the relationship of these phenomena to welfare theory, were then considered. Finally, theories critical of workfare, and particularly those theorists who view workfare as a mechanism of exploitation and/or domination, were considered.

Work, welfare and workfare are controversial and disputed terrains of social organisation. As argued here, no consensus exists over the right approach to resource distribution. Moreover, most key theorists argue that actually existing formats of work and welfare actively mitigate against cohesive social organisation. However, theorists differ significantly over who is being exploited or misused, ‘ordinary’ working people, or welfare claimants.

A review of primary empirical studies was then presented. Key themes that can be drawn from these studies include that workfare is rarely found to be successful in

terms of job creation, that ‘micro-regulation’, intimidation and exploitation are regularly emphasised by both participants and also researchers as primary aspects of workfare operation, and that at times, workfare can even weaken local labour markets. Attitudes towards work and welfare were also highlighted as important aspects of workfare in practice. This includes not only the attitudes of workfare centre staff, but also of politicians, media representatives, the general public and of welfare claimants themselves. From the available literature it appears that all of these perspectives play a role in actually existing workfare provision. The remainder of this thesis presents an exploration of this phenomenon, and its relationship to the practical operation of the WP. This commences in the following chapter with a review of the methods and fieldwork I used to gather relevant data.

Chapter Four:

Methods and Fieldwork

1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the methods and fieldwork employed in the thesis. The chapter is divided into nine sections. Following this introduction, section 2 presents a reflexive account of the research process, including any personal factors that might have affected this. Section 3 relates the events and processes surrounding my early attempts to find participants willing to take part in the study. Section 4 explains the rationale for the research approach taken in the field. Section 5 explores fieldwork methods,

providing a detailed account of how the data were gathered. Section 6 outlines the use of the computer programme Nvivo in analysing the data. Section 7 considers ethical implications and considerations, and Section 9 provides a brief conclusion to the chapter.

2. Locating Myself

Reflexivity

‘Reflexivity’ is a general concept broadly referring to a researcher’s ability to reflect upon the biases, assumptions and suppositions that might influence their research approach (Pillow, 2010). According to fieldwork research specialists Clifford and Marcus (1986), Edensor (2002) and Pillow (2010), such influences might be present due to a researcher’s experiences and origins within various social categories, including age, gender, sex, ethnic origin, political beliefs, sexuality, social class, cultural inheritance and life experiences. Edensor (2002) states that reflexive consideration of bio-locational factors is a relatively new and welcome development within the social sciences, with Western ethnographers, in particular, being “brought to book for [previously] failing to locate their ontological and epistemological framework within a particular culture” (2002: 162). Pillow (2010) adds that it is important to recognise that intersections of multiple biographical factors might sway perceptions of social reality. It is important to take this possibility seriously, not only when analysing participant responses, but also in acknowledging that the researcher’s identity might be affecting her/his methodological approach. In the next three subsections I therefore apply this reflective process to myself.

About me

I am a white, middle-aged, English male. I raised two children as a single parent, living on a council estate. Over the years, in addition to working in various roles, I have also experienced being unemployed, going to Jobcentres and signing on. These experiences were similar to those of many of the people in the centres that were researched for the thesis, allowing me to empathise with them to some degree.

My prior opinions on Workfare

Before commencing fieldwork for the thesis my opinions on workfare stemmed from three sources; firstly, my experiences working at an FND centre; secondly, my wider reading; and thirdly, my general views on social welfare – in particular, my belief that welfare should be largely unconditional. All three sources led me to view workfare as a gross and unjustifiable exercise in bullying and exploitation. While my *overall* negative view has not changed, I now recognise that my understanding was one-dimensional. Conducting fieldwork for the thesis exposed me to a very different form of workfare. Genuinely well-meaning staff operated in exceptionally difficult circumstances, on a narrow institutional budget and under significant personal pressures, to meet low but nevertheless hard to fill contract quotas. While this does not negate the claims of numerous participants that they experienced bullying or other negative events at the centres, it has forced me to think about how my prior expectations may have influenced the design of my research instruments. For example, I designed questions not only to reveal the practical operations of the WP, but also to tease out the nature of the relationships that existed between WP staff and their unemployed ‘customers’. Moreover, a desire to uncover how staff and customers felt about one another on a personal as well as a professional basis played a role in the design of the questions that I asked. This was not likely to lead to neutral assessments of welfare policy in practice. However, following the completion of fieldwork I am confident that it was useful to design the research instruments in this way. Not only did this lead to the gathering of crucial data pertaining to workfare as a lived experience, it also revealed some surprising and unexpected results.

3. *Gathering Data*

The intended purpose of this thesis was to research welfare systems and not ‘the unemployed’ *per se*. I agree with Byrne (2005) that social policy research is too often an investigation of ‘the poor’ funded by wealthy and powerful interests. I wanted to explore how workfare was experienced by the people who were part of it. In particular, I wished to observe WP centres to explore how people experienced workfare as a day-to-day reality. As Singer (2009: 191) explains it, this form of research leads to data that can “emphasize their subjects’ frames of reference and try to remain open to their understandings of the world.” My intention was to assess how the factors observed could be tied into wider economic factors. For this reason, I viewed interviews as

secondary sources of data, as a person's opinion of what is happening is not necessarily as robust a data source as direct observation. Eventually, this proved to be both an appropriate *and* a misguided perspective. Through interviews I discovered that many participants, staff and customer, felt that the WP was good, but not for its stated purpose. This was both an important finding and also a confirmation that interviews are not sufficient on their own to assess how workfare centres function in more objective terms. However, there was initially some justifiable doubt over the likelihood of gaining direct access to centres. Interviews were proposed as, potentially, an alternative. Subsequently, I attempted to source interview participants whilst simultaneously trying to secure direct access to centres. Eventually, I did gain access to two centres. My fieldwork can thus be divided into two periods: (1) before access, (2) post-access. I will consider each in turn.

Before Access

I put up posters advertising for participants in key locations. These included town centres, shops near WP centres and Jobcentres, and also inside Jobcentres themselves. The response was disappointingly low, with only three replies. However, the interviews conducted with these three people was interesting. Two spoke of exploitation and bullying, and one of the absurd red-tape that she was experiencing in the welfare system. I went to three foodbanks. This approach was not ideal. By definition, those on the WP who are at a foodbank are likely to be on a sanction, hence, they might be expected to have little positive to say about workfare. However, this approach did provide two good and informative interviews with foodbank organisers. The second organiser invited me to a third foodbank where I conducted one interview with a foodbank user who was currently on a WP sanction. While this avenue seemed potentially productive, this foodbank manager tragically and unexpectedly died shortly afterwards.

During this time I began a more direct approach. I went to four WP centres in two key locations, standing outside with a clipboard and asking exiting attendees to do interviews. This also proved to be unproductive. The rate at which individuals left the centres was unexpectedly slow, at about one every 45 minutes. Of these 'exiters', few wanted to take part. This meant that standing at a centre for four or five hours was often pointless. Even offering to buy a 'butty and a brew' did little to promote increased interest. I eventually completed seven interviews in this way over a period of several

weeks. It was a disheartening experience. I had assumed that WP attendees would be keen to take part. This was my first indication that I had previously made assumptions about the field that were mistaken.

Loitering outside centres was, additionally, not without incident. In one instance the manager of a WP centre came out to see what I was up to. When I told him he became aggressive, ordering me to “leave my premises” and to “stop harassing my customers.” I refused to leave, pointing out that I was not actually on his property. (I was in the communal hallway of a large building.) Nor was I harassing anyone. A customer came out and said “Yes he is. He was harassing me! Trying to make me answer his questions!” I was quite shocked. This was my first inkling that WP attendees might not necessarily be as hostile to the programme as I had previously expected. The manager then threatened to drag me away. I refused to move. He threatened to call the police. I waited for five minutes, pondering over which was the more professional approach - to be hard-nosed in order to pursue ‘the truth’, or to behave with polite courtesy to people I met in the field. I decided to go, but for the far less noble motive of avoiding trouble with the police.

At another WP centre I saw two men in their twenties having a cigarette outside the main door. I began to get a feel for what was going on inside the centre when a member of staff came out and said, aggressively: “What are you two still doing out here? You’ve had your break. Get in!” Later, the manager came out, ostensibly for a cigarette. She engaged me in conversation immediately, asking me what I was up to. She was chatty and friendly. She then claimed that anyone willing to talk to me would probably have negative views, because “That’s what they’re like. The moaners are the most vocal.” She gave me her email address but never responded to my subsequent emails.⁵⁴ I wondered if the cigarette smokers were ordered in *because* I was there with my clipboard.

At this time I also attended a public anti-workfare meeting. Here I heard several stories about workfare, particularly as it related to the disabled. I arranged and conducted an interview with the organiser of the group. I eventually managed to

⁵⁴ In another incident I made a trip to a WP centre that turned out to have closed down. However, before realising this, I stopped at a Jobcentre to ask for directions. There was a queue of five men waiting at reception, so I spoke to the security guard saying “Excuse me do you know...” Before I could finish, the security guard jabbed his finger at me and said, aggressively: “You just wait in line like everyone else!” He then noticed my lanyard and ID, and changed his tone immediately, saying: “Oh, sorry, I didn’t realise you weren’t one of these,” meaning the others in the queue – none of whom reacted to the exchange.

conduct 14 interviews in this way: two with foodbank managers, one with an anti-workfare activist and 11 with customers. None of the interviews conducted before access were with anyone connected with the centres researched post-access.

After Access: Preliminary Efforts

I attempted to gain access to WP centres by sending letters to centre managers at five local centres. There were no replies. One manager who spoke to me briefly in person (when I delivered the letter) gave me an email address for her company's public relations officer. She said this was the person who could give me permission to come in. I got no reply. I emailed again, but still received no reply.

In 2012, a colleague notified me of a local conference that was partly about the WP. I attended and met a key contact who worked for a welfare think-tank. This contact provided me with the email addresses of several senior workfare industry professionals. As 2013 wore on and I was failing to get anywhere with centre access, I decided to take a more proactive approach. I sent out an email to each address that I had been given, explaining my project to each recipient, and advising them that I would be speaking to people who used their service. Moreover, that I was already getting significant negative feedback about the WP, and that for a rounded, fair view, I would like to come to their centres and get their side of the story. There were only two replies. One stated that the recipient was not involved with the WP. The other was from a senior WP executive. He expressed interest in the project and invited me in for a discussion. After some postponement the discussion eventually took place in January 2014. This executive not only liked the idea of the project, he also explained that he had tried to do some fieldwork himself. However, as everyone knew who he was, and were somewhat intimidated by his position, this had not proven successful. This person turned out to be a powerful and supportive gatekeeper. He sent an email to a number of local WP companies under his contract/managerial remit making it clear that he expected them to allow me access to their centres. He considered this to be part of the centres' professional responsibility to welcome a transparent assessment of their operations. This led to an almost immediate response from one WP provider. I began arranging fieldwork dates with this company via email. However, there was a setback when it was realised that I would need to be CRB cleared. The UK government has exceptionally strict rules on data security in its DWP related operations, and it considers all data, including the personal data of WP clients, to be statutorily controlled material.

Everyone I met who was employed on the WP took this matter extremely seriously. No one can have access to such data without a full CRB check. This eventually took around six weeks to come through. After this, I was granted access to the first of the centres.

After Access: In the Centres

I arranged with the area manager of the provider to go to one of their centres. Initially, this was supposed to be for one week, full time. However, the precise number of days I was to spend at the centres was not explicitly fixed during email exchanges. It was therefore open to future negotiation. After I had completed that first week I said “see you next week” to the local manager. She replied “Oh, are you here next week as well?” I said yes and, to my relief, she accepted this. After two weeks I asked if I could go to a second centre. This was agreed to without hesitation.

‘Abby,’⁵⁵ who managed both centres, welcomed me to Centre A. She was genuinely helpful, giving me a desk, a computer and permission to observe all of the centre’s operations. I was told that I could speak to anyone that I wanted to. Staff had been informed that cooperation with me was a requirement, as part of a professional quality assessment process. However, I had to explain to customers what I was doing and make sure that they were happy to have me observing their interviews and/or speaking to them. I was happy to agree to these terms.

In total I spent 18 days across the two centres. This broke down into eight days in Centre A and ten in Centre B. (The difference was due to a bank holiday and a symposium engagement while at Centre A.) This meant attendance from 9.00 am - 5.00 pm.

When I first proposed the PhD research, I had hoped to compare and contrast two centres run by two different companies, in two completely different locations. However, I eventually had to adapt my approach and base my fieldwork on data drawn from two centres run by the same company in two different locations. I had to make this adaptation because, later, despite several emails to further providers who were under the control of the original gatekeeper, I received no further replies. I assume that they had had a change of heart. This meant that I could not go to any further providers through this source. The immense difficulties involved in getting centres to agree to let

⁵⁵ This is a pseudonym.

me in meant that I had to accept that the two centres already attended would be the primary source of the data for the thesis.

While the two centres were in two locations that had slightly different levels of unemployment, nevertheless they operated according to identical procedures under the same manager, experiencing precisely the same stresses and outcomes. Comparing and contrasting was thus abandoned as an approach, and the two centres have been treated as one set of fieldwork across two integrated sites. Nevertheless, being at these centres was still a major opportunity for direct fieldwork. It also gave me access to staff and customers, and a wealth of data.

4. *Fieldwork methodology*

Once inside the centres, data were gathered in two ways. Firstly, through ethnography, and secondly, through interviews. Ethnography is a primarily qualitative research method. Fetterman (1989: 11) describes ethnography as: “the art and science of describing a group or culture,” adding that “The task is much like the one taken on by an investigative reporter [...]” Taylor (2002: 1) states that: “Some common features that are often identified [with ethnography] are that it involves empirical work, especially observation in order to study people’s lives [...]”

Ethnographic methods conventionally used to capture the realities of the sociological field include direct and participant observation, interviews, textual and artefactual analyses, spatial mapping, semiotics, and even quantitative measures (Spradley, 1979; Cheater, 1989; Thomas, 1993.) Nevertheless, as Taylor (2002) points out, ‘ethnography’ is by no means an uncontested term, and ‘how to do it’ is not set in stone. There is, however, one foundational concept structuring much modern ethnographic method: the Weberian principle of *verstehende soziologie*. This term refers to an ‘interpretive’ method of understanding other people’s lives and senses of social reality. *Verstehen* therefore draws substantially upon the beliefs held by participants themselves to construct a picture of their social world. This is opposed to externally imposed, assumption-based judgments (Gold, 1997; Weber, 1968). Spradley (1979: iii) thus states that: “There has come a profound realization [in sociology]: that the people we study or seek to help have a way of life, a culture of their own.” Quoting Malinowski, Spradley goes on to characterise the aim of ethnography as “to grasp the

native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world" (1979: 3).⁵⁶ Achieving this aim – known as an 'emic' understanding - for Weberian-leaning, 'interpretivist' sociologists, substantially relies upon linguistic data drawn from participants (Berger, 1963; Shutz, 1970).

This approach has been influential in much modern ethnographic field research, and particularly in 'post-structuralist' sociological approaches that construe language as 'constructing' reality (Anderson, 1983). Post-structuralist ethnographer Tim Edensor (2002: 161) thus argues that, not only in ethnography, but in reality, "all forms of knowledge are situated," meaning that all knowledge is 'relative' to a person's social 'situation'.⁵⁷ Spradley (1979: 17) goes much further, arguing that "Language is more than a means of communication about reality; it is a tool for constructing reality."

However, drawing solely upon interview data runs the risk of failing to locate the data within wider socio-economic and cultural realities. As Tannenbaum (1980: 1) puts it, using interview data alone

does not allow for [the understanding of] any underlying cultural unities that guide and inform people's behaviour. By following this sort of research

⁵⁶ Emphasis in original.

⁵⁷ While this is presented as a more neutral and participant friendly approach by many 'post-structuralist' ethnographers (e.g. Edensor, 2002), nevertheless, this is an inherently right-leaning view. While the idea of a contextualising 'situation' comes to post-structuralist ethnography primarily through the work of Derrida (Edensor, 2002; Stocker, 2006), it was a key aspect of Parsonian sociology long before Derrida. For Parsons, the 'situation' is the context in which social action occurs (Parsons, 1962). However, the Parsonian situation is not an external environment, but rather, the pressure applied on each 'subsystem' by its mutual interaction with each of the other social components. This model is extended throughout society in a "boxes within boxes" pattern of multiple, mutually stabilising school, family, work, social, political, legal and cultural 'subsystems' (Smelser, 2001: x). For Parsons, this 'situation' exerts a reactive grooming effect over the individuals who populate these subsystems. This encourages individuals' continued adaptation to, and psycho-social integration within, the over-riding system-wide goal objectives of the social totality (Parsons, 1962; Habermas, 1976). 'Situation', in other words, is a synonym for 'social order' itself, with the emphasis on order, and a concomitant implication that those who do not 'integrate' are simply 'deviant'. Parsons presents all knowledge as 'situated', but in a way that also presents the 'situation' as no more than a product of its component parts. Without more explicit unpacking, there is a danger that such an approach leads to no more than either a tautology, or else the banal truism that all knowledge comes from someone being in a 'situation'. Parsons is in many ways a key forbear of post-structuralism. This can be seen most acutely in post-structuralist methodology, in which any sense of emergent properties is radically anaesthetised, and 'social reality' reduced solely to the beliefs and understanding of individuals. As Parsons puts it: "In the theory of action, the point of reference of all terms is the action of an individual actor or a collectivity of actors. [...] The motivational components of the actions of collectivities are organized systems of the motivation of the relevant individual actors" (Parsons, 1962: 97). Dwyer (2000: 20), writes: "Liberal political theory covers a wide spectrum of ideas. A linear representation would probably have the libertarian liberalism of Nozick (1995), Hayek (1944) and Friedman (1962) at the opposite end of the scale from the egalitarian approaches of Rawls (1995, 1971), Kymlicka (1995) and Dworkin (1995). However, all these approaches share one important common theme, that of the primacy of the individual actor when framing an understanding of social reality."

strategy [interviews only] one only increases the vocabulary of particular jobs and job related tasks but does not come to any greater understanding of why people do the things they do.

Moreover, although interviews have emerged over time as the preeminent qualitative research method (Heyl, 2007), they are not necessarily always trustworthy. Zygmunt Bauman (2000) has criticised what he characterises as a modern ‘obsession’ with recording and dissecting interviews, as if this can find the ‘inner truth’ of a person’s lifeworld. Numerous studies, says Bauman, have shown that interviews can reproduce rehearsed narratives that the respondent expects *should* be given. Jerolmack and Khan (2014: 178) similarly state that: “[...] many interview and survey researchers routinely conflate self-reports with behavior and assume a consistency between attitudes and action. We call this erroneous inference of situated behavior from verbal accounts the attitudinal fallacy.” This problem is particularly acute in unemployment welfare research, given that unemployment often involves stigma (Spicker, 1984). Goffman (1990) notes that stigmatised individuals, including the unemployed, are regularly expected to account for themselves, and so in many cases learn to recount socially acceptable autobiographies. Skeggs (2004) further notes that this process can often be gendered, with males and females being expected to present different, gendered, story elements when ‘telling’ authority figures about themselves. WP attendees are both stigmatised and also regularly subjected to such interviews. They are therefore used to fielding questions and so are not ‘average’ interviewees. WP staff members also suffer regular stigmatisation, as many staff noted. And staff also represented a company with its own agenda and need for good public relations. Hence, potentially, staff too had reasons to want to ‘manage’ what they presented during their interviews. And staff were themselves experts in the interrogative interview process. Interview data without any wider contextualisation would therefore not have been an ideal approach.

To avoid this lack of contextualisation, I employed elements of ‘materialist’ ethnography. Materialist ethnography draws on Marxist anthropology and emphasises ‘fields’ as integrated empirical phenomena (Bloch, 1987; Godelier, 1977). Within these fields, real material ‘factors of production’, and particularly, how social wealth is generated and divided, are viewed as underpinning socio-economic relations of exploitation and dominance (e.g. those based around class, caste, authority, gender, sex, age, ethnicity and sexuality). Materialist ethnography thus seeks to highlight how

actions, beliefs, views and psychological states might be related to wider socio-economic phenomena (Bloch, 1987; Cheater, 1989; Donham, 1990).

Materialist ethnography requires an integrated qualitative research approach; one in which the beliefs of participants are material realities, and in some cases valid windows onto reality, but which are not considered solely constructive *of* reality. As Thomas (1993: 29) puts it: “[Materialist ethnography] recognizes that cultural knowledge is the product of a combination of different social processes, including practical activity, ideology, rituals and myths, and that these cannot be understood outside of the experiences of political domination.”

Thomas’s observation is particularly appropriate in social welfare research where many mythic, ideological, economic, cultural and institutional factors often intersect in social welfare ‘hotspots’ such as Jobcentres, probation offices and hospitals (Robertson and Dearling, 2004).

The data in the thesis are primarily drawn from interview transcripts. However, following a combined approach that utilised both *verstehen* and also materialist contextualisation, interviews were conducted within the frame of reference of participant observation. The interaction of semi-structured interviews and participant observation permitted the fieldwork to proceed organically. Many questions were informed by events ongoing at the time of discussion. This process is described by Davies (1999: 94) as conducting interviews in a robust and informed ‘research context’. The product was data that both represented individual views, but which also revealed how the ‘lifeworld’ of a workfare centre was deeply interconnected with wider cultural, social and economic phenomena.

5. Fieldwork in practice

The development of a coherent research context required the eventual integration of six research methods. This section reviews each of these in turn.

(1) Background and documentary research

Background and documentary research involved investigating the history of poor laws, workfare and neoliberalism. In particular, exploring documentary data covering changes to the UK’s post-1970s welfare system, and also official statistics pertaining to the WP.

(2) *General activities.*

'General activities' refers to *ad hoc* processes of data gathering drawn from in-centre peripatetic meandering. In particular, I would sit in the reception areas, at the side of the centre on spare chairs, or in the kitchen or computer rooms. This allowed me, in the case of customers, to meet, chat with, or interview them in more confidential circumstances. Staff would also often stop and talk with me.

My relationship with the staff in both centres evolved over the days spent with them. Building trust in the ethnographic research environment requires time (Richman, 1983) and interactions that generate a 'positive' sense of what the researcher is doing (Spradley, 1979). Initially, therefore, some members of staff were reluctant to engage, and kept their distance. In Centre B this was exemplified by one member of staff who, despite sitting next to me, only engaged in a proper conversation with me on the third day, saying "I didn't know what you were doing at first. I thought you were a spy for [the prime contractor] or something." In fact, my relationship with the prime contractor was uncertain for all of the staff. This was made clear in Centre A when one member of staff came over to me, obviously concerned, and pointed out that if it seemed like he hadn't been doing much work, this wasn't because he was lazy – it was because he had had two 'no shows' (customers not turning up) that morning. I realised that he was afraid of me reporting him. And so, while I explained to staff what I was doing, and that I was not 'reporting' on them personally, I did not go out of my way to clarify my relationship with the Prime. This was partly because I was not sure what this relationship was myself. As Richman (1983) notes, gatekeepers can sometimes use sociologists to 'put the cat amongst the pigeons'. But it was also partly because I did not want to affect the atmosphere of full cooperation by completely distancing myself from the authority of the Prime. As it was, there were only two members of staff who did not engage with me. One, I think, very deliberately, and I respected this. The other, just by chance, as she was only in the office for two days. I only engaged with staff as far as they seemed happy to engage with me. However, all other staff members were open, seeming eager to share their experiences and perspectives.

As is inevitable in many social situations, I became friendly with some members of staff. These members went out of their way to help me, introducing me to customers, inviting me to sit in on interviews, discussions and training sessions, and providing me with useful information. As time went on I inevitably began to identify partly with the

staff, because we spent all day together, chatted, made cups of tea for one another and shared cakes. However, I was reflexively aware of this process; especially as I had experienced something similar before, at the FND centre. In some ways I did begin to think a little bit like the staff. In Centre B, one staff member informed me that she never went “into town” (Centre B was in the centre of town), because it was “full of the underclass. It’s a like a warzone, and they’re out there and we’re holed-up in here. When you’re out just look how grim it all is, and notice how many amputees and disabled people there are. Weird place.” After this I *did* begin to notice just how many amputees and disabled people there were in town, and I’m still not sure if this is because there *were* more than average, or if it was just a case of observation bias. Nevertheless, I did begin to feel depressed, and also to feel the sense that many of the staff had of a surrounding, grinding and hopeless poverty. This was a real psychological effect, and has to be considered both as an issue potentially affecting my interpretation of the field, and also as an interesting emic-identification phenomenon (Spradley, 1979) whereby I might have been beginning to take on part of the participants’ world view. This effect was perhaps helped by the fact that these centres were so different to the FND centre I had worked in previously. There, bullying and exploitation were, to my mind, commonplace. While bullying may well be a feature of the WP in other centres, and while staff may here have been engaging in behavioural modification (Richman, 1983) in response to my presence, nevertheless, I did not see anything that I could class as bullying. Nor did this company send claimants onto unpaid ‘work experience’ placements. Hence, there were few grounds for disliking the staff due to disapproval of their professional activities. Moreover, staff made a point of explaining that the reality of their operation was very different to media representations. They particularly emphasised the amount of time they spent as quasi-social workers, helping customers with tertiary problems. As I witnessed this continually during fieldwork, this in itself helped to build a sense of engagement between me and the staff, and also a more evolved sense of the problems and difficulties experienced by them. If anything, the most oppressive feature of the centres’ operations, which is also a clear implication from customer interviews, was not bullying, but banality. The centres’ operations were repetitive, and to my mind mostly pointless, with customers spending very little time in the centres. When customers were in, they were mostly repeating the same ineffective activities. This perception, however, could also have partly been a psychological effect brought on by exposure to an environment of highly repetitive activity.

(3) *General observation*

General observation can be divided into: (a) unstructured observation, in which all observed data, however trivial, are considered relevant (Evans-Pritchard, 1951), and (b) 'structured observation', in which particular factors are prioritised for surveillance (Robertson and Dearing, 2004). General observation also involves noting the 'proxemics' (spatial organisation of the offices) and 'kinetics' (body language and somatic features of its inhabitants) (Fetterman, 1989).

Due to time constraints, I engaged in 'semi-structured' observation: i.e. maintaining a primary interest in the key aspects of the field while at the same time sustaining responsiveness to other, unexpected but interesting events. Both methods involved observing, listening and taking notes. In an often chaotic field situation this meant being 'nosey', 'scanning' the whole room to see what was happening and honing in on what was potentially interesting. There is a danger in this practice of the researcher artificially imposing their sense of what is relevant onto the field. However, without the anthropologist's luxury of extensive field time, this approach was useful in selecting from vast amounts of potential field data.

I observed the full daily operations of the centres, including general activities, administration, life on reception, tea-room talk and staff discussions. I moved freely around the centres, coming and going to different rooms, places and activities as I pleased. There was no attempt to stop me from witnessing anything, nor to prevent me from talking to anyone. If anything, staff went out of their way to introduce me to people who were both positive and negative about the programme. In the latter case, this was sometimes followed by a discussion with a staff member about that person; the implication being that a staff member wanted me to meet that customer, to see what staff 'had to deal with'. The manager, in particular, stated that she wanted me to see the 'real programme', and not a whitewashed version. At times the honesty was astonishing, and I am sure that there was no attempt whatsoever to whitewash the reality.

Observation requires reflexivity regarding the potential of the researcher's presence to affect the behaviour of participants (Richman, 1983). I suspect that my presence did not even register for most customers. Where it was noticed, I hoped that, despite wearing a lanyard and identification card (a formal requirement), my casual dress and unshaved appearance might have dispelled some of the sense that I was a staff

member. I shared the vernacular of many of the customers. This might also have encouraged staff to view me more as ‘a student’ than as a serious observer. However, from casual conversation it was clear that some customers *did* think that I was a member of staff.

Staff were aware that I was observing them. However, while some staff might have been engaging in behavioural modification, the centre was at times so busy, and for so long, that it would have been very difficult to maintain any form of serious façade. I therefore assume that what I witnessed was very close to the normal reality of the centre.

Observation, of all types, raises the question of whether one can “be totally confident about your interpretation of that event” (Robertson and Dearling, 2004: 152). The answer is no. However, by noting multiple instances of the same event, and by considering these events in relation to other empirical phenomena in the field, a stronger and more empirically justifiable picture of reality can be garnered (Donham, 1990). This was the approach I undertook during fieldwork and subsequent data analysis.

(4) Participant observation

According to Robertson and Dearling (2004: 152): “Participant observation is an approach by which the researcher enters into, and becomes part of, the events being studied.” During my fieldwork this involved shadowing adviser review interviews, attending two team meetings, observing the teaching of a formal information technology course and also watching 1-2-1 and small group training. I also attended the following: a ‘social club’ – a club for long-term unemployed ESA claimants; Job Club (searching for jobs on the computer); staff self-employment training; and an inspection by the Prime’s area contract manager. I also sat at the reception desk for three afternoons, watching how reception and ‘front of house’ operated.

At times I was drawn into arguments, or turned to by both staff and customers for support. While on reception, I was asked numerous questions by customers, such as how to get a bus pass, or if particular members of staff were present. In training sessions I was asked how to use the computers, or whether to use certain words in emails. At a foodbank a new arrival asked me “So, how does it all work here?” I was also regularly asked to comment on theoretical and practical welfare questions by staff and customers.

I began ‘shadowing’ customer review interviews on day one. This became a regular part of fieldwork over the next four weeks. Shadowing involved sitting as a

third person in the interview. This is how new staff are trained, so I was possibly undergoing the same 'new employee' process. I think that this was partly how staff members perceived my presence, at least at first, as they had no other point of reference for what I was doing. However, shadowing often became something more, with advisers, or more usually the customer, engaging me in the conversation, usually to ask for support for a particular point of view. This required tactful neutrality, usually by simply saying "I'm just observing." I also often had time to ask questions of the customer myself, and to have discussions with the adviser about the interview after the customer had left. I lost count of the amount of adviser interviews I witnessed, but the number was well into the hundreds, with around fifty directly shadowed.

One problem with participant observation is that the participation itself might affect the object of study, thereby altering its dynamics or the behaviour of those involved (Robertson and Dearling, 2004). There is probably no way around this, but a researcher must be aware of the problem. One solution in the field was to observe activities from a distance: a 'pure observation' method (Robertson and Dearling, 2004). What was witnessed could then be compared to similar activities that I had directly participated in. This helped to make sure of the robustness of later interpretations of events.

A second problem with participant observation is the recording of accurate impressions. Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) argue that participant observation involves a threefold process of 'covert transactions'. These are (1) registering the event; (2) interpreting the event; and (3) recording the event. Later, when the observer comes to review the data, perceptions and interpretations of the event will also be influenced by memory, additionally gathered data, and any subsequent processes of analysis. "What are finally recorded," argue Schwartz and Schwartz (1955: 345) "are the end product of evaluation" rather than pure representations of field reality. However, Cheater (1989) argues that so long as participant views and empirical observations have been recorded well and reflexively, a thoughtful and informed analytic frame can legitimately integrate these data, producing a robust set of conclusions supported by a trustworthy empirical base.

For this project, I took notes during shadowing sessions and, where possible, directly afterwards. However, at times there were so many adviser interviews occurring, either consecutively or concurrently, that only brief, salient points could be recorded, such as the age of the customer, their gender and anything noteworthy that was said or

done. Or else no notes were taken at all; deeper immersion in the field being more valuable in that situation.

A final problem with observation is how to decide *what* to observe (Bryman, 1988). While the field often has a 'routine' or day-to-day normality (Gellner, 1974), nevertheless, it is breaks in that routine that often catch a researcher's attention. This could skew observation if unusual incidents (for example arguments or raised voices) are more likely to be noted. I remained open to both. A day can be a relatively long time in a workfare centre. There was no shortage, either of 'incidents', or of 'normality', and I took account of both.

(5) *Learning*

'Learning' was an important aspect of my research. Learning involved direct instruction from staff members. I was given detailed rundowns on all of the following:

- How the company makes money.
- How the interview process works.
- How the computer intranet works.
- The company's relationship to the prime contractor.
- The company's relationship to the Jobcentre.
- The sanctioning process.
- The referral process.
- Self-employment.
- The 'exiting' process.
- Claiming a 'job outcome'.
- The difference between ESA and JSA.
- Job Club.
- What counts as 'sustainable employment'.

(6) *Interviews*

According to Robertson and Dearling (2004: 118), interviews are "one of the most widely used tools in social welfare research [...] allowing the questioner an opportunity to more fully explore particular attitudes with the respondents." Fetterman (1989: 47) adds that ethnographic interviews are an essential research tool that "explain and put into context what the ethnographer sees and experiences."

However, choices over who to interview, what to ask and in what way, can reproduce personal and institutional biases and power relationships. For example by focusing on only one group's perspective, or by avoiding sensitive but crucial issues (Fetterman, 1989; Thomas, 1993). Hence, I followed a 'naturalistic' approach:

“Naturalistic researchers examine both sides of an issue, the supervised and the supervisors, the suits and the blue collars [...]” (Rubin and Rubin, 2005: 4). My interviews were divided into two streams: staff and customers. This division was not merely one of ‘group’, however; the practical exigencies of the research field necessitated two different forms of interview practice.

According to Davies (1999), ethnographic interviews usually follow one of two formats: semi-structured or participant-led. Semi-structured interviews follow a loosely scripted set of questions. In this approach the researcher has usually decided beforehand what areas he or she thinks are most important. Questions are therefore designed to prompt interviewees to impart data relevant to these subjects. Nevertheless, interviewees are free to meander around the subjects under discussion, leading to a freer exploration of key topics (Bryman, 1988). By contrast, more general participant led interviews are “often virtually unstructured, that is, very close to a ‘naturally occurring’ conversation” (Davies, 1999: 94).

Interviews with individual staff members generally followed the ‘virtually unstructured’ approach. For the most part I left it up to staff to decide what they thought was relevant for me to know. Nevertheless, as Davies (1999) points out, even in fairly unstructured interviews the researcher is often guiding the process through subtle, or not so subtle, prompts. In this sense, I attempted to elicit the following information from all staff:

1. Their work history, background and training.
2. How long they had been involved with workfare, and working for that provider in particular.
3. The nature of their job role.
4. General feelings about the WP, and the people on the WP.
5. General feelings about the current labour market.
6. Information, anecdotes and opinions regarding their customers.
7. Opinions on the activities and events within the centres, such as training, sanctions, or general atmosphere.
8. Personal stresses, including safety, and relationship with managers.

Interviews with staff were mostly conducted in multiple stages over the time that I was present in the centres. This was a useful approach in two ways. Firstly, staff were “key informants” whose daily participation in the centres gave them what Fetterman (1989: 58) describes as “a wealth of information about the nuances of everyday life.” Discussions ‘over time’ facilitated a deeper access to this knowledge.

As Spradley (1979) points out, the practice of ‘incremental discussions’ also helps to build rapport, leading to more detailed revelations. In addition, this process allowed discussions to form around specific events, often just witnessed, immediately prior to the discussion. This led to a more in depth and ethnographically grounded interaction. Nevertheless, such interactions still involved me asking questions. These conversations were often initiated by a staff member, for example by saying something like: “So what did you think of her then?” following a customer’s review interview. I would then both listen to the participant’s comments, and also ask questions pertaining directly to the issues that I was interested in. Alternatively, I would encourage the participant to elaborate on what they were telling me. A deeper understanding of the field emerged via this process, and this often suggested new areas of questioning.

Customers, however, were only present in the centres briefly, and so it was not possible to follow the same approach with them. As the rationale for conducting the research was to assess the operations and efficacy of the WP as a system, and not to research the people *on* the WP as individuals, semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from WP attendees. I had determined what the operating practices of the WP were before arriving at the centres. I did this through prior documentary research and previous interviews. I then designed a set of questions that I hoped would allow WP customers to give straightforward feedback on their experiences, but that would also allow them to add to, or contextualise, that information. A full question sheet is included in Appendix II. However, the primary questions in this research instrument were as follows:

1. Biographical data, including age, sex, highest educational achievement.
2. When did you begin attending the Work Programme?
3. How long have you been unemployed?
4. Were you transferred to Job Seeker’s allowance (or the universal credit – depending on date) from another benefit?
5. What was your last paid employment role?
6. How often do you attend the work programme centre?
7. Did you attend an induction day or induction course at the Work Programme centre?
8. In respect of employment adviser interviews, how often do you attend these, what happens on them, and what are your views on them?
9. With respect to ‘job search’ sessions, do you attend these, how often, what are your views on these?
10. Do you, or have you attended any training courses through the Work Programme centre? What are your views on these courses?
11. Have you been on a work experience placement under the Work Programme?

12. How useful do you feel that the WP has been in terms of getting you nearer to being back in employment? Why do you say that?
13. How would you describe the relationship between staff and clients at the centre?
14. Have you ever been sanctioned?
15. Have you attended any different WP or similar centres or previous welfare schemes, such as the Flexible New Deal?
16. Any further comments about your time on the Work Programme?

In some ways customers interviews were far more difficult than those conducted with staff. Most customers attended a centre for one or two hours per month, and so had limited exposure to centre operations. I was also particularly concerned not to analyse the psychologies of the customers, or to deeply question their activities to find work. That would have replicated the interviews that customers experienced in-centre, and also the wider belief that WP operations/failures were somehow the responsibility of those mandated to them. Being unemployed, looking for work, being on sanctions and being poor are all daily experiences worthy of ethnographic investigation. However, this project was about the WP as a practical system, and not about investigating the life experiences or general attitudes of the welfare claimants on it. Questions were thus primarily focused on service provision, and answers taken at face value as genuine feedback regarding the quality of the centres' operations as perceived by its target 'customers'. I did find, however, a variety of response styles, from monosyllabic through to highly informed and highly critical; and in some ways this replicated the forms that WP review interviews themselves took.

Sampling

Almost all staff were happy to discuss their roles and opinions, hence, 'sampling' staff was simply a matter of engaging each staff member in regular conversations. Getting customers to agree to interviews was slightly more difficult. Many customers were eager to get out of the centres. Some were particularly averse to undergoing 'yet another' interview. However, there were many customers who were prepared to engage in various levels of discourse, from casual chats through to full interviews. Customer sampling was opportunistic. During the daily operations of the centre customers were arriving, leaving, or engaging in various tasks on a regular basis. I selected people to talk with based on their immediate availability. Most commonly, I

approached customers sat in the large reception areas, in the computer rooms, kitchen, or otherwise loitering around the centres apparently doing nothing for the moment. This ensured that there was no single reason why someone would be available: each participant was engaged in, had just finished, or was about to start, a different activity. I did not try and select participants based on age, gender or ethnicity; it was solely a matter of approaching whoever appeared to be free in a given place or moment. I did this because in the daily chaos of the centres, I had to take whatever chances presented themselves. It was not possible for me to get any personal details of customers from staff, making it impossible to approach participants in that way. However, staff did introduce me to some customers specifically for the purposes of interviewing them. This included customers that the staff said were 'good', and also customers that were said by staff to be 'bad'.

Interview Practicalities

The length of interviews varied. With staff, the comments noted covered key conversations amounting to between approximately one and two hours per staff member. In all cases, more conversations took place, but I did not have a chance to note these down. However, those extra conversations did help to confirm that individual staff did hold particular views that I had previously recorded them as expressing.

These conversations were conducted in various places: sat at desks during normal working activities, in the tea room, or in the computer room. No specific location was used for these conversations: they occurred organically during the four weeks.

Interviews with customers were usually around 30-45 minutes long. Some were much shorter. Two customers gave only perfunctory answers to questions, and their interviews were no more than 20 minutes.

Interviews of both types were recorded through notation. WP centres are considered by the government to be highly data sensitive environments. On day one I was informed, during a staff discussion regarding my potential activities, that recording of any kind was prohibited in the centre. Furthermore, that the Prime regularly conducted spot checks to ensure data security compliance. Any breaches could potentially threaten the company's contract with the Prime. Discussion with other staff members confirmed that recording was not permitted for any purpose, even by customers, under data protection laws. I acceded to this request in accordance with the

British Sociological Association's (BSA) statement of ethical practice (2002), subsection 18:

(18) Research participants should understand how far they will be afforded anonymity and confidentiality and should be able to reject the use of data-gathering devices such as tape recorders and video cameras.

While initially disconcerting, I soon realised that the centres really were data sensitive environments; the almost claustrophobic set-up of the offices, with several desks positioned next to each another in open-plan meant that highly sensitive personal information pertaining to multiple individuals was constantly being revealed within earshot of all present. Recording, therefore, would have violated the rights of those who had not given direct permission to be recorded. While I was initially told that I could use a private room, and record in there – which I did for one interview – later, when I tried to use this room, I was told that it was mostly booked-up, and I would need to do interviews in the office. This meant finding other private spaces, such as on reception, in the computer room, or sat to the side of the office, where more private interviews could be conducted. Tape recording interviews with staff, particularly, was unfeasible, as discussions were occurring regularly and naturally as part of my daily, embedded interactions. Spradley (1979: 74) argues that in such situations, suddenly bringing out a recorder may radically change the nature of the interaction, leading to less informative data: “The use of a tape recorder may threaten and inhibit informants. Each ethnographer must decide [whether to use one] on the basis of the willingness of informants [...]” Rubin and Rubin (2005), meanwhile, propose that in sensitive situations, taking notes rather than recording can be more ethical, and more advisable, as it grants respondents an extra layer of anonymity.

However, this did raise the issue of how to record data. My approach was to follow ‘classic’ ethnographic methods. Discussions with staff involved a great deal of listening. Ethnographic listening is an art, requiring focus and close attention. Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe this as *hearing data*. Such discussions ranged from a few minutes up to half an hour. Staff tended to be articulate and vocal, displaying some eagerness to put ‘their side of the story’. It is very difficult to take notes *and* listen closely to such streams of data, so in these cases I did more listening, writing up the conversations as closely as possible directly afterwards. Multiple further daily interactions helped to confirm that my representations of their ideas were correct.

I took a different approach in the case of customers. Firstly, as Spradley (1977) notes, tape recording some interviews helps to more usefully structure further questions. Fortunately, I had recorded interviews in my pre-in-centre research period, and was able to use these interviews to hone future questions. Fetterman (1989) notes that properly-trained ethnographers are capable of remembering significant amounts of information. My training mainly came from reading and from attending university courses on research methods. However, I was an experienced interviewer, having worked for two years as a market researcher, where all surveys were conducted solely with notation. There is an art to doing this that professional interviewers develop. In claimant interviews I followed the strategy I had learned during that time: Firstly, it is important to note every question that you ask. This helps to accurately reconstruct the structure of the interview later. Secondly, by asking similar questions of each participant I was able to use short-hand phrases to signify these, such as ‘How long’, meaning ‘How long have you been on the programme?’ Thirdly, following Spradley’s (1979) field method, I noted as many ‘key words’ from the respondents’ answers as possible. For instance, the answer “I really hate this place, it’s a load of rubbish” would be recorded as “- hate place – load rubbish.” In addition, I noted specific turns of phrase used by participants to later give an accurate sense of their voices. These methods produced detailed, abbreviated interview notes. These were all typed up, at home, within 24-48 hours, reproducing the conversations as accurately as possible. While not my preferred approach, nevertheless, this was the best solution to the data security rules. The data gathered were robust, and they transferred well into coding frames that conveyed respondent opinions in a reliable, clear manner.

I conducted the interview process itself, in the cases of both customers and staff, with as neutral as possible an approach, since an interviewer’s phraseology and responses can impact upon the answers given (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). However, at times, especially with participant interviews, I would find myself saying things like “Yes, it’s crazy” or, “Terrible!” Once said, words cannot be unsaid. This, however, could also have the positive ‘transactional effect’, claimed by Spradley (1979) of encouraging participants to feel more confident in saying what they really felt. However, it is also true that, in occasional instances, I phrased responses in ways that could have influenced or biased the answers given. Usually, this was through presenting a sympathetic response to whatever was being said, which seemed like the right thing to do at the time. However, although this seems like ‘being neutral’, because the

interviewer is not challenging the participant, it obviously is not neutral, as it is agreeing with them. This could have encouraged further detail, but it might also have encouraged the maintenance of a particular angle, with the participant having their views reinforced by my agreement.

The semi-structured approach to questioning meant that, at times, I followed the participant's lead. Due to word count limitations interview transcript sections in the data chapters of this thesis are curtailed, and can sometimes give the impression of 'leading' the participant when, in fact, this is not the case: I have simply cut some of the context of the conversation in which the participant was already articulating a certain point. For example, in the following excerpt I might have presented this section only from my question commencing 'So your last adviser was a bully, you think?'

SUE: Yeah, she's not like the last one I had who was a bully.

JDJ: Your last adviser?

SUE: Yes, telling me to do this and I've got to do that. And making a big deal out of it if I haven't been up to it. So it's a real sea change with ****.

JDJ: Ok. So your last adviser was a bully, you think?

SUE: Oh yes. I don't think, I know. If you haven't got... if you're not feeling up to it that's not what you want, is it? Your adviser coming down on you like a ton of bricks?

At other points I tried to follow the line of thinking of the participant, and thereby encourage elaboration. For example, in the following section of an interview with customer 'Antonio', I tried to encourage him to continue to discuss his feelings about the government, which he had already hinted at in prior answers. However, my wording was not ideal, and may have encouraged a particular response:

ANTONIO: Yeah well they don't want to invest in us, do they? That'd cost money. They want to get us bullied off benefits, that's what it's all about. I wouldn't give them the time of day.

JDJ: Do you not think the government is doing enough?

ANTONIO: Not doing enough? What are they doing? They're not doing anything. This isn't doing something. We go out on trips to the museum. We get free tea and biscuits. That's not doing something.

Fortunately, such incidences were rare. Moreover, the strength of most responses indicates that a change of wording probably would have had very little influence on a participant's deeply held opinions.

It should also be noted that most customers had spent considerable time in the welfare system, and on the WP, and this meant that they were already used to an 'intrusive' interview process. They might, therefore, have been able to 'field' questions better than an 'average', non-WP experienced participant.

In retrospect, interviewing customers in-centre was not ideal. While it was always possible to find a private space to do this, customers might still have felt disinclined to be fully open about their experiences. Given the data, however, this does not appear to be the case. The responses given are generally direct and explicit. Moving in and out of centre to conduct interviews was not feasible given the centre locations. Moreover, a major 'selling point' of recruitment was that interviews could be conducted there and then, without any bother, and sometimes instead of doing something far less interesting such as job search or waiting for an appointment.

Interviews with staff presented different problems. Over several days, the nature of interactions can change significantly as people become more familiar with one another (Spradley, 1979). As Davies (1999: 94) points out: "Unstructured interviews nearly always take place between individuals who share more than simply the interview encounter; usually the ethnographer will have established an ongoing relationship with the person being interviewed, one that precedes the interview and will continue after it." In this case, questions went both ways. Staff were interested in my views, and often challenged things that I said as 'assumptions' that I had not thought deeply enough about. As time went on, questions became discussions, and sometimes discussions turned into debates. This was almost an inevitability when sharing long, difficult days, and many conversations. I do not believe that this negatively affected the data. Rather, it encouraged a depth and honesty from staff that I might not have otherwise obtained. In many cases staff seemed to welcome the opportunity to challenge common assumptions and to present the 'real' truth from the 'front line'.

It was initially hoped that follow-up interviews would be conducted with staff and customers in later months. This proved impractical. Re-gaining access to the centres became impossible. Moreover, the transient nature of customer experiences, and in many cases a reluctance to get too deeply involved with further research, led me to re-think this approach. Given that I had managed to interview customers at every stage of WP attendance, from just starting through to nearly finished, I was confident that the data captured a good range of WP experiences. I concluded that follow up interviews were not necessary. However, that would be a useful area of future research.

Participant Details

In total, I conducted 31 interviews with welfare claimants, including one informal ‘focus group’ with four customers, as well as ongoing discussions with 23 members of staff. With the 14 interviews conducted outside of the centres, this made 68 interviews. Details of the participants are outlined in tables at the end of this subsection.

National statistics already reveal the biographical details of WP customers nationally. This sample is too small, and the sampling strategy too opportunistic, to draw any statistical conclusions from the biographical details of participants. However, it does provide a good range of viewpoints, and is broadly in line with national WP biometric data. I was disappointed by the lack of ethnic diversity from a research point of view. However both locations did have low BME percentages in the general population. There were some, if very few, BME customers in the centre, but I simply did not get to interview them, save for one.

Table 5. Non-Customer interviewees conducted before gaining access to the two main centres researched for this thesis.

<i>Participant pseudonym</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Age-group</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>
Dean	Foodbank Manager	50s	Male	White
Alberto	Foodbank Manager	50s	Male	White
Royce	Anti-workfare activist	50s	Male	White

Table 6. Customer/Claimant interviews conducted before and after negotiated access to the centres.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>M/F</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work Background</i>
Before					
Liv	20s	Female	White	School	P/T Work
Abriana	50s	Female	White	School	Manual / Cleaning
Reanne	40s	Female	Black	Sixth Form	Retail
Lloyd	40s	Male	White	School	Manual / Sales
Haiden	40s	Male	White	Sixth Form	Skilled Manual
Lilian	50s	Female	White	School	Manual
Celeste	50s	Female	White	University	Public Services
Roisin	30s	Female	White	University	Admin/Office
Gustavo	20s	Male	White	School	Manual

Bruno	20s	Male	White	A Levels	Skilled Manual
Sendal	30s	Male	White	School	Manual
After					
Rob	18-20s	Male	White	Btec	Manual
Bert	50s	Male	White	School	Manual Labour
Simon	50s	Male	White	Trade Qualification	Skilled Manual
Amy	20s	Female	White	School	Retail
Sarah	50s	Female	White	School	No work history
Bob	50s	Male	White	Trade Qualification	Skilled Manual
Shelley	30s	Female	White	School	Manual / Cleaning
David	20s	Male	White	School	Manual
Giles	40s	Male	White	School	Manual
Butros	40s	Male	White/ Eastern European	School and Trade Qualification	Manual
Billy	20s	Male	White	School	No work history
Sue	40s	Female	White	School	Retail
Ryan	30s	Male	White	School	Manual
Pauli	40s	Male	White	Sixth Form	Skilled Manual
Jamal	18-20s	Male	Asian	School	Temporary / Manual
Marcus	40s	Male	White	School	Manual / Factory
James	18-20s	Male	White	Trade Qualification	Skilled Manual
Freddy	60s	Male	White	School	Skilled Manual / Factory
Johnny	18-20s	Male	White	School	Manual / Telesales
Selma	40s	Female	White	School	Manual / Cleaning
Janey	30s	Female	White	School	Manual
Cliff	30s	Male	White	School	Skilled Manual
Manny	50s	Male	White	School	Manual / Driving
Annemarie	40s	Female	White	Sixth Form College	Office / Admin
Selena	30s	Female	White	University	Office / Research
Alfonzo	50s	Male	White	D/A	Manual
Amos	30s	Male	White	School	Manual
Antonio	50s	Male	White	College	Managerial
Sandra	50s	Female	White	School	Manual / Cleaning
Ambrose	50s	Male	White	School	Manual
Tom	50s	Male	White	Sixth Form	Skilled Manual

Table 7. Customer interviews, by age and gender, conducted after gaining centre access.

<i>Women by age group</i>	<i>Numbers of interviews</i>	<i>Men by age group</i>	<i>Numbers of interviews</i>
Females 20s	1	Males 20s	6
Females 30s	3	Males 30s	3
Females 40s	3	Males 40s	4
Females 50s	2	Males 50s	9

Females 60s	0	Males 60s	1
Total Females	9	Total males	22

Table 8. Customers' length of time on programme at time of interview. (After gaining centre access.)

Length of time on programme at time of interview (months)	Numbers of Customers in this Category
1 – 3	5
4 – 7	7
8 – 11	4
12 – 15	7
16 -19	5
20 – 24	1

Table 9. Anonymised lengths of time unemployed and lengths of time on programme at time of interview. (For customers interviewed after gaining centre access.)⁵⁸

Length of time unemployed at time of interview (years)	Numbers
Less than 1 year	1
Over 1 but less than 2	6
Over 2 but less than 3	5
Over 3 but less than 4	4
Over 4 but less than 5	1
Over 5 but less than 6	3
Over 6	5

Table 10. Staff interviews conducted after gaining access to the two centres

Name	Age Group	Gender	Ethnicity
Arnold	30s	Male	White
Abby	20s	Female	White
Holly	40s	Female	White
Annabelle	20s	Female	White
Iain	30s	Male	White
Erica	30s	Female	White
Pauline	40s	Female	White
Leonie	30s	Female	White
Mellisa	30s	Female	White
Anna	40s	Female	White
Charles	60s	Male	White
Kurt	20s	Male	White
Xandra	30s	Female	White
Cormac	40s	Male	White

⁵⁸ There were some customers who did not answer, some who were vague and some who had intermittent work history, including taking jobs while on the programme, and in once case leaving the programme and coming back to it. Hence, there are not as many figures in this table as there were interviewees. These figures represent a general overview of what respondents said, but there is a margin of error.

Lionel	40s	Male	White
Adele	18-25	Female	White
Annabelle	20s	Female	White
Bryan	30s	Male	White
Loretta	20s	Female	White
Oscar	20s	Male	White
Jacqui	30s	Female	White
Sofia	30s	Female	White
Trisha	50s	Female	White

Length of time unemployed and length of time on programme have been omitted from this table as that information could help to identify respondents.

6. Conducting analysis

Following the fieldwork phase, I used the computer programme Nvivo to code the data. Nvivo helps an analyst work with data from multiple interviews. With Nvivo, data can be divided into codes, and then into recurring themes. This involves highlighting particular phrases, claims or opinions made by respondents and then grouping them together with similar data drawn from other participant interviews.

Each ‘group’ of similar statements was labelled under what Nvivo calls a ‘node’, or ‘child node’. Nodes are created by the user. For example, ‘Opinions on the Centre’ would be a node. This node would then be further subdivided into ‘child nodes’ such as ‘Positive Opinions’, ‘Neutral Opinions’, ‘Negative Opinions’. The child nodes can then be further analysed with more nuanced categories within the positive, neutral or negative subheadings. (A full list of nodes is presented in Appendix IV). This process followed a ‘grounded theory’ approach, in which the relevant themes were drawn from participants’ own comments and perspectives (Charmaz, 2014). This highlighted the frequency of particular claims, and also allowed those claims to be cross referenced with other categories of data. For example, it was possible to note that positive views of the centres were more likely to be associated with incapacity benefit claimants. However, as noted earlier, the overall structuring of the questions was developed in harmony with participant observation and consideration of the practical functioning of the centres. The analysis of data was therefore also influenced by a materialist ethnographic approach.

There was a great deal of data gathered on the day-to-day activities of the centres, staff and customers that does not feature prominently in the thesis. Staff,

particularly, displayed many characteristics of group cohesion formed in response to pressure. This included the minutiae of daily interaction, such as tea rotas, jokes and favour systems. But it also included more obvious group practices, such as the noticeably regular references to being ‘on a diet’ that were made by almost all staff members, interspersed by the regular, almost magical, appearance of plates of cakes and chocolates for all to enjoy. This data was interesting and important from an ethnographic perspective. However, given the limited word count of the thesis, and the current social and political significance of workfare, I have chosen to focus my analysis on the policies and practicalities of the WP. Something of the characters of the people involved is lost by doing that. However, much deeper insights into workfare as a social welfare policy are gained.

Staff and customer interviews were coded and analysed separately. In total, staff interviews produced 97 nodes, and customer interviews 110 nodes. The data from interviews conducted before gaining access to the centres were not included in the Nvivo analysis. That data was obtained from customers who attended different centres, and following discussion with supervisors it was decided that these interviews would need to be analysed separately. However there were fewer of these interviews, and moreover, not all were from customers. With word count running out for the overall thesis I decided to use these interviews only for some contextualisation. This contextualisation is made in comments and footnotes within the data chapters. However, these interviews did play an important role in helping to modify and improve later interviews. They also confirmed the overall findings of the thesis with data drawn from other providers.

7. Ethics

Ethical practice is both a formal requirement of the University and also a professional requirement and outlook on the part of researchers (Walker and Thompson, 2010). An ethics form was completed for this research and submitted to Manchester Metropolitan University’s social sciences Ethics Committee. The proposed research was adjudged ethically sound and permission to proceed was given in 2012. (See Appendix I).

Following the British Sociological Association’s statement of ethical practice (BSA, 2002: Clause 13), researchers must:

[...] ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants is not adversely affected by the research. They should strive to protect the rights of those they study, their interests, sensitivities and privacy, while recognising the difficulty of balancing potentially conflicting interests.

In this case, the wellbeing of participants was paramount. Customers are in a vulnerable position vis-a-vis their advisers. I would not expect advisers to penalise customers who did speak to me. Nevertheless, it was essential to ensure the confidentiality of anything that customers told me. My research notes never left my personal possession in the field. At times this was an awkward commitment as it required me to always have my bag or clipboard with me, even, for example, when making a cup of tea or going to the toilet. Claimant responses or names were not discussed with staff. Outside of the field, digital information was password secured, and field notes were kept in a locked, secure-box in my home office.

The company and staff were also vulnerable. The WP is a high-profile social policy and WP companies operate in a sensitive social and business environment. The BSA statement of ethical practice, subsection 34 states that:

(34) The anonymity and privacy of those who participate in the research process should be respected. Personal information concerning research participants should be kept confidential. In some cases it may be necessary to decide whether it is proper or appropriate even to record certain kinds of sensitive information.

Thus, all participant and location names in this thesis are pseudonyms. Where necessary, in order to ensure that anonymity, precise details, such as a person's exact role or previous employment, have been altered, but without affecting the general implication of the data (e.g. changing 'builder' for another skilled-manual role.) Occasionally, where data is very sensitive, a participant, or someone who is mentioned by a participant, has been referred to simply as 'X', or as 'a manager' or 'a staff member'.

Consent to conduct research in the centres was obtained via multiple documented stages. Initial consent to conduct field research was granted by a senior gatekeeper: a director of the Prime. This person was given full details of the project. Permission to research in the centres was emailed by this gatekeeper to the Prime's area contract manager, and then to the provider's area manager and relevant senior directors

(copying me in to the emails). The provider's director and area manager granted me permission to do the fieldwork, but this involved some further negotiations, explanations, granting of permission/arrangement of dates (all done by email), and a CRB check provided by the Prime. In the field, the centre manager was given an information sheet, detailing the project, and she signed a consent form permitting research in the centres. The ongoing research was discussed, in the field, with the manager, area manager, and the prime's area contract manager. Cooperation with the project was a formal requirement for staff members, as instructed by senior management who were interested in improving centre processes and, according to the Prime director and centre manager, following a process of openness and accountability. However, in pursuance of the BSA's advice that consent be an 'ongoing process', I took time to explain, in detail, and often on multiple occasions, the nature of the project, the process of anonymisation, and my respect for any decision not to cooperate. I also made it clear to those interviewed that consent to participate could be withdrawn at any time. While appreciating this, most staff nevertheless went out of their way to cooperate. I also ensured that, upon completing fieldwork, my details were left in-centre on noticeboards, including my email, phone number and work address. This was in case anyone wanted or needed to contact me for any reason.

'General observation' and 'shadowing' involved watching the operations of the entire centre, involving hundreds of people in a busy environment. Permission to do this was granted by management. During the process of shadowing it was necessary for me to fit in with the schedule of the centres. Who I was, and what I was doing, were explained to customers, and customers were asked by their advisers if they were happy for me to sit in on their sessions for purposes of assessing the processes of the centre. There were no objections to this. Where formal interviews took place, customers were given an information sheet and asked to sign a consent form indicating their permission for the data to be used, their agreement to take part in the project, and their right to withdraw at any time, then or in the future. (See Appendix III for an example consent form.) It is possible that some customers felt pressured to take part, despite my explaining what I was doing and its entirely voluntary nature. The body language, tone and responses to questions, in most cases, did not indicate this. Those customers who did agree to speak seemed eager to do so. I did also have to explain that, in some cases, staff could see that they were speaking to me. No one who agreed to do an interview expressed any concern with this, although many leaned towards me and spoke in

lowered tones. Where customers were critical of the programme there was no apparent hesitation in doing so. However, it is possible that some were ‘holding back’, or even using the interview as an opportunity to exercise personal grudges against their advisers. However, this was the rationale for ensuring that interviews were contextualised by wider reference to the field and its practices.

Finally, while these findings might potentially have had some effect on the company, staff and the customers involved, all participants will have left the programme, and all ongoing contracts to run WP will be close to ending by the time of completion of this study. This adds a further layer of protection and ethical consideration for all involved.

9. Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of the key methodological and fieldwork practices employed for this study. It outlined what was done and why, and drew on a range of scholarly sources to justify the approaches taken.

The strengths and weaknesses of the research methods used were each considered. The use of participant observation and interviews was presented as a robust means of gathering properly contextualised data. Drawing on ethnographic literature, it was argued that this form of data gathering locates and contextualises participants’ accounts in a wider frame of reference, involving material and day-to-day phenomena. However, it was also noted that conducting the research inside the centres had some drawbacks. Sampling was based on opportunity, and discussions and interviews took place inside the centres themselves. While this produced useful data, it was also possible that the location influenced the responses to some degree.

This chapter also considered the potential pitfalls of participant observation, and particularly the process via which interviews can start to become discussions and even debates. While this did help to provide deeper insights, it was noted that, at occasional moments, this did affect the way research questions were posed. In those occasional moments, a slightly more neutral tone might have been preferable.

Finally, this chapter considered the many ethical implications involved in the research phase. Both the business and the participants involved in this research are potentially vulnerable. It was noted that all names have been anonymised, and all possible steps taken to ensure that customers cannot be identified from work histories or from the things that they said. The following three chapters will present the findings

that result from this process, commencing with a chapter focusing on the subject of ‘views, attitudes and perspectives regarding the WP and its customers and staff’.

Chapter Five:

Views and attitudes of staff and customers

1. Introduction

This, and the following two chapters, present the data gathered for the thesis. The data are displayed primarily in the form of interview transcript excerpts, with some data from field observation, and some footnoted contextualisation. The data are structured according to the two perspectives that commonly polarise academic, political and media debate pertaining to workfare. The first of these positions is a ‘pro’ workfare narrative. This proposes that payments-by-results workfare compels private, for-profit firms to ‘evolve’ effective mechanisms that will disintegrate an entrenched, intergenerational welfare underclass, by-passing ‘sclerotic’ government welfare systems that have become no more than tax-draining social work and benefits advice services (Mead, 1986; White, 2005). This narrative forms the basis of the UK government’s workfare policy rationale (Smith, 2011; DWP, 2012a). The second perspective is a strongly anti-workfare narrative. This narrative argues that workfare is a neo-workhouse system, operated by bullies, and which forces the most vulnerable members of society into slave labour, penury and even death (Piven and Cloward, 1971; Peck, 2001). Both perspectives were found to be strongly present in the field. The semi-structured interviews with staff and customers were thus conducted in the explicit context of these two polarised narratives. Generally speaking, the data presented across the following three chapters constitute a conversation between various articulations of

these two views, made by people for whom workfare was not theory, but a lived experience.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, data are presented pertaining to the theme of ‘views and attitudes of staff and customers pertaining to the Work Programme and its participants’. This includes the degree to which staff and customers agreed or disagreed with the pro-workfare narrative, whether the characteristics, attitudes and activities of customers matched this narrative, and also general staff and customer opinions on workfare itself.⁵⁹ Particular responses have been selected as indicative examples of opinions expressed by (usually) more than one person, and which were coded under the same ‘node’ or theme during analysis.

2. General opinions regarding the Work Programme

Staff perspectives:

An important aspect of the UK government’s justification for the WP was that a radical ‘shake-up’ of the welfare system was necessary, and long overdue (Smith, 2011; DWP, 2012a). This perspective draws its primary justification from empirical studies by Murray (1984) and Mead (1986), each of which proposed that state welfare systems had, at that time, degenerated into little more than ineffectual benefits advice services, aggravating, and even encouraging the problem of unemployment rather than resolving it. Most staff members – 22 out of 23 [henceforth written as e.g. ‘22/23’] – expressed views that matched this argument. Staff member ‘Sofia’, for instance, stated that:

Welfare-to-work is the best thing that’s ever happened to public spending in this country. I’m not paying taxes to let other people go drinking when I work. I’m taxed... I can’t go out and get drunk unless I work for the money. I’m sick of seeing them coming in drunk... or complaining. Get a job.

Another staff member, ‘Annabelle’, echoed general staff opinions by stating that:

⁵⁹ NB: All names are pseudonyms. In the case of extremely sensitive data, an X is used instead of a name. Some personal details have been changed to equivalents in order to protect anonymity. Dots in brackets [...] indicate omitted words, while three dots ... indicates a pause. Themes are illustrated by sample interview extracts.

We need the Work Programme to get the workshy off benefits and into work. It's taking the piss at the moment, with the benefits system... like it pays everything. People just living on benefits doing nothing at all. Staying in bed. I don't agree with it.

The government, and some sociologists, have also argued that previous welfare systems encouraged welfare dependency and idleness (Smith, 2011, 2012; Spencer, 1844; Mead, 1986). Again, most staff members (21/23) strongly supported this idea. As staff member 'Trisha' put it, expressing a general staff sentiment:

I think we've really dug ourselves into a ditch with the welfare system by paying people to do nothing. I think we've encouraged a whole generation of people to think just going on the dole is a real option. It's so ingrained now as a culture, it's an uphill battle to change it. I speak to customers all the time, and I can see that they don't define themselves through work. I can't understand that. I've always defined myself through work. Haven't you?

Staff member 'Cormac' also agreed with this position, stating that:

I mean if you look back at how the welfare system has been run, I mean, looking back thirty, forty years, the more generous it's become, the more a certain category of people have opted for it as a way of life.

Only one staff member was unequivocally supportive of the WP:

SOFIA: Since social responsibility started to be taken seriously it's given everyone a chance. [...] The old welfare system let people destroy their own chances in life, but it was also dragging down the country. The government just didn't get tough enough and didn't dare to get it under control. So yeah, I'm definitely happy to do a job that I can say contributes to making the country a better place. Welfare benefits are important as a safety net, of course, but people take the piss, and when it's on the scale of millions of people taking the piss then something's obviously got to be done.

Most staff members supported the WP, but contextualised this support with personal experience, often challenging what they saw as outsiders' simplistic views of the welfare system. As one senior manager put it:

ARNOLD: [...] I watch this stuff myself on the news and I think yeah, I can understand some of it. But it's so one dimensional. You've either got people saying *oh it's all exploitation and slave labour, oh it's terrible stuff,*

the evil Work Programme, and then you've got the government saying it's, you know, this sparkling wonderful policy initiative that's transforming a culture of worklessness into a culture of work. But that's just as extreme. The reality... I can tell you the reality is that it's obviously a much more complex reality.

Only one staff member, 'Charles', was directly and unequivocally critical of the WP:

CHARLES: It's got no purpose. It's a disaster, but it gives people work. And it gives the impression that something is being done. And a lot of people, somewhere, are creaming off a lot of money from it. But it's doing nothing... it's creating no jobs other than the people who are employed on it.

JDJ: So you think there's no point to the Work Programme?

CHARLES: No. No point. Unless you think of it as a big social enterprise, giving disenfranchised people something to do, no.

Contrary to the government's claims that the WP is a "radical welfare reform designed to tackle entrenched poverty and end the curse of intergenerational worklessness" (Smith, 2011: 1), most staff (21/23) argued that the WP was lacking in several respects. 'Cormac' stated that "we're facing a generational underclass. I'm supporting the government on this, though it's not enough." Staff member 'Anna', meanwhile, stated that:

[...] I think everyone's got to agree that that's [workfare] a good thing. But I don't think this is enough. I see so many come through here and you think how's it got this far? Why did no one intervene at an earlier point? So I don't think it's ideal by any means. And I think intervention is only one part of the puzzle. There's got to be opportunities and money available to get people into training to fill them. So I think it's both. You do have some scoundrels, but the government has to... well there has to be carrot as well as stick. And yeah, making people see that work is the way to get out of the net, yeah, that's the hard ask.

Customer perspectives:

While general staff views pertaining to the WP were contextualised by the pro-workfare narrative, customer views could not be placed into any simplistic opposing camp. Unlike staff, who spent months and years in daily interaction with workfare, customer interaction with the centres was minimal (as discussed more fully in the following chapter). Hence, for the most part, customer information about WP operations and procedures was significantly limited. All customer views were thus primarily contextualised by their personal experiences. This led to a wide continuum of

perspectives and beliefs. For instance, some customers emphasised unhelpful procedures, others, the plight of those on sickness benefits, and still others, the overall operations of the programme. In this subsection I present a sample of these general customer perspectives.

3. *Being 'Referred'*

The first direct experience of the WP for all customers but one was via a 'referral letter'. For ESA (sickness benefits) customers, the first letter was for a 'work capability assessment'. As customer 'Manny' (male, 50s, ESA)⁶⁰ explained:

MANNY: I found that [referral to the WP]... Oh it was, erm... it was confusing.

JDJ: In what way?

MANNY: Well, I'm thinking now. They send you a letter out first of all. And it's... I didn't know what it was. I had to get my son to look at it. I thought it was from the doctor. But my lad says no, you know, it's from the Jobcentre and they want me to go up for a test. See if I'm still alive.

For JSA claimants, the letter was a direct instruction to attend the WP centre:

JDJ: So the Jobcentre referred you?

AMOS [30s, JSA]: Yeah. They told me in there, then you get your threatening letter saying you're over here [the WP centre].

Nine customers mentioned negative feelings, particularly confusion and fear, upon being referred to the WP. As customer 'Selena' (30s, ESA) explained:

SELENA: But, yes, I got informed by letter that there was an appointment that had been made for me to come over here. And it was like... I started seeing it on the news then of course, all of this.

JDJ: The Work Programme?

⁶⁰ Customer biographical data will initially be shown in the main text. Where the same customer's responses are used again, this data will be in a footnote. Where a name is traditionally male or female, this also indicates the sex of the participant.

SELENA: Yes. And I thought, oh, wow, do they mean me? I have to do that? It's slave labour, isn't it? That's what they've done. They've sent me onto a slave labour scheme. You know, I thought wow, how can they do that?

JDJ: How did that make you feel?

SELENA: Obviously it made me feel really bad. I was shocked. And it was really the last thing I wanted to be coping with at that time, but I thought, well, it can't get any worse from this point. I have to just bite it and do it.

Three customers noted being upset by the referral letter because it involved leaving the house for the first time in a long while. Customer 'Sarah' (50s, ESA), for example, said: "How did I feel? I cried. When I got the letter, I cried." Only one customer, 'Annemarie' (40s, JSA), expressed initial positivity at being referred:

ANNEMARIE: Erm, you know I didn't even know that there was this thing. I didn't know that it actually existed as a programme or an opportunity or anything. Not until the Jobcentre said I've got to come over here. I was like, yeah, alright, I'll give it a go. Why didn't you mention it before? I mean I've been signing on for a year and it's not been mentioned to me. I would have probably given it a go before then.

While most customers were mandated to the WP, it was also possible to volunteer. Only one customer, 'Silvio' (40s, JSA), said he had done this:

SILVIO: Yeah. I didn't get sent, I volunteered for it. [...] I made a stupid mistake. I wish I'd not done it now [...].

One customer spoke of being too ill following an accident to even understand what his referral was:

JAMES [20s, ESA]: [...] I'm not used to working with all the benefits system, right? It's not my world, I'm a worker. And all the letters are just piling up. All the bureaucracy. But the one thing I don't think... you wouldn't think... is that they're just going to kill off my benefits, right, if I miss some stupid appointment with some place I've never heard of. I mean, I'm crippled, I've got a wife and kids.

First Arrival

First arrival at the centre could also be a stressful experience for many customers according to one staff member, 'Holly', who had once been a customer herself:

HOLLY: No one wants to go somewhere where it's just hostile. I know it is hostile for a lot of people. I felt that myself when I first came in, that's how I know. And we're still getting people who come in and sit there crying. They don't even know what it is.

JDJ: They see it on the telly.

HOLLY: I blame that for a lot of it. If you watch the news before coming here, you'd think you were going to be clapped in irons. That's how I was. You don't get any information. There's nothing in the letter, and it makes it seem like you're in trouble, so a lot of people think that, like it's a disciplinary hearing.

JDJ: Some think that?

HOLLY: More than you'd think. You'd think that from the letter. Half think it's to do with fraud investigation, the other half think it's a joke, then they don't have to take it seriously. I have to say, well, it's between... you do have to take it seriously, but you're not being disciplined, you've been asked to come in so you can get help.

One customer, however, who was well-informed about the WP, and also highly critical, felt that it was, at least in part, an exercise in disciplining the poor:

JAMES:⁶¹ And that's [WP] a big fraud, right, where the company is paid billions by the government to do something that it doesn't do, but they keep doing it? And to keep a lid on it they've got people starved into submission to it at the bottom of the pile. So that is my general take on the overall scheme. It's bollocks.

4. The perceived causes of unemployment

The question of what causes long-term unemployment is too vast and contested an issue to review in the present work. However, when introducing the WP, the government had emphasised that a 'generational underclass' displaying socio-pathological norms was a primary cause of mass 'worklessness' (Grayling, 2011; Smith, 2011, 2012). This view drew theoretical support from theorists such as Murray (1984), Mead (1986) and Bartholomew (2006). In the following subsection I present a sample of staff and customer views pertaining to this claim.

Staff views:

⁶¹ 20s, ESA.

There was strong support amongst staff for the idea that an ‘underclass’ existed, with 17/23 staff members mentioning it:

JDJ: Do you believe in the welfare reform process and agenda?

XANDRA: I believe that change was long overdue. I believe that the way things were set up allowed some problems to just fester and get worse, and no one did anything. I don’t think there’s any one simple set of things that you can do. Like I don’t think, yeah, just cut people’s benefits. That doesn’t solve... like... if you’ve got a family where a male subjects the rest of the family to violence. If you need to get the wife and kids safe, out of the picture, it won’t help if they’re going to find it impossible to get a place to live or money to live on. If we force them to stay because there’s a clampdown on benefits, yeah, it’s making the problem worse not better. But on the other hand I see it all the time where someone’s life has descended into chaos and the only intervention made by the authorities is to fund it. You know, give them benefits and pay the rent for twenty years. Cutting the benefits might not be the answer, but unlimited benefits is definitely part of the problem. But that’s why you’ve got to have caseworkers who intervene, coming up with tailored solutions. It’s not easy though.

‘Intergenerational worklessness’ – a major article of faith underpinning the government’s WP policy rationale (Smith, 2011) - was cited as a particularly acute problem by 6/23 staff:

JACQUI: Oh yeah, we see it [intergenerational worklessness] all the time. It’s a way of life. They’re brought up with it. They know no different. It’s really sad sometimes to see customers come in with their kids, and I think yeah, this is just how they learn to do it, isn’t it? You can see it happening in front of you. Then it’s so important to break that cycle. That’s why we’ve got to find the right balance. Yeah, we’ve got to hold hands, get customers confident, but they’ll never learn to look after themselves if you just keep doing that. That’s how we got here.

However, no staff member viewed ‘the underclass’ as the sole explanation for long-term unemployment. ‘Xandra’, for instance, explained that for some ‘complex’ families, a range of interconnected factors led to difficult life circumstances:

XANDRA: But like I say, it’s complex families. So kid *a* gets brought up in an abusive household, grows up, turns their life around, doesn’t repeat the cycle. Kid *b*, different again, grows up, abused, repeats the cycle. That’s why you’ve got to be careful about saying culture of poverty because it makes it like you’re just inevitably going to be like that. What I see is that things get done to people and people be people... they react in different ways. It’s just that children can be so impressionable. But there again, I see

some pretty tough kids. The problem there is that what makes a kid tough is very often a tough life. But no, nothing's set. That's the basis of what I do, you know... I can intervene.

One staff member was dismissive of the idea that 'the underclass' was a primary cause for long-term unemployment:

CHARLES: The Government's response to that... the way they characterise the unemployed... Yes, some are right out of the underclass, but it's not all like that.

Moreover, despite most staff providing strong support for the 'underclass' idea, nevertheless 8/23 agreed that the jobs market was difficult, and particularly for older workers. As one staff member put it:

X:⁶² Obviously I don't make this opinion known because there's a group belief that everyone's expected to belong to, where you buy into the idea that this is all great, it's all working. But they think that you can get a bunch of ex-brickies or long-term unemployed on a basic computer course and somehow they're going to be transformed into wonderful, work-ready individuals. Never going to happen.

Another staff member, 'Trisha', stated that:

TRISHA: I don't know what the government is doing with this [WP]. It's a cruel programme. I've never been out of work but I know how it is to be getting on and thinking... well what value do I bring to society? These folks... it's obvious that they're never going back to decent work... wages like they used to get. So what's the government's thinking? Force them into the mines? One of the things that isn't recognised here is that it's an age prejudice issue. Older people are treated very badly. The labour market is fundamentally skewed to favour young people. No one wants duffers. But it's not a moral economic policy to just force the old folks into pointless schemes.

Customer views:

No customers mentioned the terms 'underclass' or 'intergenerational unemployment'. Nevertheless, customer views were by no means fully detached from the pro-workfare narrative. All of the 31 customers interviewed supported the general

⁶² I have completely anonymised this staff member.

necessity of a programme to help the unemployed; but this necessity was contextualised by reference to a variety of factors, which were in turn often intertwined with personal experiences. Customer ‘Marcus’ (40s, JSA) for instance, stated that “I even think yeah, if you want to make people do something for the dole then sure, I’m for it. It’s fair enough. But it’s got to be worth doing. Am I right?” Twelve customers mentioned that the programme was only one part of the solution to long-term unemployment, and that the other part – jobs – was missing from the equation:

FREDDY [60s, ESA]: The other thing is that you can’t force people to take jobs that don’t exist. I don’t like that. That’s a part of it where I do think, hold on, it’s all well and good having something like this but if this is like... the catapult to shoot people back out into the world of work then where are they going to land? There’s got to be jobs for them to land into or what’s the point of it all?

5. Health Matters

George Gilder (1982) argues that disability welfare encourages claimants to overemphasise the severity of their ailments. There was some support from three staff members for this idea. As staff member Trisha put it:

TRISHA: [...] Too many doctors just took the easy option. It’s easy just to sign a sick note and say *ok, you go and have a rest, you don’t have to go to work*. Anyone who’s been in this job for years like I have can tell you that’s just feeding the problem, not helping it. I know if you do feel down you might need a break from it all, but if you’re just signed-off.... That’s the thing with income support, it just dumped people and there was no effort to get people off it. That’s where the Work Programme is a major improvement.

It was impossible for me to assess the legitimacy of claimants’ ailments. However, six customers did speak of poor practices in their Atos medical assessments. For instance, five stated that they had been transferred to the WP’s ‘Work Related Activity Group’ even though this was not appropriate given their health status. Customer ‘Manny’⁶³ thus stated that:

⁶³ 50s, ESA.

Well you don't know what it is, do you? Work related activity. Is it work? My lad said we'll appeal it, because I can't work. And that's not what I want to be doing anyway. You know if you're not well you're not well, are you? And I wasn't well. I'm not well. So what have they got me coming in for to do work, or even some work related activity? What is it... what they used to call occupational therapy? That's what I was told. And I mean... that's what I was saying at the time, I don't want to do that. But... yeah... I'm here.

One customer, 'Bob' (50s, JSA), stated that he had been wrongfully transferred from sickness benefits to JSA by Atos:⁶⁴

BOB: They've done this to me now and they can make me go through the mill with all of this, even though, you know I couldn't really do what it is that they're claiming that I'm supposedly able to do. I get told where to go, what I've got to do. That's all happened because I was put onto JSA. Then they can push you around all they want, then. And that's what they do.

Ten customers stated that the WP's strong focus on sickness benefits claimants was inappropriate, or even pointless, in terms of job outcomes:

SIMON: [50s, ESA]: I'm not saying those people who just refuse to work and just live off benefits should be allowed to get away with that. I don't think they should. But look at me, my specialist has told me that I could drop off my perch at any moment. I could drop dead coming in here, with the extra stress of it. At the same time now my wife is really ill, and that's another reason why I can't go out to work because I need to be in to look after her. You can't compare my situation with some idle so and so, after I've worked and paid in for thirty years.

Some staff members did speak of the absurdity of seriously ill people being sent on the programme (7/23 staff). As staff members 'Leonie' and also 'Holly' explained:

JDJ: But some are really ill?

LEONIE: Oh yeah. That's the other side of it. Atos. I don't know what's going on over there. The tests just don't take into account that a serious injury or illness might leave you capable of doing something sometimes, but most of the time, you know if you've got bad knees like Derek, you're living half your life through hospital appointments or in pain. It's hard to place someone in work if they're going through ongoing medical treatments.

JDJ: So you think some people shouldn't be here?

⁶⁴ Atos is a private company that conducted the work capability assessments on behalf of the government.

LEONIE: Not as the situation stands.

HOLLY: Here you are John... we get some things going on in here. We've had a customer in who was in her sixties who can barely walk or use her limbs. Right, she's just been mandated to the programme. She can barely do anything. So what kind of system supports doing that? I mean, you tell me, how has she gone through Atos and come out with an assessment that says she's OK to work?

JDJ: I don't know.

HOLLY: I do believe in this programme. I do. I've seen it turn people's lives around, but it's the cases like that where the system is obviously failing people. That's not supporting her is it? I mean, really, you can't call that support. So I don't think that's a flexible system, poor woman.

6. Are long-term benefits claimants 'skivers'?

The pro-workfare narrative proposes that at least some, and perhaps a significant number, of individuals on long-term benefits are simply idle – often described in the media, and within the centre, as 'skivers' (Coote and Lyall, 2013). This perspective has a long sociological provenance (e.g. Spencer, 1844; Mead, 1986). Interpreting a customer's work history means taking account of their age and social circumstances in order properly to contextualise their circumstances. Young people aged 18-25 on the programme often had poor work histories according to the youth advisers. However, of the customers interviewed who were over 25, all had histories of working, except for one: a housewife who had never done paid work.⁶⁵

Skivers: staff Views

Staff generally supported the idea that many customers had worked for long periods, but that they had, for various reasons, become long-term unemployed. Staff member 'Charles', for example, saw the problem as structural unemployment:

CHARLES: For an economy to function you need places for people to go to, for jobs for them to go into. There's a group belief [amongst staff] that the jobs are just there but people are too lazy. But I can't look at a group of men, and women, who've worked hard all these years... and then find the jobs have just disappeared from under them and call them lazy. I won't do that. I've been lucky [...] Not everyone's had it work out so well.

⁶⁵ It should be noted that there were also several cases of customers who had both a long work history and also several years on unemployment benefits, usually due to sickness. For example, someone might have spent 20 years in work and then five years on sickness benefits.

Staff member 'Xandra', however, felt that structural unemployment was aggravated by a claimant's personal problems:

XANDRA: My customers are primarily male. Older males. If I was to describe an average customer I'd say older male, white, debt and alcohol problems, depression. What I'm seeing, it's like I know it. I've been seeing it since I was a kid back where I live. If you've got whole industries disappearing and even the men who've worked all their lives find it really hard to get into work.

Eight staff members stated that there were also many 'skivers'⁶⁶ on the programme. (And from general observation, all staff supported this view to some degree). Staff member 'Anna's' view was that some customers "never wanted to [work] and they've played the system as far as they can [...]," while staff member 'Jacqui' stated that:

[...] what we have is benefits claimants thinking they can just spend a month in bed, get up when they want. They've thought they don't have to do what everyone else does. There's no control over a life like that. They don't... they can't get any control over it. There's no quality of life in it. But we manage that. We get into that. Get into what's happening in a customer's life, and we say no, get up. Get out. Put your good clothes on and go out and get a job. If they're not going to do it then we can control their time, you know, how they're enjoying doing naff all? We can make it hard or make it easy. Carrot and stick.

Young people were highlighted in one case as being particularly prone to idleness. As staff member 'Iain' explained:

IAIN: Some [young people offered work in call centres] will actually like... you know make like they're going to collapse. The thought of having to work... and something they don't want to do. That's like... they think you're winding them up. How did we get to that state, where if you tell someone they've got to work they think it's a wind up?

JDJ: I don't know.

IAIN: They'll be like... listen, some'll be like, I have a kip in the afternoon, how can I work?

⁶⁶ Staff sometimes used alternative terms such as 'idle' or 'lazy'.

However, 7/23 staff argued that the centres' customer base was a combination of skivers and genuine claimants. (Again, from general observation, this was a standard view across staff more generally):

JDJ: Are some skivers?⁶⁷

HOLLY: Are some skivers? Some could skive for England. Look, there's all sorts. It's common sense, isn't it? There are stories here where you're crying yourself, listening. But then of course, yeah, there's buggers who wouldn't work if you offered them forty grand a year. They just can't be arsed. There's no point pretending that's not the case. If you want to show people that there are people here who obviously shouldn't be here, well yeah, there are, but there are people who really should be here. They should have been here years ago.

Staff also made a strong distinction between medically impaired claimants and able-bodied claimants. Centre manager 'Abby' noted that many poorly customers were "never going anywhere but we've still got to try our best, and we've still got to make sure all the paperwork is done for them," while 'Trisha', an ESA adviser, stated that:

TRISHA: I've got people coming through, they just shouldn't be here.

JDJ: Why?

TRISHA: Because they've got problems that this setup isn't going to address.

JDJ: Like what?

TRISHA: Like serious illnesses, mental and physical, people who are older, just not getting back into work because... yeah, they've given up hope but they're not what the jobs market is after. But yeah, we've got some with strokes, heart conditions... I worry sometimes that some of them are going to drop dead while I'm talking to them. It's bound to happen one day.

The relationship between real and 'fake' health issues was not easy to discern. Staff were not always completely sympathetic, for example in the following exchange:

JACQUI: Trisha's got some customers who hear voices.

SOFIA: Yeah, but they're not telling them to get a job, are they?'

Skivers: customer views

⁶⁷ I was not leading the participant in this passage: the subject of 'skivers' had already been raised by the participant, and this extract follows on from that discussion.

Eight customers stated that some benefits claimants were idle or ‘playing the system’. Customer ‘Bert’ (50s, ESA) provided a signal example of this perspective:

BERT: It can get lively [in the centre]. So you see that sometimes. Yeah. The skiver brigade.

JDJ: Do you think some of the people in here are skivers?

BERT: Oh, what? Yeah. But there’s a proportion of people who’re always like that, aren’t there? In any group. You’ve always got your cases like that. It was like that... That’s not saying that there’s not a big crisis. Of course... I think everyone knows now that there’s this big crisis in this country. Immigration’s making it worse. I talk to a lot of guys sat here, a lot of ex-trade, so you’ve got to account for that... they’ve pulled the rug under that section of the economy, in the building... house building, that whole area of the economy. If you let that go, then that’s the foundation of the rest of it, isn’t it? And I mean we’ve always known that.

Customer ‘Amos’⁶⁸ agreed, stating that:

AMOS: It’s a lot of... yeah, so if you listen about, it’s a lot of... so you’re hearing all the stories, yeah? There’s this going on, that’s happened, nana’s dead again. I don’t know if it’s true, half of it isn’t. I see people claiming to be spackers in here running down the road when they get out of the building they’re in that much of a hurry to get away. Be a fucking Special Olympics team, this.

7. Have the long-term unemployed have ceased active job seeking?

A major sociological view, associated particularly with ‘hysteresis theory’ is that the long-term unemployed withdraw from active job seeking, often due to low self-esteem (Layard *et al.* (1994). There was some support for this view from the staff interviews (6/23 staff). As staff member Erica put it:

JDJ: So unemployment affects mental health?

ERICA: I would say so. I mean some are nutters anyway. But yeah, for a lot of people, being unemployed is the vicious cycle, downward spiral. That’s what we’ve got to do, break them out of that.

Staff member ‘Oscar’ described what staff did to overcome the problem of depression and disengagement with the process of job seeking:

⁶⁸ 30s, JSA.

OSCAR: Giving them [customers] structure. A place to be, things to do. Don't forget if you've not had to get up and go to work for years you do lose the habit. There's no structure. And why do you do that anyway? It's because the boss says you've got to be there, or don't get paid. So you're there, aren't you? We give a bit of that back. Put it back into their lives.

However, one staff member argued that the Programme itself damaged self-esteem:

CHARLES: [...] well there's all of this, you know it's almost propaganda really, of how much your life is going to improve, how much you're going to feel better about yourself when you get into work. Now that was true, when I was a young man, absolutely. Your work was part of your identity and if you lived on the dole... they would be a shame in your community. But if you're just pushing these people into terrible jobs, where you're still on the breadline even if you're working, and then it's just a few weeks' work. Again, it has the opposite effect, it breaks down your self-esteem, it doesn't build it up.

Customer views:

Respondents attending the WP offered no evidence that they were idle or disinclined to seek work. Twenty-three customer participants indicated that they wanted to work, and were actively looking for suitable roles. Customer 'Annemarie',⁶⁹ for instance, stated that she was looking for retail or admin work, but also that:

You don't get a lot of replies. But the thing with that, with Reed [recruitment website] is, it tells you how many people have gone for the job, yeah? And you can see there's like 300 people go for some of those admin vacancies. And they're not like massively well-paid, but the demand for them. It's frightening.

'Billy', an 18-25 (JSA) category customer, noted that:

BILLY: [...] I'm not the kind of person who would want to be doing that. You know, a Benefits Street person?

JDJ: Yeah.

BILLY: I don't want that. I've got to convince him [Billy's adviser], you know, that I'm not planning on that. Because I'm getting the feeling that's what he thinks I probably am right now.

JDJ: Ok. And so you want to get off benefits?

BILLY: Yeah. I don't want to be on benefits. I've already done one of the things he said I should do. You know I went round the centre of town and I gave out my CVs to the shops.

⁶⁹ 40s, JSA.

JDJ: Right. That's good.

BILLY: I got about fifteen out. I printed more but some got soaked, you know in the rain. So I couldn't deliver them.

However, seven male and two female customers – all of whom had long previous work histories - stated that they did *not* want to work, or would only consider work that was suitable for someone with an illness:

ALFONZO [50s, ESA]: No. I couldn't work now. Not with my back.

ANTONIO [50s, ESA]: [...] Well I can't work. It doesn't make any difference whether I want to work or not.

JDJ: Would you like to work again?

MANNY:⁷⁰ I don't... honestly I don't feel any great need to. I get by with what I've got. It's not a matter of... if there was something I was capable of, and I could do it, I wouldn't be against it. Part-time maybe. Yeah, sure, but what? I mean what can I do now? It's a combination of age and bad health at my age. What would I be doing now?

8. *Employment is available, if only people are prepared to take it?*

A key feature of the pro-workfare narrative is that work is available, but that many unemployed people are simply too lazy to apply for it, or else too pampered to apply for menial roles (Mead, 1986; Bane and Ellwood, 1994; Edwards, 2013).⁷¹ According to this perspective, a stricter welfare system is required to force claimants to accept work. Staff generally agreed with this position. As staff member 'Annabelle' explained:

JDJ: Is the Work Programme making a difference?

ANNABELLE: Definitely. It's got to be strict. It's got to harass people... I think it's too soft. You've got to put pressure on people because there are the jobs there, it's just people won't go and do them. And if you think, well there's jobs, and there's so many unemployed people... it doesn't add up, does it? You've got to put the pressure on the unemployed to take them.

⁷⁰ Male, 50s, ESA.

⁷¹ In 2013, 'celebrity chef' Jamie Oliver stated that "I am an employer of 350 chefs, and when it comes to the 16- to 20-year-olds we see at the moment, I've never experienced such a wet generation. I'm embarrassed to look at British kids. You get their mummies phoning up and saying: "He's too tired, you're working him too hard" – even the butch ones. Meanwhile, I've got bulletproof, rock-solid Polish and Lithuanians who are tough and work hard. Physical graft and grunt is something this generation is struggling with" (Goldhill, 2013: 1).

However, staff views more generally were nuanced, revealing a range of opinions on both the jobs market and also the availability of employment roles for different categories of customer. Five staff members stated that employment was available for those willing to do it:

JDJ: What do you think of the job market generally? Do you think there are jobs out there?

ANNABELLE: Oh yeah, definitely. There are jobs. If people really do want to go out and work there definitely are jobs. I don't think that's the big problem to be honest.

Three staff members also mentioned that there was a 'hidden' jobs market of non-conventionally advertised jobs, which customers could access in order to find work. As staff member 'Bryan' explained:

BRYAN: You've seen the customer jobs match website?

JDJ: Yeah.

BRYAN: You're only seeing a tiny bit of the available jobs on that so to access the real levels of hidden jobs you've got to get out and talk to people. There's a fluid jobs market out there. It doesn't fit into a standard advertising... recruitment process. There's people going off sick, quitting, and there's jobs turning up, you know when a business has an increased order. I want every employer to know that they can come and see me, I've got employees ready to go.

The quality of available jobs will be discussed in Chapter Seven. However, one staff member argued that the jobs market was 'very poor':

CHARLES: The jobs market is appalling now, there's just nothing out there, or not what... what people of my generation thought of as a job, a proper job. That's swept away. So what's available... it's temporary work, zero hours contracts, very poor job roles.

Almost all staff (22/23) argued that, at least for some customers, intensified job search would not be of immediate help, either because the customers were never likely to get into work 'no matter what', or because employers would inevitably reject them, or else because such customers needed too much help to reach the point of applying for work. As staff member 'Erica' explained:

ERICA: Trevor is a very vulnerable customer and another good example of someone facing multiple barriers. He has learning difficulties for a start, and problems reading and writing. He is a really nice guy but he's not quite tuned into the same wavelength as everyone else. He's really reliant on his mother as well. They live together and she's still looking after him. I mean he's in his fifties but he's not able to look after himself. And you could probably tell he's got a problem with hygiene and body odour. I have spoken to him about it. That's one of the things we have to do, broaching personal hygiene.

JDJ: How long's he been on the Programme?

ERICA: He's been on for a year and a half now. To be honest, I don't expect him to get into work, not through this. I'd expect him to be a full termer.

JDJ: Full termer?

ERICA: Yeah, someone who does the whole programme without getting into work. He says he wants to be a cleaner. There are jobs in cleaning but I'm not sure he'd have a chance of getting one at the moment. Besides which you really need a car and a licence to work as a cleaner now.

Staff member 'Trisha' also noted that not everyone *could* work:

JDJ: Is it a case of people not wanting to work?

TRISHA: In some cases of course it is. But there again just because you don't want to work doesn't mean there'd be a job for you even if you did want to. Oh, we've got people here who haven't worked for decades, no one wants them. I can go on all I want to change their attitudes but would you employ them? I bloody wouldn't. It's not all like that, though. I've got people coming through, they just shouldn't be here.

It was also noted by staff that, while it was essential for customers to work harder to find employment, simply applying for all and any vacancies, without a focused plan, was not an ideal approach either, as this was often counter-productive, or else a form of 'playing the system' in and of itself:

SOPHIA: This is one of the standard tricks... they think they can apply for a load of jobs... I mean you can apply for them, but they go for loads of jobs that they know they can't get... that they're never going to be offered in a million years. Then they look like they've applied to tons of jobs but they haven't. They haven't applied for any that they could really get.

9. *Are benefits are too generous?*

A further major element of the Government's workfare policy rationale was the claim that benefits were too high (Hoban, 2012; O'Brien, 2012). It is difficult to separate this idea from the more general notion that benefits levels were at least high enough to induce indolence. However, three staff members did explicitly argue that benefits were too high. As staff member 'Annabelle' put it:

JDJ: I talk to a lot of them [customers] and to be fair most of them say they really want to work.

ANNABELLE: They'll say anything. They say it every review interview. You can have half hour conversations with some of them about how much they want to work... they'll *do anything, what've you got...* and then when they're offered something they go *oh God, not that, I don't want to do that, that's rubbish, I'd rather stay in bed.*

JDJ: Yeah?

ANNABELLE: Yeah, they wouldn't get out of bed for it. Being on the dole pays too much so they don't want to work. Why would they?

JDJ: So you think the dole is too high? The amount they get?

ANNABELLE: Yes, it's too high.

JDJ: Seventy quid a week?

ANNABELLE: Plus rent, plus council tax rebate, free meals, uniforms, plus then they've got it for smoking, drinking, going to bet, weed. I know you think it's a big story, but look at them, coming in drunk. Where's that from?

Of customer alcoholism indicating that benefits were too high, one staff member also made the following observation:

ERICA: 'R' is one of my most vulnerable customers. I don't think I've got any one else with so many barriers to face. For one thing, he's got serious problems with drink and drugs. He's drinking several cans of special brew a day. He told me he needs two or three cans in the morning just to stop the shakes.

JDJ: How can he afford that?

ERICA: You can afford as much as you want when you shoplift it.

JDJ: Right.

ERICA: So that's the other thing, he's always getting into trouble for that, and that aggravates the situation of course. But he's got mental health issues... I mean he's such a nice lad, it breaks your heart. I mean... he's living in a tent.

Two staff members mentioned support, or cautious support, for proposed benefit payment cards that prevented spending welfare benefits on alcohol or other non-essentials:

JDJ: What do you think about these payment cards that limit what a claimant can spend money on?

XANDRA: That's what I'm saying... there's no one simple answer, there's no one size fits all. Yeah, for some customers I think it would be a strong tool, a useful intervention. But if the idea is to get people to take more responsibility for their actions and their lives then for a lot of people you don't do that by taking away that responsibility, do you? You want customers to have more responsibility, not less. But for some, where it's justified, then yeah, they should do it. Of course they should. Some people are a danger to themselves, and you've got to intervene. If they can't take responsibility for themselves, then we've got to do it for them. Yeah.

10. Are benefits linked with crime?

A final basic aspect of the pro-workfare narrative is the idea that claiming benefits is closely linked to crime and anti-social behaviour (Mead, 1986; Smith, 2011). While there was strong support for this idea from 'complex families' workers within the centres, their views were not an assessment of the WP generally, but of their particular caseloads. By definition, these caseloads included many people with criminal records or histories of anti-social behaviour. However, even here crime was highlighted as only one aspect in a complex mix - a mix including unemployment itself as a major factor. As staff member 'Xandra' explained:

XANDRA: [...] yeah they've got every kind of problem you can think of really.

JDJ: Such as?

XANDRA: Drugs, abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence, homelessness, unemployment.

JDJ: So you do work with the unemployed?

XANDRA: Oh yeah. My customers are what we term complex families. So, you know, it's not problem families, it's complex families. I try to get people to see it's complex families, you know, the people have problems.

JDJ: The government says problem families.

XANDRA: I know. I see it on the news, even in the official output but I try to get across to people and to my customers themselves... because people do internalise the labels you give to them... but yeah, if you see people as problems, then it puts the focus in the wrong place. People aren't the problem. People have problems but they're not the problem. Problems are the problem. People can make their problems worse... often do. And that's what I deal with all the time, you know, people set on cycles of self-destruction. But no, I don't see them as the problem.

JDJ: What do you think of the Louise Casey report?

XANDRA: Yeah... I mean I obviously recognise a lot of that. I see those kinds of issues, you know... entrenched, intergenerational problems. Poverty, and yeah... I don't know.

JDJ: Culture of poverty?

XANDRA: Yeah, but I don't know what that means exactly. It's not like people are deliberately learning to become a problem family. But a set of factors will often come together to make a complex family.

JDJ: Such as?

XANDRA: I would say the top two things are unemployment and substance abuse. They're the top two factors. Inevitably, if I dig deep enough into a story you're going to find one of these, probably both because they do go hand in hand. But then, that's too easy an explanation, because there is a generational element to it. If your dad is abusive, it's not your fault as a twelve year old, is it? But when you grow up, you know, if there's no intervention in the cycle, on it goes, into another generation.

Only two staff members made a general link between crime and welfare. As staff member 'Trisha' put it:

JDJ: But you believe in welfare-to-work?

TRISHA: I do. The alternative is to just give in to a welfare underclass. Just paying people to be in an awful place right at the bottom. That's no good for anyone. No good for us, no good for them. It feeds the crime rate. And it feeds the culture of intergenerational poverty and worklessness.

A related claim is that welfare claimants regularly commit benefit fraud by working while claiming welfare (Mead, 1986; Hough, 2012). An office conversation indicated that staff did generally believe that many customers worked on the side:

JACQUI: Most customers don't even tell us if they're going away [on holiday]. They arrange their jollies around their appointment. They don't want us to know they're off to Ibiza for a fortnight, we'd start asking where they got the money from. Who's paying for it?

JDJ: The dole?

JACQUI: No, working on the side. They're all dong it.

JDJ: Yeah?

JACQUI: Not all.

SOPHIA: It is widespread though. I have loads.

JACQUI: It's really hard to prove it. But you know, don't you? [Jacqui agrees. Bryan shrugs – I don't think he's convinced.] The attitude... they know if it comes down to it they can do a few weeks' sanction. They'd rather do the sanction than miss the work because they make a lot more working than coming in here.

JDJ: How else can you spot them, if they're working on the side?

SOPHIA: Overalls. You wouldn't believe it, they come in in their overalls.
 JACQUI: He doesn't believe it. We see it all in here. You wouldn't believe what people do, come in in their work clothes.
 JDJ: How do they get away with that?
 JACQUI: Because they say *I've not been working, I'm fixing my car. I've just come from fixing it.*
 SOPHIA: Or painting their home.
 JACQUI: That's the other one. Covered in paint. *I've been painting my house.*
 JDJ: Some people probably are re-decorating.
 JACQUI: Naïve. Is this what they teach you at your university? Even if they are, that pisses me off. Where do they get the money for that? When do I get a week off to re-decorate my house?
 BRYAN: She wants the customers to go round and re-decorate her home.
 JACQUI: Can't see anything wrong with that. That'd be a brilliant idea. Get them all doing community service. You'd soon see them dropping off the dole.

However, one customer who *was* in his old work overalls in the centre gave a substantially different explanation:

JDJ: Why are you wearing your work clothes, if you don't mind me asking?
 JAMES:⁷² Yeah, I thought you wasn't going to ask. I can see the staff here looking at me like, wow you proper scally, you've not even bothered to change out of your work clothes to come in and scam it. You know they've not even said anything, just like, they're looking at me like yeah... we'll get on to the Jobcentre with that... get you down for being investigated. What they don't think... because they've never had to experience it is that I've been on a sanction for weeks, and I can't even get the electricity to wash the clothes. I mean, we get the kids' clothes done, that's the priority, so these are literally like the last clean clothes I've got left to wear.
 JDJ: Right. That explains it. I thought it looked a bit incongruous.
 JAMES: They don't look clean, but they're washed is what I'm saying. The last things I've got and I'll be wearing these all week now. But I don't mind that, you know. That's nothing. You've got people here homeless, starving, because the bus was late. Know what I mean? Because they didn't write the right thing in a form. So, yeah. It's all about trying to break people. They can think what they want about my clothes.

Only one customer admitted working while on benefits:

JDJ: What were you doing before?
 X:⁷³ I was... right you need to be proper confidential, yeah, because I was with my mate who does [***] and, yeah, I was doing that. You know what

⁷² 20s, ESA.

⁷³ I have completely anonymised this participant.

I mean, I wasn't bothering with the tax and that, and I was signing-on with it an 'all. And between them, yeah, you just about get a decent income from it.

JDJ: Right.

X: Thinking on it now I wish I hadn't even bothered with the dole, because they wouldn't have had no record of me. But on the other hand, it wasn't a lot of money on its own, so I did need that extra money from it. And yeah, I just did that, anyway... and then after a year they said go on, get in here.

JDJ: And what about the old work?

X: Erm, I'm not saying. Let's say that's all over now. Officially that's gone by the wayside.

11. Conclusion

This chapter reviewed data drawn from interviews with staff and customers pertaining to the subject area of the views and attitudes of staff and customers pertaining to the Work Programme and its participants. The data were structured in comparison with the primary two 'narratives' surrounding workfare. The first of these narratives is 'pro' workfare, while the second is opposed to it. The data were further divided into eight sections, namely: general opinions of workfare, the causes of unemployment, 'health matters', 'skivers', cessation of job seeking activity, the availability of employment, 'benefits are too generous' and finally, putative links between benefits claiming and crime. The remainder of this section summarises the data pertaining to each of these subjects.

There was a consensus amongst all staff members, apart from one, that workfare was a positive social policy. Staff, in general, felt that the pre-WP welfare system was ineffective and counterproductive, and moreover that it encouraged claimant idleness and welfare dependency. This view matches arguments made by the UK government (Cameron, 2011c, 2012a; Grayling, 2011), and also the work and theories of pro-workfare theorists such as Mead (1986), Wax (2003) and White (2005). However, 21 staff felt that workfare was only 'one part' of the solution to long-term unemployment. While one staff member claimed that the WP was pointless, most staff stated that in order to resolve the current unemployment crisis a stronger government response than the WP was required, including government job creation and more funding for training. Staff strongly articulated the view that people *have* to work, both for their own self-esteem and also for the good of the nation and of the economy.

All customers felt that *some* programme or government help for the unemployed was a positive step. However, most customers felt that the WP was either not a

sufficient response, or else did not address the ‘real issues’. Similarly to staff, customers strongly argued that job creation and money for training were necessary in order to resolve long-term unemployment.

There was widespread support amongst staff for the idea that an ‘underclass’ of often inter-generationally unemployed, welfare-dependant people existed, and that this group constituted a substantial portion of the WP’s customer base. The WP was felt by most staff to be an important ‘intervention’ into an ongoing underclass ‘problem’, forcing customers to re-assess their lifestyles, assume more responsibility for themselves and their families, and to begin to ‘turn their lives around’. This strongly supports the pro-workfare arguments of Mead (1986). However, most staff also noted that the labour market was difficult, and often prejudiced against older, middle-aged, former manual workers – a substantial part of the WP’s customer base. No customers mentioned ‘the underclass’ as a cause of unemployment. Where customers expressed an opinion on the causes of unemployment, this was generally stated to be a structural problem, particularly of job scarcity and ongoing economic crisis. Most customers felt that the WP was not sufficiently addressing these structural issues.

There was some support from staff for the idea, popularised by Gilder (1982), that sickness benefits encourage claimants to over emphasise the extent of their illnesses, causing them to come to believe, falsely, that they are too poorly to work. There was strong support amongst staff for the idea that incapacity benefits had been too easily granted by doctors in the past, and that this had led to claimants focusing on their long-term health ‘barriers’ rather than on their current capabilities. However, many incapacity benefit customers spoke of poor external medical assessments that, according to them, had mistakenly classed them as ‘fit for work’. Some customers clearly were ill, and staff also noted cases of customers who should not have been on the programme due to seriously poor health.

There was support, from both staff and customers, for the idea that some welfare claimants were ‘skivers’. However, customers generally felt that this was a minority, while all staff noted that the centres’ customer base was a mix of people, including some idlers, some who could not work, and some customers for whom getting back into work was difficult or even impossible given their age, health and the difficult labour market. Only one staff member felt that the ‘problem’ was almost exclusively structural unemployment.

A major aspect of the pro-workfare narrative is the idea that long-term unemployment effectively causes, or at least exacerbates itself, by diminishing the morale of jobseekers, thereby encouraging them to cease active job seeking (e.g. Layard *et al.*, 1994). Staff generally agreed that long-term unemployment was a ‘downward spiral’ for many customers, leading them into a variety of interconnected life crises and sources of depression. This was felt by many staff to retard job seeking activity. ‘Breaking customers out’ of this perceived ‘negativity’ was viewed by staff as a primary aspect of the centres’ operations.

Customers who felt that they *could* work were all actively job seeking. Although some customers did express hopelessness and exasperation, they did not express sentiments of idleness or passive welfare receipt. Evidence from customers indicated a strong and widespread desire to work. However, some incapacity benefits claimants felt that they were too ill to work, and so were not actively seeking work; or else they felt that there was no work available that was appropriate for them. Some customers indicated that they were ‘just going along’ with the programme to avoid trouble, but this did not appear to be connected to a lack of desire to work, but rather, to a feeling that the programme was ineffective.

Several staff echoed claims made by the government and pro-workfare scholars that employment was available if customers were prepared to accept it (Mead, 1986). However, it was noted by both staff and customers that this work was generally low-paid, often temporary, and of a more menial level than many customers had experienced in the past. Staff generally felt that benefits were too generous, and that welfare largesse was leading customers to refuse low-wage work.

There was some support amongst staff for the idea, expressed by the government (Cameron, 2011c; Grayling, 2011), that claiming benefits was linked with crime and anti-social behaviour. The strongest support for this perspective came from complex families advisers. However, in reference to complex families, this support was contextualised by emphasising the uniquely interconnected problems of this category of customer. For ‘complex families’, unemployment was argued by staff to be one problem amongst many, and not necessarily the direct *cause* of criminal behaviour. A very small minority of staff (two) felt that welfare-induced crime was an issue more generally. Benefit fraud, however, was felt by most staff to be a common occurrence amongst customers. Data drawn from customers did not indicate criminality, although one customer did admit to working while claiming benefits.

In sum, staff generally supported the pro-workfare narrative, emphasising individual behaviours and pathological underclass values as the causes of unemployment. This harmonises with the theories of welfare scholars such as Murray (1984, 1996); Mead (1986), Buckingham (1996), Wax (2003), White (2005) and Bartholomew (2006). Customers generally supported the idea of *some* form of programme to help the unemployed, but felt that the WP was largely ineffective. Customers placed the blame for unemployment primarily on structural factors. They provided little support for the ‘underclass’ narrative, and mostly expressed perspectives supporting the views of anti-workfare scholars such as Piven and Cloward (1971), Gans (1995), Handler (1995) and Peck (2001). However, when it came to day-to-day practices within the centres, opinions were more varied. This subject will form the basis of the following chapter.

Chapter Six:

Day-to-day operating practices

1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the day-to-day operating practices and formal activities of the two centres. These were: monthly review interviews, in which customers reported to staff on their job seeking activities, ‘job club’, which involved searching for employment vacancies on computers in the centres, training, and the centres’ administrative practices. According to the government’s workfare policy rationale, the role of WP providers is to offer ‘tailored help and support’ to the long-term unemployed (Grayling, 2011). This claim has gone on to become a major justification of the WP, as expressed by numerous government spokespersons (Smith, 2011; Cameron, 2012d; DWP, 2012a; Lane *et al.*, 2013). In addition, the marketisation of welfare, and the tendering of workfare provision to private, for-profit companies, was stated to constitute a superior service than that provided by the public Jobcentre. It was also meant to lead to the ‘evolution’ of better provision as providers adapted, competed and shared best practices (DWP, 2012a). Moreover, the use of ‘black box’ contracts, which allowed providers to innovate and implement their own courses, procedures and practices, was argued to provide the widest possible scope for innovation and success, freeing providers from unnecessary bureaucratic interference (DWP, 2012a).

Contrarily, Peck (2002), Herd *et al.*, (2005) and Wacquant (2010) have argued that workfare leaves claimants vulnerable to the bureaucratic and penal ‘micro-regulation’ of their lives by staff, to no useful purpose save social control of the poor. Sanger (2003), meanwhile, has argued that privatisation transforms welfare provision into a ‘hard’ social policy that ignores claimant wellbeing in favour of profit-making. This chapter reviews the primary practical activities of the centres in the context of these claims.

2. *Review Interviews*

In this section I review the primary method of contact between staff and customers: compulsory, monthly ‘adviser review interviews’. Customers attended these meetings in order to explain to a personal adviser what they had been doing to look for work in the previous four weeks. The general activity of each centre was a continual flow of these adviser review interviews, with one to five customers sat in the reception area waiting to be seen, and four or five customers being interviewed, at any one time. Interviews generally took place in an open-plan office,⁷⁴ with customers’ chairs placed next to their advisers’ desks. Customer chairs were old, and several had ribs sticking up through their worn-out cushions, making sitting on them quite uncomfortable. Adviser review meetings were described by staff member ‘Erica’ in the following terms:

ERICA: You learn here, there’s no one reason why people are here, so there’s no one role really. As an average day I work with people on a one-to-one through what we call review interviews. That can be anything really, from twenty minutes to half an hour, an hour with some customers.

JDJ: What do you talk about?

ERICA: [...] it’s a bit of a variety. I have a big caseload group so it’s everything from your furthest from the labour market to the job ready. It’s not one of those roles you can understand just by talking about it. [...] There’s no one thing that this is.

All customers interviewed noted that the primary formal requirement of the programme was to attend such interviews monthly, with the length of contact with an adviser

⁷⁴ In exceptional circumstances, usually related to medical conditions such as a psychological fear of public spaces, customers were allowed to have meetings in a private room.

ranging, on average, between 15-30 minutes, albeit with initial interviews lasting longer:

JDJ: And how long do those interviews last?

ANNEMARIE:⁷⁵ They last... the first one was the longest. That was about an hour. But since then they've been, what, half an hour? Something like that.

Staff members confirmed that meetings were short and infrequent:

JDJ: Do you think welfare-to-work fulfils that duty [to work]?

CORMAC [adviser]: Yeah, well, it's not, is it? But I reckon that's better than asking nothing. I mean, look, it's not even like a lot's asked of them, is it? They come in twice a month, do a bit of job search. It's not prison. So you've got people kicking off about it but that's not an unreasonable return for what you get, is it? I'd be happy if that was all I had to do. Wouldn't you?

Staff viewed the frequency of interviews in various ways. Two viewed it as sufficient:

LORETTA: God, we couldn't cope with it if it was like, seeing them every week. I guess you could have people come in every week if you cut out the paperwork for it. I mean every time they come in we have a ton of stuff to get through just for that one interview. If you had to do that every week for every customer, no, that'd be crazy.

JDJ: But wouldn't it make it easier, you know, to get people back into work, if you saw them more often?

LORETTA: Some customers maybe. Younger customers sometimes. You could get pressure on them before the rot sets in.

Four staff members saw the frequency and duration of meetings as insufficient, as they did not allow enough time to work with customers, or place enough pressure on them to get into work:

JDJ: How do you break through that [non-committal attitude]?

IAIN: You know what, you don't, really, do you? To be fair... we're seeing them once, twice in four weeks. We put as much pressure on them as we can in that time, but they're just missing a couple of kips, aren't they? You can tell them *you've got to work*... it's just hoping that at some point it sinks in. That's the breakthrough point, when they go *ok, what've you got?* But I

⁷⁵ Female, 40s, JSA.

don't get that with most of them... most of them I have to say *here you go, this is what I've got, get up and do it.*

The infrequency of customer contact appeared to have a straightforward explanation: cost. Rather than the centres adapting to an abstract goal of long-term service improvement, as the government had hoped (DWP, 2012a), operations appeared to be adapting to current low budgets. Staff member 'Holly', for example, stated that "...yeah, no way is enough money and people working on this. It's a budget operation." Senior Prime manager 'Melissa' also expressed serious concerns about the provider's poor level of investment:

MELLISA: This just isn't the standard of provision that we expect. Customers coming in for fifteen minutes, once a month? That's just not acceptable. And it's not right. The whole idea is that we move past all the old cheapskate ways of doing things. [...] I've been sitting in on the interviews. It's appalling. [...] The atmosphere across this provider, the [advisers] are just having fifteen minute discussions about *how's life?* It's not on.

Furthermore, in what appeared to be another cost-cutting exercise, the two centres were being run by the same manager and assistant manager. The manager was also phone-managing a third centre.

Review Interview Categories:

Adviser review interviews were divided into four primary categories: ESA, JSA, 18-24s and 'Second Jobbers', with one tertiary category, 'complex families'. Manager 'Abby' described these four categories in the following terms:

ABBY: But these [customers] fall into different customer groups. They're treated basically the same but there are some differences in the paperwork. So the major groups are JSA and ESA. JSA is the jobseeker's allowance claimants and ESA is the employment and support allowance claimants. You know what they are?

JDJ: No.

ABBY: Right, well ESA claimants are customers who have some kind of health problem. So that's a really broad group... it can be people with diseases or people with mental health issues. Some are worse than others, and to be honest some of the ESA customers that are referred over are in a right state, but we still have to work with them.

JDJ: A right state?

ABBY: Yeah, like health issues, you know they're never going anywhere but we've still got to try our best, and we've still got to make sure all the paperwork is done for them.

JDJ: Right.

ABBY: So those are the two main categories that we work with. The ESA are the WRAG group, which means work related activity group. That means there's a little bit less pressure to get them back into work. I can't tell you what our targets are, you could give that to our rivals, couldn't you? [Later, I am given the targets.] But the targets for the ESA customers are less. To be honest the idea of the WRAG group isn't all that clear. They're supposed to be doing work related activity, but that could mean anything, couldn't it? Anyway, the other main group is the under 25s. So the JSA group is divided between the 18-25s and the 25+, and these groups have their own advisers. Other than that we have Anna who's on the second jobbers which is customers who've had a job while they were on the programme but then came back to it, so they have their own adviser. Oh, and you'll see some other people here because there is a problem families unit here.

Customer views:

According to customers, the content of adviser interviews did not, as a rule, vary greatly. Initial interviews involved basic paperwork⁷⁶ and orientation. As customer 'Annemarie'⁷⁷ explained:

ANNEMARIE [Recent starter]: Erm... so it's all business at the moment. I've got to go through everything that I've done to apply for work. That's... I give her my jobs list. [...]. Erm, my actions towards work at the moment are to keep applying for the positions that I'm going for. She's happy with that. And then my other action towards work is to keep up with the course,⁷⁸ and start to look for positions that might open up for me once I complete that qualification.

Customer 'Cliff' (30s, JSA), meanwhile, explained what had happened on his first interview:

⁷⁶ At their interviews, customers were asked to complete a set of paperwork, including a form explaining what the programme was, and the customer's rights and obligations in respect of it; a calculation showing that customers would be better off in work; and a legal notice that should a customer start work, the centre had a legal right to contact their new employers to confirm the job start. According to the manager, in the programme's initial year, customers had to agree to this contact, but as many did not agree, centres were losing money on job starts and so the government had taken away the customers' right to refuse.

⁷⁷ 40s, JSA.

⁷⁸ This was a course Annemarie was doing outside of the centre, which she had arranged for herself.

CLIFF: Yeah, so they did say like, what do I want to do? They want... like a job that you're ideally aiming for, or, you know like a plan? A within reason thing that you're ideally going to make something happen about. You know?

JDJ: Yeah.

CLIFF: Like, a plan of action... action plan, that's what it is anyway, that's what they call it, an action plan. And then you've got to have your CV all done properly. I have to say that's a positive, yeah? Jacqui helped me with that, putting a CV together, because I didn't have a clue with that to tell the truth.

Customers were also asked to provide up to three preferred employment fields. One staff member noted that this often caused problems:

ADELE: Another thing is everyone's got to give a job goal. You know, like they've got to say something that they're supposedly working towards.

JDJ: Like an ideal job?

ADELE: Yeah, but something that they're supposed to be able to do and it's reasonable, yeah? So who's going to say that if you've got a broken back, or you're proper ill you want to do some job? Something that you know there's no way you could do, but you've got to say it is what I'm saying. You've *got* to. So that ends up in proper arguments and proper abuse because you've got your customers just going no, I'm not saying it. And your advisers going yeah, you've got to. The customers are kicking off saying they're not capable of working just because someone says they are, so they don't want to do it. 'Cos they know when they say something then it's going to be like, that's what you've got to work towards.

JDJ: The job goal?

ADELE: Yeah. And if you've been made to say it, then they keep asking you about it, then yeah, you see them giving proper abuse about it. And I can understand that. Another thing, yeah, they sometimes take what a customer did in the past, you know so they can put it as a future job goal, like they're putting down something they've got experience of so they can go for it again as a job goal, and that causes proper stress sometimes.

According to customers who had been attending the centres for longer than around three months, monthly interview content did not vary much between general chit-chat, showing evidence of job seeking, and discussing current 'actions towards work'. While one long-term customer (discussed later) found this useful in terms of finding work, and a minority found it useful in terms of social contact (also discussed later), most customers reported that they found the adviser interviews to be pointless and repetitive:

JDJ: Do you find those adviser interviews useful?

BOB:⁷⁹ No. Not at all. I can say without hesitation that they're no use to me at all. All they are is filling out the instructions on the computer screen, making sure that they can put on the computer that they've done all their necessary activities with me. I don't get any advice. I don't get any help. I don't get any help or direction on what to do.

Moreover, the practice of public interviews was felt by some customers to add an extra dimension of humiliation to the whole process. Customer 'Amy' (20s, JSA), for instance, mentioned feeling 'shame' at having to attend the WP, and that:

AMY: And you've got to go through everything, you know sat over there in front of everyone else. They really drag it out as well. I hate all that.

JDJ: Going through your details?

AMY: Yeah. That's awful.

'Types' of customers:

The point of adviser review interviews was to get customers into work so that the centres, and individual staff members, could achieve contracted 'outcome' quotas. This requirement coloured staff views of customers, leading them to speak of a 'range' of customer 'types' based on four primary factors: their 'employability', the degree to which they cooperated with the programme, how they behaved during adviser interviews and whether they had completed 'actions towards work' set by advisers. 'Good' customers were said to be those who were keen and enthusiastic, as staff member 'Erica' explained:

ERICA: We do have some customers like Shauna. Really keen... do everything they need to be doing. You can guarantee that someone like that is going to be in work pretty soon. She's been on programme for a few weeks, she's already had a couple of interviews.

JDJ: Is it the attitude that makes the difference?

ERICA: A good attitude really matters, but that's not the whole picture. A good attitude comes from being confident and in a good place. If you're not in a good place, if you've got a life in total disarray, it's hard to have a good attitude about where you are in life. What we have to do is work with the customer to get them up to that point.

⁷⁹ 50s, JSA.

'Bad' customers, however, were said by staff to be those who were unresponsive and disengaged. Staff member 'Trisha' described such customers as 'grunters': "I've got a proper grunter coming in today. You'll see what happens when you let someone stay on benefits for twenty years." Staff member 'Erica' described 'bad' customers in the following terms:

ERICA: [They] just won't engage, refuse to talk, refuse to do anything you ask them to. I get a few who won't sign anything. One said he wanted to take it to the lawyer. There's things you can do to deal with this sort of behaviour but it's a limited set. If someone really doesn't want to comply there's not a lot you can do about it.

Even 'good' customers were not necessarily always what they seemed, because, according to staff member 'Trisha', they could sometimes feign, or else lose enthusiasm:

TRISHA: I see a lot of [ESA] customers who come in enthusiastic about a job and go through all the motions, all enthusiastic and then when you see them again and you ask them how they're getting on with it it's *oh I forgot about that...* or *oh I decided not to do it*. So you have these people who just tell you what you want to hear... and you've got to take them at face value. You can't say *oh well I've heard all that before*. You've got to go through the motions.

The centres also operated a more formal means of categorising customer 'types', based on their employability. This was a traffic light system, categorising customers as 'green', 'amber' and 'red'. As staff member 'Anna' explained: "A green customer is mostly job ready. We have a traffic light system, so amber is requiring a bit of work and red is far from the labour market."

'Green' customers represented a category that staff regularly described as being 'job ready' – that is, likely to get back into work imminently. This idea was mentioned directly by seven members of staff. 'Job ready' customers were essential for making up most of an adviser's quota, as these customers required little or no processing to get into employment. As staff member 'Trisha' put it:

TRISHA: I rely on the new blood. I check every new month... you see who you've got. Some are always just passing through, you know the natural off-flow into employment? They're always good for your quota. Then you look and see who's close to being job ready, or is job ready. You need the

new blood, the new job-readies, that you can get into work easy. You can only work with the material you've got.

Barriers to employment:

Less job ready customers required more work than 'green' customers. With staff recognising 'structural' causes of unemployment, but nevertheless backgrounding these within their general group perspective, much of their work entailed identifying and attempting to overcome whatever *personal* issues were apparently preventing customers from gaining employment. All customer-facing staff spoke of customers as experiencing a variety of 'barriers' that had to be addressed in order to get them into work. This would often be accomplished over months, via carefully structured interventions administered at adviser review interviews. In addition to 'underclass values', 'age' and 'skiving' (see earlier discussion), the primary 'barriers' that customers had to overcome according to staff were: *attitude, substance abuse, low morale, age, physical health, resistance to 'entry' level jobs, homelessness, abusive relationships, hygiene, illiteracy, poor language skills, debt, lack of qualifications and no work history*. I will review each of these factors in turn.

A 'poor attitude' was felt to make work almost unimaginable for many customers. As staff member 'Erica' explained:

ERICA: Because that's the biggest barrier [...]. Thinking that getting into work is like... it's just not imaginable. It's a barrier in a lot of customer's lives. They don't see it. A job. Money. It's so out of their world they can't imagine themselves having those things. They see it as something that someone else has, never them.

'Poor attitude' also referred to customers who, according to staff, thought of the programme as unfair or oppressive:

LEONIE: A lot are crying or complaining how unfair it all is, that they're forced to come here, that it's making them worse. But then one of the most rewarding things about doing this job is seeing the change. Seeing customers realise that, hold on, this has something good here, something that might actually help me.

Substance abuse was thought by staff to be a barrier for a large minority of customers. As staff member 'Loretta' put it, speaking of alcoholism: "It's more of a

problem with the older customers, but yeah, of course there are some. I see it all, drugs, domestic abuse, depression.” Substance abuse was also felt to be often linked to other barriers. As staff member ‘Erica’ said of ‘R’, a highly ‘vulnerable’ customer experiencing serious health and poverty issues:

ERICA: No [he’s not on a sanction]. He’s just doing drugs and drinking. You can see... it’s not easy to get someone like ‘R’ over all those barriers.

JDJ: Is it possible?

ERICA: I don’t think so. Not with this programme. But it’s a soft outcome. Just keeping him going is enough for now. Not like you think, is it? We’re not monsters really.

Low morale, as opposed to a simple ‘bad attitude’, was felt to depress customers and cause them to disengage with the programme. Staff member ‘Pauline’ called this the ‘poor me’ syndrome:

PAULINE: It’s what I call PM syndrome, poor me syndrome. He’ll come in and say his bad back’s playing up, but... you get older you do have things going wrong on you, don’t you? But if you’ve to work, well most of us just get up and get on with it, don’t we? You have to, because that’s your life, everything’s revolving around work. You’ve got your rent to pay, the food to buy, bills to pay, and you’ve got work so you go and do it and moan about your back there. But if you’re signing-on, what do you do? You tell yourself your back’s stopping you from working, you feel it hurting because that’s all you’ve got to focus on. So I say it’s a choice about what your life is going to revolve around, your work or your barriers. What I’m working with is PM syndrome. It’s institutionalised behaviour, so that’s your barriers. You can see from Berthold, it’s a battle of wills, him reinforcing his barriers, me trying to break them down.

Many customers had poor physical health, and this was also cited by all customer-facing staff as a major barrier for some, preventing them from working:

LEONIE: [...] there are so many who, yeah, I’d love to see them get back into work, especially when they really want to. I would say some people just shouldn’t have been put into WRAG in the first place. So it’s an impossible... or very difficult ask. Having them on my caseload means I’ve got a group of customers who... basically, I’m just acting as a kind of life adviser, helping them manage what they *can* do, what they could be doing better, rather than getting them into work.

JDJ: Would it be easier if they weren’t sent over?

LEONIE: Some people sent over are so ill... or suffering complications. What they think they’re going to do... I don’t know what they’ve got in

mind. If someone's had a stroke and can't hardly walk, I don't know what I'm expected to do for them.

A further major barrier, according to staff, was that former skilled manual workers would often refuse to take less well-paid, less skilled service work or 'entry level' roles:

JDJ: So some of these guys want to do what they've done before?

CORMAC: Yes, that's it, their identity. They'll be like, I'm a roofer, I want to do roofing - what roofing jobs have you got? And I'm like how are you going up on a roof at 55 with a bad knee and having been out of the game for ten years? If that's closed off then I say... I try to get people to think about it all in a different way of looking at it. It's work that's their identity, not being a builder or a roofer.

Homelessness was a regular problem for a small minority of customers, often made worse by sanctions. A homeless customer was extremely difficult to get into work, leading to a vicious cycle of homelessness and unemployment, hence, as staff member 'Erica' explained, staff had to overcome this barrier before getting them into work:

ERICA: Look, think about it like, if you're not in work, and you're skint, you've got nowhere to live... for us, we've got to work with that, we've got to get the customer into a position where they can say yeah, she's got a house, I've got somewhere to live, a bit of stability. We try to create a bit of momentum in their lives. If we can get things going, you know it crosses that barrier.

A small minority of customers were in abusive relationships. This could have a variety of knock-on effects according to staff, such as partners retarding a customer's job seeking activities, or otherwise placing them under such intolerable stresses that it caused further issues. As staff member 'Erica' put it:

ERICA: Ellie was in an abusive relationship. It took a lot for her to get over that. But she was the one who ended up homeless with nowhere to go. It all has a knock-on effect and we do see that kind of thing a lot where one problem leads on to the next, like a domino effect.

JDJ: How do you mean?

ERICA: Like, one problem means you end up with another one. In this case Ellie was struggling to keep everything together. At the same time she's

here on the programme. Anyway she forgot an appointment and got sanctioned. That left her just destitute and she was forced to go back to her old place and straight back into an abusive relationship. That's where she is now.

For a small minority of vulnerable customers with special needs, hygiene was, according to staff, an issue:

PAULINE: You can probably tell Sissy's got some problems with personal hygiene? A good example of a major barrier. That's the kind of thing I have to deal with. See that's part of my job, to tell Sissy that she's got to wash herself properly. She's got to clean her teeth and take care of all that. And that's not a one-time conversation. That's what I'm saying when I say working to get over these barriers. Every time Sissy comes in I have to address it again.

One customer noted that his *adviser* had poor hygiene:

AMOS:⁸⁰ Yeah. I'm in for that [adviser review].

JDJ: With who?

AMOS: **. Sweaty **

JDJ: Right. We've all got to have a nick-name.

AMOS: Yeah. Well she could wash up. I have to sit with her.

Illiteracy was a major barrier for a small group of customers, making it difficult or impossible to conduct job search without intensive support. Finding work as an illiterate person was also extremely difficult. As staff member 'Erica' explained:

ERICA: Donal is a very vulnerable customer and another good example of someone facing multiple barriers. He has learning difficulties for a start, and problems reading and writing.

JDJ: You didn't put a lot of pressure on him to get work.

ERICA: I can't. I can't do that, there's no point. This is something you only realise when you're on the front line. If someone can't read or write, it's extremely difficult for him to job search.

⁸⁰ 30s, JSA.

Although most customers in the centres studied were white British, a very small number were immigrants, and some of these had poor English language skills. Poor English was flagged by five staff members as a particular barrier to effective job seeking. Staff member 'Erica' explained how this affected an Asian customer, 'Mrs X', who had a complex set of 'barriers':

ERICA: That's a good example of multiple barriers. You have your customer with poor English and she needs to get on an ESOL course, but because she's got poor health it's not easy for her to stay on a course. I think this'll be the third time she's started on ESOL. To be honest I think her English is a bit better than she lets on because sometimes I say things to her and she's answering before it's translated. But even *with* English, something you see is women from Asia sometimes is a total cultural shift where they've never worked. Mrs Abdulla has never worked because, well I'm not saying not worked because I do value the work women do in the house and raising children... but paid work. You do see some Asian women for who the idea of paid work or work outside the house is a total cultural shock. It's a big change, so that's a barrier in itself, just getting people to readjust their way of thinking. Whatever anyone thinks, that's what's expected so there has to be a navigation of the whole cultural change. Sometimes you see women coming in from Asia who not only haven't worked before, they've not even had access to education. So you add all these barriers up and ask me to get that person into work, you see what I'm being asked to do.

Of another customer, 'Erica' stated:

If you can make yourself understood then that's enough. The problem though, think about Haisha [Asian female with poor English] going on an interview for child-minding at a nursery. It's not ideal. But as an adviser you've got to be creative. If Haisha's English isn't good then that could be an advantage like working in the Asian community as a child minder. The problem is she still needs to pass the course, so she still needs to improve her English, so it's a roundabout of problems. Multiple barriers again.

Poor English also led to another problem: children performing job search. As staff member 'Oscar' put it:

This can be a problem... not just for the non-English speakers, but for parents with learning difficulties. It's easy to ask them to ask their kids to help them but, yeah... this has a knock-on effect because the government wants finding a job to be a full-time job. Kids have got their own schoolwork or college work to do so it's not good for them to have to spend so much time helping do job search.

While most customers were, by definition, poor, debt was said by staff to be a particular barrier in and of itself. Debt could cause depression, retard job seeking by making internet access, phones or bus fares too expensive, and it could also make finding work unattractive if this meant that repayments on loans were triggered, outweighing the gains in income. There were also some problems with loan sharks. As staff member 'Holly' explained:

HOLLY: They come in drowning in debt. It's not all legal debt either.

JDJ: How do you mean?

HOLLY: Illegal money lenders, loan sharks. People paying off debts, drug dealers. Or alcoholics, you know, spending all their money on booze then they've got nothing to eat.

JDJ: Right.

HOLLY: That's not everyone. Don't misquote me. There's *some* like that. Because we're coping with everyone who's fallen right to the bottom. Right at the bottom of the pile. Everyone's here. They bring a whole load of problems with them.

Many customers had few or no qualifications and/or no work history. According to staff this made it difficult to place them in work. Yet, staff still had to try to help them:

PAULINE: Another thing with Eloise. No qualifications, no experience. I'll say though, this is a pretty extreme case, but there are plenty like that, and it's not a matter of just ignoring them. I've got to work to do the best for Eloise same as someone who's ready to just go back into work. You don't see that... that I actually spend a lot more time working with Eloise, even if she doesn't go back to work.

'Multiple barriers', in and of itself, was felt to be a common and difficult 'compound' barrier by all customer-facing staff. Staff member 'Pauline' noted that solving such complex problem sets meant that "half the time I'm working as a counsellor, trying to get customers reassessing their lives." Moreover, multiple barriers were felt to reinforce each other, making helping a customer a difficult, long-term process of gradual rehabilitation. As staff member 'Iain' explained:

IAIN: There's a lot of reasons why young people start here, and for some it's really difficult, like... problems, you know, the kind of things that you don't just get over.

JDJ: Like what?

IAIN: Everything... from drug addiction, alcoholism, sexual abuse. A lot of youth homelessness and the thing is, a lot of young people find themselves falling into one thing, like drugs, drinking, and it leads to other things, or they end up with more than one problem, like getting thrown out of the house. It's hard to get a young person focused on work or into work when they're sofa-surfing, drinking, don't know where they'll be from one week to the next. Yeah, sometimes the best thing you can do is just try to resolve the immediate problem and worry about work at a later point. I mean, you have no choice in some cases.

JDJ: But, could they be manipulating you?

IAIN: Oh yeah, that's a big part of it. But that's why you have a programme where people are in every month and put through it... you get a good idea of who you're talking to, whether they're really going through it, or whether they're just stringing you along.

3. 'Job Club'

In addition to review interviews, some customers were asked, or volunteered, to attend 'job club'. Job club involved searching for vacancies online for one to two hours per month, usually not monitored by staff. Job club took place in a separate computer room in each centre, and utilised a handful of old, glitchy, grubby computers. As one customer put it:

SILVIO:⁸¹ And I complained about the computers, right? They're disgusting. Right, they make you use them but you could well get a disease from them. You'd get scabies from them. They've never seen a clean since I've been in here. And you think of everyone who uses them. Yeah, they're disgusting.

While one customer said he enjoyed job club because it gave him someone to talk to, all other customers who had attended job club (eight customers) found it to be a negative or pointless experience:

MARCUS:⁸² [...] the job club that's... That's... here's a computer go and sit at that and go through that list of jobs and get some applied for. But that's just having a laugh. Ok you find one or two things on that to go for

⁸¹ 40s, JSA.

⁸² 40s, JSA.

and maybe you've got a chance of... you know getting an application through to the next stage? But that's, like there's nothing on that list, yeah?

BILLY:⁸³ And you're going through those jobs, just again and again. Jesus... and you're trying to find... Yeah, I go through them all like in no time, you know? You've done what you're applying for with it. But then you've done them, yeah? Then what? Then you're trying to find some others. Just, you know you've got to make up your numbers with it? I'm just... oh, me or the computer's going through the window.

Job club was mostly voluntary,⁸⁴ and was sparsely attended. As one staff member noted:

TRISHA: We're just not getting the referrals. Just not getting them through the door. It's so quiet now... I can't even do the job search. This is the problem. I've got so few job ready customers there's no point putting them to do job search. What will they do if they get an offer? They don't get offers anyway. But there's no point putting on a job search session with them.

However, job club was only one aspect of a customer's expected job seeking regime. Most customer job seeking activity was expected by staff to be done either at home, at the library, or by approaching firms in person. A conversation with staff member 'Annabelle' outlined what staff expected from customers in this regard:

JDJ: What's a proper [job searching] effort?

ANNABELLE: Not sat watching telly all day.

JDJ: I know but... what proper steps would you say they should be doing, day-to-day?

ANNABELLE: Day-to-day, down at the library for the papers, jobs ads, getting in here, there's no excuse... we get the papers, we give stamps and envelopes.

JDJ: OK, what else?

ANNABELLE: Online job search. Everything's online now, isn't it? You can get loads of applications out now through that. Then handing out CVs door-to-door if you're not getting anything any other way.

JDJ: Yeah?

ANNABELLE: Yeah. Why are you saying it like that? If you need a job no one's going to come to you and give you one, are they? They've got to know you're after one. If you get out there... the hidden jobs market.

⁸³ 18-25, JSA.

⁸⁴ Some customers were mandated to attend, however. While some spoke of being asked to do it in a manner that made it impossible to refuse, even though it was officially voluntary. According to staff, mandating job club was primarily reserved for awkward or difficult customers.

Staff also searched for jobs for customers:

JDJ: In terms of job search, who finds the jobs, you [staff] or them?

PAULINE: I spend a lot of time looking for jobs, but this isn't an employment agency. We've got a customer group of very hard to reach customers. So, yeah, I do, I spend a lot of time checking vacancies, thinking about who they might be good for. I have to be proactive, but there's only some customers who're at that point of saying, come on, get your application in for that. There's no point sending someone in for an interview if they're still not even aware that they smell or their clothes aren't appropriate, or they're still not even convinced that they even need to be in work.

Of all staff, the placement officers were the only ones tasked with the priority duty of proactively seeking out vacancies. Placement officer 'Bryan' explained this role:

BRYAN: [...] A lot [of customers] find their own jobs, or do it through the advisers but I have to kind of keep on top of the local jobs market and keep tabs on the new roles and opportunities that come up. So if the adviser's focus is on the customer, mine is on the job market. I keep that monitored and the advisers, they know their caseloads, so if I say right, I've got a good opportunity here, like working in Boots or something... I say who's got someone with retail experience and might be good at Boots? Then the advisers tell me I've got such and such. So I get the details and I say yeah, I phone them or speak to them when they come in, depending on the timescale. You know some of these employment roles are gone before you know it so you've got to be right on the ball with it. But yeah, I get in touch and say I've got this role, are you interested? Then I'll work with those who are interested, to get them working towards the applications. If they get that far I'll work with them to prepare for the interview. And I'll usually contact the employer directly as well, have a bit of a chat, just to tell them about the person or people who are applying. You know, just try to give them a bit of an edge.

Customers 'proved' that they had been applying for work by presenting a 'jobs log' at their monthly adviser review meetings. This was a written list of roles that they had applied for in the previous four weeks. However, a customer's applications were only cursorily noted by staff, and not checked to see if they were genuine. Customers could apply for inappropriate vacancies just for the sake of appearances. Customer 'David', for example, stated that he would often "stick something on" his jobs-log that he had not applied for, or else that he was unlikely to get accepted for. However, staff member

Pauline stated that she could not “keep track” of whether her customers’ applications were real, because:

PAULINE: There’s not enough time in the day to do the interviews, solve all the problems, give the customer a pep talk and do all the paperwork. I’d never leave the office if I had to go through all the job search forms.

Sometimes customers were said to not even bother to apply for jobs. As staff member ‘Pauline’ said of one customer:

PAULINE: She’s also supposed to have done some job search, but, you know, you could hear, she’s not even lying about it, she’s just not done it. So that’s what I’m negotiating [...]

For some customers who were unlikely to find work in the short-term, job search was seen by staff as simply a useful activity for establishing routines:

ERICA: Felicity is a in a proper state. You can’t help someone like Felicity just by getting her into a job because she’s so deep in debt and depression that holding down a job is a big ask. It’s good for her to apply though, because it keeps her in the habit and gives her some sense of control.

A further job search issue, flagged up by both staff and claimants, was the government’s insistence that all customers used the government’s own ‘jobs-match’ website. This was universally decried by staff and customers as appalling. Staff member ‘Trisha’ stated that the government’s insistence on using this site was:

TRISHA: So they can keep an eye on them. The Jobcentre can see what they’ve been up to. It’s all about micro-control now. It’s not enough that they’re going to confession with us... they’ve got to be watched.

Manager ‘Abby’ noted that this led to negative consequences:

ABBY: Yeah, so of course that makes customers actually prioritise doing their job search on that site, instead of using better sites. Obviously this has a knock-on effect in their overall job search outcomes. But you can’t feed it back to JCP because they’re told what to do by the government.

One customer, who was educated to degree level, also felt that the centre only catered for the lowest levels of job seeking activity:

SELENA:⁸⁵ [...] the whole thing is set up just to cater for a certain type of person looking for the lowest tier of menial jobs. Everything else is just ignored. It doesn't exist. I don't know why they want you to just use the government website. That's appalling. There's literally nothing but call centres and cleaning work. [...] there's not just one category of person who's going to end up here, because you could be unemployed for a lot of reasons. So if they want it to work, then I want to see them offer something from other tiers of the jobs market, to get work for people who've got professional backgrounds, who are well-educated. It's not being snobbish.

4. Training

The third major aspect of centre activity was 'training'. Training was divided between one-on-one or small group training, and formal courses. The latter included information technology, confidence building, interview techniques, and, occasionally, external training with partners. Of the 1-2-1 training, the instructor stated:

CHARLES: Right. I'm basically the one-on-one support for people who need extra support with computer skills... [...] interview skills, a bit of help with literacy.

And:

CHARLES: I work with a scale of people. You've got young people who are fully computer literate, but they need a bit of help putting a CV on paper or working to get ready for an application. But I do work with a lot of older workers. So there is a distinct group of customers, older blokes... former manual workers, not feckless, you know, blokes with long careers. Respectable people in my generation, but the economy has moved on and left them behind. I have to remember that, because I do find many of these are resistant to me at first. They say *you can't tell me how to work. I know how to work, why do I have to do this?* So, you know, it's an insult to think you're being told you've got to do all this because you're not able to understand what a day's work is.

Of the in-house training programmes, the instructor stated:

KURT: Yeah, it's a really good course, it runs three days a week for three weeks. There's a good syllabus that works to the people... not from no

⁸⁵ 30s, ESA.

knowledge but with the basics, and it takes them to having the skills to do their own CVs, letters, searching for jobs in a more advanced way.

Advisers also ran some 'employability' courses themselves. Customer 'Angelo'⁸⁶ thought that these were too basic for him, but good for some:

ANGELO: [...] it is a helpful course for people who... who I think haven't got... haven't got a foothold, they don't know where to start to put a CV together, erm, how to dress or conduct themselves in interviews, things like that. You know where to look for jobs, that was another thing, erm... and they just try to get like... general skills up and running in people such as working on your own and working in teams like they're setting tasks and assignments... erm... so just general skills that help people get back into work.

Five customers expressed highly negative feelings regarding available in-centre training:

SILVIO:⁸⁷ [...] very, very low quality. Very low quality. I did say, right, I was happy to do something. It's not like I was resisting them, because I volunteered for help. I was thinking there would be proper training, like at a college or a university or something. And that would lead into something worth going for. A qualification or something. I was excited about it. I was up for it. But when I actually went through them, I was totally disappointed. I was like what, this? This is it? It was shit.

JDJ: What did you do? What courses?

SILVIO: Erm, I'll tell you one thing I did, right. Interview techniques. I wouldn't employ this idiot if he came into my company, yeah? So he didn't have a clue what he was doing. He didn't know the first thing about interview techniques. It's like, yeah, they must think we're all such retarded... you know that you can just send in any monkey to do it, talk a load of bollocks and we'll be like, *oh cheers I didn't know you should wear a tie and not tell the interviewer to fuck off. I didn't know that, thanks for that.* So it is, yeah, it's that kind of level.

Three customers noted that the available training was too basic for them:

⁸⁶ 30s, JSA.

⁸⁷ 40s, JSA.

SELENA:⁸⁸ [...] you've got to have provision for people who can't read or write. But what about provision for someone like me, who's got a degree? In that case... for me, the training was embarrassing. It was embarrassing to be there, because it's... they don't mean it to be patronising to me but it really was. I mean it was just so basic. So unbelievably basic, it was like, well I'm not a three year old.

However, fifteen customers gave positive reviews of in-centre training. 'Annemarie'⁸⁹ for instance, had been on a confidence building course and felt that the content was good:

[You learn about] How you sit, don't sit on your hands. What you're projecting. Eye contact. Some of it was common sense but I thought there were a few good tips that could come in useful. And they did also say that there was money available, you know to pay for interview clothes, or for bus fares to the interview, and I thought, yeah, that's good. Useful to know.

However, three customers mentioned that, despite finding the courses useful, there was an in-centre policy to pressure customers to re-attend them:

JANEY [30s, JSA]: She's [adviser] telling me it's good to keep doing it, go back and do it again. Refreshing your skills. And that's, erm... I'll tell you what that is, they haven't got a clue. They've no clue what to do with anyone here, just get everyone on the roundabout, same old discussions, same old courses.

5. *Administrative requirements*

The government had hoped that the WP would begin to 'clear' long-term unemployment by providing a less 'red tape' based, more intensive (than the Jobcentre) intervention in customers' lives. However, while there was strong staff support for workfare, the government's view was challenged as simplistic by most staff. As previously noted, many customers were ill, or else unlikely to ever work again. For many other customers, according to 11/23 staff members the government's focus on immediate interventions and employment outcome targets failed to account for the fact that many customers required long, or very long-term, interventions. As staff member 'Trisha' put it:

⁸⁸ 30s, ESA.

⁸⁹ 40s, JSA.

TRISHA: For ESA it's not working right. I have so many customers with mental health problems, often made a whole lot worse by physical health problems. It's a bit optimistic to think that you can get to the root of problems like that in two years.

The government's belief that the WP would 'cut red tape' was contradicted by all staff members. As staff member 'Erica' put it, echoing general staff opinion:

ERICA: [...] we have to see customers back to back. And we have to do all the paperwork while we're with the customer.

JDJ: So less focus on the customer?

ERICA: That's it exactly. So you're spending so much more time just getting things filled in on the computer. You're not spending as much time with the customer. At the same time, you're expected to get better results.

Two customers argued that the programme *was* primarily about paperwork. As customer 'James'⁹⁰ put it:

JAMES: Right, there's this superficial thing of all the time... about pretending that they really care about you, and they're really looking out for you, trying to help you out... holding your hand. But the reality is it's a paperwork exercise all the way through. They tick off the boxes, then it's... ok, we want you down at the call centre tomorrow doing that.

One customer argued strongly that while an old adviser had had this type of attitude, her current adviser did not:

SUE [40s, JSA]: But Erica is really supportive. Because she knows you can be unwell and still... She makes it about me. It's really, yeah, it's supportive, she doesn't make it about a box ticking exercise. I'm not a box.

One customer interviewed before gaining access to the centres recalled that, after receiving a work-related head injury that left her confused and unable to focus, she then had to complete long and complex forms in order to arrange her incapacity benefits. She found this process difficult and oppressive.

⁹⁰ Male, 20s, ESA.

Payments-by-Results

The WP is a privatised, payments-by-results scheme. The government hoped that this approach would encourage providers to improve upon past state welfare and private workfare schemes (DWP, 2012a; Grayling, 2011). There was universal support from staff and customers that the public Jobcentre offered a very poor service. Moreover, no customers mentioned anything positive regarding the WP's predecessor, the Flexible New Deal. Nine staff members mentioned that the FND had been a poor scheme. According to staff member 'Loretta', who had worked on the FND, FND providers "thought you could just get people in all day doing CVs and courses, but the courses were rubbish." 'Loretta' also stated that:

Just... can't explain how terrible it [the FND] was. That was when, you know, the providers were just trying to work out how to run the contract, but they were hopeless. I used to go in and it was total chaos.

Contrary to the government's hopes that privatisation would cause a process of evolution towards continual improvement and a 'survival of the best' practices and staff, four staff members noted that the same firms and staff passed from one workfare firm to another, based on availability, and from one policy generation to the next, regardless of efficacy:

JDJ: So how does the Work Programme compare to the past?

TRISHA: Same shit, different shovel. They introduce a new scheme, we do it, it runs out, we jump over to the next big idea. That's how it's been, all the way through. And different governments want to put their stamp on it, so in comes the next bright idea. I know what it is, it's the short-term contract. There's no real incentive to make it work. If you can just last the four or five years that the contract runs for, it goes under, or it fails, and then they have a new wave of bidding for the next big thing, and all the same people are employed who were on the last scheme that didn't work... and then it goes round again. We're all waiting now, to see this new contract come in, and then we'll all move over to that.

Support for the government's idea that the process of privatisation could lead to improvements came solely from one senior Prime manager, 'Melissa', who stated that "What we've learned, we can take forward, design better systems." One staff member noted that the rollout of multiple consecutive schemes even had the negative effect of teaching customers how to manipulate programmes to their advantage:

JACQUI: [...] they know how to play the system. It's like when they go to prison, come out knowing how to play the criminal justice system... then they spend so much time on the welfare system... they know how to play it. And they know how to push your buttons.

With regard to the cyclical introduction of underfunded new schemes under successive governments, staff member 'Xandra' also stated that this made it seem like the problem was the 'hard core' nature of the customer group, because "it just looks like x million was spent but even then people were so feckless they still didn't turn around."

6. Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed data drawn from interviews with staff and customers pertaining to the subject area of 'daily practices'. The data were divided into five sections, namely: adviser interviews, customer 'types', job club, training, and administrative realities. The remainder of this conclusion summarises the data pertaining to each of these sections.

'Adviser review interviews' were found to be the primary activity of both centres, and for all customers. The data here indicate that adviser review interviews occurred monthly, and lasted, on average, between 15-30 minutes. Adviser review interviews were divided into five categories: 18-25s, JSA, ESA, 'second jobbers' and 'complex families'. Each of these categories had its own specialist adviser or advisers. JSA was the largest category. Initial interviews lasted for around one hour and involved completing essential paperwork, including a calculation showing that customers would be better off in work, a review of skills, and signing a document indicating a customer's rights and responsibilities. Staff generally felt that the length and frequency of customer interviews was sufficient, given the large size of their caseloads and the necessity of allowing customers enough time to act on the instructions that they had been given in those interviews. However, four staff members felt that the frequency of interviews was insufficient to fully pressurise customers into taking more active job seeking measures.

The content of adviser review interviews was limited. While customers were, on initial interviews, asked to provide a 'job goal', i.e. a job that they could, ideally and realistically, achieve, the data show that after around three months the interviews consisted of little more than customers presenting a list of jobs that they had applied for

(the expected number being around five per week) and a general review of a customer's current personal circumstances. Most customers found these interviews to be pointless. However, newer customers – those still within the initial 'three month' period – generally felt that they had received some useful or positive advice. The data show that most customers felt that as time went on, the interviews became repetitive, more focused on a customer's personal life, and less useful in terms of helping them to finding work.

There was a widespread belief amongst staff that customers' job seeking efforts were significantly hampered by customers' failure to overcome personal 'barriers'. Staff, in general, felt that the primary role of the centres was to work with customers to identify and, where possible, overcome these barriers. This practice took up most of the time staff spent with customers. Fieldwork revealed that there was little else that staff could reasonably do to get customers back into work given the state of the labour market; hence, identifying and 'working to overcome barriers' had emerged as an alternative centre goal. Following this goal required inquiring into customers' personal lives and mental states. These chat-based interviews were felt by staff to constitute 'long-term interventions', and most staff felt that this was a valid approach to 'curing' long-term unemployment.

Staff were subject to a strict 'targets' regime. The 'quality' of customers was graded partly according to the necessity of achieving these quotas, with 'job ready' customers classed as 'green light' customers. Those customers who were felt by staff to be 'close' to the labour market were classed as 'amber', and those furthest away were classed as 'red light'. Some customers expressed confusion over this concept, noting that it was difficult to assess how 'near' someone was to getting into work. Staff generally felt that a customer's attitudes and behaviour during their adviser review interviews indicated their level of 'employability'. Most customers, however, indicated that their attitudes towards, and compliance with, or, alternatively, resistance to, the programme, were not connected to their employability, but rather to their feelings about the programme itself, or else their feelings regarding their adviser.

In addition to adviser review interviews, some customers went to 'job club' sessions. These were mostly voluntary, and always infrequently attended. No customers thought of these sessions in positive terms (excepting those for whom job club had become a 'social experience'.) Staff did not view job club as a particularly useful tool, partly because customers were mandated to use the government's 'jobs match' website

so that their job seeking activity could be monitored. All staff and customers found this to be one of the least useful jobs websites available. It was also noted that being forced to use this website had a negative effect on customers' chances of finding work. Otherwise, searching for jobs took place in the customers' own time. The centres did employ placement officers to source vacancies, but this activity was said to be retarded by excessive paperwork. Meanwhile, customers could easily add entries to their list of applications, even if they had not really applied for them. Still, many staff did feel that jobs were available, if only customers were prepared to lower expectations and accept 'entry level' jobs. Young people were thought to be more open to this sector than older people.

The training provided by the centres was effective and enjoyable for some. However, it was aimed at rudimentary skill development, particularly job search and interview skills and basic computer literacy. Some customers found this content to be demeaning and pointless. No trade or occupational re-training was available, except through occasional partnership with external agencies, some of which was considered dubious by staff.

The government's hope that best practices and policies would pass on from one policy generation to the next did not appear to be happening. Not only was there no 'evolutionary mechanism' to achieve this effect, the basis of the idea was flawed: the centres, operating on a budget, appeared to be repeating the same programme designs, and hiring the same people, that had operated on previous schemes, simply because there was very little else that any centre could feasibly do given such limiting financial, customer and market parameters. New staff were primarily trained 'on the job'. However, a hardening payments-by-results 'bottom line' was said by all staff to be contributing towards a qualitative shift in the industry, albeit a shift that was moving focus away from customer service and onto achieving targets. This was said to be failing those customers who required 'long-term interventions' that were not necessarily conducive to short-term payments-by-results systems. Some of these ideas and claims are considered in more detail in the following chapter, which reviews data concerning the 'anti-workfare' narrative, and aspects of workfare operations that are rarely considered in media or academic discourse.

Chapter Seven:

The ‘anti-workfare’ narrative, and ‘behind the scenes’ of welfare-to-work

1. Introduction

This chapter presents data drawn from interviews with customers and staff relating to the most significant aspects of the anti-workfare narrative, namely: bullying, free labour, ‘parking and creaming’ and sanctions. This is followed by data relating to aspects of centre practice that are rarely considered in discussions of workfare. These include: the transformation of the centres into a social service; the degree to which the WP does – or does not – integrate with other services; the impact of falling caseloads; ‘zero-work self-employment’; alternative measures of success; and staff security.

Opponents of workfare from media, academic and social commentary sources present a very different view of ‘welfare reform’ to the government’s pro-workfare narrative. This anti-workfare perspective proposes that workfare is a bullying system that forces the sick and vulnerable to attend pointless schemes despite there being little available work. Moreover, it argues that workfare ‘churns’ claimants into temporary ‘slave labour’, or otherwise exploitative roles, ‘parks and creams’ the most and least employable customers, follows a punitive ‘sanctions’ policy, and operates humiliating

practices of micro-regulation (Piven and Cloward, 1971; Herd *et al.*, 2005; Goldberg, 2001; Peck, 2001).

Peck (2002) argues that ‘black box’ contracts that allow providers to design their own programmes strip the unemployed of the guaranteed statutory protections of local social welfare regimes, opening the poorest members of society to the demands of global, neoliberal labour markets. Wacquant (2010, 2012) has further argued that workfare constitutes a brutalising penal system of oppressive social control in a ‘centaur state’ of elite super-wealth underpinned by workfare labour. For Wacquant, following Foucault’s (1991) concept of the ‘carceral continuum’, workfare constitutes an extension of the prison system into wider society.

This chapter draws on interviews with staff and customers to explore the empirical validity of these claims. This is followed by a consideration of aspects of the programme that are ‘unseen’ or generally unmentioned by either the ‘pro’ or ‘anti’ workfare narratives.

2. *Does bullying occur?*

‘Bullying’ is a difficult phenomenon to assess, partly because staff *might* have been modifying their behaviour due to my pressure as observer, but also partly because the requirements of the staff roles meant that staff had to enforce customer compliance with the programme if they wanted to remain employed. This could be seen as bullying, or alternatively, as doing the job properly, depending on perspective. As one customer, Amos⁹¹ put it: “But yeah, they do give you some attitude here, telling you to get off your arse. So I did, anyway.”

While customer ‘Simon’⁹² said of his adviser: “She’s a bully sometimes. Yes. She’s not a very good one. She tries to push me to do things, and I push back and I say *that’ll be the day*, and I’m not doing them.”

However, ten customers said that they had experienced or witnessed direct bullying by staff. Customer ‘Cliff’⁹³ for instance, stated that some advisers were “proper twats” who were regularly “threatening people, with the sanctions,” while customer ‘Silvio’⁹⁴ described his ‘relationship’ with his adviser in the following terms:

⁹¹ 30s, JSA.

⁹² 50s, ESA.

⁹³ 30s, JSA.

⁹⁴ 40s, JSA.

SILVIO: I don't have one. It's... she's my bully. That's the relationship. She's not sympathetic to what it's like, being in this situation. Not a clue. She's not supportive of anything that I do or the positive steps that I make towards getting out of this. She's a bitch, to be fair. She's not got anything to do or say that is actually useful towards getting me onto the next step. If I ask her for anything she's like, yeah, well... she'll minimum effort something, but yeah, she's just a bully.

This customer, despite also describing his adviser as “a member of the Gestapo,” later added that:

SILVIO: Erm... to give her credit I have to say she has done me a cracking CV. So that's... yeah I know it's all bullshit but that is like one thing that's been... ok, I can say that's something they've done that is what I expected.

Nine customers claimed that staff were patronising in the way that they spoke to customers. Customer Janey⁹⁵ explained what she found ‘patronising’ in staff behaviours, and how she responded to this:

JANEY: Just like, you know, telling you what to do, and talking down to you. And that's like, yeah... if you don't like it there's nothing you can do about it, that's clear. So you're better off just going along with it. Like, if you ever end up here, yeah, my advice is just go along with it because they do have the control, yeah?

Six of the eleven WP customers interviewed before the primary in-centre research phase also reported that they were subjected to patronising staff attitudes. One stated that she was subject to bullying. Two stated that the WP was a positive experience for them. Within the two centres observed for the thesis, some customers also spoke of the WP as a positive experience. Three new customers, i.e. customers who were still within their first three months at the centre,⁹⁶ spoke of being cautiously optimistic given the help that they had received thus far. For example, it was customer ‘Annamarie’s’ (40s, JSA) perspective that:

⁹⁵ 30s, JSA.

⁹⁶ The data indicate that after three months customers tended to find the programme's activities to be repetitive and less useful than on the first three months when the activities and information presented by staff were new.

ANNAMARIE: Yeah. Overall good so far. See how it goes. I mean I know some people are really against it. I don't judge. Everyone's got their own story, haven't they? But for me I'm seeing this as a good thing that's opening up some opportunities. Maybe not as many opportunities as I'd like. Like I say, I understand now that if you want to make the most of this then you're going to have to do a lot of the work yourself, but that's the whole point of it, isn't it? And I'm up for that.

Only two long-term customers were unequivocally happy with the service overall. As customer 'Angelo'⁹⁷ put it:

ANGELO: [...] they've offered me... anything I've ever mentioned, even a slight interest in, they've given me avenues that I can take through them. And they're always offering to, you know, put me on courses, pay for my CSCS card training,⁹⁸ erm, you know, they're just always willing to help me pay for my bus tickets, for my haircut. Anything they can do to help [...].

Eight customers said that they had a good or very good relationship with their adviser. 'Angelo'⁹⁹ described his adviser as "fantastic," while customer 'Bert'¹⁰⁰ stated that:

BERT: I'm getting a lot more help. That's my secretary over there, Leonie. She keeps all my appointments in order, gets all the phone calls done. Dealing with the council for me at the moment. Yes, she's great. She helps me. Tell her all my problems. I do that. [...] Oh yeah, full service. So, I get help now, yeah. Not the kind of help they thought when they sent me over here, but I get help.

3. *Is the Work Programme a free labour scheme?*

Evidence from other providers, gathered through interviews conducted for this thesis, indicate that the WP was used to provide exploitative free labour in some cases. One man, for instance, stated that he had been exploited as a 'fish-guts scooper' for four weeks on a fish market.¹⁰¹ However, the two centres researched for this thesis did

⁹⁷ 30s, JSA.

⁹⁸ CSCS – construction skills certification scheme. This compulsory card allows people to work in the construction industry, and covers everything from builders to painters and decorators. Getting the CSCS card involves a test and costs around £40.

⁹⁹ 30s, JSA.

¹⁰⁰ 50s, ESA.

¹⁰¹ A middle-aged participant attending another WP company, and who I interviewed, stated that he had been sent on a four week 'work experience' placement at a fish market, along with another WP customer. Their job was to scoop up fish guts into vats, ready to be transported for some unspecified purpose. His employer told him that if he worked hard he would get a six month contract as a 'gut-scooper'. Desperate

not generally operate a formal 'mandatory work activity' protocol. There was some staff support for the general idea of mandatory work placements (4/23 staff), but this support was moderated by other considerations; particularly their unsuitability for older or poorly customers. As staff member 'Loretta' put it:

LORETTA: [...] this is why you can't just have... like... forced work, because the employers don't want people like that. Especially a young person who's being forced to be there. I mean they're just not going to do anything, are they? And if they totally don't want to be there then they just make themselves into a problem. Employers don't want that.

No customers interviewed had been asked by staff to go on a work experience placement. However, lack of a formal work experience placement policy did not mean that low-wage, temporary work was not a part of the centres' operations. Staff member 'Loretta' explained that it was:

LORETTA: You know, the Work Programme is much darker than a lot of people think. I mean, it has a bad public image and the government put this spin on it, but I don't mind saying, you know... that it's a lot darker behind the scenes.

JDJ: How do you mean, much darker?

LORETTA: I mean the dodgy stuff that goes on. A lot of employers, I mean those who have any kind of decent job that's on offer, they're really resistant to Work Programme customers. So we end up dealing with the bottom tier of employers. I mean not solely, but we're kind of driven there because we've got to hit the quotas... everything's about the quotas. So we're... yeah, we're dealing with the types of employers who are basically looking for ways of exploiting people.

JDJ: Yeah?

LORETTA: Oh yeah. They want... and I'm talking about the crappiest jobs where you can just have people do it, especially if you're dodgy... the types of low-paid and... they're not even happy with paying low wages, you know? So they want Work Programme labour, and they come to us.

JDJ: Do you give it to them?

LORETTA: Yes, that's what I'm saying. It's a lot darker than people think. Of course we do. A day on a job is a day towards a sustainable employment outcome. So yeah, we do. They're the people we end up working with.

JDJ: Like who?

to win the contract, he worked as hard as he could. However, two weeks into the placement he saw two more work placement workers arrive, and was told by another worker - a full-time employee who had befriended him - that their employer got two new WP 'work experience' workers every two weeks, told all of them that there was a full time job in it for them if they worked hard, and then sacked them after four weeks. After four weeks, this man, and the other WP customer he had started with, were both told that there was no six month contract after all.

LORETTA: A lot of smaller employers who just want some cheap labour for a few days. And some you know, because you've seen it... the call centre work. We're churning them in and out of that. I mean yeah, you can say it's to get someone back into the working habit to go out and do some work, and yeah, maybe... but it's also churning. You know that term, yeah? Churning?

JDJ: Yeah.

LORETTA: Yeah, it's churning. It's a lot darker than the general public think. A big part of it is just churning them in and out of low wage, temporary stuff. Some of it, you know it's dodgy. It's not real work, you know, like on the books properly... it's shady. We can churn them out there. Apprenticeships is one of the worst.

JDJ: Yeah? In what way?

LORETTA: I deal with this all the time, you know [...]. There's so many employers just going *yeah, an apprentice, right... just get a young person in and exploit them on an apprenticeship*. And then when the term is up they just drop them, get another one. Another two, three. They call it an apprenticeship but things aren't what they seem, not really.

'Loretta' further explained that she had sent someone on an apprenticeship who never, or rarely received his agreed wages, and who was constantly 'messed around' over his hours. However, apprenticeships were only one 'entry level' employment type for customers. Call centre work – described by many staff as 'contact centre' work – was the primary employment destination to which staff directed customers. Eight customers mentioned that they had been offered call centre work. Staff member 'Bryan' explained the importance of call centres for achieving targets:

BRYAN: Yeah, we've got three major contact centres and to be honest, they keep us afloat. Without them, quotas would be right down. I've got good relationships with them and yeah, we send a ton of people over there. They don't all stick to it, but there's always more [customers].

JDJ: So they keep you afloat?

BRYAN: Yeah, absolutely. Don't know what we'd do without them. But you've got to understand, even if it isn't the best job in the world, it's a re-entry, and a stepping stone. It's experience, something on the CV. I'd do it if I was in their shoes, definitely, just to get back on the ladder.

While using 'contact centres' as employment destinations was described as essential for the business to survive, it was also justified by staff as a 'step towards work':

BRYAN: It's an employment crisis, and it's people who are long-term unemployed, so they do need to re-enter the job market... and at the entry level. That's just the reality. But that's what I'm saying, if you focus on

what you used to do then it's going to seem like you've come down in the world. But a reality check... and actually you're on benefits, you're on the Work Programme, so it's a step up, at least from there.

However, forcing customers to attend call centres was not felt to be always conducive to effectively achieving targets. Staff member 'Loretta' recalled that, under the pressure of facing disciplinary action following a failure to achieve targets, she began to pressurise customers into taking call centre work, but that this had backfired:

LORETTA: Yeah, but within six weeks all the people I'd got into work by doing that had dropped out. All of them. I mean yeah, course you can force people into jobs that they don't want to do. The thing is, you can't make them stay in it if they hate it. It's counterproductive. But I was basically forced [into] doing that, so for a month it looked like, yeah, great, doing great. Then you find out that's all rubbish because they've dropped out.

No customer mentioned being offered anything other than an 'entry' level job. However, 13 customers mentioned that they would be happy with such jobs, including retail, telesales, labouring or cleaning work. Three customers mentioned that they would prefer a higher quality job. As customer 'Selena'¹⁰² put it:

SELENA: I think more than that it's like if you think beyond it, you know you even think beyond the jobs that they think you should be going for, they think, oh hold on, you're going a bit off the edge there... like, as if it's unbelievable that anyone here could do something more than cleaning or call centre. But... ok I've had time out, but if it was time out for having a child and I came back into the jobs market they wouldn't say oh sorry, you've had time out so you've got to start right at the bottom again, with cleaning work. They wouldn't say that, would they?

JDJ: No.

SELENA: No, I don't like that. I would like... more generally to be seen as having more potential than that. Because I've worked and I'm qualified and I am capable of doing much more than cleaning or working in factory or something packing boxes.

4. *Parking and creaming*

A key aspect of the anti-workfare narrative is that workfare programmes focus on the most employable customers – a practice known as 'creaming' – leaving the least employable customers in-centre – a practice known as 'parking' (Peck, 2001). One

¹⁰² 30s, ESA.

customer stated that the centres only focused on the most employable customers, and one described his situation as being in 'storage'. Another customer also mentioned that he felt that his application for a minor management role was frowned upon by staff as overly ambitious, despite this customer having previous experience of such a role. However, staff argued that the situation was more complex; in particular, that it was inevitable that the most employable customers would get into work faster than the least employable customers, regardless of what staff did. As staff member Trisha explained it:

JDJ: So normal practice is to get those most job ready into work?

TRISHA: Of course. How else could you do it? If they're job ready, half of them get themselves into work. The others, you give them a little help with it. Grunters, another story.

JDJ: Has the falling caseload put more pressure on you?

TRISHA: Intolerable pressure. Intolerable pressure. It's really been something. Each month you're feeling it, it's getting that little bit harder to make the target. And the pressure from the management to hit it is that much worse.

JDJ: But it does force you to focus on the very hard to reach?

TRISHA: That's right, it forces me to. But there's nothing different other than that. They're still hard-core unemployed... there's still nothing for them, for the most part.

JDJ: So has it been a case of parking and creaming?

TRISHA: I don't like that phrase. If you don't work in welfare-to-work you don't see the reality. If someone's ready for work then they're gone sooner, aren't they? If they're absolutely hard-core, underclass, unemployed, won't work or can't work... they park themselves, or they get parked.

Staff member 'Pauline' confirmed this view:

JDJ: So good opportunities go to the most job ready customers?

PAULINE: How else would you do it? If someone is all ready to go and the job's fine for them you're not going to hold them off it, are you?

5. *Sanctions*

Sanctions involve removing benefits, or a portion of benefits, from customers. This can be for various periods: one week, one month, three months, six months or even three years. Sanctions were a major part of daily centre life, with each adviser raising two or three per day. All customer facing staff except one supported the idea of sanctions, at least in principle:

XANDRA: [...] I'm not afraid to sanction the hard core or really resistant who don't engage. There's no point having interventions in people's lives if they can just drop out of it when you want, because it's someone making you take positive steps rather than just going back to the bottle. But I have to say scare tactics are not the best way to get the most complex people to comply. I mean the sanctions are a good tool used properly but JCP do stuff you wouldn't believe.

However, staff member 'Charles' had a more critical perspective on sanctions:

CHARLES: It's obviously not about helping the person who gets the sanction. What's happening with sanctions... that's the worst aspect of what's happening here. It's one thing that the programme doesn't do anything positive, but reducing people to starvation, that's something else. I don't for one second buy into that. But what it does is terrify that middle group of customers. It's a regime of terror, there's no doubt about that. If you don't behave, they'll starve you... take everything away from you. Young mothers on sanctions. Terrible.

Sanctions were raised for a variety of reasons, including non-attendance, failure to comply with set actions and lateness. As staff member 'Jacqui' explained:

JACQUI: I know the media likes to say that we're all monsters but that's not true at all. I'm sensitive to the issues that people have. But if someone turns up late and says *I haven't searched for any jobs*, well I'm just not having that. That's not the agreement and I've got a job to do. So they get put on a sanction. And also there's your lates. You can only give them so long before you have to put them down as non-attendance. If I have half an hour to speak to someone and fifteen minutes have gone into it then there's no time to do a proper interview, so it has to raise a WP08 [sanction paperwork].¹⁰³

While it had been claimed by some anti-workfare activists that workfare centres had 'targets' for sanctions, this was denied by staff:

JDJ: Are JCP staff being told to get a certain amount of sanctions?

ERICA: I don't know, I haven't heard that.

JDJ: Are you [being asked to do that]?

ERICA: Absolutely not.

¹⁰³ Fifteen minutes late was the cut off point for lateness. Any later and a sanction had to be raised. One customer who I interviewed, who attended a separate centre, also said that she had been sanctioned for being fifteen minutes late.

All staff had a complex relationship with sanctions. Sanctions were felt to be useful, but there was acute awareness amongst staff that sanctions often caused hardship:

LEONIE: [The] the people I work with, they've got real complex barriers, multiple exclusions. Vulnerable, sick, yeah... it's awful to know that some people get sanctioned when they're trying their best, but make a mistake. I mean, and I have to discuss that with them as well, and it's stressful for me to have people coming in crying or kicking off. I have to deal with that.

Moreover, two staff members mentioned instances in which their customers had been made homeless as a direct consequence of sanctions raised by them. Staff member 'Pauline' recalled one case:

PAULINE: They do [get angry when sanctioned]. I can understand it, can't you? But I can't understand how they don't think hold on, I did this to me, I didn't turn up for an interview, I knew this would happen. But how else can you make people start to take control of their lives if you don't start to make them see that actions have consequences? For a lot of people that's the first time in years someone's said no. Someone's said no, you're not having your handout you didn't do what you were supposed to do. It's harsh. It's a shock. I had a customer, serial non-attender. I didn't have a choice it's the procedure that they go through for a sanction. To cut a long story short they ended up going under financially, rent wasn't paid and they were out, homeless. That all comes from a sanction, but you see that on the news... you don't see that I then worked with that customer to find them a new home. And then you start re-building. It's a shock, but from that you re-build, start building up your relationship with them and start getting them to take their responsibilities for themselves seriously. If you didn't have sanctions, what else could you do?

There was a strong awareness amongst all staff that sanctions were perceived as negative by outsiders. This was responded to in four ways. Firstly, by affirming the necessity of sanctions:

ANNABELLE: It's alright having the theory and everything, but in practice you've got to have people taking the tough decisions on it. You're not doing anyone any favours by going *yeah... just carry on doing nothing. Yeah... go on, just live on the dole and we'll pay for you to do that.*

Secondly, it was argued that the decision to sanction was not really in the power of staff, as it was done 'automatically' through the Jobcentre's intranet:

JDJ: How do you feel about sanctioning people?

PAULINE: Got to do it sometimes. Although JCP sanctions. We inform them if someone isn't being compliant with the programme, and they deal with actually laying the sanction on. We just deal with the customers coming in, kicking off, screaming blue murder.

Thirdly, it was noted that sanctions were often laid for mistakes that customers could have easily avoided:

IAIN: Look everyone knows what the rules are... [...] I know it looks dead bad, in the media and all that, but what are you seeing here? All they're asked for is a bit of job search and get your backside in once or twice a month. If that's like, you know... pushing it, too much to bloody ask they bloody need sanctioning don't they? You know what I'm saying?

Fourthly, it was noted that staff would often *not* sanction customers if they were vulnerable:

JDJ: Do you ever *not* refer someone for a sanction even though you should?

JACQUI: Yes. Everyone finds ways to use the system, don't they? If someone is living on the streets and they haven't applied for any jobs, I'm probably not going to put that through as a sanction. We are human beings.

Although, sanctioning vulnerable customers was seen as necessary in some cases:

JDJ: With vulnerable customers, does that [sanctioning] not make things worse?

LEONIE: Yes, it can do. Obviously if you're only just coping and you get a sharp drop in your income, then yeah, it's going to make some things worse. But that's how everything's been held up for so long, yeah? In the end, you have to say ok, I know this is a blunt instrument but we've got to accept that for some customers things have got to get worse before they can get better. It is hard, but it's the only thing that will make a change for some customers. Seen like that, it's a good thing.

However, during a staff meeting, one staff member noted that a sanction had been 'knocked back' by JCP because the customer was vulnerable and a 'risk assessment' had not been performed. The manager responded that it was "fine to sanction a vulnerable customer so long as they've filled in all the right paperwork."

All customer facing staff felt that the sanctioning system was too inflexible. As staff member 'Erica' explained:

ERICA: We're the ones who get to know the customer and it's really frustrating when we're working so hard to build a relationship with the customer... the JCP throw a sanction on them. It can really undo so much of the work that we've done. [...] what sanctions do, it's like, they reinforce the barriers. But what I was saying, it's worse than that. It's a setback. It's a setback because it makes the customer go *oh, hold on I've been trusting this person, going along with what they say, and now look what they've done. They've put the knife in and sanctioned me.*

Staff also noted some cases of sanctions that defied common sense. Staff member 'Jacqui' recalled that a highly compliant customer had been sanctioned by JCP after arranging with her to move his appointment to another day so that he could help his mother move house. Jacqui felt that this was absurd, particularly because it encouraged otherwise compliant customers to disengage with their advisers - who customers inevitably felt had betrayed them. One customer mentioned a similar occurrence:

SELENA:¹⁰⁴ Because, like in my case, I always did everything that they said here. [...] And then just one day I got the wrong day. That's it. I thought my appointment was the week after. You know for my adviser appointment?

JDJ: Yeah.

SELENA: And I missed it. It was a genuine mistake, because I do get confused sometimes. I'm not always on the ball with where I'm up to. I realised it the next day and I phoned in and said I'm sorry. I offered to come in that day instead, but there was no chance, they wouldn't do it. And then just like that they sanctioned me. Just like... There was no flexibility to it at all. And I realise it's mandatory and you've got to do everything, but I was completely engaged with the programme, enjoying it, giving everything a go. And I made one mistake and it was a really dehumanising experience because it bypasses your adviser.

Staff member 'Xandra' also noted that: "I've seen them [JCP] sanction someone who'd just had a stroke. Sanction them for non-attendance. I mean when you do stuff like that it's no wonder that welfare reform gets such a bad reputation."

¹⁰⁴ 30s, ESA.

Six customers in total mentioned being sanctioned. ‘James’¹⁰⁵ described the difficulties he and his family faced following his sanction for missing an appointment while seriously ill and semi-conscious in bed following an accident:

JDJ: So how are you surviving?

JAMES: Yeah, if wasn’t for family, we’d be eating dirt. I mean it’s that serious. You know what I’m saying, our option would be literally to eat dirt.

JDJ: Have you had to go down to the foodbanks?

JAMES: Fortunately our folks can give us a bit of money, you know? But seriously, without that it would be the foodbanks or we’d be starving. I mean we’re... they’ve taken us down as far as they could possibly take us now, without actually just starving us to death. And that... yeah, that’s where we’re at.

JDJ: And you’ve appealed it?

JAMES: Oh yeah. Of course. But here’s how it is, right, you can appeal it. You can say look, I’m crippled here, I’ve got kids starving, I’ve got... I can’t get clothes washed, there’s no electricity, no heating, and it’s all just a mistake over missing an appointment, not understanding the system. But the thing is, you still stay on the sanction while your appeal goes through, right? Did you know that? [Appeals can take several weeks.]

Sanctions did lead to foodbank use according to staff. However, as staff member ‘Holly’ explained, there might have been other reasons for foodbank use:

HOLLY: Yes, well we’re one of the official foodbank voucher outlets. We give them out when people need them.

JDJ: How often is that?

HOLLY: Regular.

JDJ: Because of sanctions?

HOLLY: It’s not only because of that. We get a lot of people on sanctions, a lot of customers on hard times. But don’t think that everyone at a foodbank is on hard times because somewhere like this sanctioned them. The poorest people are walking in through those doors.

One foodbank manager interviewed for the thesis stated that benefits sanctions were the cause of rising foodbank use, and that a senior police officer had been to see him in order to find out why there was a sudden rise in women being arrested for shoplifting. A second foodbank manager stated that many customers cited welfare sanctions as a

¹⁰⁵ 20s, ESA.

cause of their foodbank use, while an anti-WP activist, who also volunteered at a foodbank, claimed that sanctions were directly responsible for foodbank use.

For all customers, sanctions were a major aspect of their interaction with the centre. Some were terrified of them:

JDJ: Have you ever been sanctioned?

SUE:¹⁰⁶ No. But I live in terror of it. I did do. I'm a bit more familiar with it all now and I'm not worried because I know what's expected of me.

JDJ: Right.

SUE: But when I wasn't familiar with it, it was awful. And I go deep into the anxiety sometimes. And that's what, you know is that what they do to help you out? So you're thinking if you turn up one minute late your kids won't have anything to eat. You won't be able to heat the house. Is that what they do to help? It's not right is it?

Twelve customers mentioned that they were just 'going along' with whatever was expected of them in order to avoid any trouble. 'Billy'¹⁰⁷ was "trying to do what they want from me", while 'Bob'¹⁰⁸ stated that "I can't afford to have a sanction applied to me, and lose all my income. So I apply for the jobs they ask me to. I apply for more than they ask me to." In this sense, threat of sanctions did enforce compliance with the programme for some customers. A significant number of customers who I engaged in general conversation claimed to have been sanctioned, usually for lateness or non-attendance. Staff also pointed out two women who were painfully thin, and stated that they were 'starving' to feed their children after being placed on a sanction. However, in both cases this was said to be due to sanctions raised by JCP, not by the centre.

Data from interviews conducted with customers prior to accessing the two main centres researched for the thesis corroborated this overall picture. Four customers spoke of being sanctioned for lateness or missing appointments, and in one case due to illness.

6. 'Life triage'

The pro-workfare narrative argues that workfare can bypass the tendency of government run Jobcentres to become ineffective benefits advice services and social work centres (Mead, 1986). The data strongly suggest that this is untrue, at least in this case. My observations of adviser interviews – numbering in the hundreds over 18 days

¹⁰⁶ 40s, JSA.

¹⁰⁷ 18-25, JSA.

¹⁰⁸ 50s, JSA

- revealed that the vast majority of staff-customer interview time was spent coping with a near continuous array of customer problems, including domestic violence, health issues, keeping doctor's appointments, troubles with the police, relatives, neighbours or the council, insect infestations, homelessness, mental health, substance abuse, dental problems, debt, depression, broken glasses, and countless more besides. 'Actions towards work' must be inputted into the customer's computer records, and dealing with these problems had become the most usual 'actions'. One interview, for instance, involved a young man who was homeless and suffering from an agonising tooth abscess. In this case, contacting a dentist constituted his 'actions towards work'. I came to describe this overall process as 'life triage', because so much staff time was taken up dealing with personal problems and signposting customers to sources of help outside of the centres. 'Loretta' stated that "Half of the time we're counsellors", while 'Pauline' described her role as 'social work'. 'Erica' explained, further, that:

ERICA: It's what you [me – DJ] called life triage. That's what we do, that's most of it anyway. When you think our targets are only six job outcomes per month, but we're seeing customers all day. It's the soft outcomes... you can't just think in terms of jobs. Try telling that to the management team though, you just get blank faces. They just want hard outcomes, jobs, but you've seen... you can't do it. Like Bobby, what can you do? He comes in, he's got mental health problems. Half the year he's homeless. I can't just put him into a job even if there was one for him. At the moment you've got to think like... I'm working with him on looking after himself, getting a wash. How can he go for a job like that?

However, 'life-triage' was not always welcomed by customers. One customer mentioned his concern over staff acting as 'social workers':

SILVIO:¹⁰⁹ Because you've got the investigation into your mental approach. Like, yeah, if it's like you're depressed then *oh, a job at the call centre'll lift you right up*. So yeah, they are... right into your private life, because they think it's like... they're your social worker, yeah? So that's what I'm saying... that's nothing like what I was expecting when it was sold to me.

JDJ: No.

SILVIO: And I'll give you another thing to put in, right. Yeah she does question my mental health, but they're snide with it. So if you question it, like, I'll tell the truth, right, I argue with it. I question the bollocks, and then it's like, they think that means you're mental. Right? They think that's like,

¹⁰⁹ 40s, JSA.

you're either depressed with it all, or you've got a mental condition because you question why this bullshit is happening and they're getting away with it. So that's something to put in because I have thought that's pretty interesting before. Like, if you question it then yeah, there's got to be a question over your mental health. It's worth having a think about that one.

Eight customers mentioned that attending the centre was primarily a social event for them, rather than the government's expected 'journey back to work'. Customer 'Bert'¹¹⁰ stated that "I like the little group when we meet up on the computers. That's a worthwhile day for me, so I'm... yeah, it gives me something to be getting on with. Something to come out for." Customer Freddy,¹¹¹ meanwhile, found the programme 'great':

FREDDY: [It's] Great. I like it. I like coming in. I'm only in the WRAG, you know what that is?

JDJ: Yeah.

FREDDY: The work related activity group. So I'm work related. Just related to it, which is fine for me. I'm not under a threat to get out and work, just... I come in for a talk. It's up to me what I do. I'm going at my own pace and anyone can see me hobbling about knows that's not moving over to working any time soon.

In one centre, ESA job search sessions had been transformed into a self-styled 'social club' whose members attended purely for social reasons, with no emphasis on job seeking. A group discussion highlighted this:

ALFONZO:¹¹² We do a lot of activities. Trisha arranges a lot of different things for us. And it's exercises we can do, games, social activities, word puzzles. And we do quizzes. We get lots of things to do. Our leader, [adviser] does all that.¹¹³

SANDRA [50s, ESA]: Yes, and we have days out. That's the best thing of all, our days out. We all meet up here and we go somewhere. Sometimes we walk somewhere, like we might go round the market. Which is something because Alfonzo can hardly walk, and we're not much better. We're walking down the road at a snail's pace, but we all enjoy it.

¹¹⁰ 50s, ESA.

¹¹¹ 60s, ESA.

¹¹² 50s, ESA.

¹¹³ I took part in one session, which was a 'measure your self-esteem' workbook. I got a very high score – very high self-esteem – but I questioned the ambiguous wording of some of the questions. This encouraged the participants, all of whom had got very low scores, to question it as well.

AMBROSE [50s, ESA]: Yes, we've had a day out at the museum. That was good. We went all round that. I thought that was really interesting. It was educational. We had a cup of tea. It was great.

ANTONIO:¹¹⁴ He [referring to me - JDJ] thinks that's a load of rubbish. He thinks we shouldn't be doing that.

JDJ: No, I think it's good.

ANTONIO: Yeah?

JDJ: Yeah. I do. I'm just interested because this is what was the job club, right? But it doesn't sound like that's what you do. Like the other job clubs.

AMBROSE: No, we have our understanding. We're never getting back into work. We all know that. [Our adviser] knows that. She never puts any pressure on us to do that.

7. *An integrated approach across services?*

Staff (6/23) noted that despite government attempts to connect together an integrated response to the alleged problems of the 'underclass' and 'troubled families', this did not happen in practice. Such an approach was made difficult by data protection laws and, at times, hostility and non-communication from other keyworkers and services. This also meant that work was often 'doubled up'. As staff member 'Trisha' explained:

TRISHA: The idea is that I'll build up a back to work journey that gets them into therapy... seeing a counsellor... but the fact is I become the counsellor, and the real counsellor... that's another story because with data protection they won't speak to us. And a lot of the doctors and health professionals can be hostile to the programme... so they don't want to work with us. They can reinforce resistance to the programme through conversations they're having with the customer.

JDJ: So it's not an integrated approach?

TRISHA: Of course it's not. Not at all. Different parts are working against one another. But the thing now is... I'm still having to be a counsellor because I'm getting all the problems poured out to me. I just can't work effectively with other agencies. They're working against it, if anything.

8. *The problem of falling caseloads*

The centres had experienced a significant fall in the number of customers referred to them from the Jobcentre in the preceding six months. Manager 'Abby' explained this in the following terms:

¹¹⁴ 50s, ESA.

ABBY: Things have become significantly worse of late. The vast majority of the bulk of long-term unemployed have been transferred over to the Work Programme already. We were working with around sixty new referrals per centre, per month. Before Christmas this began to drop and it's now around seventeen per month. There simply aren't the numbers of employable individuals coming through the door. This is forcing advisers to go over their harder-core cases to try and get them into work.

While this redoubled effort on the harder-core unemployed might seem positive, staff found that the customers they were left with were extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get into work. As 'Trisha' and 'Bryan' explained:

JDJ: And there's less [referrals] coming in?

TRISHA: That's right, so there's less naturally job ready, less to choose from. Worse each month, until you're left with the grunTERS.

JDJ: The grunTERS?

TRISHA: Yes. The grunTERS. I don't mind saying it. I mean those who won't respond to anything you say or do, they just grunt at you. Then I have to go back on that group and think about who are the best grunTERS.

JDJ: The best grunTERS?

TRISHA: Aye. The ones who I might have some chance of getting into work.

JDJ: Are you finding your job is getting harder with falling caseloads?

BRYAN: Oh yeah... Everyone's job is getting harder. Harder and harder. There's so few new referrals coming in. I will get the best of it sometimes because I mostly work with customers who are pretty much ready to go. But yeah... it's getting harder all the time.

9. *'Zero-work self-employment'*

While I was at the centre, a new possibility for making targets was presented to staff:¹¹⁵ self-employment. Self-employment was a suitable option for some customers, with self-employment adviser 'Lionel' describing it as "a brilliant solution to a particular problem of long-term unemployed customers that no one wants to know." However, during a staff meeting Lionel informed staff that it was possible for claimants to sign off unemployment benefits by declaring themselves as 'self-employed'. Customers would continue to receive similar levels of benefits in the form of

¹¹⁵ This 'opportunity' was in the form of a presentation on self-employment. All of the staff attended, as did I.

government 'tax credits', even if no work was actually being done. This seemed unbelievable, so I questioned Lionel about this after the meeting:

JDJ: So am I right in understanding that in theory someone could sign up as self-employed and just claim tax credits indefinitely? Without actually doing any work?

LIONEL: Yeah. Weren't you paying attention?

JDJ: Yes. I thought I was. It just seems so unbelievable.

LIONEL: Yeah, unfortunately it's a system that's wide open to abuse if people want to scam it. There's no oversight to it at all. Yeah, in theory, you set yourself up as a sole trader... and I mean you can do this yourself, it's not a Work Programme thing, anyone can do it. You set yourself up as a sole trader, phone over to HMRC, and yeah, Bob's your uncle you're self-employed.

JDJ: And you get tax credits?

LIONEL: Yeah, that's right. For most people you're going to need to do something, a couple of hours work a week to be coming out with the same kind of income, but yeah, you can do that. [Such 'self-employed' traders also receive free prescriptions, free school meals and housing benefit - JDJ.]

JDJ: When do HMRC check?

LIONEL: They don't. You can go on indefinitely like that, if you just say you're marketing, and no one expects a business to make a profit in the first year anyway, so it doesn't even raise an eyebrow. But to be honest it's not like HMRC are going to come in and audit a sole trader, so yeah, you could just switch over and stay in bed.

JDJ: Switch to tax credits?

LIONEL: Yeah.

JDJ: That's amazing.

LIONEL: I know. It's a scandal, but they don't want to know, do they? The government. You could transfer so many unemployed people over to being small businesses, sole traders, yeah it could just be a transfer of one benefit to another, and that obviously could be massaging the figures. There's a lot of people in self-employment recently.

A senior manager revealed that this was a well-known issue affecting the Work Programme, and 'Lionel' agreed with this assessment:

LIONEL: I'm going to be honest with you, it is a massive issue. I know for a fact that right across the board... that providers are scamming it.

JDJ: Right across the Work Programme?

LIONEL: Yes, right across the Work Programme. It's a neutron bomb scandal waiting to go off, I'm telling you. It's underwriting a big part of the Work Programme's outcome rate. I know for an absolute fact that [another provider] are scamming it. [And another provider] they've got no business adviser. I think that's worse... it's just down to individual advisers which I think is crazy. They're having to pull in their targets, and the pressure is on.

You know the pressures are on right across the board. So what's stopping them just doing benefit for benefit swaps? Nothing. But I don't work like that. I want to see a viable plan.

Despite the 'safeguards' in place, such as running self-employment starts through the in-house self-employment service, staff were able to transfer customers over to self-employment themselves, and I witnessed several cases of staff informing customers that they *could* sign onto self-employment without doing any work, in one case calling it a "no brainer." Staff member 'Erica' discussed this in the following terms:

JDJ: So, what do you think about the self-employment issue?

ERICA: What issue?

JDJ: Signing people onto self-employment, even if they don't do any work.

ERICA: Yeah, that was my understanding. You can do that.

JDJ: Would you do it? I mean, even if they didn't have a real self-employment, you know... plan or business, just sign them over?

ERICA: Yes.

JDJ: You would?

ERICA: Yes. As far as I'm concerned it's a godsend for reaching targets. I'm doing it, definitely.

I did meet several customers for whom self-employment seemed like a good option, for example a plasterer getting back into the trade after an illness. However, I also met customers whose business plans seemed unlikely or vague, such as a man whose 'trade' was that he 'had a van' and a woman who was being encouraged to open a specialist catering service operating out of her council house kitchen.

10. Different measures of 'success'

WP centres make money, primarily, by getting customers into what the government describes as 'sustained employment'. However, 'sustained employment' did not mean keeping the same job over a specific period of time. It meant achieving 181 days in employment, in any number of jobs. As manager 'Abby' explained:

ABBY: When customers get a job, this is known as a *job start*. The company doesn't get a payment for a job start. They only get a payment when a customer has been in work for 181 days. [...] However, this doesn't need to be continuous employment in one job. This could be multiple jobs over the two years, and all the days are added up to make 181. This means that everything is geared towards making up those 181 days.

ABBY: OK I'll show you one customer we had who is legendary. He eventually made his 181 days but this was made up of eleven jobs. [...] That then counts as sustained employment and earns a first payment.

ABBY: Around 40% of sustained employment outcomes come from people who have taken two or more jobs.

Measuring the WP's overall success is difficult. As discussed in previous chapters, the actual success figures during the research period were around 5-10%. However, 'Arnold', a senior Prime manager, noted that:

ARNOLD: One thing I can tell you right off the bat that you can use is that you can't believe anything the government says about the Work Programme. I mean you can't believe any stats at all. What they do to manipulate them is like, it's like an art form, yeah?

Measuring success: customer views

Within the centres, customer views on the 'success' of the programme were divided and difficult to categorise. In terms of 'hard outcomes', i.e. jobs, only four customers were about to start some kind of work, and therefore felt that the service was at least working to some degree for them.¹¹⁶ Another customer, Selena¹¹⁷ noted that she was 'closer' to being in work: "And I know I've had a journey to get closer to being back into work, and in that sense then it's really helped me. I don't know where it's going next." Two customers stated that this concept of 'being closer to work' – which was a concept staff regularly discussed with customers, as well as being a major government workfare concept - was unclear:

JDJ: Has it [the WP] helped in terms of getting you closer to finding work?
FREDDY:¹¹⁸ I don't know because I don't know how close I am to finding work. You don't know that, do you?

¹¹⁶ Customers who had obtained work were not in the centres. However, the failure rate of the programme overall was so high – at somewhere between 90-95% - that it would be statistically impossible for most customers to genuinely claim that the centre had helped them to gain employment, even if they *had* been in the centres.

¹¹⁷ 30s, ESA.

¹¹⁸ 60s, ESA.

Customer views more generally ranged across a continuum, from finding the programme utterly pointless through to seeing it as very good. Eight argued that it was primarily successful as a social service:

JDJ: OK. Do you think the programme is useful to anyone?¹¹⁹

BERT:¹²⁰ Erm... I don't know. I do chat with some of the older boys and girls. As a social... it's got something that people are finding useful. As [in] getting someone out to talk to someone else, get out of the house, yeah? I suppose... you've got to say that's a good thing.

However, in general terms of getting people back into work, most customers thought that the programme was largely ineffective. Customer 'Amy',¹²¹ for instance, said:

AMY: I haven't got a job out of it.

JDJ: Right. But do you think it's moved you closer to being in work?

AMY: Erm... I don't know. I haven't gotten anything out of it like that, so I don't know. They haven't said *here's a job, you can go and do it*. If they'd said that then yeah, it'd be alright.

JDJ: But they haven't?

AMY: No.

Customer 'Ryan' (30s, JSA), meanwhile, stated that:

RYAN: The clue's in the fucking name, isn't it? It's the *work programme*, where you get people into work. Right? So what've you got? Nothing. So you've got no jobs, on the work programme? The thing that's actually called the work programme. No. We've got nothing. So what's the point? And I've called their bluff with it, yeah? And then she's on her high horse with it.

Measuring success: staff views

There was a minority view amongst staff that the programme was pointless (one staff member), and a general view that the WP was 'not enough' of an 'intervention', as discussed previously. However, staff held complex views on the programme's 'successes'. These views can be divided into five categories: *getting people into work*, *meeting targets*, *'something has to be done'*, *saving money* and *'soft outcomes'*. All

¹¹⁹ This was not 'leading' the participant – Bert had already described the programme in highly negative terms and as totally useless.

¹²⁰ 50s, ESA.

¹²¹ 20s, JSA.

staff held combinations of these views simultaneously. Below, I briefly review each perspective, with examples.

- (1) *People in work*. All advisers noted that they had successfully gotten people into work:

SOFIA: I hope you're going to tell everyone about the positive side of it. It's not just sanctions and getting people to jump through hoops. It's a transformation process. We've got a lot of success stories. They're not here, they're in work. But we put them there.

- (2) *Meeting targets*. Five staff members emphasised that the programme was meeting its government targets:

JDJ: Is the Work Programme working?

LEONIE: Yes. It is, isn't it? Yes, we're regularly hitting our targets, we're making it successful. So yeah the outcomes are speaking for themselves and the company wouldn't go on, would it? They couldn't pay our wages, so it is working.

JDJ: Targets are low compared to caseloads though.

LEONIE: Yeah but that's the government's benchmark for success so we're hitting that. Well as far as I'm aware we are.

- (3) Six staff stated that the programme was 'successful' because 'something had to be done':

TRISHA: I'll say you've got to intervene now to stop it [culture of worklessness] carrying on into the next generation. You know, disrupt the cycle... make an intervention. If you can start challenging it now, you can change attitudes... of the next generation. I don't see what else we can do.

JDJ: But it's so expensive, and the targets are so low. Is it worth it? Is it working?

TRISHA: I would say it is expensive... but it's worth it. How could we justify just letting it roll on into the next generation? We can't.

- (4) *Success is 'saving money'* (2/23 staff). Two staff members mentioned that the programme could be viewed as a success because it would save money now, or in the long run, when claimants found work:

SOPHIA: [...] the taxpayer shouldn't be paying people to do nothing. They rely on us to make sure money isn't being wasted.

JDJ: It's costing 3.5 billion to run this [the WP].

SOPHIA: You've got to think about what it'll save the long run when people get off benefits. That's how I look at it.

- (5) By far the biggest category (11/23) was that success meant 'soft outcomes', i.e. 'life triage' and social work:

CHARLES: You can't call it a success in terms of jobs, can you? But as a social club, yeah. I think maybe drop the stuff about getting into work for most of them. Change that into tea parties and dances. Otherwise what we've got here is institutional denial.

TRISHA: There's more to being a success than just those statistics. That's what I don't like when I hear all those statistics. I work with people, not with statistics.

JDJ: You have to work with the quota [target] statistics, though.

TRISHA: I do. I wish I didn't, but I do. This whole industry should be about helping people. I have so many customers who have no hope of getting into work. But I don't see that as meaning we can't do anything for the customers. I think we offer a really important service for giving people social contact and advice.

JDJ: It's an expensive social club.

TRISHA: It is, but you can't think that it's alright just to abandon people. Being able to come in, talk to someone. I have customers who wouldn't speak to another soul if they didn't come in here to see me. You can't put a price on that.

11. Staff stresses and staff security

Pressures on WP centre staff often go unreported in comparison to the plight of benefits claimants. However, staff spoke of facing numerous psychological pressures, including meeting targets, personal safety and facing the stresses of poverty and social deprivation. In this section, I consider each of these factors in turn.

Meeting Targets

The centres were highly focused on achieving job outcome targets. As manager 'Abby' explained:

ABBY: An outcome payment can't be paid until a customer is in work for six months. This means that the provider does a great deal of work before they can even get any money for it. [...] All staff are targeted but the centre is targeted as well. Each centre must get seventeen job outcomes per month in order to meet its contracted targets. Staff are targeted for job starts, the centre is targeted for job outcomes. But job outcomes must include two ESA outcomes. These earn more but are harder. If there are no ESA outcomes that month's centre target is not valid. I don't tell the rest of the staff what the centre's real targets are... they currently think its nineteen... because I want them to over-achieve each month. The pressure on centres to achieve these targets is massive.

Individual targets varied. For ESA advisers, it was two job outcomes per month, and for JSA and 'second jobbers', six. Achieving targets was highlighted by 7/23 staff as contributing to a qualitative change in the welfare-to-work industry; a change that had resulted in highly stressful working atmosphere:

LORETTA: You know this isn't... it's not a good working environment, but it's... Now it's just panicking about not hitting the targets. I mean I'm going home and thinking about bloody ****¹²² and what she said. I don't want to be thinking about that.

TRISHA: That's one of the really big changes for the worst in this industry. I started working in this field and stayed in this field because I wanted to help people. You know, it was a people business. It's not like that now. That's all changed for the worse. Now it's all about money and hard outcomes. It's gone faceless.

While 'hard outcomes' – jobs – were few compared to caseloads, 12 staff counted 'soft outcomes' – social work - as primary, or at least very important 'successes', and as equally valid to 'hard outcomes', despite them bringing in no money. As staff member 'Erica' explained:

ERICA: But it's how people think about the programme, you know outside of it... that you can just bully customers into work. This is what you're learning, isn't it? We do so much soft outcome work, getting the customers on their feet before we can get them into work. You get someone into work then that's a hard outcome, but you don't see the months of soft work that goes into making that outcome happen.

¹²² Here the participant mentions a work colleague who, she says, is continually repeating management instructions, and who she finds it very difficult to work with.

Thirteen staff members spoke of a high stress environment, with staff pressurised into meeting targets:

LORETTA: they're putting the pressure on intensive levels... really, the bullying is like, it makes you sick. I mean really ill. I've had to go to the doctor, I've been really, really sick with stress and depression, but they [management] don't lay off.

Four staff members spoke of outright bullying by management. One staff member stated that the pressure of working in the centre "put me into clinical depression", while 'Loretta' explained that "we go onto disciplinary if we don't make our targets for three months in a row" adding that when this happened to her:

LORETTA: It was really horrible. I mean it's really bullying. [A certain management officer] treats you like you're the office dirt. Other people don't even want to speak to you. You know like in the office you get cut off, people make little comments about you if you're going to the loo. Or making a cup of tea.

Personal Safety:

Ten staff members mentioned that, at times, they feared for their personal safety at work. From general conversations this was a concern for all staff, and staff had, at times, been followed or threatened outside of the building. Staff member 'Trisha' explained that working in the centres could often be dangerous:

JDJ: Is it a dangerous job?

TRISHA: Oh it can be. I've seen all kinds of things. People punched, spat at, threatened, dragged across the table. Not just here but over the years. Of course you've got all kinds of people coming through and they don't like being told to get off their arses, to put it bluntly. So they lose it sometimes.

JDJ: How is it here?

TRISHA: Not too bad. With FND you had customers in [centre] much longer, so it was more intense. Very stressful. Here it's more if the sanctions are getting put on them. That's what sets people off.

Similarly, senior Prime manager 'Arnold' stated that:

[...] you've got some people, some individuals on programme, you know, with serious criminal records. I mean, you know there's usually no security in-centre, it's mostly female staff, which is interesting as an empirical fact in itself... and we're expecting them to somehow build professional, working relationships with some pretty violent people... rapists... imagine having to start working with someone who's been inside for twenty years for murder. It's not going to be easy, is it?

Facing Poverty:

Facing poverty and severe problems, and even threats of suicide, on a daily basis, while simultaneously maintaining a professional outlook and personal sense of morale, was mentioned by ten members of staff as a depressing and psychologically draining aspect of their work. However, as staff member 'Xandra' explained, this was felt by staff to be an integral aspect of the role:

JDJ: Do you enjoy the work?

XANDRA: Oh... yeah. When you look at the stresses, you've got to be able to go home at the end of the day and feel like what you're doing is right where you're supposed to be. If I didn't feel that I'd get out of it. But, I don't know if enjoy is the right word, but I definitely feel that this is something that is really worthwhile and makes a difference. Even at its gloomiest, I always come back to thinking, well, this is the front line. This is what I'm in this role for. If it wasn't for people doing this then some of these people would literally have no one. So yeah, it's definitely a fulfilling role.

'Xandra' also mentioned that threats of suicide could be a tactic for manipulating advisers, but that staff could not afford to ignore these threats:

XANDRA: It is unbelievably stressful at times. I think apart from being threatened, and sometimes I don't even feel safe leaving the building, apart from that it's the people who, you know, you work with people then you often get a breakdown. If people have to confront their problems head on, you often get a break down point, yeah? And that's when you get the suicidal threats, the phone calls. Or, they don't phone in and I have to phone them. That's one of the worst things, dealing with that. So I'm an employment consultant, a social worker, a counsellor or you name it, then I'm phoning people up to talk then down from ending it all.

JDJ: Are these real suicidal threats?

XANDRA: You never know, really, do you? You can't take the chance for one thing, but of course what I see is tactics of disengagement or the same tactic that customers use to push you back, to stop you... you know, to not let them into their world, to see what it is, how they live. So for some, definitely, it's a tactic. You say you want them to do *a* or *b* and they hit you

with, *I can't do that, I'm on the edge, I'm going to end it all*. That's not nice.

Only one customer mentioned anything close to a threat:

X: She's a fucking nob actually, I'll see her one day out and about. I'll give her a proper reality check.

JDJ: OK. She winds you up?

X: Yeah. Power trip though, isn't it? They can't help it because they've got a bit of power over someone. I can take it but they're twats to some of the people in here.

However, I did witness one customer announce that "when it all kicks off" he was coming back, and that it wouldn't take him long to "go through" the office with his samurai sword.

12. Leaving the programme

When a customer left the programme, it might have been into work, into retirement, onto a sanction or simply a 'disappearance'. However, when any customer left, the government collected data on their attitudes while on the programme. As staff member 'Anna' explained:

ANNA: Anyway, when a customer exists one of the forms we have to fill in is this one, the development and exit form. This isn't for us or [the Prime], this is for the government. [...] So you have to detail... was the customer compliant with the programme? Did they do what they were asked to do? Were they resistant? You know, did they argue, resist it and so on? But the thing is, they also want a breakdown of how the customer's behaviour might have changed over their time on the programme. You know, did they start out resistant and change over time?

When a customer did find work, this entailed a significant amount of paperwork, as manager 'Abby' explained:

ABBY: The jobs that people take are checked very carefully. FND had a lot of fraud and loopholes, non-existent jobs and shady practices... so the DWP has tried very hard to ensure that the jobs people are supposedly signed up for are real. There are multiple layers in place to ensure this.... Checking that all the rules are kept to is known as compliance. There's an enormous amount of paperwork to be completed for every stage of a job outcome. Multiple people check this... at the provider, the prime, and then at DWP. The slightest incorrect details can cause.... and will cause a claim

to be rejected, meaning that months of work by us could be lost. A wrong start date... or finishing date, is enough to have a claim rejected. This means that me and Luis have to go through all the paperwork in detail, even though it's already been done [by the adviser]. The biggest part of our time is spent checking these minor details rather than actually managing the operations of the centre.

ABBY: No matter how many times I tell staff to make sure they check all the details we still find tons of mistakes. Dealing with these eats up a lot of time. Then there's a series of checks that we have to perform. We need to ring the employers to ask if customers started... what day... and when they finished, if they finished. We *have* to get confirmation on this but if the [adviser] hasn't kept on top of this we have to ring the employer asking them about job starts that could have happened months ago. If the employer hasn't kept proper records this could be a problem. We have to ask the employer for a date. If the employer gives a date less than the actual start date we have on the computer then we have to take the employer's date. This means that we could suddenly find we no longer have enough days for the six months. Agencies can be the worst. Some don't keep very good records of exact start dates... suggesting a date to them would be classed as fraud.

13. Conclusion

This chapter reviewed data drawn from interviews with staff and customers on the subject areas of 'the anti-workfare narrative' and aspects of workfare that are rarely discussed in academic literature or the media. The data were divided into 11 sections. The remainder of this conclusion summarises the data relating to each of these sections.

Drawing on fieldwork observation, this chapter noted that 'bullying' in the WP was a complex matter. The administration of the WP itself could be seen as bullying *per se* by some critics. Ten customers stated that they experienced bullying. This claim was generally related to threats of sanctioning, and usually for an alleged failure to comply with instructions. Eight customers said that their advisers were supportive, either in terms of job seeking, or more usually on a personal basis.

The centres did not operate a free labour or work placement programme. In order to meet targets, the centres relied on 'entry level' employment roles. These were usually service, call centre or domestic roles. It was also noted that forcing customers into entry level work was likely to backfire. Working with customers to accept the necessity of entry level work was felt by staff to be a more productive approach. There

was some evidence that, at times, apprenticeship placements and part-time work arranged through the centres was exploitative and very low quality.

While it has been argued that ‘parking and creaming’ is a key aspect of workfare (Peck, 2001), the data here revealed that any unemployment system would naturally see the most employable people enter work more quickly than the least employable people. Although one adviser stated that spending time working with unemployable customers was pointless, most staff stated that all customers got an equal share of attention, regardless of their employability.

Sanctions formed a substantial part of centre life. Each adviser was likely to raise two or three sanctions every day, adding up to several being raised per week. Reasons for sanctioning varied, from total non-compliance through to failure to complete mandated actions, and lateness. While staff strongly supported sanctions as a tool for enforcing compliance, they also felt that the current system was too rigid, and that JCP often forced sanctions through even though this was not in a customer’s best interests. There was strong evidence from both staff and customers, and also foodbank managers, that sanctions were directly responsible for food-bank use amongst welfare claimants.

The primary role of the centres was found to be ‘life triage’, meaning that despite the government’s hope that workfare would by-pass state welfare’s supposed tendency to become a benefits advice service, nevertheless, this is precisely what the centres had become. In some cases, centre attendance was entirely a matter of social activity.

Contrary to the government’s hopes of an integrated approach to difficult social problems, staff noted that data protection, and hostility from other keyworkers, often mitigated against such cooperation. Some customers, meanwhile, were said to be able to exploit this situation to play their keyworkers off against WP staff.

As caseloads had dropped, so ‘self-employment’ had emerged as a possible means of raising target achievement rates. This ‘zero-work self-employment’ situation was described as a ‘neutron bomb scandal’ that was underpinning much of the WP’s apparent successes. Moreover, it was indicated that other providers in the area were relying on this practice to achieve their employment outcome rates.

The data also revealed that achieving ‘sustained job outcomes’ meant, in practice, having six months in work. This could be made up of multiple jobs, and 40%

of centres' 'job outcomes' had been achieved in this way. There were also a significant number of customers who had worked for less than six months.

While the national statistics for the WP were poor, staff noted that they regularly reached their contract targets, and viewed this as an indicator of success. Staff also argued that the centres were successful because 'something had to be done' to challenge welfare dependency, no matter how poor the outcome rates were. Many members of staff viewed the 'social service' provided by the centres as a major and socially beneficial aspect of their operations.

Customer views on the successes of the programme were split between those who found the centres to be completely or largely ineffectual, and those who felt that the centres provided some useful social services. These views were not necessarily mutually exclusive: many customers stated that the centres were good *as* a social service, but not in terms of helping people to find jobs.

WP staff faced numerous stresses, including personal safety, dealing with relentless poverty, and a harsh management and targets regime. This was alleged, at times, to lead to mental health breakdowns.

Finally, staff noted that claiming payments for job outcomes was an onerously complex process involving such high levels of paperwork that, rather than cutting red tape, this increased it, negatively affecting the centres' operations. The next chapter considers some of these points in more detail, and discusses the findings of the study overall.

Chapter Eight:

Discussion of findings

1. Introduction

This chapter draws the fieldwork data together into one overall review and analysis of the functioning of the WP centres researched. The data are situated in relation to prior and current literature in order to provide solid empirical context to widespread and ongoing academic, media and political speculation regarding workfare in the UK.

The main body of this chapter commences with a brief recapitulation of the ‘for’ and ‘against’ workfare narratives introduced in previous chapters, and of the scholarly theories that support them. Discussion then turns to key aspects of these narratives as commonly articulated by and through political, media and academic sources. Each key aspect is considered in turn, the theory contrasted with the findings, and conclusions drawn on the relevance, or otherwise, of these theoretical claims in the case of this research. Where the current data go beyond previous theory, new insights are presented. The chapter concludes with a summary of primary findings.

2. The primary ‘for’ and ‘against’ narratives, and the UK government’s workfare policy rationale

The UK government’s workfare policy rationale was that old social democratic welfare systems encouraged unemployment by rewarding welfare claimants for

idleness (Smith, 2011, 2012; DWP, 2012a). This perspective draws on a long history of anti-poor law sentiment stretching back at least to the 10th Century in Great Britain (Webb and Webb, 1910), and much earlier in the Classical world (Hands, 1968). It also enjoys longstanding and widespread support from a range of influential social thinkers, both including and also extending well beyond the field of sociology (e.g. Spencer, 1960; Hayek, 1933; Rand, 1964; Rustow, 1980; Dawkins, 1976; Blair, 1997a; Cameron, 2012a). In the modern era, this perspective draws upon research and theory provided by a series of high-profile academics, most significantly sociologists Lawrence Mead and Charles Murray. Additional support has come from the output of influential think-tanks (e.g. Institute of Directors, 2010; Policy Exchange (Holmes, 2013); Centre for Social Justice, 2013; Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, 2013a; Taxpayers' Alliance, 2015) and high profile social-conservative commentators (e.g. Platell, 2008; Utley, 2004; Bartholomew, 2006; Phillips, 2007; Humphrys, 2013). These sources have been influential in promoting the view that welfare diverts taxpayers' money out of the functioning economy, reducing the number of jobs available (see also Miller, 1988; DWP, 2012a). This, allegedly, leads to an ever growing 'underclass' of "endemic worklessness" (Grayling, 2011), populated by individuals who have been 'incentivised' to remain unemployed (Centre for Social Justice, 2013; Rees-Mogg and Davidson, 1992), or else have become too depressed and demoralised to search for work (Layard *et al.*, 1994). Furthermore, that passive government welfare schemes and their unmotivated staff are seen to be as much a part of the problem as the claimants (Mead, 1986; Layard and Philpott, 1991). The proposed solution is what Dostal (2008) describes as 'market welfare'.

Market welfare is the belief that that by breaking welfare provision into multiple private payments-by-results franchises, a 'market' will be created in which individual firms, centres and even individual centre workers, will compete with one another in a 'succeed or perish' survival of the fittest (Sanger, 2003; DWP, 2012a; Grayling, 2011). As the worst-performing providers become 'extinct', the remaining providers 'evolve': they operate more successfully, take more market share, and so attract the best staff in a virtuous circle. Where welfare claimants are considered 'very hard to reach', significantly higher outcome payments are offered to encourage provider practice improvements (NAO, 2014).

As with natural selection, the essentially evolutionary model of 'market welfare' requires 'generations' (fixed contract periods) across which modified

‘information’ (i.e. best practices and staff, innovative techniques, ideas and training programmes) can be passed on. The rationale behind this approach is a cracking open and ‘shaking up’ of ailing, government-run welfare systems where staff spend more time helping the unemployed claim further benefits than they do helping them back into work (Mead, 1986; Centre for Social Justice, 2013). Thus, during my fieldwork observation at the Employment Related Services Association conference in London, 2012, Centre for Social Justice researcher Deven Ghelani advised an audience of WP managers to “avoid allowing your staff to become experts on benefits and welfare rights” as “this was the problem with past welfare provision... caseworkers end up as social workers helping customers milk the system further. It’s better if the caseworkers just don’t know what the customer’s rights are, and focus on getting them into work” (Ghelani, 2012).

What Dostal (2008) terms ‘market welfare’ describes the underpinning rationale behind the WP. Given that there have been poor law schemes in Britain since the 8th century (Webb and Webb, 1910), market welfare is probably the only genuinely ‘neoliberal’ aspect of modern workfare, in that it applies market forces to welfare provision in a deliberate attempt to promote the evolution of superior services (Peck, 2002): the precise model that neoliberal theorist Friedrich Hayek (1976) proposes for capitalism *per se*.

The UK government has argued that by following an evolutionary approach, the long-term unemployed will be offered an increasingly efficient suite of ‘tailored help and support’ (Grayling, 2011). The government has further argued that the WP is both superior to previous welfare systems, such as Labour’s ‘Flexible New Deal’, and also that it will help claimants find sustainable employment (NAO, 2014).

Opponents of workfare argue in contrast that workfare is a bullying system that forces the sick to attend pointless interviews, operates humiliating practices, pushes claimants into slave labour, or the worst jobs, ‘parks and creams’ the most and least employable customers and follows a punitive ‘sanctions’ policy that is often gender-biased due to its acute impact upon carers (Peck, 2001; Pateman, 2005; King, 2005; Herd *et al.* 2005; Goldberg, 2001; Wacquant, 2010). Moreover, it argues that in order to support late capitalist political and economic objectives, such as cheap labour and coercive social control of the increasing numbers of poor, the rollout of workfare has been accompanied by a demonisation of welfare claimants so divisive and defamatory that Westergaard (1995: 118) describes it as “the attrition of citizenship” (see also

MacNicol, 1994; Gans, 1995; Handler, 1995; King, 2005). This perspective also draws general provenance from Marx's (1887) argument that capitalism requires a reserve army of the unemployed, held in disciplinary storage until required by capitalists, and which helps to drive down wage rates (see also Mandel, 1968). Dwyer (2000) has further described this political and economic programme as a return to past perceptions of a 'deserving' and 'underserving' poor, and of social policies that discriminate between these two alleged categories.

3. *What the data show*

In the following analysis the acronym 'WP' and the phrase 'the programme' generally refer to the WP as operated inside the centres that I researched; generalisation to the wider Work Programme is not necessarily supported by this data.

Did the WP intensify the pressure on the unemployed to find work?

While it is a key claim of pro-workfare advocates that workfare intensifies pressure on the unemployed to find work (e.g. Mead, 1986; White, 2002; Schwartz, 2005; Smith, 2011), the overall answer to this question was, within my study, *no*. Similarly to the conclusions of Herd *et al.* (2005) and Peck (2001), in the present study the threat of sanctions *was* found to create an environment in which many customers felt deeply afraid that minor infractions of the rules would leave them destitute. Customer 'Sue', for instance, stated: "So you're thinking if you turn up one minute late your kids won't have anything to eat. You won't be able to heat the house" while staff member 'Charles' stated that: "If you don't behave, they'll starve you... take everything away from you."

For those who could work, destitution often made them *feel* like they *wished* they could find work. For those who could not work due to disability or caring responsibilities, threat of sanctions imposed significant stress, and several customers noted that they were 'just going along with' the programme to avoid trouble. To this degree, the practice of pressurising customers in the centres researched was in line with the 'disciplinary socialisation' approach, reviewed in Chapter Three, and associated with theorists such as Mead (1986, 2005b), Beem (2005) and Wax (2003), as well as historical scholars such as Bentham (1843), Locke (1697) and Tudor social

theorist William Marshall (Slack, 1988). The disciplinary socialisation approach proposes that intensive workfare schemes can ‘dissolve’ the ‘welfare underclass’ by enforcing discipline onto otherwise feckless and dysfunctional welfare ‘addicts’ (Mead, 1986; also Bane and Ellwood, 1994). However, despite government ambitions to achieve this ‘solvent’ effect by using welfare reform to intensify the pressure on the long-term unemployed (Cameron, 2011a, 2011c; NAO, 2014), the present study found that while staff *could* pressurise customers to do more job search (see below), there was little else that staff could reasonably do to compel customers to get back into work. A poor labour market, plus the personal circumstances of the customers, including many customers with health problems, strongly mitigated against this. As staff member Trisha stated, there were many customers with “[...] serious illnesses, mental and physical” and “people who are older, just not getting back into work because... yeah, they’ve given up hope but they’re not what the jobs market is after.”

In terms of overall in-centre practices, ‘pressure’ was otherwise minimal. Customers attended the centres for one ‘adviser review interview’ per month, usually lasting only around 15-30 minutes. Some customers came in for ‘job club’, usually held once a month, but this was infrequently attended and had poor outcomes. In total, including waiting times, an average customer spent only around one to two hours per month in-centre, and only around half an hour meeting with staff.¹²³

As I have noted elsewhere of the WP’s forerunner, the Flexible New Deal scheme (Jordan, 2013), and in harmony with the findings of Dahl (2003), Herd *et al.* (2005), Attas and De-Shalit (2004) and Michaud (2004), the primary pressure on customers appeared to come not from being compelled to attain, or remain in work, but from integration within a stressful administrative regime. Customers had to be continually vigilant to avoid minor infractions, such as lateness, bringing children into the centre,¹²⁴ forgetting an appointment time and/or not completing required paperwork. All of these might attract a serious financial penalty.

Advisers *were* expected to issue strict ‘actions towards work’, which customers were mandated to fulfil before their next monthly meeting. To some degree, this matches Peck (2001), Herd *et al.* (2005) and Piven and Cloward’s (2001) arguments,

¹²³ A customer might spend more time with staff than just their actual adviser review meeting, such as waiting for travel expenses, being walked out of the centre, or chatting at reception.

¹²⁴ Customers had to be ready and able to work at all times. Hence, bringing children into the centre was considered inappropriate. In one instance, a customer who said his partner was ill, and came into the centre with a small child, was threatened with a sanction.

reviewed in Chapter Three, that North American welfare attendees were subjected to disciplinary ‘micro-control’. It also conforms with the insistence by social-conservative thinkers, also discussed in Chapter Three, that welfare should be strictly ‘conditional’ in order to bring ‘fairness’ to the welfare system (White, 2004; Goodin, 2004; Wax, 2005; Cameron, 2012d). However, the present study found that the customers’ primary ‘actions’ did not constitute daily intensive micro-control, and nor were they ‘disciplinary socialisation’. Customers were simply asked to continue to search for work in their own time, including applying for, on average, five vacancies per week. As customer ‘Annemarie’ stated: “*Erm*, my actions towards work at the moment are to keep applying for the positions that I’m going for.”

Customers were expected to produce a ‘jobs log’ listing vacancies applied for, but the authenticity of these applications was rarely checked. Customers could easily add entries to the list, or else apply for jobs that they had little chance of being accepted for, simply to make up their weekly quota. As customer ‘David’ stated, he would, if necessary, “stick something on” his jobs-log that he had not really applied for. Moreover, staff would, at times, waive this applications requirement due to the personal difficulties being faced by customers. Staff member ‘Pauline’, for instance, stated that sanctioning a vulnerable customer for failing to complete a jobs-log was not an appropriate action because it would not help to build a relationship of trust. This flexibility in programme application appears to contradict the disciplinary socialisation argument that the solution to such difficult personal circumstances is strong, work-focused interventions (Mead, 1986; Grayling, 2011; DWP, 2012a). Staff argued contrarily that individuals facing deep and intractable life crises, such as homelessness, addiction or severe mental health breakdowns, were not always well-served by intensified job search requirements. As staff member ‘Erica’ said of one “very vulnerable” customer, whose ‘actions towards work’ were simply to keep coming into the centre: “[...] it’s a soft outcome. Just keeping him going is enough for now. Not like you think, is it? We’re not monsters really.”

Customers were also expected to have ‘personalised actions towards work’. For new customers, working on a CV, or completing the centre’s basic paperwork – such as a BOC (Better off in work calculation) and a ‘skills check’ - constituted these actions. However, after around three months general centre practice was to make working towards overcoming barriers a customer’s personalised actions. Hence, contacting the dentist, or the council housing officer, or going to the doctor, or continuing to attend

ESOL,¹²⁵ therapy or counselling services, and countless other personal and domestic actions, many of which were tasks that employed people might also need to complete, became ‘actions towards work’. This practice of mandating social or non-directly work-related tasks constituted the vast majority of customers’ personalised steps towards employment. These same actions were often kept ‘live’, i.e. ongoing, month after month. Staff argued that this was inevitable as customers could not get into or sustain work without overcoming these ‘barriers’. However, it was difficult to see any other possible actions that staff could mandate. Thus, engaging customers in general discussion about their lives and social circumstances had become an essential, and primary, aspect of adviser review meetings, not simply because there was little else to discuss, but because this was where barriers were allegedly identified. As staff member ‘Trisha’ put it, justifying the major social element of centre practice: “Being able to come in, talk to someone. I have customers who wouldn’t speak to another soul if they didn’t come in here to see me. You can’t put a price on that.” Hence, the administrative necessity of listing ongoing actions towards work on the Prime’s intranet, combined with the reality that there simply were no actions towards work that customers could do other than applying for jobs, necessitated *finding* potential further actions. This pressure appeared to encourage staff to investigate customer’s personal lives in order to identify such barriers. Moreover, where there were few, or no barriers, an alleged poor mental approach or attitude often came to be seen as the barrier by staff. As staff member ‘Erica’ stated: “[...] for a lot of people being unemployed is the vicious cycle, downward spiral. That’s what we’ve got to do, break them out of that.” This view harmonises with the workfare policy claim that job seeking is often significantly retarded by low self-esteem (Layard *et al.*, 1994; Bane and Ellwood, 1994). However, and in harmony with a similar argument made by Macnicol (1994), the present study appears to show that the stress and disappointment of being unemployed, or on the WP, was falsely and ideologically transformed via workfare interviews into a putative cause of continued unemployment. As customer Silvio put it: “They think that’s like, you’re either depressed with it all, or you’ve got a mental condition because you question why this bullshit is happening and they’re getting away with it.”

Thus, other than the genuinely frightening threat of sanctions, and in many cases a general dislike of coming into the centre, the pressure on customers to find work was

¹²⁵ ESOL is an English language course.

limited to a monthly chat about job seeking activities and general life problems, with optional attendance at ‘job club’. The compulsory administrative process itself encouraged an institutional belief that unemployment was at least in part due to personal barriers; this, arguably, *had* to be true in order to continue fulfilling the contracted administrative obligation of listing customers’ ‘personalised actions towards work’. Furthermore, rather than the workfare notion of a “short, sharp, shock” to end a ‘culture of worklessness’ (Dominiczak and Winnett, 2013), staff proposed that ‘intervention’ in many customer’s lives required a long-term, step-by-step approach.

It would appear then, that although the WP inherited the ideological provenance of ‘disciplinary socialisation’, which stretches back to Bentham (1843), 18th and 19th century forced labour programmes (Burnett, 1994), Puritan work schemes (Hill, 1969) and repressive Tudor and Anglo-Saxon poor-law legislation (Slack, 1988; Webb and Webb, 1910), its practical realities, in this case, lagged far behind the pugnacious and ‘transformational’ rhetoric of disciplinary socialisation arguments. Equally, however, the WP did not replicate the horrors of historical workhouse schemes, as is sometimes claimed by critics (e.g. Void, 2013).

Did the Work Programme offer ‘tailored help and support’?

That the WP would offer tailored help and support was a key government claim. As Chris Grayling (2011: 1) put it: “[The WP] is revolutionary in the way it tailors support to jobseekers’ individual needs and pays organisations primarily for getting people into sustained employment.” However, the data from this study contradict this claim. The privatised tendering system appeared to have led to a company running the WP on a budget that was woefully inadequate for offering tailored help and support. As one senior Prime manager put it: “This just isn’t the standard of provision that we expect. [...] The whole idea is that we move past all the old cheapskate ways of doing things.” The centres therefore offered a generic and minimal service. The centres did provide preliminary, in depth discussion with customers, exploring their work histories, ambitions, qualifications and skills. This usually took place on a customer’s first interview, and also involved reading and signing forms related to the WP. Newton *et al.* (2012) found that these initial interviews generally determined a customer’s subsequent progression through the programme. However, the present study found that following these initial meetings, the service provided to customers tended to be generic and similar for all. As previously discussed, the primary activity of each centre was

monthly adviser reviews, and there was little reason to call these ‘tailored’, excepting the tendency to focus on a customer’s personal life and problems.

One-on-one training was available, and this appeared to be high quality, and delivered by a professionally qualified tutor. However, this training was limited to basic skills, particularly basic computer literacy. General training was available. However, far from being ‘tailored’, this was limited to CV writing, interview techniques, confidence building and computer skills – all aimed at a generic and extremely basic level.¹²⁶ Some customers did find this useful, but some found it pointless, or even demeaning. Customer ‘Silvio’, for example, noted that the courses were demeaning and “very low quality.” There was no evidence of services for more highly educated or higher-skilled individuals, nor of the government’s stated workfare aim that “Ultimately, we are keen to see people who are facing disadvantages take full advantage of education and skills provision at every level” (DWP, 2012c: 40). Moreover, there was some evidence that customers were sometimes expected to complete these basic courses more than once, and regardless of their skills-levels or previous experience.

These overall findings appear to confirm Miller’s (1988) argument that workfare training is often pointless and/or very basic due to the prohibitive costs of more advanced provision. The WP is expected to be worth only around £3-5 billion to private companies (NAO, 2012), but as reviewed in Chapter Two, Willetts (1998: 5) found that the (then Labour) government’s similar investment of £3.5 billion in the FND¹²⁷ would need to be closer to £240 billion in order to genuinely re-skill the unemployed.

In Chapter Two it was noted that significant debates have occurred, particularly in the USA, over whether ‘work-first’ (work placement)¹²⁸ or ‘human capital’ (training first) workfare schemes are preferable (Deacon, 1994; Bryner, 1998; Daguerre, 2004; Dingledey, 2007; Dostal, 2008). Mead (1986) and Quaid (2002) have both argued that work-first workfare is preferable and more effective, while Bane and Ellwood (1994) have led the field in arguing that human capital approaches yield superior results. The

¹²⁶ Compare this with the DWP’s following ‘case study’: “Take Barry’s experience – his life was changed not by increased benefits, but by being brought into contact with a local and innovative service called BAC O’Connor. BAC O’Connor helped Barry to become free from drug dependency in a sustainable way and to move on and up into work. He now has a home and a job, he pays his bills, he is studying for a degree and is back in contact with his family” (DWP, 2012: 10).

¹²⁷ FND: Labour’s ‘Flexible New Deal’ scheme.

¹²⁸ In other words, making claimants work immediately on work experience or government make-work schemes in order to maintain or earn eligibility to claim welfare.

present study cannot speak to this debate directly, but it does indicate that shoestring budget training is not correlated to high success rates. Nor does it constitute ‘tailored’ support. There was strong evidence that tendering a WP franchise to a low-bidding company was, in this instance, responsible for a minimal-level service provision. This supports, in a British context, the overall argument and findings of Sanger’s (2003) study of the privatisation of US state welfare systems.

However, staff did offer basic personal advice and support, and some customers found this extremely useful. As customer ‘Angelo’ put it: “Because they’ve offered me... anything I’ve ever mentioned, even a slight interest in, they’ve given me avenues that I can take through them.” Staff had a wealth of experience pertaining to writing CVs, preparing applications, searching for work and preparing for interviews. Many customers found this to be a useful resource. Other than this, customers all received the same, basic, service.

Did the WP by-pass the supposed tendency of old welfare systems to become ‘passive’ benefits and advice services?

Claims that “The Work Programme represents a new era of delivering public services” (Chris Melvin, quoted in HM Government, 2011: 1) and that old welfare systems struck a “Devil’s bargain” that “transferred benefits *to* the poor, but [...] also took responsibility for their lives *from* them” (Mead, 1986: 66),¹²⁹ represent key articles of faith for the pro-workfare narrative. As Lawrence Mead later put it, criticising US welfare systems: “Passive administrators lead to passive clients” (Mead, 2005: 193). Murray (1984), meanwhile, describes as welfare’s law of unintended consequences the process via which welfare services spread dependency and passivity. Nor is this a purely right-leaning view: Marxist sociologist Ralph Miliband (1974) argued that welfare systems de-politicised, isolated and pacified claimants.

The data significantly question the WP’s supporting ‘new era’ rhetoric. Moreover, the data shed light on this principle’s fundamental flaw, finding that the long-term unemployed are *not* in that situation because welfare systems are insufficiently harsh or proactive. Despite being ‘workfare’ centres, the operations of the two centres had become significantly oriented towards ‘life triage’; that is, offering advice, guidance, help and support, counselling and benefits advice. As staff

¹²⁹ Emphasis in original.

member 'Loretta' put it: "we do so much problem solving, counselling services. But that's part of the long-term approach. It doesn't fit with the targets, but it's the reality." The idea that state run welfare services become benefits advice services (Centre for Social Justice, 2013) is predicated on the notion that staff are not under enough pressure to 'get results' (Mead, 2005b). However, staff were under immense pressure to achieve targets; so much so that at times this pressure was classed as bullying, and, allegedly, even led to mental health breakdowns: "But we've been put under unbelievable stress with that [meeting targets with falling caseloads] because they're putting the pressure on intensive levels... really, the bullying is like, it makes you sick" ('Loretta'). Nevertheless, customer-facing staff spent most of their time acting as social-work 'keyworkers', or, on a lesser level, as someone to talk to or who resolved non-work related problems for customers. This was not caused by lack of pressure on staff but by the realities of the labour market and the customer base. There was little that staff could do other than to act as 'life advisers'. Many customers were older, many were ill, and the labour market was both prejudiced against them and also structurally parlous.

While staff held in common a self-perception of being 'on the frontline of welfare reform', in practice, most staff perceived the primary successes of the centres to be their 'soft outcomes', i.e. providing a useful, or even essential, social service. In one centre, some ESA claimants faced no pressure whatsoever to get into work, while their 'job club' had been transformed into a social event, offering trips to the museum and other weekly social activities. This was not because staff were incompetent or negligent, but rather, because the customers were poorly and vulnerable. Pressurising such individuals to find work appeared to staff to be not only pointless, but also cruel. This is contrary to the findings of Jessop (1993), Goldberg (2001), Peck (2001), Attas and De-Shallit (2004), Herd *et al.* (2005), Drahokoupil (2007), Wacquant (2010) and Jordan (2013) who all found, or proposed, workfare to be a singularly oppressive and humiliating mechanism of pauper control. Many customers, in fact, thoroughly enjoyed attending the centre, albeit primarily for purposes of social contact. As one 'social club' member, 'Alfonzo', put it: "We do a lot of activities. [Our adviser] arranges a lot of different things for us. And it's exercises we can do, games, social activities, word puzzles. And we do quizzes. We get lots of things to do. Our leader [...] does all that."

That many customers found their adviser's help to be a welcome service, in part, ties in with research by Hoffmeyer and Wolff (2012). This concluded that numerous vulnerable or isolated workfare claimants come to see workfare programmes as points

of vital social contact. However, while Hohmeyer and Wolff view this putative psychological phenomenon as accounting for low ‘off-flow’ (leaver) rates, the present study found that many such customers were simply unwanted by the labour market, or else unable to work, regardless of how they personally viewed the programme. Moreover, it found that staff were actively involved in transforming the programme into a social service as a direct consequence of this situation.

Although staff argued that ‘overcoming barriers’ was essential for getting customers ‘closer to the labour market’, the WP’s extremely poor outcome rate meant that this was more of an item of faith than of reality. A more likely explanation is that without this social service approach the centres would do little else but have attendees write CVs, complete job logs and go on occasional basic courses. The achievement of employment outcomes was so low that it would be impossible to describe the centres as successful. Staff had thus significantly altered the definition of success to mean the one thing that they did appear to be doing well: offering a social and basic advice service for some customers, despite this making little money for the firm.

The theoretical perspective that workfare by-passes an inevitable collapse into passive advice and social service provision was therefore shown to be itself an item of faith, falsely premised on the notion that customers required, as shadow Energy Secretary Caroline Flint argued, “a kick up the backside” (Hawkes, 2015: 1) Staff were compelled by the realities of structural unemployment to offer the only service that they could: basic advice, including benefits advice, and social support.

Was the programme ‘evolving’ better services?

According to the DWP (2012c: 36):

By giving providers of the Work Programme freedom to design support around the needs of the individual, rather than enforcing a one-size-fits-all approach, and by offering the greatest financial rewards for helping people with the greatest need, we are encouraging providers to find new and innovative solutions to getting individuals facing multiple disadvantages back to work.

While staff did note that ‘the business had changed’ and become ‘harder-faced’ and more target driven – a process that Sanger (2003) links directly to the privatisation of welfare provision - and also that this made the work environment difficult for those staff failing to achieve the required results, nevertheless the centres operated a system

that differed little to the FND. They offered the same syllabus of occasional adviser meetings, basic skills workshops and job club (see Jordan, 2013). While the government had hoped that, given payments-by-results, centres would ‘evolve’ superior practices, the centres inevitably adapted to their current low budgets rather than to ambitious long-term objectives. The result was a minimal, generic service. Staff had high caseloads, and moreover, it is difficult to see what more the centres *could* do other than to intensify what they already were doing. Where such intensification had occurred, i.e. with other providers, this had not led to improved employment outcomes. Customers overwhelmingly argued that the only real solutions to the unemployment crisis were higher-quality training and job creation. As customer ‘Freddy’ put it: “The other thing is that you can’t force people to take jobs that don’t exist. [...] There’s got to be jobs for them [customers] to land into or what’s the point of it all?” This perspective matches the claims of scholars such as King (1987), Gorz (1989) and Peck (2001), as well as the Trades Union Congress (2012) and anti-workfare campaign groups Boycott Workfare (2014) and Anti-Workfare (2015), that job creation, or else shorter working weeks for all, are required to solve structural unemployment.

The inability of market welfare to ‘evolve’ better programmes partially supports Dostal’s (2008) argument that workfare is effectively a rhetorical illusion in which hackneyed policies are re-dressed in populist and novel terminology. Quaid (2002), as reviewed in Chapter Three, has similarly noted that workfare, particularly in North America, has been marked by a continuous ‘ritual’ political re-branding of the same schemes and methods under new names and regimes. The present findings lean significantly more towards Dostal, however, in that Quaid argues that only *work-first* workfare can overcome this ritual repetition, whereas Dostal argues that welfare provision is inevitably moulded primarily by wider structural, not ideological or policy, factors.

The repetition of the FND’s failed practices might provide some support for the view that workfare is simply too expensive to offer a useful service, and so should be abolished altogether (Gilder, 1982; Miller, 1988; Bret, 2003). Thus, it could be that as workfare provision has been rolled out over the past three decades, the available resources have been spread too thin. This was denied by one senior Prime manager, who located the problem firmly with the provider and its poor delivery of tendered promises: “[...] they have to do what it takes to make it work and to live up to their contract obligations. It’s not acceptable that they’ve got the contract, promised the earth

and then give... what? This? No. They have to invest. They have to take risks.” Moreover, Gans (1995) has argued that underfunding welfare systems is a deliberate anti-welfarist tactic, designed to manufacture the impression that welfare is a catastrophic failure: a tactic that could support the long-term goal of welfare abolitionists. Something close to this perspective was mentioned by staff member ‘Xandra’: “But you don’t see that it’s just nowhere enough, it just looks like x million was spent but even then people were so feckless they still didn’t turn around.”

Regarding the state Jobcentre, the pro-WP Centre for Social Justice (2013: 5) characterises its operations as too limited, and too slow: “[...] the [Jobcentre] adviser saw the claimant once every two weeks, this would mean the claimant would have been unemployed for nearly 10 weeks or three months before they truly understand the barriers to employment their claimant experiences.” However, as previously discussed, the WP centres, on average, saw customers *less* often than this. Nevertheless, there was strong support from customers and staff for the claim that the Jobcentre offered an extremely poor service. As customer Silvio put it: “[...] the joke centre, that’s a total waste of time, isn’t it? I mean that’s like, there is actually no point to it other than the... you know the humiliation of it?” There was also strong agreement amongst both staff and customers that the FND had been a poor programme. As staff member ‘Loretta’ noted: “Just... can’t explain how terrible it was. That was when, you know, the providers were just trying to work out how to run the contract, but they were hopeless. I used to go in and it was total chaos.” Where the WP was felt to be better, this was either because the WP was less intensive (than the FND), or because there was at least more time available (than at the Jobcentre) to receive some advice and help. Staff also claimed to be better trained on the WP. However, training in the centres researched for the thesis appeared to be primarily ‘on the job’.

It should be noted that a small minority of customers in this study did find the WP centres’ services useful in terms of job outcomes. Those who had already found work and left the centre were not interviewed. However, most customers found the centres’ services to be pointless, too limited, or of low quality. Moreover, rather than ‘evolving’, workfare providers, staff and methods appeared to be passing from one policy ‘generation’ to the next based on availability and lowest effective bids rather than any pressure to ‘evolve’ better services.

Is there an intergenerational, welfare-dependent underclass?

The existence of an intergenerational, welfare dependent underclass is a key article of faith for many workfare advocates (Kennedy, 1962; Moynihan, 1965; Mead, 1986; Schwartz, 2005; Wax, 2003). However, a separate perspective, one that, in Chapter Three, I described as the ‘paradoxical failure’ view, and which is associated with scholars such as Murray (1984, 1996), Hayek (1980), Friedman (2002), Bartholomew (2006) and Herbert Spencer (1844), argues that all forms of welfare and poor-relief – by definition also including workfare – aggravate and fund the ‘welfare underclass’. From this perspective, welfare/workfare encourages dependency and social breakdown, diminishes personal responsibility and family commitments and interferes with the ‘natural’ function of the labour market. Furthermore, this perspective argues that welfare and workfare schemes are illiberal, representing an unacceptable expansion of state power over citizens; citizens who have the right, if they so choose, not to work, just so long as they take personal responsibility for the consequences and do not turn to the state for assistance (Spencer 1884; Murray, 1984; see also White, 2004, 2005; Goodin, 2004).

WP government policy draws on elements of both of these perspectives. It is also worth remembering arguments by Miliband (1989) and Gans’ (1995) that welfare is often in a state of flux, with governments not necessarily permanently committed to any single approach. Nevertheless, according to the UK government, the WP is a “radical welfare reform designed to tackle entrenched poverty and end the curse of intergenerational worklessness” (Smith, 2010: 1). Staff, by and large, did strongly agree that there was an often intergenerational, chronically welfare-dependant underclass, and also that a substantial portion of their customer base came from it.¹³⁰ Moreover, there was strong support from staff for Grayling’s (2011: 1) claim that “endemic worklessness [...] has blighted so many of the country’s communities for decades.” Many customers also differentiated between genuine claimants and ‘skivers’.

However, there was no evidence whatsoever from this study of intergenerational unemployment, either from the interviews or from the significantly greater number of general conversations I had with customers. Aside from young people new to the labour market, there was only one case of someone who had not been in paid employment for decades - since the 1980s - due to health problems.¹³¹ There

¹³⁰ Intergenerational unemployment was felt to be far less common than simply being ‘from the underclass’ *per se*.

¹³¹ If domestic housework and child care are classed as work, then this person had worked.

were many customers who had been on sickness benefits for several years, but otherwise, all customers interviewed except one had work histories, mostly in manual labour, trade, cleaning or driving. Some had worked in offices and two had professional backgrounds - one in academia and one running a business. Most customers stated that they were actively seeking work. Those who were not, stated that this was due to ill-health. Other than the one outlying case mentioned, there was no evidence whatsoever of people who had spent a lifetime on benefits, nor of any condition, psychological state or 'ethic' that could be implied by the faux-diagnostic term 'worklessness' - other than, of course, the condition of simply being unemployed. Customers often appeared deeply depressed by being unemployed, sometimes having tears in their eyes when they spoke to me. The atmosphere of the centres as I perceived it was one of depressing desperation, not of people enjoying being on benefits. Many, particularly ESA, customers were probably simply too ill to ever work again, at least in the types of employment that were available. This is not to say that no one was 'playing the system'; there was some minor evidence of customers working whilst claiming unemployment benefits, and one case of a customer who was deliberately avoiding engagement with the programme via various stalling methods. Regardless, the overall findings here provide strong support for the arguments of Marx (1887), Spicker (1984), King (1987), Digby (1989), Macnicol (1994), Westergaard (1995), Gans (1995), Dwyer (2000), Goldberg (2001), Piven and Cloward (2001) and Peck (2001), reviewed in Chapter Three, that the rhetoric and ideology surrounding welfare claimants is generally defamatory, and usually designed to humiliate and stigmatise the victims of structural unemployment. There was no evidence that welfare itself encouraged or worsened the problem of unemployment. The idea that attendance at the centres 'encouraged' individuals to keep attending was a simple tautology; the programme is mandatory, and by definition customers are 'dependent' on welfare. However, the application of a system of punitive administrative surveillance that placed state agents in positions of power over individuals who were otherwise quotidian citizens, complete with the power to fine those citizens, does provide significant support for the argument that workfare is a punitive and illiberal extension of state power over ordinary people, as well as Dwyer's (2000) contention that 'conditionality' is designed to recreate in the public and political imagination a sense of division between the 'deserving' and 'underserving' poor.

Did the WP create 'sustained employment'?

A key government claim is that the WP “is a huge step towards supporting the almost five million people currently on out of work benefits into sustainable employment” (Grayling, 2011: 2). This claim draws theoretical provenance from the arguments of major workfare advocate Lawrence Mead. Mead (1986, 2005b) proposes that many on welfare *could* work *if* they wanted to, and in many cases *are working*, albeit illegally, or else refusing to take low-paid jobs because welfare offers an easier option. According to Mead, workfare pushes underclass shirkers into employment by making welfare less attractive - a process Mead (1986) calls ‘funneling’ - or else by instilling discipline into their lives, via forced work schemes where necessary. The data from the present thesis contradict Mead’s arguments, finding that the WP’s employment creation record was extremely poor.

The WP ran, at the time of the field research, with a less than 10% success rate. Moreover, this was possibly as low as below 5% (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, 2014). The complexity, and in some cases dubious (UK Statistics Authority, 2014) use of statistical measures employed by the government to calculate the precise figure make it difficult to establish the truth.¹³² However, some insight into the empirical reality can be gleaned from a recent report issued by the Scottish Parliament, which states that:

There is however no evidence across Scotland of an impact on incapacity (ESA) claimant rates, or that welfare reform has resulted in higher levels of employment or higher levels of labour market engagement. [...] On balance, the evidence in the report provides little support for the view that welfare reform is having important and positive impacts on the labour market in Scotland. (Scottish Parliament, 2015: 1).

The answer to this subsection’s heading question is therefore *no*. However, of those job outcomes that *were* ‘achieved’ nationally, the picture is still not straightforward. Firstly, general and unrelated improvements in the national economy and labour market have, at times, been falsely presented as ‘successes’ of the WP (Scottish Parliament, 2015). Secondly, everyone on the WP is counted both as unemployed *and also* as ‘in

¹³² Of the many statistical ploys used to present WP figures, one of the most controversial was to divide the job outcomes over *two* years by the number of people who had joined the programme in the *second year alone* – giving an artificially high success rate. This measure was rapidly withdrawn amidst widespread criticism.

employment’ (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, 2014). Those placed on sanctions are also counted as having ‘left the programme’ (Meacher, 2014), potentially skewing appearances of the programme’s success.¹³³ Furthermore, between 2011 and 2014 *at least*¹³⁴ 2,380 people died shortly after being found ‘fit for work’ by a ‘work capability assessment’ panel, and so no longer appeared in the figures (DWP, 2015: 8).

Evidence from this research shows that, in practice, the WP’s ‘sustainable employment’ rule meant merely six months in work, and moreover, that this six months could be made up of several short spells of employment. Around 40% of job outcomes within the researched centres were said to be cases of customers who had taken more than one job. Some had taken more than two. The record was eleven. It was entirely possible to achieve this six months figure, be classed as ‘having achieved sustainable employment’, and yet still be on the programme for up to a year and half subsequently. (I.e. if the customer was fired from work after six months). Moreover, according to ‘second jobber’ staff, around 30% of those customers who had experienced one short spell in employment did not have another spell, and so did not achieve ‘sustained employment’. This latter group constitutes a hidden pool of temporary labour that does not appear in the ‘sustainable outcomes’ statistics, but which does appear in ‘job starts’ statistics (see e.g. Employment Related Services Association, 2014: 1).¹³⁵ This could be exceedingly misleading because such ‘job starts’, which involved only short spells in work, could easily be mistaken for the achievement of more substantial employment.

There was strong evidence that the centres worked primarily with the lowest levels of the employment market; and call centres in particular, whose constant turnover of staff was said to be “keeping the [the WP] company afloat.” Supplying cheap,

¹³³ According to Michael Meacher MP (2012: 2): “The government has adopted the utterly dishonest practice of excluding from the claimant count all those persons who have been sanctioned. Thus the abrupt fall in the claimant count is explained by the scam of regarding all sanctioned persons as no longer seeking work, though they clearly are.”

¹³⁴ Serious questions have already been raised over the method used by the DWP to calculate this statistic. According to Ilegal [sic] (2015:1): “Importantly, the DWP acknowledge (In their supporting notes) that whilst no causal link can be established between the mortality figures provided and the numbers of deaths recorded for deceased incapacitated claimants, “a number of other possible factors may contribute to an increased/decreased mortality rate such as income, housing and education.” It is very much the contention of campaigners that the wrongful reduction or dis-allowance of an incapacity benefit may bring about circumstances where the deceased person may have had their income adversely affected, where housing may have been in jeopardy and where the most vulnerable in society are most likely to include some who are at an educational disadvantage affecting their ability to cope.”

¹³⁵ For example, the Employment Related Services Association (2014: 1) states that: “ERSA publishes Work Programme Job Start data on a quarterly basis. The latest [sic] release found that 551,000 long term jobseekers had been helped into employment. Of these, official government data shows that over 300,000 have moved into long term employment.”

temporary labour – ‘churning’ – was described as part of the “darker side” of the WP by one staff member, who claimed to have significant experience of this practice. This finding aligns with the work of scholars such as Piven and Cloward (1971), Peck (2001), Attas and De-Shallit (2004), and MacLeavy (2010), who argue that workfare enjoys a close relationship with low-quality employers, often ‘churning’ customers in and out of low-paid, menial roles. Staff, however, argued that the long-term unemployed had few realistic options *other* than to do this type of work, and that such roles acted as ‘stepping stones’ to superior positions. As staff member ‘Bryan’ put it: “[...] even if it isn’t the best job in the world, it’s a re-entry, and a stepping stone. It’s experience, something on the CV. I’d do it if I was in their shoes, definitely, just to get back on the ladder.” This harmonises with the work of pro-workfare scholars Quaid (2001), Wax (2003), Mead (2005b) and Beem (2005), who argue that menial roles act as gateways to increased social inclusion and further career development. However, no evidence supporting this latter claim was discovered.¹³⁶

It cannot be said, however, that ‘churning’ was a major aspect of the WP in this instance. Most customers were ‘parked’, or as one put it, “in storage” on the programme, and not being ‘churned’. Staff were struggling to meet individual monthly targets of up to six job starts per month, out of caseloads of between 120-180 people. With only around 3% of customers achieving job starts monthly, it is therefore logically and statistically impossible that large numbers of customers were being ‘churned’. This picture is similar to government reports cited by Marx (1887), detailing working men held in ‘storage’ on poor law make-work schemes, digging holes, breaking rocks or standing in a yard for the length of a working day.

Claims by Piven and Cloward (1971), Handler (1995) and Kingfisher and Goldsmith (2001) that workfare in North America and New Zealand was acutely targeted at women, and towards enforced female labour in menial roles, was not supported in the British context in this case. Males make up 70-80% of UK WP attendees (DWP, 2014e). Menial roles were suggested to females, but also to males. Cleaning work, found by Hohmeyer and Wolff (2012) to be a primary destination for female German workfare attendees, was, in this research, suggested to some female customers who had worked in that role previously. However, having a driving licence

¹³⁶ This might be because people who had started out in menial work had since achieved a different category of employment.

and vehicle appeared to be far more important for the modern zero-hours ‘flexible’ cleaning market than gender.

The centres did not operate a forced labour or work placement scheme. Work placements were felt by staff to be a generally negative exercise, as employers rarely wanted unwilling WP ‘employees’. Such a practice would therefore leave, primarily, the most exploitative employers as potential work experience destinations. As these ‘employers’ were unlikely to offer longer-term paid work, they would not be useful in helping the centres meet their targets. This challenges the more extreme claims made for workfare – i.e. that it is a ‘slave labour’ or forced work scheme (e.g. Peck, 2001, Boycott Workfare, 2014, also Dominiczak and Winnett, 2013). However, these data refer solely to the centres researched, not to the WP or workfare generally. Some other providers clearly did operate ‘work experience’ schemes, and these represent an important area for potential future research.

The degree to which the programme caused, or led to, job outcomes is open to question. Staff targets varied between 2 and 6 job starts per month. While this allowed the centres to achieve their expected minimum performance levels, this is approximately equivalent to the numbers of people that would statistically be expected to find work *without* the intervention of any programme: i.e. around 5% (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, 2013). Even if the programme *was* operating at closer to a 10% or even 20% success rate, this is still better termed an 80 or 90% *failure* rate. Moreover, in order to meet these minimal targets, staff relied heavily upon the more ‘employable’ customers who were referred to them, as these were likely to get into work regardless of what staff did. As staff member ‘Trisha’ put it: “I rely on the new blood. I check every new month... you see who you’ve got. Some are always just passing through, you know the natural off-flow into employment? They’re always good for your quota.”

Do the centres ‘park and cream’?

A key claim made against workfare is that it ‘parks’ the least employable customers in-centre, and ‘creams’ the rest – i.e. it does not provide equal support for all categories of customer (Peck, 2001). A House of Commons report (HM Government, 2013b: 7) states:

The Work Programme's differential pricing structure was intended to reduce the risk of "creaming" and "parking" [...]. However, there is growing evidence that differential pricing is not having its intended impact: the Work Programme appears not to be reaching the most disadvantaged jobseekers.

The data from this study indicate that parking and creaming *did* occur; however, the picture was more complex. Firstly, as already noted, job outcome levels were low – so low that it was not logically possible that 'creaming' happened to any more than five to ten per cent of the caseload.¹³⁷ More importantly, staff insisted that it was inevitable that the most employable, enthusiastic people would, as a general rule, get into work before the least employable, least keen, individuals. As staff member 'Trisha' put it: "If someone's ready for work then they're gone sooner, aren't they? If they're absolutely hard-core, underclass, unemployed, won't work or can't work... they park themselves, or they get parked." Given the centres' budgets, the realities of the caseloads, and of the harsh labour market, it is difficult to see how this situation could be altered: a 'job ready' or more employable category of customer simply is 'job ready' and more employable, while someone who is not job ready simply is not. Moreover, significantly higher payments for more difficult categories of customer made little difference to this reality. The claim that customers on sickness benefits (who attract higher outcome payments) are there because no one has put enough pressure on them to get into work (i.e. Mead, 1986; Cameron, 2012d; Smith, 2015) is predicated on the idea that these customers are, essentially, 'skivers', or else so depressed that they have given up seeking work. While staff believed this narrative to some degree, nevertheless, many ESA customers clearly were ill, and some appeared to be far too sick to be on the programme, never mind get work; and no amount of incentive payment could conceivably alter this fact.

Zero-work self-employment

For a few months before the research period began, the centres had experienced a significant fall in caseloads due to most of the 'bulk' of long-term unemployed being already transferred to the WP. Hence, there were too few 'green-light' (highly employable) customers arriving each month to make reaching targets relatively easy.

¹³⁷ That is, if by 'creaming' is meant customers achieving 'sustained employment'. It is conceivable that some customers were 'creamed' into employment but nevertheless did not achieve six months in work.

Staff were forced to go back and attempt to get what one called ‘the grunters’ back into work: “Yes. The grunters. I don’t mind saying it. I mean those who won’t respond to anything you say or do, they just grunt at you. Then I have to go back on that group and think about who are the best grunters” (Trisha). However, this was proving extremely difficult, not least because many of these people simply could not work, or else were unwanted by the labour market. Within this context, ‘zero-work self-employment’ – signing customers over to self-employment, for which they received an almost equal (to benefits) sum in paid tax-credits, regardless of whether they worked or not – appeared as a potential solution. Whilst not asserting that the centres *were* doing this – in fact, they had a good and robustly administered self-employment advice service – nevertheless, ‘benefit transfers’ from unemployment welfare to tax credits was flagged as a “neutron bomb scandal” across the WP generally. It is impossible to assess from the data to what degree this accounts for the ‘successes’ of the WP. However, I did witness staff encouraging people to switch. This is not illegal, and, as one staff member noted, it is not up to staff to decide whether a customer should take a risk on self-employment. Nevertheless, this remains a significant moral hazard, and it raises questions over the large number of self-employment starts that made up falls in unemployment in 2014, leading to “Self-employment [being] higher than at any point over [the] past 40 years” (Office for National Statistics, 2014: 1).

Sanctions

According to MP Michael Meacher MP: “‘Sanctioning’ is a particularly harsh and brutal way of treating unemployed people. They have all their benefit removed even for the most trivial infringements, e.g. being 5 minutes late for a job interview or for a work programme session” (2014: 1). Workfare theorists such as Piven and Cloward (2001), Peck (2001), Dahl (2003) and Herd *et al.* (2005) have each also argued that strict, often cruel sanctions regimes are a common feature of welfare-to-work.

Sanctions *are* a major aspect of the WP. Not all sanctions are raised by WP centres, however: a significant number are raised by JCP directly,¹³⁸ and many are raised against jobseekers who are not, or not yet, attending the WP. It is not always easy or possible to differentiate between these sanction sources, particularly as the UK

¹³⁸ These might be raised, for example, due to infringements of Jobcentre rules and expectations rather than for infringements of Work Programme rules.

Statistics Authority (2015) has raised concerns over the methodology used by the DWP to calculate its sanctions statistics *per se*. However, there were 1,758,031 sanctions laid against JSA claimants, and 66,846 laid against ESA claimants between December 2012 and March 2015, including those both on and also not on the WP (DWP, 2015: 2).

Contrary to some media claims (i.e. Hegarty, 2015), fieldwork data show that staff were *not* ‘targeted’ to raise sanctions or encouraged to do so in this case; and moreover, that the centres and staff had nothing to gain by doing this. Nevertheless, each staff member was likely to raise several sanctions per week, and sanctions were a major aspect of centre operations. Staff generally argued that most sanctions were automatic, and triggered by major failures to comply with programme rules.

Sanctions *were* raised for being late, but the trigger-point was ‘over fifteen minutes’ late, not five minutes. Staff argued that fifteen minutes late meant that most of the appointment time was lost, hence the sanction was justified. However, all staff felt that giving staff the authority (which they did not have) to re-appoint unavoidably missed appointments, and so avoid the sanction, would have been a much superior and more flexible system.

Sanctions for lateness affected those with care commitments particularly heavily, as they were more likely to face unexpected delays, and were then also left to cope with dependents whilst on a sanction. This supports claims by Piven and Cloward (1971), Handler (1995), Peck (2001), Kingfisher and Goldsmith (2001) and Pateman (2005), that workfare is acutely gendered in its punitive social effects, given that carers are significantly more likely to be female.

Sanctions were also raised against those who failed to comply with actions towards work, particularly failure to apply for work, but also for ‘resistant’ attitudes and behaviours. Moreover, the UK government harvested and stored data on customers’ attitudes and behaviours, even after customers had exited the programme. This supports claims by Peck (2001), Herd *et al.* (2005) and Wacquant (2010) that workfare imposes disciplinary regimes of punitive micro-control on the unemployed. Customers also noted being sanctioned for bureaucratic errors, or failures to keep up with paperwork. Sometimes this occurred when customers were suffering illness, mental-health problems, or were unable to cope with the complex paperwork system. This partially supports Goodin’s (2004) claim that workfare ‘bureaucratic disempowerment’ is used to push claimants off welfare. (However, a WP sanction is usually only temporary, and so does not ‘push people off’ welfare – except in terms of the official statistics, which

discount sanctioned individuals.) It also matches findings from Dahl's (2003) study of Norwegian workfare, but in British context. However, Dahl found such bureaucratic sanctioning to be a means via which a false sense of 'success' was granted to workfare programmes and their staff. While this might be true of the WP in a national context, at least in terms of statistical manipulation, the present study found no evidence that staff themselves gained anything from bureaucratic sanctioning.

Sanctions caused immense distress and hardship. As sanctioned customer 'James' put it of the plight of himself, his wife and his young family: "Yeah, if wasn't for family, we'd be eating dirt. I mean it's that serious. You know what I'm saying, our option would be literally to eat dirt." Sanctioned individuals and families were forced into serious financial difficulty, and there was evidence of women starving to feed their children. While sanctioned individuals could appeal, this process took several weeks, during which time the sanction remained in force. Contrary to the claims of Iain Duncan Smith (*The Independent*, 2013), sanctions forced individuals and families to go to foodbanks.

Staff were well aware of the hardships caused by sanctions. Two staff members mentioned making customers homeless due to sanctions. Sanctions were a blunt instrument used to enforce compliance against many vulnerable and already extremely poor people. According to staff, some sanctions were raised bizarrely: for instance against someone who had suffered a stroke and could not attend. However, it was also the case that, at times, staff used discretion to avoid sanctioning vulnerable customers. Staff also insisted that most sanctions were 'out of their hands', blaming WP bureaucracy and automatic systems. This is reminiscent of Rustow's (1980) neo-Weberian argument that bureaucratic procedures can act as filters of psychological deniability, allowing individuals to mentally displace guilt for the awful impacts of their actions.¹³⁹

The consequences of sanctions were deeply concerning. Despite claims by scholars such as Mead (1986), Murray (1982), Wax (2003), Schwartz (2005) Bartholomew (2006), White (2004) and Kreiner *et al.*, (2005), and confirming the

¹³⁹ Rustow draws on the bureaucracies of Nazi concentration camps to make this argument. It would be absurd and offensive to compare WP to these, but, similarly to Erving Goffman (1961), Rustow extends his argument and analysis from this extreme case into later bureaucracies, arguing that this effect, in lesser form, has become a means by which all manner of major and minor infractions against people are justified by the 'cogs' as the actions of a 'machine' that is beyond their control, despite them being the practical administrators of that machine.

findings of the Scottish Government's *Welfare Reform Committee* (Scottish Government, 2015), there was no evidence that withdrawing benefits improved a customer's chances of finding work, nor that it 'encouraged' them to do so. Moreover, sanctions could also often be counterproductive in that they encouraged resistance and disengagement, rather than increased compliance, with the programme - and also by making job seeking more difficult, as bus fares and internet access became an increasingly unviable expense. This confirms tentative findings of similar effects reported by Newton *et al.* (2012).

A bullying and hostile environment?

Numerous scholars have argued that workfare is a bullying, degrading system designed to subject the unemployed to intensive social and/or economic discipline (e.g. Jessop, 1993; Peck, 2001; Goldberg, 2001; Herd *et al.*, 2005; Handler, 2005; Piven and Cloward 2001; Wacquant, 2010, 2012) and, in some cases, even that something like 'bullying' is essential and necessary to 'clear' the underclass (e.g. Mead, 1986; Schwartz, 2005; Wax, 2005).

The data on this matter do not provide a simplistic yes or no answer. There was little scope for extended, direct bullying, given the short amount of time customers spent in the centres. Moreover, differentiating between 'bullying' and the duties that staff *had* to perform as part of their employment role was difficult. For instance, staff had no option *but* to have customers sit at the side of their desks, providing accounts of their personal lives (which one staff member described as "confession"): Herd *et al.*, (2005) characterise this practice as a degrading invasion of privacy. Nevertheless, staff *did* have the power to punish customers by reducing them to total indigence via what was, in effect, a fining system, i.e. sanctions. Clearly, this power to punish leveraged customers' behaviour and had effects that extended well into their lives outside of the centres. This was despite customers not being in the centres for having committed any criminal offence. This gives strong support to arguments made by Bauman (1998), Peck (2001), Attas and De-Shalit (2004) and Wacquant (2010, 2012) that workfare represents an expansion of quasi-penal control; an idea that also echoes Foucault's (1991, 2008) fears of the continued migration of prison technologies into a wider, neoliberal 'carceral continuum'.

Sanctions granted staff significant power over customers, and this ensured that the staff/customer relationship was one of very real power differentials. Staff had, by

and large, formed into a 'group' in Douglas' (1970) sense of a community of shared beliefs. And these beliefs did cohere around the pro-workfare 'underclass' narrative, leading to a strong, formal centre focus on customers' personal lives and habits, and where these needed to change. As staff member 'Pauline' put it: "It's institutionalised behaviour, so that's your barriers. You can see from Bob it's a battle of wills, him reinforcing his barriers, me trying to break them down." Notions of structural unemployment were present but muted in the staff group belief.

One reason why this staff group belief might have formed is that without it, staff would have had almost no purpose. Beyond offering basic help with CVs and job search, there was little else that they could do to challenge wider structural economic problems. Many staff *needed* to believe in a pathological underclass in order to give meaning to their work.¹⁴⁰ This placed staff in a 'grid' relationship with customers: again, in Douglas' (1970) sense of a hierarchy within groups. However, customers were also a *separate* 'group' in their own right: one of varied and disparate individuals, each experiencing a unique 'journey' through the programme. Many customers simply 'went along' with whatever was asked of them. Some challenged the programme directly and were punished, or else were subjected to verbal pressure to conform. The social position of *all* customers was one of subordination, and this was encoded via language, seating position, tone of voice, control of the conversation, enforced 'actions', quasi-psychological and sociological investigations into customers' lives, and the crude and terrifying threat of sanctions. Moreover, customers also found themselves in a, for some, frustrating position in which staff insisted that by following 'the programme' customers could 'turn their lives around' - despite this claim having dubious statistical meaning in terms of job outcomes, and an otherwise unclear general meaning, excepting an encoded assumption that simply by *being on* the programme customers must, by definition, have previously been diverted onto the 'wrong path' by their 'barriers'. The quasi-psychoanalytic process of untrained (in psychoanalysis) staff 'identifying' these barriers and acting as 'counsellors' to overcome them was in itself a questionable and inherently self-fulfilling 'confessional' power-relationship. Skeggs (2004) argues that power relationships are encoded in language use. Skeggs particularly cites the practice of 'telling', i.e. of working class people being forced to explain their personal failures to middle class officials, as an important aspect of post-modern class

¹⁴⁰ Another alternative is, of course, that the staff were correct.

control. Moreover, as Dwyer (2000: 20) points “all [Liberal/Libertarian] approaches share one important common theme, that of the primacy of the individual actor when framing an understanding of social reality.” This type of relationship, and individualising assumption making, defined staff/customer interaction. Moreover, many customers were vulnerable adults, adding a further questionable dimension to the practice of untrained ‘counselling’. The issue of enforced counselling, described by Davies (2015) as ‘compulsory wellbeing’, and of treating unemployment as a mental condition, has since emerged as a controversial aspect of the WP, with the government announcing “integrated employment and mental health support to claimants with common mental health conditions” (HM Government, 2014c),¹⁴¹ and some subsequent protests (Friedli and Stearn, 2015).

Customer views on the programme were divided. While many alleged bullying and being patronised, others spoke of the centre as a positive and welcoming arena. Newton *et al.* (2012) found that customers’ perceptions of the WP were strongly influenced by how well, or otherwise, they felt that their relationship with their caseworker was going. However, the present study found that while many customers had positive relationships with their caseworkers, this did not translate into any simplistic sense that the overall operations of the centres were good. Most customers who had positive relationships with their caseworkers also felt negatively about at least some their centre’s overall operations, and more significantly and emphatically, about the WP more generally. The positive view that many customers expressed regarding their relationship with their caseworkers provides some support for Jahoda’s (1982) argument that social integration is often a vital aspect of a person’s psychological health, and which is missing from the lives of some unemployed individuals.

Wider conversations with customers indicated that there was a generally equal division between those customers who enjoyed being at the centre, and those who did not enjoy being at the centre. As customer experiences were highly individualised, both of these perspectives appeared to be equally valid for the individuals who held them. It might be argued that the establishment of a psychological power relationship based on confessional activity could be experienced as positive, and yet still be questionable and

¹⁴¹ According to welfare minister Lord Freud: “We want people with mental health conditions to have the same opportunities in the world or work as everyone else and not simply written off on out of work sickness benefits as often happened in the past. That is why we are trialing different types of support to improve employment and health outcomes for people with common mental health problems” (HM Government, 2014c).

exploitative, but this perspective in turn could be seen as denying the agency of those customers who stated that they genuinely valued this guidance. And many clearly did. ESA customers were noticeably more likely to enjoy centre attendance.

Staff recognised that their actions were seen negatively by many customers and outsiders, but insisted that this was a ‘tough love’ approach, necessitated by a crumbling welfare system and a caseload of customers requiring long overdue ‘interventions’ in their dysfunctional lives. As staff member Leonie put it:

This is where this is real positive because it breaks into that cycle and says come on, you can’t just go on like this. [...] But then one of the most rewarding things about doing this job is seeing the change. Seeing customers realise that, hold on, this has something good here, something that might actually help me.

Did the programme save money?

Part of the government’s rationale for the WP was that previous schemes “failed to achieve enough positive job outcomes for the long-term unemployed or good value for money for the taxpayer” (Grayling, 2011: 2). It is unlikely that the WP altered this situation. The programme operated in addition to the JCP, and so was a major expense on top of the JCP’s operating costs. Moreover, widespread shifts to working tax-credits also possibly masked a continuation of government spending on the same customers. There was therefore little evidence that Graylings’ political, or Mead’s (1986) earlier theoretical, arguments, that workfare saves money in the long-term, held true.

4. Conclusion

Nationally, in extremis, elements of both the ‘pro’ and ‘anti’ WP narratives were probably true. However, data from the researched centres reveal a more complex and nuanced picture. Staff were not a bloc of inhuman bullies, but nor were they highly trained ‘counsellors’ operating a state-of-the-art employment agency. With the centres woefully underfunded, staff – who were effectively admin and office workers operating, by their own admission, as under-paid social work keyworkers - found themselves delivering a basic and generic service under deeply stressful, often distressing, conditions. They were expected to resolve the consequences of years of structural poverty, austerity and collapsing job markets with twenty-minute monthly appointments. And, moreover, to achieve this outcome whilst simultaneously

maintaining ‘discipline’ over a disheartened and frustrated customer group, including a small minority of individuals with histories of serious violence, with only a blunt and inflexible sanctions regime. The notion that all, or even many claimants were feckless scroungers transpired to be wholly unsupported. Even if there were some individuals like this, they were outlying exceptions. The notion of an ‘intergenerational underclass’ was not supported by the data. Customers were primarily male, and many middle-aged, and mostly former manual workers with long work histories. Many customers, by definition (being ESA customers), had health problems. Some of these health problems, such as strokes, heart conditions, severe depression and spinal injuries, were so serious that referral to the programme was felt even by staff to be wholly inappropriate. Nevertheless, the desire to work was strong amongst most WP attendees; so much so that some became deeply upset when discussing their plight. Customers who could work were, on the whole, desperate *to* work. The idea of ‘welfare dependency’ proved to be no more than a tautology: by definition, customers were dependent on welfare, but this did not indicate that welfare caused that dependency.

The ‘tailored help and support’ promised by the government appeared to be inadequate, pointlessly punitive, and falsely predicated upon the notion that the ‘problem’ was the idleness and personal failures of the claimants. This assumption had transformed the programme into a form of psychological confession and counselling system, designed to overcome and identify customers’ ‘barriers’. Barriers *had* to be found by staff, whether they existed or not, in order for staff to continue operating the programme.

There was little evidence of any improvement upon, or even moving beyond, the standard welfare-to-work practices that had failed to achieve positive results under the Flexible New Deal: namely, occasional ‘caseworker’ meetings, CV writing, job search sessions and very basic courses. The fact that some individuals might have been claiming benefits due to illness, and not idleness, and therefore might have previously worked in above ‘entry-level’ roles, was ignored, or rather, accepting this possibility was mitigated against by the centres’ inadequate budgets. Hence, the available training and service provision was targeted solely at entry-level employment.

The regular practice of subjecting customers to what was, in effect, a kangaroo-court system in which they were substantially fined for minor infractions, and without access to due process, representation or legal guidance, and leading, inevitably, to profound and devastating consequences, was deeply concerning. There was no question

that this ‘sanctions regime’ reduced individuals and families to penury, including foodbank use. Nor was there any question that this practice was devastatingly and immorally detrimental to carers, and therefore particularly to women. Moreover, the sanctions system achieved little, and was often counterproductive, especially when applied to customers who were otherwise engaging with the programme.

Job ‘outcomes’ were scarce, hence staff spent most of their time engaged in ‘social work’ – what I call ‘life triage’ – helping claimants with non-work related problems. Staff re-defined their sense of what ‘success’ meant towards ‘life-triage’, viewing this as a useful social service in and of itself. There was strong customer support for this idea: many customers spoke of positively enjoying attendance, albeit primarily as a social activity. This dichotomy between deeply concerning practices and those who enjoyed centre attendance was a key aspect of the centres’ complex reality.

Staff faced intolerable pressures to cope with a targets based results system in a climate of substantially falling caseloads, and a parlous jobs market generally hostile to WP customers. This left staff working primarily with ‘red-light’ customers who were, according to staff, unlikely to ever get back into work. Meanwhile, the entire workfare industry was subject to a ‘zero-work self-employment’ scandal in which welfare claimants were transferred to ‘self-employment’ status - for which they received almost the same amount in government benefits – without being required to perform any work. WP centres classed this as a ‘sustainable job outcome’, and the government classed this as a ‘job’

The government’s key claim of creating ‘sustainable work’ was found to be a matter of keeping a claimant in work for only six months, with 40% of such ‘sustainable work’ outcomes consisting of multiple spells in often low-quality roles such as call centres or temporary manual work. Moreover, the centres were kept financially viable by directing a constant stream of customers to three major call centres with high staff turnover rates.

As a ‘social service’, the programme had many positive aspects for those claimants who *wanted* the regular contact and/or someone to help and advise them. But as a £3.5 billion social club and minimal provision service, it is difficult to reconcile the expense, and the reality, with the spirit of the pro-workfare narrative. Nor, moreover, with the government’s WP policy rationale, or its underpinning evolutionary ideology. At the implementation of the WP, Iain Duncan Smith stated that: “We will reform the regime so that we properly reward the providers who do best at creating

sustainable jobs that help people move out of benefits and into work. But we are not prepared to pay for anything less” (Smith, 2010: 5). The data do not support this statement.

Neither of the two great ‘workfare narratives’ appeared to be generally true. Rather, the data revealed a surprising third reality: The WP, at least as far as the centres researched for this study were concerned, was a pointless and extremely expensive ‘white elephant’ that did not match up to the government’s claims. It is possible that the ‘point’ of the WP is that the government wishes to appear to be tackling unemployment, regardless of the efficacy of the scheme. It is also possible that the WP is intended only to be one stage in a deeper modification, or even rollback, of the welfare state. However, considered on its own merits, and in the government’s own terms of providing help and support to the long-term unemployed, the WP, in this case, appeared to serve no apparent practical purpose whatsoever beyond providing some rudimentary advice and training, and a social service for some socially excluded individuals.

Chapter Nine:

Conclusion

1. Introduction

This thesis presented research conducted into the UK government's 'Work Programme' as it was operating in two locations in the north of England in 2014. The research was based on 68 interviews with staff, welfare claimants, foodbank managers and one anti-workfare activist, plus field research embedded in two WP centres. The remainder of this chapter will briefly outline: 1) this thesis's contribution to knowledge, 2) some potential areas for further research, 3) six policy recommendations, 4) concluding thoughts.

2. Contribution to knowledge

This thesis provided five key contributions to knowledge. This section considers each in turn.

1. While discussion surrounding workfare is widespread amongst social welfare theorists, very little research exists based on fieldwork inside workfare centres. Even less qualitative research exists that combines fieldwork observation with interviews with staff and welfare claimants, thereby providing data that are both balanced and also contextually robust. This thesis fills this lacuna, providing a rare window onto the daily life of workfare centres.
2. While much social welfare theory supports one or other of the two major workfare 'narratives', this thesis provided an original third perspective: that

workfare can be essentially pointless, at least in terms of employment outcomes, so that neither narrative proves to be true. This finding, supported by empirical data, marks an extension of current thinking. It does, however, fit strongly with the Marxist perception of poor law schemes as disciplinary mechanisms of capitalism (Marx, 1887; Miliband, 1974), considering that ‘discipline’ need not entail work. However, this thesis also found that, contrary to reports of extreme ‘micro-regulation’ enforced against welfare claimants (e.g. Peck, 2001; Herd *et al.*, 2005; Byrne, 2005), customers were rarely in the centres. This left little opportunity for direct, ongoing bullying or micro-regulation. ‘Pointlessness’, although difficult to accept as a theoretical perspective, proved to be an aspect of centre operation, at least in day-to-day terms. The ‘point’ may exist at a higher level of system logic, but that is beyond the remit of this thesis.

3. This thesis contributed to ongoing debates surrounding workfare’s alleged use as a ‘forced labour’ scheme, or else global neoliberal policy employed to force workers into modern helotry (Jessop, 1996; Peck, 2002; Byrne, 2005). In this case, at least, forced work was not found to constitute a part of the centres’ operations. Moreover, that most customers never achieved any form of employment; forced, voluntary or otherwise.
4. This thesis found that a major ‘moral hazard’ existed over the possibility of transferring welfare claimants to another government benefit, in the form of self-employment tax credits, thus boosting the apparent success rate of the WP.
5. This thesis intervened in the often hostile debate surrounding workfare by presenting the views of workfare staff and customers in their own words, revealing that staff were subject to numerous constraints and pressures. The data in this case did not support the argument that individual bullying was widespread or essential to the operation of the centres. Nevertheless, clear claims of bullying were made by eight interviewees, and several other customers did mention in passing conversation that the centres were hostile, and the staff bullies. There was clear evidence that the operations of the centres, as administered by the staff, were institutionally geared towards coercing customers to follow a range of rules and practices which, if not obeyed, led to sanctioning and subsequent appalling consequences, such as, in extreme cases, stress, distress, homelessness and lack of food. The threat of sanctioning was itself stressful for the majority of customers. This thesis also found that most

WP customers either wanted to work, or else felt unable to do so due to ill health. (The thesis also revealed that many individuals had been referred to the WP when their ill health made this a dubious decision.) The underpinning rationale of the WP – that the long-term unemployed are idle or otherwise unwilling to work – was found to be either false, or else grossly misleading in most cases.

3. *Avenues for future research*

This thesis could have provided more comprehensive data if more centres had been researched, and particularly centres run by other Primes and providers. Researching centres with higher levels of black and minority ethnic customers, or centres in different parts of the UK, would also have extended the scope of the analysis, and therefore the general relevance of the findings. A wider study, addressing the above limitations, would be a valuable avenue of future sociological investigation. Research directed specifically at female, single parent, BME, youth, prison leavers or older claimants would also provide useful data not sufficiently accounted for in the current study. The destinations of customers, into work, or into further, more intensive schemes, and the impacts of this and other aspects of ‘welfare reform’ on a claimant’s home life, health and psychological wellbeing are also all important areas for potential future study.

4. *Policy Recommendations*

While further research is required to ensure that the findings of this thesis reflect the WP on a national level, six policy comments and recommendations can be made, tentatively, based on the current data. These are:

1. The current ‘tailored help and support’ available to the long-term unemployed via the WP is inadequate. A significantly higher investment would be required in order to provide superior training. Moreover, it is essential that any such investment be *in* training and/or genuine opportunities, and not in extending the remit of currently poorly performing programmes to include more of the unemployed.
2. Sanctions are cruel, socially unconscionable, and have little, if any, practical value. The use of sanctions should cease immediately.

3. The issue of long-term social isolation requires an alternative solution. That some people found the programme useful as a social service indicates a wider problem of loneliness and isolation amongst certain sections of the UK population. An alternative to the WP, one which abandons the conditionality and ‘workfare’ elements of the programme, but which retains the social service elements on a voluntary basis, could be introduced for this group.
4. The practice of transferring onto a zero-work tax-credits ‘pathway’ out of the WP should be investigated and halted. The extent to which this practice might be underpinning the WP’s apparent success rate should be investigated.
5. The oppressive paperwork and targets regime of the WP interferes with service provision, and should therefore be overhauled and replaced. More leeway should be given to WP staff to engage in long-term work with customers. Where necessary, ‘soft’ outcomes that might not lead to employment, but which nevertheless benefit a claimant, should be valued and encouraged. However, such long-term involvement should also become voluntary.
6. Finally, the WP itself should be phased out and replaced with a simpler service that provides voluntary help, advice, CV writing and re-training.

5. *Final comments*

The ‘pro’ workfare lobby has not changed in essential sentiment since the Statute of Labourers of 1351 stated that:

[...] giving themselves up to idleness and sins, and, at times, to robbery and other crimes, let no one [...] cherish them [beggars] in their sloth, so that thus they may be compelled to labour for the necessaries of life.

Nor has the ‘anti’ workfare narrative shifted much since Marx stated in 1867 that:

The fathers of the present working class were chastised for their enforced transformation into vagabonds and paupers. Legislation treated them as “voluntary” criminals, and assumed that it depended on their own good will to go on working under the old conditions that no longer existed. (Marx, 1887: 515).

Throughout this thesis I have emphasised the recurrent and longstanding nature of the ‘pro’ and ‘anti’ workfare narratives, which appear as far back as ancient Mesopotamian folklore. (See Chapter Three). In modern times, the UK government has re-articulated

the ‘pro’ workfare narrative by claiming that the WP would provide a revolutionary new approach to welfare. This was alleged to allow private, for-profit firms the freedom to innovate radical programmes that offered ‘tailored help and support’ to the long-term unemployed (DWP, 2011c). The government also claimed that the WP would encourage the unemployed into ‘sustainable job outcomes’ (Grayling, 2011; DWP, 2011c). Proponents of this ‘market welfare’ approach hoped to see it ‘evolve’ advanced, highly effective, pro-work welfare systems. The anti-workfare narrative, by contrast, echoed ancient complaints by proposing that ‘welfare-to-work’ was a bullying system designed to force, or ‘churn’, the unemployed into low quality work, or else to ‘cream’ the most employable customers while ‘parking’ the remainder in-centre (Handler, 1995; Goldberg, 2001; Peck, 2001; Byrne, 2005). A range of social commentators have accused the WP of doing all of these things (Boycott Workfare, 2014; Viney, 2014; Silvera, 2014).

This thesis collected the stories of people for whom workfare was a lived experience, in the context of workfare itself as a material reality. It provided a rare insight, in other words, into workfare as a lifeworld. My own story, as a participant observer, was added to this mix. The conclusion of these combined accounts is that the Work Programme did not ‘make welfare work’.

Appendix I:

Ethics Forms

Application Number.....

(faculty coding)
(Sep 2007)

Date.....



**MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, LANGUAGES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES**

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

Introduction

All university activity must be reviewed for ethical approval. In particular, all undergraduate, postgraduate and staff research work, projects and taught programmes must obtain approval from their Faculty Academic Ethics committee (or delegated Departmental Ethics Committee).

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The form should be completed legibly (preferably typed) and, so far as possible, in a way which would enable a layperson to understand the aims and methods of the research. Every relevant section should be completed. Applicants should also include a copy of any proposed advert, information sheet, consent form and, if relevant, any questionnaire being used. The Principal Investigator should sign the application form. Supporting documents, together with one copy of the full protocol should be sent to the Administrator of the appropriate Faculty Academic Ethics Committee. (Insert contact details)

Your application will require external ethical approval by an NHS Research Ethics

Committee if your research involves staff, patients or premises of the NHS (see guidance notes)

Work with children and vulnerable adults

You will be required to have a Criminal Disclosure, if your work involves children or vulnerable adults.

The Faculty Academic Ethics Committee meets every (insert period) and will respond as soon as possible, and where appropriate, will operate a process of expedited review. Applications that require approval by an NHS Research Ethics Committee or a Criminal Disclosure will take longer - perhaps 3 months.

1. DETAILS OF APPLICANT (S)

1.1 Principal Investigator: (Member of staff or student responsible for work)

Name, qualifications, post held, tel. no, e-mail

John David Jordan

BA Sociology and Modern Studies [MMU 1993]

MA Sociology and Global Transformations [MMU Expected 2012]

0161 718 7094

John.d.jordan@stu.mmu.ac.co.uk

1.2 Co-Workers and their role in the project: (e.g. students, external collaborators, etc)

Details (Name, tel. no, email)

None

1.3 University Department/Research Institute/Other Unit:

Department of Sociology, MMU

2. DETAILS OF THE PROJECT

2.1 Title:

The Work Programme: Making Welfare Work?

2.2 Description of Project: (please **outline** the background and the purpose of the research project, 250 words max.).

This research project will explore the day-to-day running of the Work Programme, which is the current UK government's welfare programme to get the long term unemployed back into work. I will be researching the activities and processes which take place in Work Programme centres, such as re-training and 'job searching. My research will use field observation and interviews and is intended to answer the five following questions:

1. What are the empirical realities of day-to-day life in a Work Programme centre for staff and attendees, and what practices and processes are used at such centres? How do these practices and processes affect the employment outcomes of Work Programme attendees?
2. Does a benefit claimant's experience of the Work Programme vary by age, gender or ethnicity? If so, is this also affected by geographical location?
3. Are there ways in which the aim of 'successful outcomes' is being modified by Work programme centres to mean something other than employment? For example, social control, life-style re-training or encouraging claimants to leave welfare despite not finding employment?
4. Is the Work Programme effectively addressing the issue of long-term unemployment?
5. To what extent can the Work Programme be said to be a 'neoliberal' welfare regime?

Describe what type of study this is (e.g. qualitative or quantitative; also indicate how the data will be collected and analysed). Additional sheets may be attached.

This project will use field observation, interviews and documentary analysis to study at least one Work Programme centre in each of two areas, Stockport and Central Manchester. As Work programme centres may reflect the prejudices and structures of contingent labour markets, these two areas have been chosen for differences in unemployment rates, ethnic make-up and economic geography. Drawing on Gellner (1970) and Radcliffe-Brown (1952) I will use direct field observation (three weeks per centre) to construct a 'map' of the structures, processes and functions of WP centres. Combined with analyses of statistical, policy and government documents this will allow me to uncover crucial elements of WP practice not necessarily recognised or observed by interview participants such as the possible dynamics of socio-economic and class functions embedded within daily practice. Field observation will require negotiation with gatekeepers to secure access. Provisional interest from one major WP provider operating centres across the North West has already been negotiated. However, if this proves impossible to arrange, the number of interviews as well as documentary analysis will be expanded to compensate. I will conduct semi-structured interviews with 40-45 current or former work programme attendees, discussing the processes utilised by WP (meetings with case workers, 'job-search', re-training, work experience placements) and the participants' overall experiences/feelings as regards the Programme. In addition, I will conduct around five interviews with staff members from each area, making a total of approximately 54-55+ interviews.

Using interview data I intend, following Goffman (1961), to build a picture of what a 'career' through a WP centre consists of, capturing the diachronic and progressive nature of the experience.

2.3 Are you going to use a questionnaire? YES
(Please attach a copy)

I will primarily use semi-structured interviews. A copy of the primary question structure has been attached to this document.

2.4 Start Date / Duration of project:

October 2012 to September 2015 (35 months)

2.5 Location of where the project and data collection will take place:

The North West region of England, specifically Stockport and Central Manchester

2.6 Nature/Source of funding

Studentship

2.7 Are there any regulatory requirements? YES/NO/N/A

If yes, please give details, e.g., from relevant professional bodies
No

3. DETAILS OF PARTICIPANTS

3.1 How many? 55

3.2 Age: Between 18 and 65

3.3 Sex: Male and female

3.4 How will they be recruited?

(Attach a copy of any proposed advertisement)

Snowball sampling

3.5 Status of participants: (e.g. students, public, colleagues, children, hospital patients, prisoners, including young offenders, participants with mental illness or learning difficulties.)

The participants will be either current or former, attendees or staff, at Work Programme centres.

3.6 Inclusion and exclusion from the project: (indicate the criteria to be applied).

Possible differing experiences of WP will be accounted for by setting sample quotas. In each area I will conduct around 22 or more interviews with Work Programme clients, divided into the following quotas: 15 males (10 under 50 years old and 5 over 50); 7 females (4 under 50 years old and 3 over 50). The numbers of visible ethnic minority people interviewed will be weighted to reflect Central Manchester's higher BME population. WP attendance lasts for two years. As this is intended to be a progressive process, I would seek to carry out a follow-up interview with each participant at an interval of 4-5 months to capture any changes in attitudes or circumstances, making a total of around 110 interviews.

The minimum age for the Work Programme is 18, so no under 18s will be involved in the study.

3.7 Payment to volunteers: (indicate any sums to be paid to volunteers).

None.

3.8 Study information:

Have you provided a study information sheet for the participants? YES

Please attach a copy of the information sheet, where appropriate

3.9 Consent:

(A written consent form for the study participants MUST be provided in all cases, unless the research is a questionnaire.)

Have you produced a written consent form for the participants to sign for your records? YES

Please attach as appropriate.

4. RISKS AND HAZARDS

Please respond to the following questions if applicable

4.1 Are there any risks to the researcher and/or participants?

(Give details of the procedures and processes to be undertaken, e.g., if the researcher is a lone-worker.)

No research risks.

4.2 State precautions to minimise the risks and possible adverse events:

4.3 What discomfort (physical or psychological) danger or interference with normal activities might be suffered by the researcher and/or participant(s)? State precautions which will be taken to minimise them:

None.

5. PLEASE DESCRIBE ANY ETHICAL ISSUES RAISED AND HOW YOU INTEND TO ADDRESS THESE:

Due to UK government policies a number of different types of unemployed people have been streamed into the Work Programme. This includes some adults with learning difficulties who could not be reasonably expected to give informed consent. I would decline to interview any such persons.

6. SAFEGUARDS /PROCEDURAL COMPLIANCE

6.1 Confidentiality:

- (a) Indicate what steps will be taken to safeguard the confidentiality of participant records. If the data is to be computerised, it will be necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

Data will be both recorded and transcribed. This information will be held on a detachable memory stick, with a password, and in password protected digital files. The data stick will be kept in a secure, locked cupboard. No one else will be allowed to see the information. The information will not be stored on a lap top or hard drive.

- (b) If you are intending to make any kind of audio or visual recordings of the participants, please answer the following questions:

- a. How long will the recordings be retained and how will they be stored?

Recordings will be kept for three years – the duration of the research project. As above, they will be stored in password protected digital files on a password protected data stick, in a locked, secure cupboard. The information will not be stored on a lap top or hard drive.

- b. How will they be destroyed at the end of the project?

The data sticks will be wiped, formatted and physically destroyed.

- c. What further use, if any, do you intend to make of the recordings?

None.

6.2 Human Tissue Act:

The Human Tissue Act came into force in November 2004, and requires appropriate consent for, and regulates the removal, storage and use of all human tissue.

a. Does your project involve taking tissue samples, e.g., blood, urine, hair, etc., from human subjects?

No

b. Will this be discarded when the project is terminated? YES/NO/N/A

If NO – Explain how the samples will be placed into a tissue bank under the Human Tissue Act regulations:

6.3 Insurance:

The University holds insurance policies that will cover claims for negligence arising from the conduct of the University’s normal business, which includes research carried out by staff and by undergraduate and postgraduate students as part of their courses. This does **not** extend to clinical negligence. There are no arrangements to provide indemnity and/or compensation in the event of claims for non-negligent harm.

Will the proposed project result in you undertaking any activity that would not be considered as normal University business? If so, please detail below:

None.

6.4 Notification of Adverse Events (e.g., negative reaction, counsellor, etc):

(Indicate precautions taken to avoid adverse reactions.)

Please state the processes/procedures in place to respond to possible adverse reactions.

Unemployment is a very stressful experience. If individuals being interviewed become upset and appear depressed discussing these issues, I will recommend that they contact their GP to discuss possible help and advice.

In the case of clinical research, you will need to abide by specific guidance. This may include notification to GP and ethics committee. **Please seek guidance for up to date advice**, e.g., see the NRES website at <http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/>

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

DATE:


.....


.....

SIGNATURE OF FACULTY ACADEMIC ETHICS

DATE:

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON:

.....

APPENDIX

Checklist of attachments needed:

1. Participant consent form
2. Participant information sheet
3. Full protocol
4. Advertising details
5. Insurance notification forms
6. NHS forms (where appropriate)
7. Other evidence of ethical approval (e.g., another University Ethics Committee approval)

Appendix II:

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Candidate: *John David Jordan*

Research project Title: *The Work Programme: Making Welfare Work?*

Sample Interview Questions

Format: Semi-structured

Name					
Gender	Male	Female			
Age group	18-29	29-39	39-49	49-59	59+
Ethnicity					
Location (S or CM)					
Centre					
Commenced on the Work Programme:					
Previous employment role/s					
Highest qualification					

17. Approximately when did you begin attending the Work Programme?

18. Approximately how long have you been claiming Job Seeker's allowance?

19. Were you transferred to Job Seeker's allowance from another benefit?

If yes:

- How do you feel about that?

20. What was your last paid employment role?

21. How often do you attend the work programme centre? Has any reason been given for that?

22. Did you attend an induction day or induction course at the Work Programme centre?

If yes:

- How long did the induction last for?

- What happened on the induction?

23. Do you attend interviews with a caseworker?

If yes:

- How often do you attend interviews?

- How long do they last for, on average?

- What kinds of things are discussed at the interviews?

- How would you describe your relationship with your caseworker? Why?
- Do you find the interviews useful? Why do you say that?
- Have caseworkers suggested particular types of jobs that they want you to apply for?
- What kinds of information or evidence do caseworkers ask for regarding your 'job-seeking' activities?

24. Do you attend 'Job-Search' sessions?

If yes:

- What do you do on Job-Search sessions?
- How long do you do it?
- How do you feel about doing Job-Search?
- Do you find Job-Search useful?

25. Do you, or have you attended any training courses through the Work Programme centre?

If yes:

- Were these run in the centre or by other training providers?
- What training courses have you attended?
- Were these courses compulsory or voluntary?
- (If voluntary) Why did you choose to go on this course?
- What kinds of things did you do on the course?
- How effective do you think the training courses were in terms of teaching what they were supposed to teach? Why do you say that?

If the course was compulsory, did it turn out to be a worthwhile activity, in your opinion?

26. Have you been on a work experience placement under the Work Programme?

If yes:

- What did you do?
- How long for?
- Was it compulsory?
- How many times have you been on a work experience placement?
- How would you describe your working relationship with employed staff members at the work placement?
- Do you feel that the experience was worthwhile in terms of helping towards re-employment? Why do you say that?
- Do you feel that doing work experience was worthwhile in personal terms? Why do you say that?

If no:

- Has the idea of doing a work experience placement been suggested to you?
- Do you want to do a work experience placement? Why do you say that?
- Do you feel that any pressure has been put on you to take a work experience placement?

Thinking of your time on the Work Programme more generally:

27. How useful do you feel that it has been in terms of getting you nearer to being back in employment? Why do you say that?
28. How would you describe the relationship between staff and clients at the centre? Why do you say that?
29. Have you attended any different Work Programme or similar centres or previous welfare schemes, such as the Flexible New Deal?
If yes:
 - How does this centre, and the Work Programme more generally, compare with those?

Appendix III:

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Forms

Project Title: *Researching the Work Programme*

John David Jordan, Manchester Metropolitan University

John.d.jordan@stu.mmu.ac.uk

Date:

Dear Participant

Thank you for kindly agreeing to take part in this sociological research project. My name is John Jordan and I am conducting this research as part of a doctoral (PhD) degree at Manchester Metropolitan University. My supervisors are Dr Susie Jacobs and Dr Karthryn Chadwick. This research project is independent from the Government or any Work Programme centre. My credentials and identity can be checked by contacting the university's research office director at d.bown@mmu.ac.uk.

The purpose of this research project is to look at the way the Work Programme actually works in practice. I want to find out what activities and processes take place in Work Programme centres, how effective these are, or aren't, in terms of getting people back into employment, and what other experiences people are having as they go through the new benefits system. One of the ways I am gathering this information is through asking questions in interviews.

The interview will be a relaxed chat about your experiences and will last between half an hour and an hour. I would prefer to use a recording device to record the interview but if you do not want me to do that then this is fine and I will take notes instead. No one else will hear the recordings. I will write-up what was said in the interview and what you tell me will be used to make generalised observations about the Work Programme. In some cases what you say might be quoted directly, but anonymously, in the final PhD written project. That project will be published. Your anonymity will be protected at all stages and all information you provide will be kept securely so that no one else can see it. False names will be used in the final report – including false names for any other people or locations you mention. A digital copy of the interview and/or final project will be made available to you upon request.

All interviews are voluntary. You are entitled to change your mind and withdraw from participation at any time, either during or after the interview. The information you give me will not be passed to your caseworker/advisor,

Work programme provider, Job Centre Plus or any other organisation, and will be treated as completely confidential.

Thank you for your participation. Please read and sign below. If you have any difficulty reading or understanding any part of this document, or if you have any further questions, please ask me for clarification.

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Researching The Work Programme

Name of researcher: John David Jordan

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated..... for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. I acknowledge the risks associated with the study and they have been explained to me.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.

3. I agree to John David Jordan conducting an interview with me.

Name of participant Date Signature

__John David Jordan_____

Name of person
taking consent

Date

Signature

Appendix IV:

Nvivo Coding Nodes

(1) Customer interview nodes.

Nodes									
Look for: <input type="text"/> Search In <input type="text"/> Nodes <input type="text"/> Find New <input type="text"/> Clear <input type="text"/> Advanced Find <input type="text"/>									
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By			
Activities	31	201	05/07/2015 19:07	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			
Adviser Interviews	28	126	12/07/2015 20:27	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			
Advisers give instructions	2	3	14/07/2015 15:38	JDU	14/07/2015 15:42	JDU			
Feelings about the meetings	11	16	14/07/2015 15:40	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU			
First Interview	6	9	14/07/2015 00:17	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU			
Frequency of attendance	11	13	14/07/2015 00:15	JDU	14/07/2015 16:06	JDU			
Length of interview	7	8	14/07/2015 00:16	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU			
Paperwork and Standard Activities	8	15	14/07/2015 00:18	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU			
Things advisers say	9	14	14/07/2015 15:41	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU			
Things that happen	7	12	14/07/2015 15:44	JDU	14/07/2015 16:08	JDU			
Brenda's Social Club	4	15	12/07/2015 20:28	JDU	12/07/2015 23:12	JDU			
Flexible New Deal	2	3	13/07/2015 13:25	JDU	04/08/2015 21:16	JDU			
Job Club	17	27	12/07/2015 20:28	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU			
Job club is bad	9	10	10/08/2015 21:05	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU			
Sanctions	13	18	12/07/2015 20:29	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			
Yes	6	6	12/08/2015 19:03	JDU	12/08/2015 19:05	JDU			
Self-Employment Adviser	2	2	12/07/2015 23:08	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU			
Training	22	31	12/07/2015 20:29	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			
Positive	15	17	11/08/2015 14:17	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			
Negative	5	5	11/08/2015 14:20	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU			
Repeat	3	3	11/08/2015 14:21	JDU	11/08/2015 14:24	JDU			
Being sent on the programme	13	13	07/08/2015 12:21	JDU	17/10/2015 11:55	JDU			
Indifferent	3	3	07/08/2015 12:21	JDU	07/08/2015 13:27	JDU			
Indifferent	3	3	07/08/2015 13:47	JDU	07/08/2015 13:27	JDU			
Negative	9	9	07/08/2015 12:21	JDU	17/10/2015 11:55	JDU			
Positive	1	1	07/08/2015 12:21	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU			
Biographic data	31	121	05/07/2015 18:51	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			

Nodes		Look for:	Search In	Nodes	Find Now	Clear	Advanced Find
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By	
Biographic data	31	121	06/07/2015 18:51	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU	
Age	5	5	12/07/2015 20:26	JDU	12/07/2015 23:35	JDU	
ESA or USA	2	2	12/07/2015 23:29	JDU	12/07/2015 23:30	JDU	
Family Matters	4	6	12/07/2015 23:27	JDU	13/07/2015 13:59	JDU	
Gender	3	3	12/07/2015 23:28	JDU	12/07/2015 23:34	JDU	
Health	13	30	12/07/2015 23:26	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU	
How long on the programme	25	26	12/07/2015 23:33	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU	
How long unemployed	15	15	12/07/2015 23:32	JDU	17/10/2015 11:55	JDU	
Qualifications	3	3	12/07/2015 23:27	JDU	12/07/2015 23:37	JDU	
Work History	27	39	12/07/2015 23:26	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU	
Call centre	1	2	04/08/2015 19:28	JDU	04/08/2015 21:12	JDU	
Closer to being on work	3	3	06/08/2015 19:52	JDU	07/08/2015 11:24	JDU	
Compliance or not	9	15	07/07/2015 18:21	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU	
Just going along with it	12	20	13/07/2015 13:44	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU	
Total Resistance	2	3	13/07/2015 13:53	JDU	14/07/2015 15:55	JDU	
Views round the system	1	2	13/07/2015 13:45	JDU	13/07/2015 13:46	JDU	
Dehumanisation	2	4	06/08/2015 19:56	JDU	07/08/2015 11:23	JDU	
External events	16	28	06/07/2015 20:47	JDU	17/10/2015 11:55	JDU	
ATOS	6	10	13/07/2015 13:54	JDU	17/10/2015 11:55	JDU	
Bedroom tax	1	1	13/07/2015 13:59	JDU	13/07/2015 14:00	JDU	
Community Action Programme	2	2	13/07/2015 14:00	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU	
External training	2	2	13/07/2015 13:56	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU	
Job Centre	14	26	13/07/2015 13:54	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU	
Media Representations	6	6	13/07/2015 14:04	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU	
General opinion of V/P	16	30	06/07/2015 19:08	JDU	17/10/2015 11:55	JDU	
Govt should create jobs	2	3	06/08/2015 17:09	JDU	06/08/2015 17:13	JDU	
Negative about V/P	8	13	13/07/2015 14:20	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU	
Support V/P in Principle	10	18	13/07/2015 14:19	JDU	17/10/2015 11:55	JDU	
General opinions on the centre	30	160	06/07/2015 18:52	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU	

Nodes		Sources		References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
General opinions on the centre	30	160	05/07/2015 18:52	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU		
Negative about the Centre	22	85	13/07/2015 14:29	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU		
Other opinions about the centre	16	26	13/07/2015 18:00	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU		
Positive about the Centre	16	50	13/07/2015 14:29	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU		
Adviser great	7	8	12/08/2015 15:31	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU		
Generally ok	5	5	12/08/2015 15:31	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU		
Social contact	8	16	12/08/2015 15:30	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU		
Job types	0	0	12/08/2015 18:41	JDU	12/08/2015 18:41	JDU		
Letter	10	12	07/08/2015 11:50	JDU	17/10/2015 11:55	JDU		
Letter worrying	0	0	07/08/2015 11:59	JDU	07/08/2015 11:59	JDU		
Miscellaneous	25	39	07/07/2015 18:28	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU		
No privacy	2	2	07/08/2015 12:27	JDU	07/08/2015 13:33	JDU		
Office atmosphere	1	1	06/08/2015 11:56	JDU	06/08/2015 11:56	JDU		
Outsiders don't get it	3	4	06/08/2015 11:17	JDU	06/08/2015 19:55	JDU		
Parking	1	1	12/08/2015 17:37	JDU	12/08/2015 17:37	JDU		
Programme affects health	2	2	07/08/2015 11:23	JDU	07/08/2015 11:28	JDU		
Searching for work	29	95	05/07/2015 18:56	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU		
Actively looking for work	23	59	13/07/2015 19:41	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU		
Happy with entry level	13	14	12/08/2015 18:42	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU		
Not happy with entry level	3	3	12/08/2015 18:43	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU		
Not looking for work	9	31	13/07/2015 19:41	JDU	17/10/2015 11:55	JDU		
Female	2	2	09/08/2015 20:45	JDU	17/10/2015 11:55	JDU		
Male	7	7	09/08/2015 20:45	JDU	09/08/2015 20:49	JDU		
Shame	2	5	06/08/2015 11:36	JDU	06/08/2015 11:51	JDU		
Sort of underclass	10	18	08/08/2015 13:04	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU		
The Programme	31	188	05/08/2015 19:40	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU		
Conditional support	31	100	06/08/2015 11:05	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU		
Experience good	5	9	07/08/2015 14:30	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU		

Nodes									
Look for: <input type="text"/>									
Search in <input type="text"/> Nodes <input type="text"/>									
Find Now <input type="button"/> Clear <input type="button"/> Advanced Find <input type="button"/>									
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By			
<input type="radio"/> Experience good	5	9	07/08/2015 14:30	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Leave sick alone	4	7	07/08/2015 14:34	JDU	07/08/2015 14:42	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Might be good for some	2	3	07/08/2015 14:31	JDU	07/08/2015 14:41	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Needs to offer much more	6	12	07/08/2015 14:33	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Offer it earlier	0	0	07/08/2015 14:38	JDU	07/08/2015 14:38	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Ok for young people	1	1	07/08/2015 14:30	JDU	08/08/2015 19:54	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Should help youth more	2	4	07/08/2015 14:32	JDU	07/08/2015 14:33	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Stop bullying	2	2	07/08/2015 14:35	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Different for ESA	10	32	06/08/2015 11:08	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Good social service	5	10	06/08/2015 11:07	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Need for jobs	12	16	06/08/2015 11:04	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Govt must create jobs	3	5	08/08/2015 19:33	JDU	08/08/2015 19:34	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Totally against basic idea	2	7	06/08/2015 19:42	JDU	06/08/2015 11:52	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Transfers across programmes	2	2	06/08/2015 11:09	JDU	06/08/2015 19:54	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> What other customers do	14	28	06/07/2015 21:11	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Customers are losers	2	3	13/07/2015 21:25	JDU	13/07/2015 21:28	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Foreigners claiming benefits	1	1	13/07/2015 21:23	JDU	13/07/2015 21:23	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Other customers are sad cases	3	3	13/07/2015 21:24	JDU	17/10/2015 11:55	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Other customers resisting	6	8	13/07/2015 21:22	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Other customers' stories and excuses	1	1	13/07/2015 21:22	JDU	13/07/2015 21:22	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Other customers think it's rubbish	3	4	13/07/2015 21:27	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Some customers are skivers	8	12	13/07/2015 21:21	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> What staff say and do	25	74	06/07/2015 18:53	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Neutral or formal activity	7	12	13/07/2015 21:45	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Staff actions negative	17	50	13/07/2015 21:40	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Bullying	10	15	12/08/2015 14:49	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Patronising	9	10	12/08/2015 14:55	JDU	17/10/2015 11:50	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Staff actions positive	7	13	13/07/2015 21:39	JDU	17/10/2015 11:59	JDU			
<input type="radio"/> Unclear whether positive or negative	5	5	13/07/2015 21:41	JDU	17/10/2015 11:32	JDU			

- Nodes
- Relationships
- Node Matrices

- Sources
- Nodes**
- Classifications
- Collections
- Queries
- Reports
- Models
- Folders

(2) Nodes for staff interviews.

Nodes		Look for:		Search In		Find Now		Clear		Advanced Find					
Nodes		Nodes		Sources		References		Created On		Created By		Modified On		Modified By	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Awareness of criticisms	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 11:55	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	28/07/2015 13:01	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Barriers	<input type="checkbox"/>	14	<input type="checkbox"/>	53	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 13:43	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bidding low for the V/P contract	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 11:46	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	28/07/2015 13:01	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bullying	<input type="checkbox"/>	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 20:22	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Call Centre work	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 12:01	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ceased job seeking	<input type="checkbox"/>	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	28/07/2015 12:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Customer Attitudes	<input type="checkbox"/>	17	<input type="checkbox"/>	117	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 12:07	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Customer characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	17	<input type="checkbox"/>	80	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 12:58	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Customer Employment Backgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 11:40	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 20:12	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Customer Job Search	<input type="checkbox"/>	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	21	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 11:50	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	04/08/2015 11:26	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Customers have Health Issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	22	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 11:41	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	26/07/2015 18:42	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Customers need long-term intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	11	<input type="checkbox"/>	26	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 13:39	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Customers slack general	<input type="checkbox"/>	11	<input type="checkbox"/>	23	<input type="checkbox"/>	30/07/2015 13:01	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Customers with good work histories who became unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 11:43	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 19:51	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Customer behaviours and attitudes	<input type="checkbox"/>	11	<input type="checkbox"/>	24	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 19:59	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cutting corners	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 11:47	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	28/07/2015 13:01	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employer attitudes	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	28/07/2015 11:11	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Entry level jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 12:20	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Falling Caseloads	<input type="checkbox"/>	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	14	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 12:00	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	17/08/2015 20:03	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	False expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 12:55	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Forcing them into jobs	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	24/07/2015 13:37	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Frequency of Adviser Interviews	<input type="checkbox"/>	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 11:47	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	28/07/2015 13:01	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	General activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 20:40	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Genuine Claimants vs Skivers	<input type="checkbox"/>	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	13	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 11:43	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	26/07/2015 18:46	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	How to improve the system	<input type="checkbox"/>	12	<input type="checkbox"/>	29	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 13:38	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	How we got here	<input type="checkbox"/>	14	<input type="checkbox"/>	23	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 13:03	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	16/10/2015 22:08	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Customers play the system	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	27/07/2015 14:25	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	27/07/2015 14:29	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Intervention is necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	21/07/2015 14:16	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	27/07/2015 14:30	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	No shame any more	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	27/07/2015 14:20	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	27/07/2015 14:26	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Paying People to do Nothing	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	9	<input type="checkbox"/>	27/07/2015 14:14	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	27/07/2015 14:28	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public don't accept it anymore	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	27/07/2015 14:19	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU	<input type="checkbox"/>	27/07/2015 14:27	<input type="checkbox"/>	JDU		

Nodes		Look for:	Search In:	Find Now	Clear	Advanced Find
Nodes	Relationships		Nodes			
Node Matrines						
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Public don't accept it anymore	2	2	27/07/2015 14:19	JDU	27/07/2015 14:27	JDU
Sickness Benefits	2	2	27/07/2015 14:11	JDU	27/07/2015 18:15	JDU
Structural Causes	2	2	27/07/2015 14:11	JDU	27/07/2015 14:18	JDU
Job Centre	9	16	21/07/2015 11:38	JDU	26/07/2015 18:45	JDU
Job Market is Against Older Workers	8	15	21/07/2015 11:40	JDU	25/07/2015 11:38	JDU
Job Outcomes	2	4	24/07/2015 11:33	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU
Job Search Sessions	2	2	21/07/2015 11:48	JDU	28/07/2015 13:01	JDU
Job Tasks	15	63	21/07/2015 12:23	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU
Jobs Match Website	3	3	21/07/2015 12:06	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU
Life trage	12	43	21/07/2015 11:49	JDU	28/07/2015 13:01	JDU
Medically impaired versus able bodied claimants	2	3	21/07/2015 11:44	JDU	26/07/2015 12:09	JDU
Miscellaneous	19	65	21/07/2015 12:04	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU
Moonlighters	3	4	23/07/2015 19:48	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU
Movement of staff across programmes	3	3	21/07/2015 11:46	JDU	28/07/2015 13:01	JDU
Need to get 1 targets	5	8	21/07/2015 11:50	JDU	28/07/2015 13:01	JDU
No formal MIVRA protocol	4	4	21/07/2015 11:55	JDU	17/08/2015 20:03	JDU
Oppressive Atmosphere	5	7	21/07/2015 12:43	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU
Outsiders don't get it	14	27	21/07/2015 13:03	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU
General outsiders don't get it	9	15	27/07/2015 18:42	JDU	04/08/2015 11:26	JDU
Media	4	5	27/07/2015 18:50	JDU	27/07/2015 19:20	JDU
Government doesn't get it.	4	4	27/07/2015 18:41	JDU	27/07/2015 19:04	JDU
Johnboy didn't get it.	6	8	27/07/2015 18:41	JDU	27/07/2015 18:49	JDU
Staff switched sides	2	2	27/07/2015 18:43	JDU	27/07/2015 18:46	JDU
Paperwork	6	18	21/07/2015 11:49	JDU	28/07/2015 13:01	JDU
Parking and Cleaning	7	12	21/07/2015 11:57	JDU	28/07/2015 13:01	JDU
Personal data	19	44	21/07/2015 12:17	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU
Personal Safety	10	23	21/07/2015 13:53	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU
Pointless job search	4	6	28/07/2015 13:34	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU
Previous schemes	9	23	21/07/2015 13:52	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU
Different scheme, same customers	1	1	30/07/2015 12:49	JDU	30/07/2015 12:50	JDU

Nodes		Look for:		Search In		Nodes		Find Now		Clear		Advanced Find	
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By							
<input type="radio"/> Previous schemes	9	23	21/07/2015 13:52	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Different scheme, same customers	1	1	30/07/2015 12:49	JDU	30/07/2015 12:50	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Play the system	3	5	30/07/2015 12:48	JDU	30/07/2015 13:05	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Programme causes customer depression	1	1	21/07/2015 13:31	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Programme is Pointless	4	7	21/07/2015 12:01	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Regulations and rules	1	1	21/07/2015 12:24	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Relationship with other agencies	6	10	21/07/2015 11:59	JDU	04/08/2015 11:26	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Ridiculous Referrals	7	11	21/07/2015 11:42	JDU	26/07/2015 18:38	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Sanctions	14	39	21/07/2015 11:57	JDU	17/08/2015 20:03	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Second Jobber	2	4	21/07/2015 11:57	JDU	28/07/2015 13:01	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Self Employment	9	10	21/07/2015 12:00	JDU	28/07/2015 13:01	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Sharing info with other providers	1	2	21/07/2015 11:46	JDU	28/07/2015 13:01	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Silly things that happen	2	2	21/07/2015 20:37	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Social and Advice Service	14	43	21/07/2015 11:50	JDU	04/08/2015 11:26	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Soft and Hard Outcomes	4	9	21/07/2015 11:54	JDU	28/07/2015 13:01	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Some claimants take the piss	5	14	21/07/2015 14:04	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Some Customers are Shivers	8	11	21/07/2015 11:43	JDU	17/08/2015 20:03	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Stress of facing poverty and hardship	10	17	21/07/2015 12:03	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Stress of targets	6	13	21/07/2015 12:03	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Success is getting people into work	1	1	23/07/2015 19:31	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Success is meeting government targets	5	6	21/07/2015 12:02	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Success is saving money	2	2	23/07/2015 19:17	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Success is Soft outcomes	11	33	21/07/2015 12:03	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Success is Something Has to be Done	6	16	21/07/2015 12:02	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Support for VIP	17	71	21/07/2015 11:39	JDU	17/08/2015 20:03	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Target Levels	9	17	21/07/2015 11:51	JDU	28/07/2015 13:01	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> Targets oppressive and stressful	13	25	21/07/2015 11:51	JDU	17/08/2015 20:03	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> The industry has changed	7	10	21/07/2015 11:51	JDU	17/08/2015 20:03	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> The jobs Market	8	14	21/07/2015 12:06	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU							
<input type="radio"/> There are jobs	5	11	28/07/2015 13:09	JDU	28/07/2015 13:11	JDU							

Nodes		Look for:		Search In	Nodes	Find New	Clear	Advanced Find
	Nodes							
	Relationships							
	Node Matrices							
Nodes		Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The Industry has changed	7	10	21/07/2015 11:51	JDU	17/08/2015 20:03	JDU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The Jobs Market	8	14	21/07/2015 12:06	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		There are jobs	5	11	28/07/2015 13:09	JDU	28/07/2015 13:11	JDU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Hidden jobs market	3	3	28/07/2015 13:15	JDU	28/07/2015 13:17	JDU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The Next Contract	8	11	21/07/2015 12:16	JDU	16/10/2015 22:08	JDU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		The Underclass	17	50	21/07/2015 11:39	JDU	17/08/2015 20:03	JDU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Intergenerational worklessness	6	10	27/07/2015 21:37	JDU	27/07/2015 21:44	JDU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Types of Training	3	10	21/07/2015 11:48	JDU	04/08/2015 11:26	JDU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Welfare makes health worse	2	3	21/07/2015 11:41	JDU	26/07/2015 12:08	JDU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Welfare Market Darwinism	18	61	21/07/2015 11:38	JDU	26/07/2015 18:46	JDU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Working with Low Quality Employers	5	10	21/07/2015 11:56	JDU	17/08/2015 20:03	JDU

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