Assessing Ireland's Pathways to Work

The impact of behavioural conditionality and sanctions

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted in whole or in part by me or another person for the purpose of obtaining any other award.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFDC – Aid for Families with Dependent Children

AITHS - All Ireland Traveller Health Study

ALMP – Active Labour Market Policy

CSPU – Civil Service and Public Union

CSO – Central Statistics Office

DEASP – Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection

EAPN – European Anti-Poverty Network

GSW – Genuinely Seeking Work

HBS – Household Budget Survey

HCD – Human Capital Development

ILO – International Labour Organisation

IMF- International Monetary Fund

LFA – Labour Force Attachment

LR – Live Register

MABS- Money Advice and Budgeting Service

MIA – Maternity Immunisation Allowance

NESC – National Economic and Social Council

NERI – Nevin Economic Research Institute

NYCI – National Youth Council of Ireland

OECD- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OLF – Out of Labour Force

PES – Principal Economic Status

PEX – Probability of Exit

PPP – Personal Progression Plan

PPSN – Personal Public Service Number

PRSI – Pay Related Social Insurance

PUP – Pandemic Unemployment Payment

PTW – Pathways to Work

QNHS – Quarterly National Household Survey

SILC – Survey on Income and Living Conditions

SIU – Special Investigations Unit

TNC – Trans-National Corporations

WEP – Work Experience Program WFD – Work for Dole

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the lived experience of being unemployed in Ireland during the roll out of a range of new Active Welfare Policy measures introduced in 2012 as part of the Pathways to Work (PTW) scheme. Unemployment is not a naturally occurring phenomenon and instead is a political, institutional and governmental creation. There is a particular focus on how the introduction of more stringent measures of behavioural conditionality enforced by the threat of sanctions influences the experience of being unemployed. This work examines emergent practices of the use of sanctions as a means of eliciting job seeking behaviours. As such welfare policy under PTW justifies itself using punitive logics which individualise responsibility for unemployment and sees unemployed people as being in need of guidance into employment using an array of positive and negative incentives. The way in which unemployment and unemployed people are characterised is examined at length using the theoretical construct of the Active Welfare Imaginary. Theoretically speaking this thesis uses the governmentality paradigm as described initially by Foucault (2007) to examine the ways in which unemployed people are enjoined to become active job-seekers. In practice this happens through a variety of institutional and bureaucratic practices which range from filling out forms to group engagement sessions to one on one meetings with caseworkers. In order to gain a rich understanding of the experience of being governed as an unemployed person this research used semi-structured in depth qualitative interviews with 33 participants as its main method. Where possible, repeat interviews were carried out in an attempt to capture how attitudes evolved throughout the process of engaging with the unemployment services. This research captures the ways in which the experience of being unemployed under PTW involves being drawn into a system of close regulation which engenders a series of process pains (Feely 1979) where unemployed people lose many aspects of their agency and self-determination.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The introduction of Pathways to Work heralded a move away from social welfare being a categorical entitlement which was determined predominantly by personal circumstances. Instead social welfare payments also became conditional on recipients adhering to behavioural demands made of them by the unemployment services. These demands primarily related to undertaking training courses, attending case meetings and adhering to any other practices which designated them as actively seeking work. As such the status of being unemployed was replaced by the new status of job-seeker which is subject to routine inspections, interventions and calls to self-justification. These changes in social welfare provision served to reposition unemployment as a problem caused primarily by unemployed people. The solution to this problem accordingly lies in the practices of government enacted on unemployed people aiming to change their behaviours and dispositions and to mould them into job-seeking subjects.

These changes warranted close examination, as such the aims of this study are

- To investigate the policy origins of the 'Pathways to Work' with particular emphasis on social, economic and political discourses on the regulation of work and poverty
- To examine the institutional operation of the nascent system of increased behavioural conditionality and the system of formalised graduated sanctions
- To contribute to the understanding of the lived experience of activation, behavioural conditionality and sanctions
- To examine how unemployed people are governed under PTW and how they are enjoined to embrace the subjectivity of being a job seeker and to examine whether they accept the underlying rationale
- To investigate how claimants experience and negotiate the various new interventions and sanctions
- To explore how the threat of, and in some cases the actual imposition of, sanctions impacts on claimants' well-being and behaviour
- To investigate differences between the experience of activation according to location and demographics, if different people are treated differently according to their social background and circumstances (gender, age, ethnicity, social class etc.).

In order to understand these changes it is first necessary to understand the terms under which they were introduced. Pathways to Work (PTW) was introduced in 2012 amidst spiralling rates of unemployment which occurred in the wake of the Irish economic crash and subsequent bail out. Rates of unemployment rose from a low of 4.4 percent in 2007 to a peak of 15.1 percent by 2012 with youth unemployment rates almost double. PTW is an umbrella term for a suite of active labour market policies (ALMP's) which include the introduction of formalised systems of behavioural conditionality which are enforced using the threat of sanctions including the reduction or cessation of welfare payments in a system of graduated response for those deemed to be non-compliant. Prior to the introduction of Pathways there were elements of both conditionality and sanctions in the Irish welfare system but as the only sanction available was a complete cessation of payment it was rarely if ever used (Murphy 2016).

Under the generalised rubric of 'activation' PTW set up a number of interventions which unemployed people are compelled to undergo; job-search training, group engagement, individual case-work, referral to training, internships or employment services to name but a few. Failure to engage with these interventions incurs a sanction in the form of a penalty rate of 21% which is applied for three weeks. If after this period there is still no engagement forthcoming there is the scope for the welfare payment to be stopped entirely for up to nine weeks. After nine weeks if there has not been the necessary engagement with activation measures the payment is cancelled entirely.

1.2 Background to the Study

The Irish economy had been through a prolonged boom period known as the Celtic Tiger (Coulter 2003, p. 3) lasting from the mid 1990's to the great financial crisis of 2007. During this time Ireland's annual economic growth frequently topped 7.5% and more than once was above 10% putting it almost three times that of most other European countries (Kirby 2010, p. 2). This period was also characterised by historically low rates of unemployment with this sustained period of low unemployment seemingly banishing the spectre of emigration which had haunted previous generations. Yet by the mid 2000's much of this economic growth was reliant on a terminally overheated property market funded by the reckless lending of profligate domestic banks which drove an unsustainable property bubble. The Irish exchequer became over reliant on income generated by credit fuelled private consumption and the building and trading of houses. Membership of the Eurozone kept interest rates in Ireland low which meant that credit was cheap and this 'further added to the orgy of borrowing and consumption' (Kirby

2010, p. 3). Rates of personal income tax were cumulatively reduced over time and this further fastened state reliance on taxes raised from property.

This period came to a crashing halt in the aftermath of the global financial crash of 2008 which exposed the limitations of the Irish system and 'created four interconnected crises: (i) a property market crisis; (ii) a banking crisis; (iii) a fiscal crisis; and (iv) a financial crisis' (Donovan & Murphy 2013, p. 2). Faced with a cataclysmic fiduciary vista the Irish government decided to guarantee the debts of 6 Irish banks at a cost of €64 billion. These Bank Bailouts placed a fiscally disastrous burden on the Irish state, in the period between the years 2007 and 2010 GDP contracted by 21% with this described as the most severe economic collapse outside of a war ever experienced by a wealthy country (Donovan & Murphy 2013, p. 255). This collapse meant that despite attempts at cutting spending and increasing taxation by the end of 2010 the state was all but bankrupt and was required to accept a bailout from the 'troika' of institutions comprised of the European Central Bank (ECB) the European Commission (EC) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Coulter et al note how the widespread use of the term bailout to describe this arrangement had 'genial connotations' which suggested that 'the financial assistance involved represented an act of selfless benevolence' (Coulter 2015, p. 3). In fact these loans were subject to an interest rate of 35% and were subject to strict conditionality with payment released in tranches subject to the completion of a raft of structural reforms. As such the entrance of Ireland into the troika program marked the beginning of a period where economic and fiscal sovereignty was ceded.

Seasonally Adjusted Monthly Unemployment Rate (%)
by Month
Both sexes, 15 - 74 years (%)

®CSO
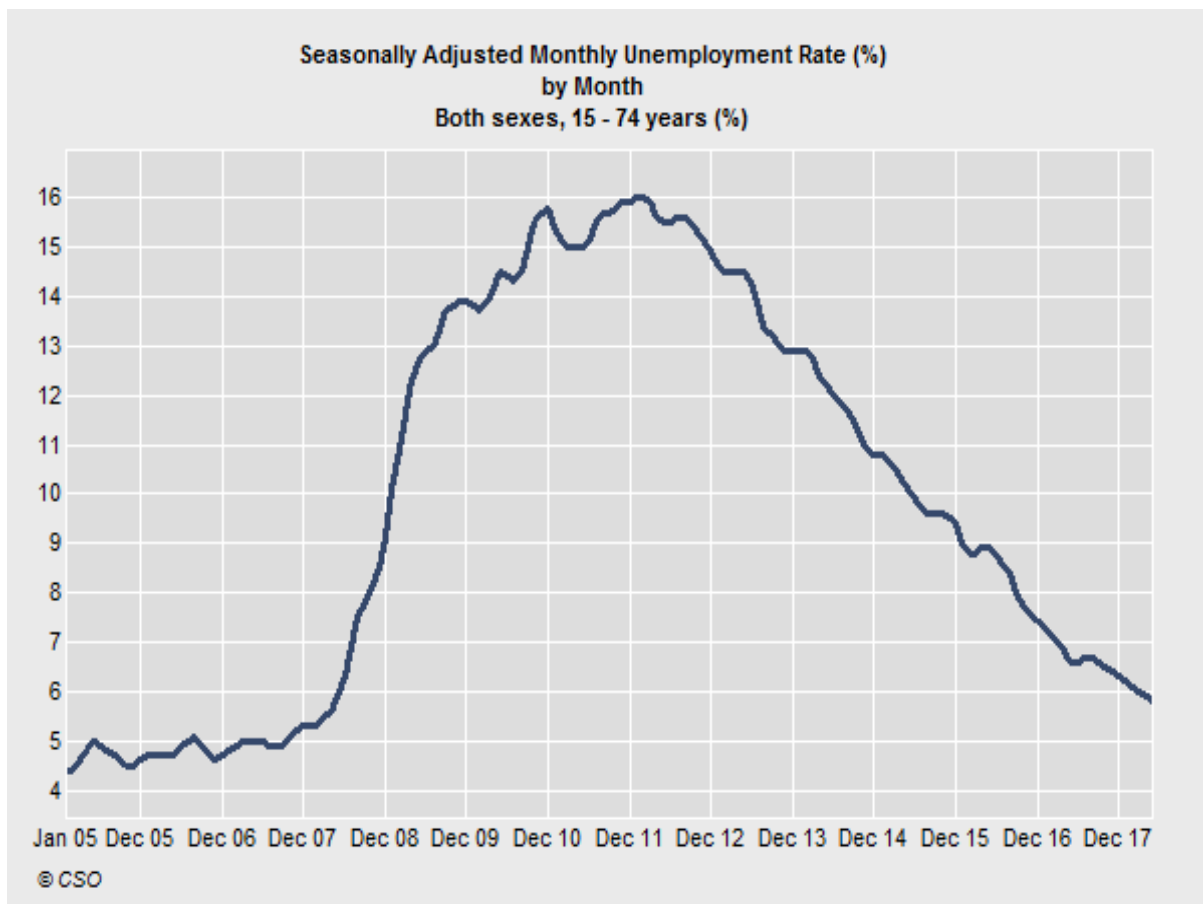
Figure 1. % Unemployment Jan 05 to Dec 17 Job Seekers Rates and Relative Poverty

The terms of the agreement were written into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Irish state and the troika. This document set out the program of policy changes that would be made during the period of the bail out as well as the measures by which they would be assessed. Included in the MOU was the clause which stated that

'Legislative and other measures will be introduced with a view to:

- enhancing conditionality on work and training availability;

- strengthening activation measures via: i. the introduction of instruments to better identify of job seekers' needs("profiling") and increased engagement; ii. a more effective monitoring of jobseekers' activities with regular evidence-based reports; iii. the application of sanction mechanisms for beneficiaries not complying with jobsearch conditionality and recommendations for participation in labour market programmes set in such a way as to imply an effective loss of income without being perceived as excessively penalising so that it could credibly be used whenever lack of compliance is ascertained' (MOU 2010, p. 25).

This clause formed the basis for what would ultimately become PTW as it set into motion the move towards activation, behavioural conditionality and sanctions in the Irish system. Prior to this Ireland was 'generally regarded as an outlier with an underdeveloped activation practice' (Murphy 2016, p. 2). This was despite a number of ideational influences such as the OECD review of activation in Ireland which described it in terms of being an emperor with no clothes (Grubb 2009). Similarly the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) prior to the MOU carried out studies of the effectiveness of existing Irish social welfare policy. In particular a report entitled *'Carrots without Sticks?'* (McGuinness et al 2011) took issue with the absence of any significant threat of sanctions for non-compliance with the welfare office or 'insufficient' job-search activity. The consensus view was thus that the Irish system prior to the crash was one which was insufficiently interventionist with regard to unemployed people and the reforms introduced under PTW were explicitly designed to correct this.

The reforms of the unemployment service were widespread with large scale institutional changes enacted so as to foreground activation in the delivery of social welfare services. The first of these was the change in logo, branding and name of the service as the Office of Social Protection became known as Intreo. The new Intreo offices were described in the PTW documents as a 'one stop shop' which aimed to link the administration of social welfare payments with activation services. Prior to this these two functions were institutionally separated as the DSP managed entitlements and administration and Fás looked after activation. The time period of 2011 of 2016 was one of notable policy experimentation particularly with regard to the management of unemployment. During this period there were a range of measures introduced including among others the JobBridge National Internship Scheme (Arlow 2019) and the JobPath scheme (Wiggan 2015). JobPath involved the partial privatisation of some activation services on a payment by results model under the rationale of increasing activation capacity without expanding the civil service.

1.3 Rationale for Research

Inherent in PTW was a swift and fundamental change in how unemployment was constituted and how unemployed people were managed. In particular there was the movement away from people being unemployed towards them being re-categorised as job seekers (Boland & Griffin 2015). This action inserted the requirement for almost all people to participate in the paid labour market with Intreo staff empowered to enforce job seeking behaviour and to levy punishments in the form of sanctions to those who did not comply. This means that eligibility was altered from being categorical and was reconstituted as a behavioural imperative. It was now no longer

enough to fulfil the categorical parameters of age and status to be classified as unemployed. Continued eligibility became dependent on adhering to specified behaviours set out in a record of mutual commitments which is a form of symbolic contract between the unemployed person and the department which spells out the actions required for getting and maintaining a social welfare payment.

1.4 Structure and Outline of the Thesis

Chapter 2 outlines the methodological approach utilised in undertaking this research. Chapters 7 through 10 are analysis chapters which use the data gathered at interviews and subsequently analysed to examine features of the lived experience of contemporary unemployment under the aegis of activation, behavioural conditionality and sanctions. Chapter 7 discusses the experience of unemployment with a particular focus on what happens outside of the relationship with the unemployment services. Chapter 8 looks specifically at the experiences of participants in their interactions with the Social Welfare system. It describes how the social welfare office and staff are encountered. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the ways in which the complex bureaucracy and procedures of the social welfare system are navigated and how forms of cultural and social capital are influential in determining who is successful in managing this relationship and who isn't.

Chapter 3 will initially examine unemployment by looking at the different ways in which it is measured in Ireland before proceeding to examine the influence of unemployment on material poverty. This section will also demonstrate the extent to which the Social Welfare system acts in a redistributive manner to ameliorate the massive inequalities in income found in Ireland. Chapter 2 will then examine the influence of unemployment on both physcal and mental health before discussing deprivation theory which is one of the most enduring and influential theories of unemployment.

Divided into 3 main parts Chapter 4 describes Activation, Conditionality and Sanctions. It begins by describing Activation and the manner in which it expands the concern of the welfare state beyond income maintenance and into the promotion of labour market participation (Boland 2015; Bonoli 2013; Kiely & Swirak 2022) and the creation of pliant and docile workers (Peck 2001; Wacquant 2009; Wiggan 2015). The next section of chapter 3 deals with Conditionality by describing its three main forms namely conditions of category, conditions of circumstance and conditions of conduct (Clasen & Clegg 2007). It explains how conditionality forms a part of all welfare programmes before noting the move towards the emphasis of

behavioural conditionality in contemporary welfare systems (Dwyer & Wright 2014). The final section of Chapter 4 examines the use of sanctions in the context of Social Welfare and compares them to administrative sanctions in the penal system noting that while the latter system has numerous safeguards and protections the former does not.

Chapters 5 and 6 cover the theoretical aspects of this research. Drawing heavily on Michel Foucault Chapter 4 describes the theoretical perspective of governmentality which focuses on the 'conduct of conduct' (Foucault 2007, p. 192). Governmentality involves the examination of practices of government and the operation of power according to governmental rationality while also examining what each specific mode of governmental rationality is and how it is formed enacted and maintained (Miller & Rose 1990). Government is therefore a productive form of power as it produces the subjects it governs; in this instance the subject produced by PTW is the proficient self-starting job seeker. The chapter proceeds to examine subjectivation and neoliberalism before concluding with a lengthy description of the processes by which unemployed people are governed under PTW.

Chapter 6 draws on Pat Carlen's (2008) conception of 'imaginary penalities' to theorise the existence of the Active Welfare Imaginary. Imaginary Penalities are fictive governing rationalities which are enacted and sustained for the purpose of legitimising a system which in practice frequently operates in a manner which is completely different from the imaginary depiction. It begins by drawing comparisons between the discursive modes of justification used for both penal policy and social welfare policy. These include the distinct processes of constituting the subjects of both systems as deficient 'others' who need to be closely governed. The chapter then goes beyond the discussion of the 'othering' (Lister 2004) of the poor and the unemployed discusses the manner in which 'imaginary victim politics' (Samuels 2016) are mobilised to create both a desirable in group as well as a denigrated out group. This serves to establish a line of demarcation between the deserving and undeserving which serves in itself as a form of governance which is influential in the creation of active welfare subjects (Boland et al 2022; Fletcher & Redman 2022; Redman 2020).

The experiences associated with unemployment are described in Chapter 7, these include the initial period of being unemployed which in some instances was described by participants in positive terms as being similar to a holiday. This chapter also describes the struggles faced by unemployed people in filling their time as well as the difficulties of managing finances and keeping mental health in check.

Chapter 8 is concerned with the direct experiences of being processed by the unemployment system. It describes the spaces where social welfare is administered and interactions with the the staff. Chapter 9 describes the processes associated with activation. Firstly it examines the accounts of participants as they described the various ways they were subject to behavioural conditionality. Chapter 10 examines the operation of the sanctioning system under PTW. The main form of sanction introduced was the activation sanction which is a formal graduated response form of sanction levied on people who fail to sufficiently comply with activation activities. Chapter 11 is the conclusion which brings together the different issues raised during the preceding chapters. After a brief summary of the research there is a discussion of the academic contribution of the work.

Chapter 2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will describe and outline the methodological factors involved in carrying out this research. Research Methodology 'refers to the way in which we approach problems and seek answers' (Taylor et al. 2016, p. 3), it can be likened to the bones or the foundations of the research process as methodological decisions form the basis of how the research is carried out, how the data is gathered and ultimately how it is interpreted. The method used for this research was the qualitative interview, there were 33 participants, 17 male and 16 female. Of the 33 participants interviewed 18 were interviewed only once meaning that less than half of the sample participated in repeat interviews. The aim of this study was to elucidate and understand the experience of being unemployed in contemporary Ireland with particular attention being paid to the experience of being a 'client' of the welfare system under Pathways to Work. Of particular interest was the experience of negotiating the nascent system of increased behavioural conditionality which is underpinned by sanctions. While there are a number of statistical measures which are gathered by the state such as the Live Register and the Quarterly National Household Survey these data are only concerned with enumeration and so are unsuitable for generating the type of thick descriptive narrative data necessary for this study. The method that was utilised therefore was that of the qualitative interview as this is the method which is appropriate for delving into the lived experiences of participants and of drawing out the meanings associated with them. In depth semi structured interviews which are informal and conversational in style are the most suitable for allowing participants to determine which issues were most important and to relate them to the researcher in a safe and comfortable research environment.

Broadly speaking qualitative methodologies are those which generate 'descriptive data-people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour' (Taylor et al 2016, p. 7) as these methods involve delving into the life-world or lived experience of participants (Schwandt 1998, p. 221). This study is thus one which is heavily influenced by interpretivism as it is focused on the interpretations of the data gleaned from the interviews. The interpretivist ontological position is influenced by the social constructivist epistemological position which posits that 'reality is socially constructed' (Berger and Luckman 1966, p. 13) and meanings are

created and maintained via language, symbols and relationships shared between people. Following on from this it can also be said that social constructionist epistemology posits that meanings are specific to a given historical and cultural milieu.

In keeping with legal and academic norms this research was subject to ethical approval which was granted by the WIT Ethics board in February 2015. These ethical considerations will be discussed below as a means of demonstrating how they were influential in formulating this research. This chapter will describe the process undertaken in recruiting research participants paying attention not just to recruitment strategies which were successful but also to those which did not yield any research participants. Doing this will inform as to how the sample was gathered as well as accounting for any gaps in its composition. As well as this a detailed description of the recruitment process will demonstrate the process of how I gained institutional knowledge of the patchwork assemblage of organisations which govern unemployment. The sample studied here is comprised of people who are in receipt of a social welfare payment or who have undergone or are undergoing any of the myriad forms of activation contained in PTW. Due to the multiple and varying forms of interactions possible with the different arms of the unemployment services this sample is varied and includes a range of different types of service users including long term unemployed, short term unemployed, precarious workers, seasonal workers and people close to retirement among others.

There were a number of difficulties and considerations involved in getting people to talk about a sensitive topic such as unemployment. These will be discussed below with reference to the practices in the field of dealing with them. The chapter will then proceed by outlining the interview process undertaken and will then proceed with a discussion of the methodological tactic of employing repeat interviews to track changes in individual constructions of meaning relating to unemployment, acceptable work and so on. This chapter will then discuss the analytical strategy employed to make sense of the data gathered in the interviews before concluding with a note on the limitations of the study.

2.2 Ontology: Being or Becoming?

'Ontology is the study of being, that is, the nature of existence' (Gray 2004, p. 16), in broad terms it is that which is concerned with the nature of reality and what exists (Effingham 2013, p. 12). It is 'a concept concerned with the existence of, and relationship between different aspects of society, such as social actors, cultural norms and social structures' (Jupp 2006, p. 202). It concerns the theory of the existence of social entities, their inter-relationships and the

manner in which they may be investigated. Gray (2009) describes the influence of Greek philosophy on ontology, the two main branches of which are objectivism (being) which is influenced by Parminedes and constructionism (becoming) which is influenced by Heraclitus. Objectivism which is associated with the ontology of being is that which examines the social world in terms which see it as a distinct object of itself which exists outside of or above social actors and their myriad interactions. Objectivist ontologies are generally associated with positivist views of the social world which see it as an independent object which can be measured in the same way as can the objects studied by the natural sciences. Such ontologies are therefore most often associated with quantitative research methods which generally aim to measure the existence, prevalence or frequency of a predetermined object or occurrence within a given sample.

Constructionism on the other hand which is associated with the ontology of becoming and the various strands of interpretive sociology which see the social world as one which is created and interpreted by social actors in their ongoing and routine interactions. A constructionist ontology is one which at its core claims that the 'knower makes the world' (Bunge 2001). This ontological perspective is concerned primarily with the ways in which the social world is interpreted by social actors from their own perspective and it posits that there is not just one definitive reality but instead there are 'multiple socially constructed realities' (Mertens 2019, p.11). The constructionist social world is thus characterised 'as a constantly shifting emergent property of individual creation' (Bryman 1988, p. 20). The notion of perpetual flux (Russell 1946, p.48) is central to the constructionist ontology of becoming and this is exemplified by the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus who believed in the principle that everything flows or *panta rhei*. This principle is exemplified by his claim that 'one cannot step twice into the same river, nor can one grasp any mortal substance in a stable condition, but it scatters and again gathers; it forms and dissolves, and approaches and departs' (Kahn 1979, p. 53). Heraclitus believed the world to be constituted by perpetual change which was forged by the mingling of oppositional elements as 'in strife opposites combine to produce a motion which is a harmony' (Russell 1946, p. 51). The perpetual flux which is constituted by the interminable strife of oppositional elements means that there is never a fixed and stable reality which holds in any place for any length of time. This means that the social world is in a constant state of becoming and is not as Parminedes and the objectivist ontologies would have it fixed, independent, stable and measureable.

The perpetual change which is constitutive of social reality is also emergent from each individual as their reality is comprised of their combined experiences, beliefs, ideas, attitudes and perceptions. Such constructions of reality do not however happen in a vacuum and they are instead imbued with power relations as powerful people or institutions frequently have the ability to discursively produce truths which can be materialised into practices. Such discursive production of truth is further influenced by historical, cultural and social norms. This of course is not to say that people are passive recipients of subjectivities, truths may be socially produced but each individual in turn accepts, rejects, contests or amends these truths in a process of creolisation and adaptation. This research takes the ontological position that there is not a singular objective and external social reality waiting to be discovered. Instead truths are relative and subject to interpretation and construction by individuals. This feeds into a further epistemological position of social constructivism which will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 Epistemology

While ontology is concerned with the nature of reality, epistemology is concerned with the questions relating to knowledge; the basis of what constitutes knowledge has been a concern of philosophy for centuries. Gray sees epistemology as being that which 'provides a philosophical background for deciding what kinds of knowledge are legitimate and adequate' (Gray 2009, p. 16). Knowledge is that which both makes a claim to truth and offers a justification of this truth, as such it is distinct from mere opinion or belief. The historical debate in epistemology is that between positivism and interpretivism with the core question being that of what constitutes knowledge and how it can be gained. Positivism relates to measurable and observable external data which can be falsified or verified and rationalism which 'locates knowledge in the rationality of the knowing subject' (Jupp 2006, p. 93). Rationalism unlike empiricism is not limited to that which is observable and includes knowledge gained by non-observational practices such as intuition and deduction; reason is the core foundation upon which rationalist knowledge is based.

Positivist epistemologies are similar to and drawn from objectivist ontologies, positivism avers that knowledge is restricted to that which can be observed or measured. Popper (1968) however rejects this notion noting the impossibility of proof by multiple observations as irrespective of how many observations or measurements 'prove' a theory or hypothesis it can be disproven by one instance of refutation. This epistemological theory of falsifiability as espoused by Popper has been further popularised by Taleb who writes of how 'one single observation can invalidate a general statement derived from millennia of confirmatory sightings' (2007, p. xvi).

Interpretivism is premised on the belief that reality is relative and multiform and differs from person to person as it is subject to individual construction. In contradistinction to the objectivist ontological position, constructionism rejects the view that the social world is an external, measurable and fixed set of phenomena. Instead social reality is to some extent in the eye of the beholder; events happen and forces act upon individuals yet it is how these events and forces are understood and interpreted which is of most importance. By this reckoning meaning is not a tangible entity waiting to be discovered and instead is constructed, 'subjects construct their own meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon' (Gray 2009, p. 17). Research in the field of the psychology of perception- particularly in the subfield of psychophysics- concurs with this notion as it holds that the act of perception of any external object is one which is mediated by the brain of the individual (Grondin 2016). Outside stimuli are picked up by a sense receptor and transduced into a signal that can be registered by the brain (Wittig 2001, p. 74). Thus any external object will differ according to who perceives it meaning that there is not a uniform and agreed upon reality which is 'found'. Instead the perception of external objects is subject to differing constructions in the brains of each perceiver. Interpretivist research is that which is premised on the belief that interpretation is necessary to understand the worlds of meaning which are fashioned 'out of events and phenomena through prolonged, complex processes of social interaction involving history, language and action' (Schwandt 1998, p. 222). The position taken by this research is that truths are subject to interpretation by individuals and as such are relative. For this reason this research is then linked with the epistemological position of social constructionism.

2.4 Notes on Ethics

From the outset this work aimed to conform at all times with the ethical norms and standards of academic enquiry. This research was granted ethical approval the Waterford Institute of Technology Ethics Board in February 2015. In describing the centrality of high ethical standards in conducting research the Sociological Association of Ireland notes the responsibility of researchers to 'safeguard the interests of those involved in or affected by their work' (SAI 2017, p. 6). The prime consideration with respect to ethical standards when carrying out research is that the welfare of participants is in no way adversely affected due to their participation. Participants were treated with respect and due care was given to ensure their comfort and emotional wellbeing. Unemployment is widely recognised as being a status which is associated with negative physical and mental health outcomes as well as social stigma and isolation. In asking participants to speak about the facts of their unemployment there was the

risk that it may have caused emotional upset, discomfort, or harm. The initial way in which this was to be counteracted was to make the interviews as informal and comfortable as possible for all participants.

All participants were given a fact sheet which explained the research and described in detail what participation in the research involved. This sheet also included details of instances where the researcher would feel the need to end the interview for the good of the participant. This would have happened in cases where the participant was upset or in distress and the duty of care which the researcher has for all participants would have been invoked. In such an instance the interview would have been stopped, and after a break of suitable duration the participant would have been asked if they wish to continue. If a willingness to continue was indicated then the interview would have continued, if it was felt by the researcher that the interview was causing distress or discomfort to the participant then the interview would have been terminated. The central consideration was always that of the wishes and wellbeing of the participant which were respected at all times, to this end there would have been no pressure or inducement to continue in the instance of a stopped interview. This event never occurred however, although a number of interviewees did get angry when describing certain events, none were sufficiently upset to warrant the pause or termination of the interview.

2.4.1 Informed Consent

In all instances meaningfully informed consent was sought from all participants. At the outset of the initial meeting each participant was given a fact sheet which outlined all details of the study. This fact sheet was read out by the researcher and explained in plain and understandable language, this was crucial in a small number of cases where participants were illiterate or had difficulty reading. This sheet included details such as the topic of the research, its aims and methodology, who was funding it, the systems in place for storing any confidential data, the reasons for carrying out the research and the expected uses of the finished project. As each interview began with this process of explaining the study, gaining consent and reading through the information sheet there were no surprises or unexpected lines of questioning throughout the interview. As part of the pre interview explanatory process it was also made clear to all participants that if they were asked a question which they did not wish to answer they were under no obligation to do so. The fact sheet also included contact details for all members of the research team, participants were expressly informed that all participation is entirely voluntary and participants were also informed of the right to withdraw from the study at a later date. If a participant chose at a later date to withdraw it was explained to them that their data would be

deleted and their contribution omitted from the final report. This right to withdraw however came with a time limit as when the thesis was approaching completion it would be too late to alter the text and omit their contribution. This issue never arose and all participants who took part in initial interviews were happy for their contributions to the research to remain.

2.4.2 Handling Sensitive Data

The data which has been gathered is of a personal nature and includes information relating to schooling, employment history and interactions with the various elements of the employment and social welfare services. As some of these data are critical of these services it is crucial to that participants are not identifiable in the final report. All participants have been given pseudonyms and identifying details have been omitted or disguised. To this end place names have also been either omitted or disguised. All efforts have been made to avoid publishing any information in the final thesis which renders participants identifiable thus ensuring confidentiality of participants making them non-identifiable. The fact sheet which was given to participants also outlined the policy for the handling of their personal data.

2.5 Sampling and Recruiting Participants

Although public discourse may consider unemployment a monolithic and singular occurrence which affects people in similar ways this is not the case. More than being the absence of a job, unemployment is a status which is structured and created by the unemployment services; it differs according to a number of factors such as age, geographic location, education, work history and so on. The introduction of Pathways added further layers into the already complex governmental assemblage of unemployment services and bringing with them multiple additions to the types of unemployment. New types of unemployment under Pathways include JobBridge internships and 'clients' of the Job Path services as well as Gateway and Springboard among others. Given the multiplicity of types of unemployment it would be too cumbersome and beyond the capability of a single PhD project to try and compose a sample which would give a detailed and balanced account of each. Conversely if the sample were to focus entirely on any one type of unemployment it would be too sharply focused and would ignore parts of the larger picture of the governance of unemployment.

This study is therefore 'nonparametric' (Inglis 2014, p. 193) and the sample of people interviewed does not represent a direct probability distribution which matches that of the population of unemployed persons in Ireland. Instead this sample can be characterised as an attempt to give a flavour of some of the different types of unemployment and to highlight the

commonalities and distinctions between them. The aim of the research was to hear from as many different voices in as many different situations as possible; this meant that there was not a highly structured data collection strategy and instead decisions were made as the field work progressed which directed the researcher towards particular places and groups of people. For example the I nitial research design did not envisage the inclusion of precarious workers, but as the field work progressed it became apparent that this cohort was in regular contact with the various unemployment services. These people who were in and out work also had multiple experiences of navigating the complex bureaucratic imperatives of the social welfare system which made them knowledgeable interviewees.

At the outset of the study the only condition for inclusion of participants was firstly that they were over eighteen years of age and secondly that they were in contact with some aspect of the unemployment services. This meant that people who were on activation schemes such as Tus and Jobs Bridge were included, as were people who perhaps worked part-time and signed on for non-working days. One of the aims of the study at the outset was to attempt to discover if there were any differences in how unemployed people were managed according to their geographical location. To this end a mixture of urban, suburban rural locations were selected for inclusion in the study. The locations chosen for recruiting participants were Wexford town and county, Wicklow, Sligo, Dublin city and county as well as Waterford city and county. These locations allowed for participants to be drawn from urban, suburban rural and small town areas which were useful for comparative purposes.

There were a number of strategies employed in an attempt to recruit research participants, the first and most simple method of recruitment was word of mouth. Once the project was underway the researcher spoke to friends, acquaintances and family members about the research with the aim being that they in turn would tell others who may take part. A similar strategy was used via social networking platforms where a call for participants along with a brief description of the research was posted online on facebook and twitter with the instruction given for others to repost the call. These strategies had limited success yet did yield a small number (n = 4) of participants. In keeping with the snowballing method of recruitment these participants were asked if they knew of any people who would potentially be eligible for participation. This measure however did not yield any new participants. Once this method of recruitment had been carried out the next phase involved a more focussed approach which directly targeted organisations that were involved directly or indirectly with unemployed people. The first organisation to be contacted was the men's shed movement; a number of these

were contacted at a local level with differing results. While most were happy to allow a researcher in to request interviews some were reticent and refused access. The men's sheds also gave a singular demographic of older men generally aged fifty or more years old. The age demographic typical of these interviews meant that there were particular topics covered mostly relating to these men being in the liminal space between work and retirement. They found themselves unemployed and in a labour market with little demand for their skills yet their proximity to retirement age meant that they felt they were too old to retrain.

The next organisations to be contacted were those who provided training and advice to unemployed people, the focus here was particularly on younger people (aged 18-30) as at that time this demographic was missing from the sample. Gaining access to these groups involved lengthy negotiations with various types of gatekeepers. In some instances a lengthy process of negotiation would result in being allowed to give a brief presentation to groups of young unemployed people who were undergoing training. In other instances such actions lead to permission being granted to leave research flyers in the offices of Local Employment Services. In most instances however these presentations did not lead to the recruitment of any participants. One useful outcome of this approach however was that I gained knowledge of and access to other parts of the network of training and support services for unemployed people. This ultimately did prove very useful in recruiting participants at a later date. Some of the organisations targeted for recruitment included Local Area Partnerships, Jobs Clubs, Adult Literacy Centres, Youth Training centres, Citizens Advice Bureau, Family Resource Centres and community organisations that were making use of social activation schemes such as community employment and Tus. Other advocacy organisations such as the National Youth Council of Ireland, the Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed and Single Parents Acting for the Rights of Kids (SPARK) were contacted in an attempt to recruit participants, these yielded no interviews.

As well as this other strategies included attending events which were aimed at unemployed job seekers. These events included information evenings and jobs fairs which the researcher attended in a quasi-ethnographic fashion taking notes and talking to facilitators and attendees in an 'off the record' fashion; these conversations lead to a small number (n = 2) of interviews. It became apparent during the course of the fieldwork that when people encountered difficulty in dealing with the Social Welfare bureaucracy they frequently turned to local politicians for advice and assistance. Accordingly a small number of politicians constituency offices were contacted which yielded two interviews. The final strategy for recruitment involved the

researcher surveying below the line comments which were placed under online articles related to the research subject. When interesting comments were attached to an identifiable social media profile a message was sent to the person outlining the research and inviting the person to participate. In the majority of instances these messages did not receive a reply and this method of participation yielded only two participants.

Name	Age	Gender	No. of Interviews	Location	PTW Scheme(s)	Payment
Ann	47	F	2	Rural	Intreo, JobPath	JA
Adam	45	M	2	Rural	Intreo, JobPath	JA
Alma	58	F	1	Rural	Intreo, JobPath	JA
Mary	57	F	1	Urban	Intreo, JobPath	JA
Barry	23	M	2	Rural	Intreo, JobPath	JA
Catriona	24	F	1	Urban	Intreo, JobPath	JA
Cate	57	F	1	Urban	Intreo, Tus	JA
Dave	30	M	2	Urban	Intreo, JobPath	JA
Edgar	29	M	1	Rural	Intreo, Tus	JA
Elaine	43	F	3	Rural	Intreo, BTEA, JobPath, JobBridge	JA
Ellie	29	F	2	Urban	Intreo, Tus	JA
Imogen	27	F	1	Urban	Intreo, JobPath	JA
Jason	29	M	1	Urban	Intreo, JobBridge	JA
Jane	43	F	2	Urban	Intreo	LPFA
Justin	25	M	1	Urban	Intreo, JobPath	JA
Jack	26	M	1	Urban	Intreo, JobPath	JA
Jill	59	F	1	Urban	Intreo	JB
Jimmy	40	M	2	Urban	Intreo	JB
Kathleen	21	F	2	Urban	JobPath	JA
Kelvin	34	M	1	Urban	Intreo	JB
Kevin	41	M	2	Urban	Intreo, Tus JobPath	JA
Lorcan	57	M	1	Urban	Intreo	JB
Niall	26	M	1	Urban	Intreo, JobPath	JA
Niamh	38	F	2	Urban	Intreo, JobPath	JB
Nora	28	F	2	Urban	Intreo	JB
Natasha	36	F	2	Urban	Intreo, BTWEA JobPath	JA
Rachel	27	F	1	Urban	Intreo	JB
Sam	24	F	1	Rural	Intreo	JA
Shane	63	M	1	Rural	Intreo	JA
Seamus	23	M	2	Urban	Intreo	JA
Stephen	40	M	1	Urban	Intreo, BTWEA JobPath	JA
Suzy	38	F	2	Urban	Intreo	JB
Terry	62	M	1	Urban	Intreo, JobPath	JA

Fig 2 Sample of Participants

Figure 6.1 above demonstrates the final sample according to age, gender, number of interviews conducted and location. It also demonstrates the activation measures each participant had been involved with as well as the type of payment they were on at the time they were interviewed. As is evident from the table there were 33 participants, 17 of whom were male leaving 16 participants who were female. Of the 33 participants interviewed 18 were interviewed only once meaning that less than half of the sample participated in repeat interviews. 25 participants lived in an urban area although many of these were in smaller towns rather than larger cities with the remaining 8 participants living in rural locations.

2.6 Conducting the Interviews

The interviews were conducted in a number of different locations and environments with it generally being the case that the manner in which the participant was recruited influenced the location of the interview. In instances where the participant was recruited via an organisation it was most often the case that the interview would take place there. So for example when a participant was recruited via a 'men's shed' it was usually possible to conduct the interview at that location. If however the participant preferred to carry out the interview at a location of their choosing this was always facilitated. In some instances it was necessary to find a private space in which to conduct interviews which was neither the home of the participant or a space associated with an organisation by which they were recruited. In these instances public places which could offer privacy were used. Such spaces included family resource centres, youth centres and study rooms in libraries among others. The main stipulations when choosing a location for carrying out the interview were firstly that it was quiet enough to record audio to a standard which would make it possible to transcribe. Privacy was also of prime importance as participants had to be comfortable and reassured that none of what they were saying would be overheard by anyone else.

The preferred type of interview was a one on one face to face interview yet in a small number of instances potential participants expressed a preference for being interviewed in the presence of others. This was particularly the case where there was a potential for a power imbalance between interviewer and participant. One instance of this was in an adult education centre where some participants who were illiterate wished to take part in the research but expressed minor reservations about the one to one format. In three of these cases the interviews took the form of roundtable discussions, in two instances these were comprised of two participants and the interviewer and in the third instance the format was three participants and the interviewer. For these three sessions the facilitator for the adult literacy centre who was known and trusted

by the participants sat in on and contributed to the sessions. The flexibility of methodological approach allowed for decisions such as these to be made in the field. By not insisting on limiting interviews to the one to one format it was possible to include the voices of people who otherwise would have been excluded but who had a large contribution to make to the research.

In conducting repeat interviews there was a high rate of attrition or wastage in the sample meaning that 18 people who participated in initial interviews did not participate in follow up sessions. There are many reasons why this happened which include people moving to a different place, taking up education or work and there were also a number of occasions where despite best polite efforts it was not possible to get in contact to arrange follow up interviews. It was also apparent that where participants were recruited via an institution they were often impossible to contact for a second interview once their period of involvement with the institution had elapsed. An example of this was in an adult education centre where a number of people who were in the job path system attended literacy classes as a means of demonstrating a desire to upskill and increase their chances in the labour market. Once these participants had timed out of their period of engagement with Job Path they stopped attending these classes altogether. One means of counteracting sample wastage was the use of video conferencing and telephones to carry out repeat interviews. This made it far easier for participants to commit their time to follow up interviews and it drastically increased the likelihood of repeat interviews taking place.

The interviews ranged in length from 20 to 90 minutes, initial interviews were always the longest as they involved getting the most information from participants. Follow up interviews were generally shorter although there were instances where the follow up interview was as long as or even longer than the initial one. For the first interview each participant undertook a lengthy narrative interview. In keeping with the view that qualitative research is a 'craft' (Miles, Huberman & Saldana 2014) the approach taken here was that 'there are guidelines to be followed, but never rules' (Taylor et al. 2016, p. 11). The style of interviewing which was used aimed to be participant led and conversational, it was a mostly unstructured discussion which began with the interviewer simply asking the respondent to 'tell me about yourself'. In doing this the aim was to attempt to limit the role of the researcher in imposing a pre-determined structure and avoid being overly deterministic in shaping the discussion. A point of limitation however is that participants were aware prior to commencing the interview that the research was examining unemployment and this served as a point of orientation in anchoring the discussion. By the time the conversation had begun the aims and objectives of

the research had been explained in detail using fact sheets and consent forms and this to some degree directed the focus of the ensuing conversation.

Narratives involve the linking of events in both time and meaning with the relationships between events being crucial for gaining understanding of the causal factors which have impelled the action of the narrative (Jovchelovitch, & Bauer 2000, p. 2). Most participants related the story of how they came to be unemployed and told their 'story' in a sequential fashion outlining the 'plot' of how they progressed from education to work and beyond. In telling the story this way it was possible to identify the causal factors which the participants felt had impelled their narrative and allowed for them to describe these factors in their own words. The important aspect of this style of interview is that it allowed room for participants to shape their own narrative and relate their experiences in the words and manner of their choosing. This method was also beneficial in building a rapport and trust between the interviewer and the participant as there was less of an interrogative dimension meaning that interviews took the form of a 'conversation with a purpose' (Burgess 1984, p. 102) which were participant led rather than interviewer determined. These initial interviews were thus largely unstructured, after ascertaining the details of the individuals background, education, employment history and economic situation, the purpose of the interview was to allow the respondent to tell the story of their interaction with the social welfare system since becoming unemployed, and relate their experience of labour activation.

As outlined above this study involved getting people to talk about unemployment which can be a sensitive topic. With this in mind special attention had to be paid to the manner in which interviews were conducted. If the interviews took the impersonal form of a dry scientific questionnaire being administered by an impartial interviewer then it would not be conducive to getting participants to open up and talk freely about their experiences. The interviews were thus by design informal and conversational and aimed at feeling less like a research interview and more like a chat from the perspective of the interviewee. Questions were asked early on in the interview which aimed to build up a rapport by getting the person to talk about something that they enjoyed, and room was given for them to talk about this at length. There were two reasons for doing this firstly it was a useful means of building rapport with the participant as it allowed them to speak about something of their choice which they enjoyed and which brought happiness to their lives. Across the interviews this ranged from topics such as art, sport, music, photography, pets, children, comic books and socialising to name but a few. A second reason for doing this was that at later points in the interview where there was a possibility that the

topics being discussed might cause upset or mild distress it gave the interviewer a useful avenue to guide the discussion elsewhere if necessary although this eventuality never arose

Despite the open format of the interviews there was a need to have some degree of similarity and consistency between the interviews. To this end there was a topic guide used by the interviewer which listed the subjects to be covered in the course of the conversation. This allowed for a means of checking off subjects as they were discussed and ensured that broadly speaking there was comparability between each of the interviews. This meant that there were a number of topics which invariably were to be discussed yet the discussion was fluid and as far as possible participant led. The reason for using the topic guide was to attempt to have some consistency in the interviews which would allow for comparative analysis. In most cases the questions were open ended and this allowed for participants to elaborate and give more time to subjects or events which they became particularly animated about.

As well as the recorded interview data a further source of data was that of notes taken during and after the interview. These allowed for the inclusion of contextual details of the interview which may not be apparent from the raw audio recording. These included information such as the room in which the interview took place, the volume at which people spoke as well as the body language and types of gestures people made as they were speaking. In instances where interviews were facilitated via organisations such as jobs clubs or men's sheds there were brief ethnographic style notes which were written which served to supplement and contextualise the interview data.

2.7 Qualitative Longitudinal Research

Ideas, beliefs, opinions and subjectivities are not permanently fixed and instead can be described as being fluid and changeable over time or in response to particular events or interventions. While in depth qualitative interviews are ideal for gaining a deep level subjective understanding, this understanding is often temporally fixed. Repeat interviews are an effective means of countering this temporal fixity and of capturing changes and developments in understanding. Qualitative Longitudinal Research (QLR) is defined as qualitative research which involves 'the collection of data from the same individuals (or groups) across time' (Jupp 2006, p. 164). QLR is a useful methodology for measuring whether change happens within a given social context but also for understanding how and why such change happens, it is thus a method which allows for 'the nuanced understanding of phenomena which evolves through time' (Carduff et al. 2015, p. 2). QLR is frequently employed in healthcare research as it can

be used to gather data which describes the response in patients to medical interventions as well as describing the progression or evolution of symptoms related to particular illnesses.

This research which examines the influence of ALMP intervention on the individual is 'predicated on the investigation and interpretation of change over time and process in social contexts' (Holland et al 2006, p. 1). For 15 of the 33 participants it involved repeat interviews which are recursive waves of data gathering and it aimed by design to document complexities and processes of change over time (Vincent 2013, p. 342; Hyden 2014, p. 796). QLR is an efficient means of tracking a person as they progress through a series of systematic interventions such as those involved with Pathways to Work. By carrying out repeat interviews it is possible to generate rich narrative data pertaining to the experiences of unemployment while capturing evolving attitudes, ideas and beliefs.

QLR allows for the opportunity for each iterative interview to be tailored to each participant based on the content of the previous interview (Carduff et al. 2015, p. 2). This makes it possible for the researcher to become familiar with the participants' idiolect and means that over the course of more than one interview it is more likely that the interviewer and participant can build a rapport which is beneficial for the overall quality of data gathered. The process of building some degree of rapport between the interviewer and interviewee is one which is facilitated by repeat interviews. Topics covered in the interviews include those which are sensitive and cover periods of time where participants are vulnerable. Developing a trusting relationship of mutual respect makes it increasingly likely that participants will feel comfortable sharing such information and can do so without fear of judgement (Hyden 2014). This is a particularly important point with respect to groups who are 'visible subjects of a negative public gaze' (Vincent 2013, p. 344) via campaigns such as those relating to welfare fraud which were prevalent during the time the interviews were carried out. Repeat interviewing means that follow up interviews can be tailored to each interviewee; this is made possible by reading the transcription of the previous session in preparation. Doing this and mentioning things said in prior interviews demonstrates the fact the interviewee is being listened to and gives a chance for gaining feedback on prior interviews which can alter assumptions made by the researcher.

Vincent notes how studies which employ repeat interviews are 'prospective rather than retrospective' (2013, p. 342) making the method amenable to capturing changes in attitudes and views over time. One off interviews are mostly comprised of the participant recalling and

describing events which happened in the past. Such retrospection can lead to distortions as the story told via the process of recalling is filtered through the perspective of the present. This filtering can lead to the imposition of a rationality which the participant did not have at the time of the event (Farrall 2006, p. 6) or the memory of the event can be influenced by subsequent events and outcomes. Repeat interviewing can thus generate data in a manner which is closer to real time and this can be useful in moderating these memory based or retrospective narrative distortions. Repeat interviewing also allows participants the space and opportunity to consider and reflect on any changes in their circumstances, beliefs or dispositions which have happened in the time between interviews. The use of multiple interviews in this study allows respondents to relate new experiences with social welfare and job-seeking to the interviewer at length, but also provide opportunities for general reflection about their overall experience. This is important to track how the meaning of unemployment and job-seeking can change under the influence of 'Pathways' as well as how the levels of enthusiasm and compliance are altered.

2.8 Data Analysis

Each interview was recorded using a digital Dictaphone and manually transcribed by the researcher. While transcription was a particularly time consuming aspect of the research it was useful for getting to know the data. The volume of data which gathered meant that it was necessary to choose a viable strategy for data reduction and analysis which allowed for meaningful conclusions to be drawn. These interview transcriptions were analysed in Nvivo using the three stage analytical strategy which as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). This strategy involves firstly reducing the data set down by attaching open codes to the transcripts and organising them in a manner which discards irrelevant data and identifies sections of text which are to be subject to further analysis. 'Reduction not only allows analysis, it *is* analysis' (Miles and Huberman 1983, p.285 italics in original); grouping nodes together even at the initial stage implies some level of relationship between them which is of analytical significance. The challenge at this early stage is to avoid over simplification and to allow for flexibility so the initial open codes can be revisited at a later date if necessary. It is thus important at this stage to ensure that any data which is discarded is not deleted and is still available for analysis should it be needed at a later stage. Once the open coding is complete the second phase involved developing categories of classification to group these codes together. At this stage it is necessary to ensure that the nodes are exhaustive so that every piece of data which is relevant to the study is included. It is also necessary in grouping the nodes to ensure that each node is exclusive and distinct where there is no overlap where two different nodes

describe the same thing. Once these phases are complete it is possible to move on to the third phase where the categories developed in previous steps can be analysed and emerging themes identified and elucidated.

2.9 Limitations

A charge frequently levied against qualitative research is that it amounts to little more than a collection of anecdotes which lack the rigour and replicability of supposedly more scientific 'hard' data of quantitative research. Such notions while being misguided are usually informed by and related to questions about what the aims of the research are. There is an almost endless supply of different types of quantitative data pertaining to unemployment which are constantly disseminated and discussed, debated and offered as evidence of the various truths of the economy and the labour market. While such data and the studies which rely on them are undoubtedly important they fail to capture the experience of the people who find themselves unemployed. These studies are generalisable use advanced statistical sampling methods and because of their positivist methodologies are usually both replicable and scalable to high samples. In contrast qualitative research is that which aims to construct meaning and to do so at the level of the individual and their own experiences of the topic in question. As the gathering and analysis of qualitative data is by its nature more labour intensive and time consuming it is not well suited to large scale research. As well as this the particular methods used in this study which aimed for conversational participant led interviews do not easily lend themselves to large scale studies which involve hundreds of interviews. In terms of reproducibility there are some facets of this research which are of the time in which the interviews were conducted. In this sense while much of the core findings would be reproducible in a thematic sense, if the interviews were carried out again today there are undoubtedly aspects of the responses given and discussions had which were influenced by the temporal 'structures of feeling' and these would not be reproducible.

A further limitation of this study is that which relates to the time period that the fieldwork and interviews were carried out which was between 2015 and 2017. This time period was one where initially the raft of changes introduced under PTW were being rolled out and many of the new rules, procedures and institutional practices were bedding in at the same period when the initial fieldwork was undertaken. This time period was one of flux and change as the nascent system of behavioural conditionality and sanctions was settling in and this meant that some of the early interviews were carried out in the midst of this confusion. It is arguable whether or not this should constitute a limitation of the study or whether it points to some of the earlier interviews

being influenced by the time in which they were carried out. In this sense there are some facets of this study which are undoubtedly influenced by the time in which it was carried out and so should be seen in terms of capturing a snapshot of the initial roll out period of PTW. Finally the initial research design was one which aimed to recruit participants as they became unemployed and to document via repeat interviews their progression through the nascent system of activation under PTW. While this idea was a very good one in theory the practical difficulties of recruiting newly unemployed participants made this incredibly difficult.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has described the methodological considerations which have informed this work. It has elucidated the philosophical underpinnings of the research and has outlined the choices made with regard to the research design. A central component of the research design relates to the importance of keeping within ethical guidelines and these were discussed in detail with a specific focus on informed consent and the handling of sensitive data. The successful conduct of empirical qualitative research is highly dependent on the sample of participants. To this end there was a discussion in this chapter of the various ways in which participants were recruited with further discussion outlining some of the measures of recruitment which were not successful. The chapter also described the manner in which the interviews were conducted which aimed to be respectful, welcoming and open to the experiences of the research participants. After a brief discussion of QLR and the use of repeat interviews the chapter described the process by which the data was analysed. The chapter then concluded with a brief look at the limitations of the study.

Chapter 3 Unemployment

3.1 Introduction

The experience of unemployment is one which is almost universally acknowledged as being unpleasant (Ezzy 1993; Feather 1997; O'Connor 2010) with adverse effects on both physical and mental health and wellbeing (Fryer 2013; Jahoda 1981, 1971; Janlert 1997). The most obvious negative outcome of unemployment is the material aspect where a sizable portion of income is lost when a person becomes unemployed; but as Schöb notes 'there is a general consensus that this misery is not caused by material hardship alone' (2012, p. 149). The basis for this consensus is the belief that contemporary welfare states provide enough in social welfare payments to sufficiently counteract the worst types of material deprivation. This allows for what Esping-Andersen (1990) has termed 'decommodification' which is 'when a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market' (Esping-Andersen 1990, p. 22). Unemployment is most typically defined in public discussion as the state of being without paid work. It is often linked with a broad range of social, personal and political ills such as apathy, disengagement, poor mental and physical health and learned dependence. This research will argue that unemployment is a far more complex phenomenon which is deliberately defined, measured and structured in ways which have definitive effects on the lived experience of unemployed people. This chapter will initially outline the empirical aspects of how unemployment is officially defined and measured before describing how unemployment relates to material deprivation and poverty. Following on from this there will be a discussion on the negative effects of unemployment with a particular focus on mental and physical health. The following sections from this will situate the Irish welfare state firstly by giving a brief historical analysis and secondly by placing it within Esping-Andersen's (1990) worlds of welfare typology. Next there will be a section looking at the theoretical underpinnings of how contemporary unemployment is conceptualised while paying particular attention to the seminal work of Jahoda et al (1971) on the Marienthal study and the resultant conceptual framework of deprivation theory. The reason for emphasising Deprivation Theory is that it is an influential framework which underpins much of the ways in which contemporary unemployment is conceptualised and managed.

3.1.2 Measures of Unemployment

An unemployed person as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) is someone who in the week prior to their being surveyed was without work, available for work and had in the previous four weeks undertaken specific steps to find work. Conversely an employed

person is defined by the ILO as someone who had worked for at least one hour in the week before the survey was taken. The ILO measure of unemployment in Ireland is that taken from the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) and this measure is the internationally recognised means of measuring unemployment and labour market participation in a manner which is internationally comparable. These figures are reported quarterly and are broken down according to region which allows for geographically comparable measurement of economic activity. As part of the QNHS respondents are asked to state their Principal Economic Status (PES) which is their usual situation with regard to employment which gives a further measure of rates of employment and unemployment. The reason why PES is an important measure is that the ILO definition of working one hour in the previous week is arguably too lax and does not capture with complete accuracy whether a person is employed or unemployed. Someone could be long term unemployed and work for one hour and be included as employed. Likewise someone employed in casual work arrangements who happens to have not had any work in the prior week would be classed as unemployed despite the fact that they usually would have work. By simultaneously capturing PES data it is possible to balance these problems out and to get a more rounded measure of rates of unemployment.

The most frequently cited measure of unemployment in Irish public and media discourse however is that of the Live Register (LR) which is a measure compiled by the local social welfare offices. It is comprised of people who are receiving any type of Jobseekers Payment including those who work part-time and receive top up payments, as well as people who are not in receipt of any social welfare payment but are signing on for Pay Related Social Insurance (PRSI) credits. The LR figures would thus also include seasonal and casual workers who are not actively seeking other work. As such it is an administrative count of people who are in receipt of selected benefits or PRSI credits. As the LR figures are reported monthly they are a constant in the news cycle and can almost be seen as a totemic measure of the health or otherwise of both the labour market and the broader economy. Despite their prominence in public discussion LR figures are not designed to measure rates of unemployment and this fact is prominently stated in the monthly releases from the Central Statistics Office. LR figures generally run higher than the ILO figures, the trend in the differences between the measures is that in times of high unemployment the variance between the measures lessens whereas in times of economic buoyancy where labour markets are in better conditions and more jobs are available the levels of variance between measures increase.

Figure 3. ILO, PES, and LR 1
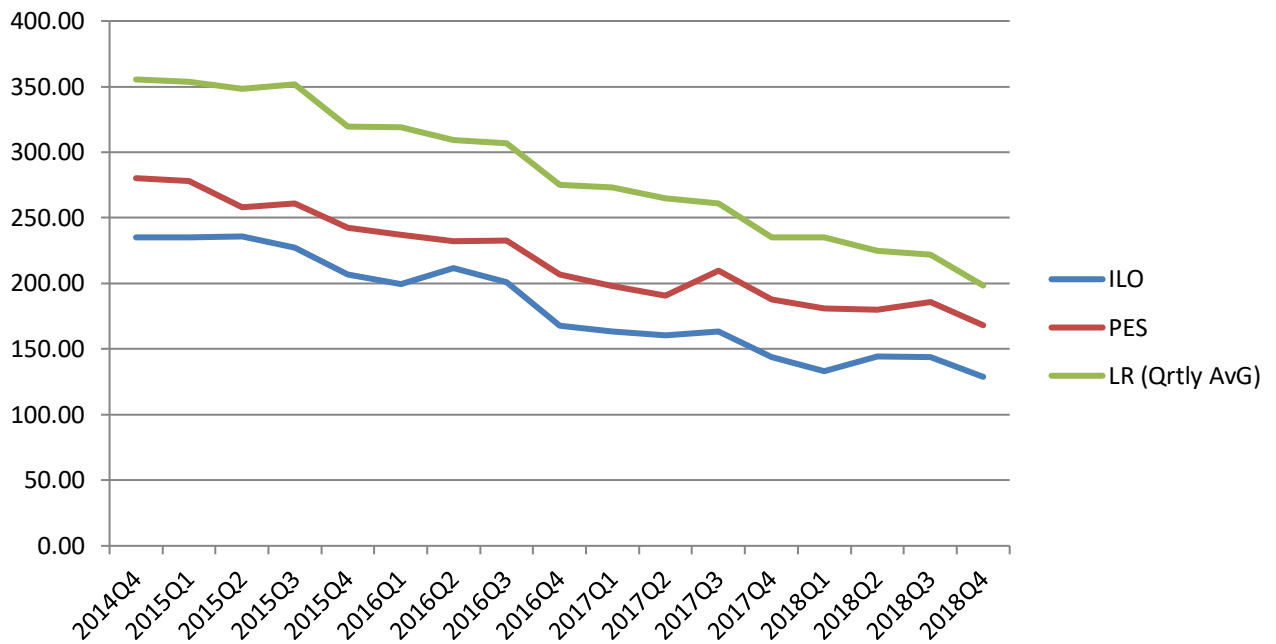
The time period under consideration in this study is one after the point where unemployment had peaked in the aftermath of the financial crisis and the resulting bailout from the troika. As the labour market recovered from these shocks rates of unemployment by any measure began to drop significantly. It is worth noting however the manner in which the three measures are consistently different with the LR figures being the highest and the ILO the lowest.

3.1.3 Unemployment and Material Poverty

The most pressing issue with unemployment is that of material poverty as payment rates for unemployment benefit are generally insufficient and below the at risk of poverty rates set out by the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC). In Ireland many people who become unemployed after losing a job face a steep drop in income as neither social welfare nor social insurance rates of payment are indexed to previous earnings. This means that upon becoming unemployed people instantly face material poverty unless they have savings to draw upon. Such periods of material deficit can be long lasting as people by necessity can enter into high interest debt (Sullivan 2008) via credit cards and other forms of unsecured borrowing. Such expensive debt can take a long time too clear once someone gets back to work and restores their earnings. People who experience long term unemployment face a significant risk of suffering from material deprivation as the rates paid for Job Seekers payments are below what is deemed necessary to avoid poverty. The European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) defines relative poverty as being someone with 60% or less of the median income. Relative poverty is also termed as being in the 'at risk of poverty' category. Material deprivation is measured

according to a list of eleven indicators which describe goods and services which are deemed essential to achieve a basic standard of living with anyone who is unable to afford two or more of these items deemed to be suffering material deprivation. The SILC figures for 2020 show 32% of unemployed people at risk of poverty, 35.3% of unemployed people classified as deprived and 16.6% of unemployed people in consistent poverty.
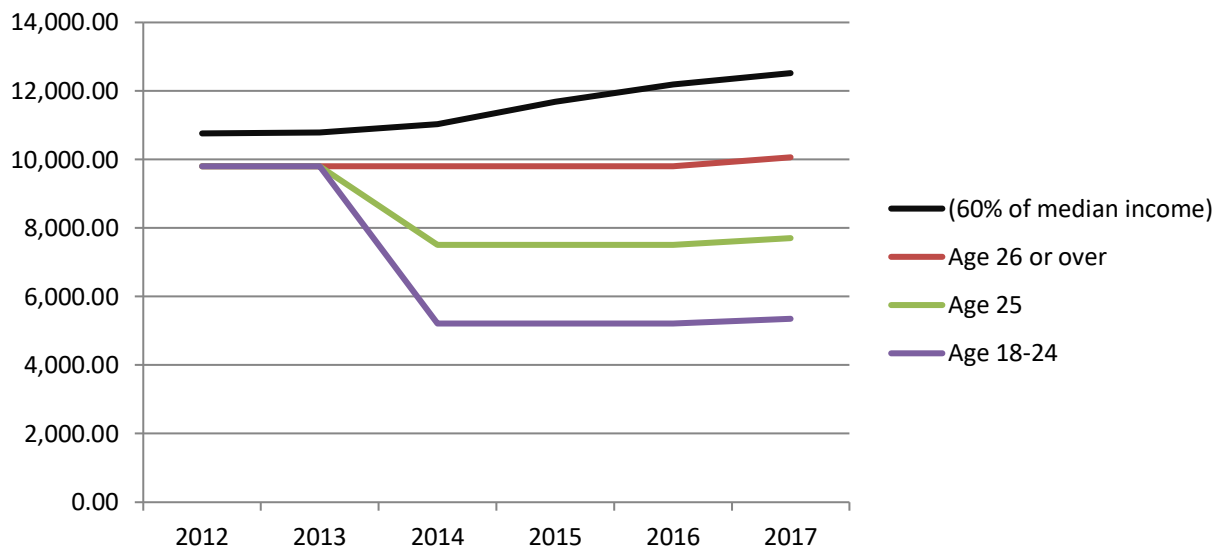
Figure 4. Job Seekers Rates and Relative Poverty

Figure 3 takes the figures for 60% median income in the period of 2012 to 2017 as given in the SILC data for 2017 and compares them with rates of payment for jobseekers for the same time period. These figures are only inclusive of the basic rates for jobseekers allowance and do not include any additional payments for housing or for dependent children and as such are indicative. In cases where a claimant qualifies for rent allowance this payment can bring their income closer to or even beyond the 60% of median income threshold but this is not the case for people aged 18 to 24. This demonstrates that basic rates for jobseekers payments fall significantly below the figure for relative poverty.

Despite the low rate of basic jobseekers payments it is still a fact that when all social transfers are included the Irish Social Welfare system is one which significantly reduces levels of inequality, poverty and deprivation. It does a considerable amount in assuaging the vast income and wage inequalities in Ireland and a high percentage of the population draw down a considerable portion of their income from state funded social transfers. Figures from the Household Budget Survey (HBS) shown below in figure 3.3 demonstrate how crucial state transfers are across the income deciles with the first decile which is comprised of the poorest

people in society taking 85.6% of their income in state transfers and the seventh decile drawing down fifteen percent. So while basic jobseekers payments are insufficient to avoid the risk of poverty the broader range of social transfers combine to significantly reduce this risk. According to the HBS almost 35% of all household income across the state comes from social transfers. Due to the reliance of such a wide section of society on social transfers it is crucial that the manner of their administration is closely monitored and assessed. The introduction of sanctions and the use of behavioural conditionality both have the potential to have severe negative effects on the well-being of a large number of people.
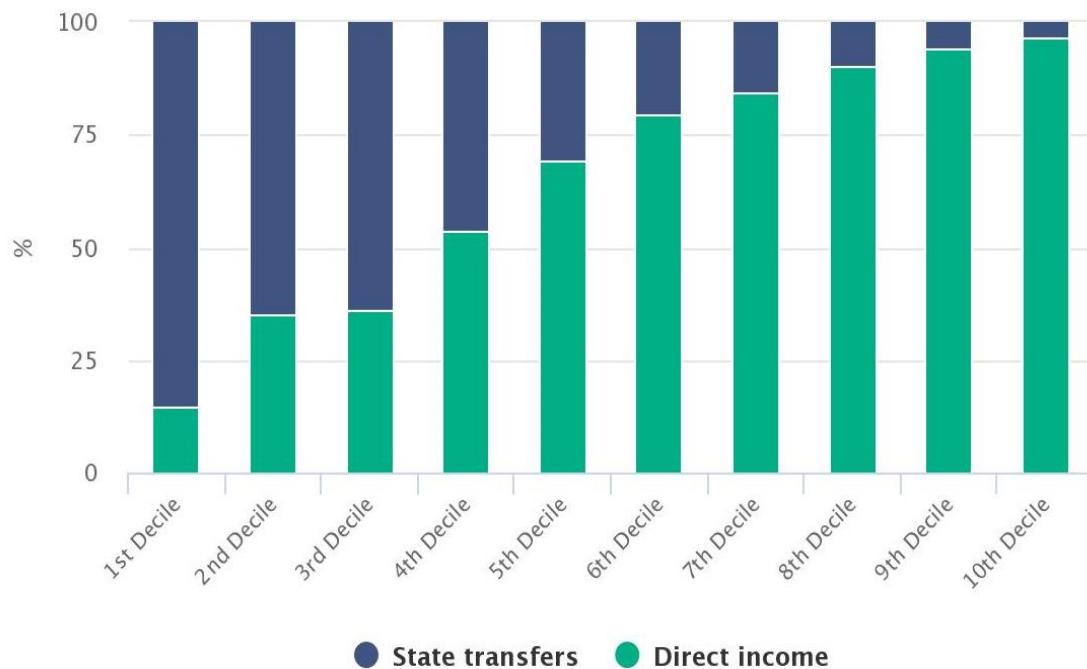
Fig 5 Gross Household Income by Income Type and Decile (Household Budget Survey 2015-2016)

3.1.4 Unemployment and Health

In Epidemiological terms unemployment is frequently associated with severely negative outcomes in the realms of both physical and mental health with rates of drug (Nagelhout et al 2017) and alcohol (Khan et al 2002) abuse and addiction correlated to rates of unemployment (Henkel 2011). The lived experience of unemployment is recognised as having damaging consequences on both physical and mental health (Bambra 2010; Drydakis 2015). The material

difficulties associated with trying to survive on a meagre income (Fitzpatrick et al 2018; Garthwaite 2016; Hays 2004; Tirado 2015) are matched with the more latent difficulties associated with psychological problems such as the lack of identity, purpose or time structure (Jahoda 1981, 1971). Research conducted by the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) (O'Connor 2010) emphasised the negative effects of unemployment on the overall well- being of participants which was manifested in negative mental states such as low self- esteem and morale (Yeager & Culleton 2015), feelings of helplessness and even depression and anxiety (Boland 2015; Ezzy 1993; Fryer 2013; O'Connor 2010). A recurring motif in examinations of the lived experience of unemployment is that of social isolation (Delaney et al 2011). There are a number of reasons as to why unemployment can be an isolating experience the first is evident in the immediate dwindling or even the cessation of social contact and interaction with work colleagues which happens when a job is lost (Boland 2015, p. 23).

Irrespective of whether a person likes their job or not, undertaking work means continual contact and interaction with work colleagues which is immediately lost along with the job. This means that one of the first outcomes of losing a job is the shrinking of day to day areas of social contact. Social isolation can also be caused by a lack of financial means where unemployed people are excluded from actively socialising because they cannot afford to eat out, go to the pub or undertake any other standard leisure activities which incur costs (Delaney et al 2011, p. 35, Wight 1993). Further to this is the fact that some unemployed people have reported difficulties in relating their experience of unemployment to others who are still working. Tied in with this is the reported feeling that there is a negative peer judgement which is placed on those who are unemployed, as well as a feeling that the repetitive and boring experience of unemployment means that when a person does get to socialise they don't have any stories to tell or experiences to share (Delaney et al 2011, p 35). This negative effect on social life is referred as a 'network event' (Price et al 1998) as unemployment has negative implications not just for the individual but also by extension to their family and friendship networks. The experience of prolonged unemployment could thus be seen as one which strips the individual of certain aspects of their personhood as it places them outside of regular sanctioned leisure and social interaction which is central to processes of constructing and maintaining the social self (Cooley 1992; Goffman 1949).

3.2 Situating the Irish Welfare State

The foundations of the Irish Welfare State were laid when Ireland was still a part of the United Kingdom. Cousins (2016, p. 38) describes how the Poor Law (Ireland) act of 1838 established

the first system of income maintenance payments, followed by the introduction of workmen's compensation in 1898, an old age pension in 1908 and national insurance in 1911. Further schemes were introduced after independence in 1922 such as unemployment assistance in 1933, widows' and orphans' pensions in 1935 and children's allowance in 1943. Norris (2016) notes how the conditions under which the Irish Welfare State developed differ from many other countries as they were rooted initially in agrarian policies concerned with the post-colonial redistribution of land ownership as opposed to other countries which were primarily developed in response to the urban labour movements. Land reform was the cornerstone of social policy in the nascent Irish state and initially 'the welfare system focused on the consolidation of a "permanent" rural smallholder class' (Norris 2016, p. 6) who were granted right to buy housing concessions in 1936 and again in 1966. This meant that the social order fostered by the nascent Irish Welfare State was one that was rural and based around familism and patriarchal authority. The Irish constitution of 1937 went as far as granting the family the status as the 'natural primary and fundamental unit group of society' (Government of Ireland 1937). Rules around the inheritance of family farms meant that one heir was appointed to take over and it was their labour while awaiting inheritance coupled with state funds which would make many small farms viable. The economy as was facilitated by this was one which was insular, protectionist and inward looking focused as it was on small hold farming.

The 1960's saw the beginnings of modernisation, developmentalism and an opening up of the country to international trade. This resulted in an increased focus on welfare spending in areas such as health and education which meant that the existing familist welfare order could no longer be funded to the extent it had been in prior years. Speaking of this period TK Whitaker who was secretary to the Department of Finance stated that 'it was recognised that reliance on a shrinking home market offered no prospect of satisfying Ireland's employment aspirations, and that protectionism, both in agriculture and industry, would have to give way to an active and competitive participation in a free trading world' (quoted in Keogh 2005, p. 252) The 1960's thus marked the beginnings of Ireland as an outward looking country in trade terms. The development of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the success of the European Economic Community (EEC) pointed towards the movement away from rural protectionism and towards international trade. The opening of Shannon Free Airport Development Company in 1959 saw the first free trade zone in the world set up near Shannon Airport. The two incentives given for industry to set up here were exemptions from customs fees for imported and exported goods and an exemption from corporate tax for a period of 25

years. Similarly the signing of a new Anglo Irish trade agreement in 1960 and the application to join the EEC in 1961 demonstrated the pathway for future Irish economic development. This was to be a rupture from the past and a movement towards industrialisation, Europeanisation and modernisation.

The next phase in the development of the Irish economy was aimed at attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). As such the welfare state of the period was characterised by large increases in spending on education as attracting FDI was contingent on there being a pliant and educated work force. In this sense social policy became subservient to economic policy which was primarily aimed towards the imperatives of international competition. It is this period which marks the beginning in policy terms of Ireland as a competition state. The link between education and economic development was expressly made in a 1966 state document on education which titled Investment in Education. Powell notes how this document posited as a principal objective of the state the 'production of a labour force geared towards the needs of an advanced industrial economy' (Powell 2017, p. 170). As such fees for vocational training in schools were abolished and state sponsored school transport schemes were set up which widened participation. In 1967 the free education scheme was introduced which saw second level education become the norm. As well as this a system of Local Authority higher education grants was set up in 1968 to extend access to third level education. Between 1963 and 1974 the percentage of GNP spent on education doubled and this was aimed particularly at using the education system as a means of making Ireland more attractive for FDI.

Similarly the introduction in 1987 of the Programme for National Recovery saw the beginning of the model of Social Partnership. This was a programme of economic and social agreements between the government and 'the three pillars –employers, trade unions and farmers' (Murphy 2002, p. 80). Under this programme the trade unions agreed to limit wage increases and to refrain from taking industrial action for the duration of the agreement. In return the government agreed to reform the system of income taxation so as to increase take home pay. Once again the main aim of this was that of creating a stable and predictable business environment which would be attractive to FDI and in policy terms this copper fastened Ireland as a competition state.

The concept of the competition state comes from the idea of the separation of global capital and nation states. In response to globalised world markets, states become competitors with each other in a zero sum game to attract capital investment and the associated employment and tax

revenues. Competition states are those which give priority to economic competitiveness over general welfare and social cohesion. They are concerned primarily with the 'promotion of enterprise, innovation and profitability in both private and public sectors' (Kirby & Murphy 2007, p. 5) as such they aim to create a desirable national environment for FDI. There is however notable difference between the neoliberal conception of the rolling back of the state and the competition state as the latter is far from being in retreat and instead marshals its resources towards facilitating an institutional and regulatory environment which is attractive for investment. The state thus becomes more 'active and extensive' (Kirby & Murphy 2007, p. 6) in its actions but it is the locus of where these actions are directed which differs.

This social, economic and regulatory landscape combined with other factors such as the geographical location between the USA and Europe meant that Ireland was successful in establishing itself as an FDI location. As discussed above in section 1.2 the period from the mid 1990's up until the crash of 2008 came to be known as the Celtic Tiger period as it was associated with rapid increases in standards of living, dramatic reductions in rates of unemployment and high rates of economic growth. This period also saw a drastic increase in inequality as social expenditures lagged significantly in comparison to other countries leading to interlocking crises in housing, healthcare and transport among others. Kirby notes the 'ambiguity at the heart of the Celtic Tiger' (Kirby 2010, p. 8) as it celebrated aggregate increases in living standards yet paid scant attention to how these increases were distributed.

The Irish social welfare system is one which has its origins in the British system yet post-independence it was initially focused towards land redistribution and the maintenance of an inward looking protectionist and mostly agrarian economic and social order. From the 1960's onwards this form of welfare was slowly jettisoned and replaced with an outward looking economic policy which aimed primarily at attracting investment from abroad. The next section will examine the Irish Welfare state in terms of the extent to which it fits within the 'worlds of welfare' (Esping-Andersen 1990) typology.

3.2.1 Worlds of Welfare

Welfare State typologies are complex with wide variations according to levels and types of assistance. Yet at the core of these variations is the binary difference between a residualist welfare state and a universalist welfare state. Residualist welfare states limit the extent to which state assistance is given out as they see the majority of people as being able to provide for themselves. Under residualist regimes assistance is given only to the neediest with significant

stigma and social opprobrium attached. Universalist welfare states on the other hand see welfare provision as the universal right of all people. The universal provision of comprehensive social services to all is the cornerstone of universalism. The tension between residualism and universalism is one which is typified in theoretical terms by Polanyi (1944) and his notion of the double movement which refers to the dialectical process between the movements of laissez-faire and the attempts to expand the scope and influence of deregulated markets and the counter movements of welfarism which aim to insulate the social world against the harms wrought by these actions.

Perhaps the most influential welfare state typology is that of the 'worlds of welfare' (Esping-Andersen 1990) which does not simply 'rely on an empirical classification of welfare states but was based on a theory as to why welfare states took on a particular form' (Cousins 2005, p. 109). According to Esping-Andersen there were three main types of welfare state, the liberal, the conservative/corporatist and the social democratic. The liberal welfare state is one which is closest to the residual welfare state described above, The UK and the US are the main exemplars as in both 'means tested assistance, modest universal transfers, or modest social insurance plans predominate' (Esping-Andersen 1990, p. 26). The conservative/corporatist welfare state model is one where welfare state values are 'typically shaped by the Church and hence strongly committed to the preservation of family-hood' (Esping-Andersen 1990, p. 27). Conservative welfare states are thus typified by the principle of 'subsidiarity' where 'the state will only interfere when the family's capacity to service its members is exhausted' (Esping-Andersen 1990, p. 27). The final of the welfare state regimes is that of the social democratic, this is characterised by a welfare state that aims to promote equality and to manage the dualism between state and market. It is a model of de-commodification and universal services which 'crowds out the market and consequently constructs an essentially universal solidarity in favour of the welfare state' (Esping-Andersen 1990, p. 28).

In writing about social democratic style welfare states Esping-Andersen was primarily referring to those found in the Scandinavian region. Welfare states under this regime primarily followed the model of high de-commodification and universal services and the associated costs of running such a regime meant that unemployment and labour markets required close management. As such it was in this region that the initial forms of ALMP's were instituted, in the 1950's Sweden as a manpower program which was aimed at sustaining non-inflationary growth. Under the intellectual development of trade union economists Gosta Rehn and Rudolf Meidner there were two mutually supportive policies introduced. Firstly wage increases were

set at the national level with the aim being that of equality and solidarity. This meant sharp pay increases for low paid workers but also it meant that firms that 'could only survive by paying low wages needed to rationalise, while inefficient firms would be forced to shut down'(Timo Weishaupt 2011, p. 84) . This action brought forth the need for a second complementary action, namely the introduction of specified programs for retraining and redeployment to 'absorb, retrain, and move the workers made redundant in the decaying industries' (Esping-Andersen 1990, p. 168). In this manner the first forms of ALMP as they are presently known were instituted. The policy was not concerned with disciplining or punishing the unemployed and instead there was a concerted focus on retraining and redirecting workers. The aims of the policy were also focused on the wider economy as they attempted to enhance productivity while keeping inflation in check and fostering upward social mobility and upskilling of the workforce (Timo Weishaupt 2011, p. 84).

According to Esping Andersen's typology the Irish Welfare regime is classified as being liberal as it has low levels of de-commodification which means that households are dependent on the labour market to maintain standards of living. Supports are mostly targeted at the poorest of people that are given broadly speaking fall under one of three headings, 'social insurance or contributory payments, social assistance or means tested payments, or universal child benefit which is residence based and unrelated to income or previous contributions'(Cousins 2016, p. 38). As is evident from the brief historical sketch of the development of the Irish welfare state above it is more complex than this straightforward typology. The unique path development into the welfare state via rural land ownership (Norris 2016) as well as the conservative influence of Catholic social ideology mean that the Irish welfare state is a 'mixed and fluid regime that does not fit easily into Esping-Andersen's framework' (Powell 2017, p. 37). There is also little in the worlds of welfare typology which speaks to the welfare state processes associated with the competition state as discussed above. As such Powell points to Holliday and his description of productivist welfare capitalism (Holliday 2000) as a model which is a closer fit to the Irish case. Holliday uses this model to describe the East Asian experience which bears a more than passing resemblance to the economy that emerged in Ireland in the Celtic Tiger period. Under productivist welfare capitalism 'social policy is strictly subordinate to the overriding policy objective of economic growth. Everything else flows from this: minimal social rights with extensions linked to productive activity, reinforcement of the position of productive elements in society, and state- market-family relationships directed towards growth'

(Holliday 2000, p. 708). In Ireland the subordination of social policy by economic concerns was well established by the Celtic Tiger Period.

This section has aimed to situate the Irish welfare state by giving a brief potted history of its development. It then considered the place the Irish welfare state within the typology of the worlds of welfare capitalism. The next sections will examine unemployment in terms of Deprivation theory.

3.3 Deprivation Theory

Generally speaking a person takes up employment for the purely instrumental reason of earning a wage. By exchanging time and labour for money it is possible to pay for the necessities for survival such as food, heat and shelter as well as any luxuries which contribute to well- being and allow for a person to live in comfort. Earning money also enables the person to save for the future which empowers them to plan and make future oriented arrangements for holidays, retirement or even to have money put by as a form of insurance against illness. These are the *manifest* benefits of employment; there is however a further set of *latent* benefits which are most keenly realised in their absence. These latent benefits of employment which form the basis of deprivation theory are posited by Jahoda (1982, 1981, 1971) as being central to psychological health. Deprivation theory has proven to be an enduring explicative account of the consequences of unemployment on both the social and individual level. The theory was developed using what was at the time a pioneering mixed methodological study of the Austrian Town of Marienthal in 1931. The Marienthal research project was unique because it aimed to elucidate the sociographic consequences of total unemployment on a given area. Marienthal was a one factory town whose inhabitants relied entirely on the textile mill for work, when the mill shut down in 1929 almost everyone in the town became unemployed.

The study posited a central relationship between work and human nature as it stated that beyond the manifest *material* needs met by work, there is a further series of *latent* needs which are central to maintaining psychological health. In this sense when someone loses a job they face not just the loss of the manifest benefits of an income but also five latent benefits which in their absence can have detrimental effects on self- esteem, self- identity and general well-being. The assumptions of deprivation theory are influential in a further way as they focus on the unemployed individual as a psychological subject which is amenable to governmental intervention. While unemployment had hitherto been mostly the preserve of dry statistical

analysis, studies of this kind opened up the individual as a legitimate subject of biopolitical research.

Deprivation theory states that in the absence of work it is possible to assume that aside from the material deficit caused by unemployment and the loss of a wage there is also an 'enforced deprivation'(Schöb 2012, p. 151) of the latent benefits of work. These are listed by Jahoda as being: a structured experience of time, shared experience, collective purpose, status and identity, and required regular activity (Jahoda 1982). Deprivation Theory is used to describe the negative psychological effects of unemployment which are associated with inactivity and disengagement from purposive social bonds. In doing so it goes beyond the paradigm of solely associating the study of unemployment with material poverty and its myriad associated negative consequences.

It is important to note that Jahoda does not entirely discount the effects of material deprivation on the well- being of the unemployed (1982, p. 21). Such effects are given their due importance, yet the enduring aspect of deprivation theory is that it attempts to go beyond valuing work solely for material gains and posits a list of associated psychological and social benefits. Many of the findings which are presented in Deprivation Theory inform the assumptions relating to present day unemployment and how it is managed. The vision of the human being as espoused by Deprivation Theory is a moral discourse which posits their natural state as being at labour with any prolonged deviation from this state being experienced as a period of rupture and discontinuity (Cole 2007). This mode of thinking about work has been influential and is particularly evident in contemporary forms of the management of unemployment which are primarily focussed on getting people back to work as quickly as possible irrespective of the type of work These assumptions according to Cole 'have become sedimented into sociological research on unemployment, whether or not the seminal influence of the study is formally cited or acknowledged' (Cole 2007, p. 1135).

3.3.1 A Structured Appearance of Time

In order to allow for the analysis of deprivation theory it is necessary to first describe and summarise each of the latent functions of work, the first is a structured appearance of time. Unemployment brings with it 'the enforced destruction of a habitual time structure for the waking day' (Jahoda 1982, p. 22). Public institutions are instrumental in shaping the daily time structure of the individual, beginning when they start school where students are habitualised in punctuality, timetables and the filling of time with meaningful activities. This socialisation

into the time structures of working life from an early age makes it particularly difficult for the individual to adjust when these structures are suddenly removed in instances such as unemployment. The repetition of such temporal structuring throughout education and into working life serves to set such patterns deep into the routines and rituals of daily life. Without the temporal orientation of work people tend to drift out of these structuring habits, paying less attention to time keeping, sleeping far longer hours than previously and obeying Parkinson's Law (Parkinson 1957, p. 3) by stretching out any tasks they do have to undertake so they consume as much time as is possible. In the absence of deadlines, timetables or any other temporally structuring mechanism many tasks are indefinitely put on the proverbial long finger as the unemployed lose any of 'the material and moral incentives to make use of their time' (Jahoda 1971, p. 66).

In the absence of time structure and the attendant ordering of the days there is an experience of drifting in an eternal present where nothing really gets done because there is no sense of urgency in needing to do anything. 'The realisation that free time is limited urges a man to make more considered use of it' (Jahoda 1971, p. 71) yet when there is no limit to the time available to get something done there is correspondingly no limit to the amount of time spent in procrastination. If it is known that there is all day, or week, or even all month to carry out a task then it becomes stripped of its sense of urgency. As well as this most periods of unemployment last for an undetermined duration and as such 'uncertainty about how long the unemployment will last may discourage individuals from projects which will keep them busy' (Wanberg et al 1997, p. 76). Thus the unemployed can find themselves caught in between two states, where they don't have anything to structure their time yet fear undertaking any large scale activities in case they are interrupted by finding work.

Jahoda describes the men of Marienthal in terms of idle stasis, 'nothing is urgent anymore: they have forgotten how to hurry' (Jahoda 1971, p. 66). Without the anchoring reference points of work the men of Marienthal had drifted into an idle torpor where they stand stolidly on street corners while doing nothing in particular. The only reference points which punctuated the days for the men of Marienthal were those which related to getting out of bed and meal times and aside from these the men had difficulty in temporally describing their activities. Time structure is also formed according to financial factors; in Marienthal those who received unemployment benefit were paid on a fortnightly basis whereas when they had been working they were paid weekly wages. The weekly routines of work were thus punctuated by payment of wages with men going to the pub or social club on a given night each week according to when they were

paid. In the absence of the weekly payments the differentiation of the days of the week became effectively meaningless. The fortnightly payment of benefits served as a means of orientation for the families of Marienthal, food was often scarce towards the end of the fortnight and comparatively plentiful in the days just after payment. So temporal structure was no longer oriented around the neat demarcation of days and weeks but instead was primarily based on the fortnightly payment of unemployment benefit.

The alteration of temporal frameworks and the destruction of time structures imposed by working meant that there was an absence of distinction between leisure time and work time. This absence meant that all time could be deemed leisure time and was thus experienced as something which must be passed as opposed to being enjoyed. Jahoda describes this endless leisure time as 'a tragic gift' (1971, p. 66) which for many was 'experienced as a heavy psychological burden' (Jahoda 1982, p. 23). A subjective experience of time which is structured and purposeful has been found to be positively correlated to self- esteem and negatively correlated to feelings of depression (Bond and Feather 1988, p. 322).

3.3.2 Collective Purpose

The second latent benefit of employment is that it bestows a sense of collective purpose on the worker which is manifested by participation in wider society. A sense of collective purpose is an element which is exemplified by a communal feeling of social solidarity. The factory was deemed to be the hub of the community of Marienthal with Jahoda describing it as being 'the centre of social life' and being 'not just a place of work' (Jahoda 1971, p. 37). Upon the closure of the factory this social hub was extracted from the community without any obvious replacement arising. Collective purpose was observable in a number of ways including participation in social and political life, the organisation of dances, fairs and carnivals as well as participation in other communal public activities such as the maintenance and use of public parks. As with the other latent benefits of employment the benefits of these communal activities were most keenly felt in their absence. In Marienthal the research team noted a number of instances where collective social activities such as political associations and voluntary activities were in decline despite the fact that in the absence of work people had more time to partake in such activities.

There was also an accompanying shift from social solidarity to individualist conflicts. 'The decline from a higher cultural level of political confrontation was accompanied by a rise in more primitive hostilities motivated by personal malice' (Jahoda 1971, p. 43).The predominant

form that this personal malice took was the anonymous tip off, where denunciations were made claiming that some people were working unofficially while claiming unemployment assistance. These denunciations were generally unfounded yet it is indicative of a form of 'negative solidarity' (Winlow and Hall 2013, p. 12) that people attempted to inform on each other in such a fashion. In Marienthal the wearing down of communal social bonds is much remarked upon with a complete chapter in the original text entitled 'the Weary Community' dedicated to its description. Cole notes the hierarchy inherent in this schema where the unemployed are described in primitive animalistic terms in direct comparison to the 'cultured humanity of workers' (Cole 2007, p. 1137). The description of how time was passed where 'everything that occurs happens as if it were unintentional' (Jahoda 1971, p. 70) also encompasses this ordering of the unemployed as more primitive inferior beings. Thus according to deprivation theory there is an implicit social ordering which accompanies work which disintegrates in situations of mass unemployment where people regress to a more primitive form of individualism.

The description of the destruction of communal social bonds in Marienthal is one which is beset by inconsistencies. The description of the unemployed men who stand in idle congress on street corners is one which is not attributed with any form of sociality or community. In these terms it is only purposive action oriented gatherings which can be considered in terms of community. This means that once again there is an inherent social ordering in place where purposeful work oriented activities are granted the label of community and anything outside of this definitional jurisdiction is indicative of social decline and deprivation.

3.3.3 Work as Shared Experience

Work is a shared experience; the factory in Marienthal was the hub around which the village had grown as it was the primary employer of the majority of the men of the town. As such work in Marienthal had been a communal and shared experience which served to strengthen social bonds and integrate the men into shared communities of practice. The removal of the factory served to simultaneously remove the basis upon which much of the sociality and integration had been built. As with collective purpose the experience of unemployment in Marienthal was as much shared as the experience of work, yet deprivation theory discounts the shared experiences of the unemployed men lounging on street corners or telling tales in the social clubs. This discounting of shared experiences which happen outside of the realm of paid work is crucial to understanding the crux of deprivation theory and the ways in which it has been co-opted into contemporary means of managing unemployment.

Diedrich (2004) describes a situation in a Welsh coal mining town ravaged by pit closures and mass unemployment where work was central to the formulation and maintenance of masculine identities and respectability. In this instance there was a marked difference between some men who dealt with unemployment without much personal suffering and upheaval and others who didn't. The key differentiating factor was informal groups of workmates which 'were crucial to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity because they kept the connections between work, respectability, community and gendered identity alive' (Diedrich 2004, p. 112). This maintenance was primarily possible because these informal groups gave the men a space in which to continue their relation with the prevailing masculine identity. As with Marienthal these informal groups were centred around pubs and working men's clubs but they allowed for the reaffirmation of working identities which shielded these men against the worst effects of the loss of status associated with unemployment. Deprivation theory posits that it is only work which can bestow the five latent benefits and excludes activities such as volunteering or work around the home. There is a similar view inherent in contemporary ALMP's which see paid work as the only route to achieving these latent benefits.

3.3.4 Required Regular Activity

In the absence of the structures imposed on daily life via work there was a concomitant absence of required activity. Having set activities which must be undertaken is as important as having a structured appearance of time as both serve as a means of structuring day to day life. When these structures are withdrawn people tend to flounder and drift into aimlessness as they lack a means of orientating themselves and their day to day activities. The importance of required regular activity for maintaining mental well-being comes from having a place to go every working day with set tasks, responsibilities and targets to achieve. The absence of a place to go means that people are compelled to spend more time in the home which Jahoda describes as being a more emotionally charged environment. Workplaces are spaces of emotional self-management where tempers must be kept in check and public 'faces' or 'fronts' must be maintained and affective management is expected (Goffman 1949). Thus the absence of a workplace to attend also means that such forms of regulation are lacking which has negative effects on mental health.

By way of demonstrating the importance of regular activity in staving off the latent deprivation associated with unemployment Jahoda describes how the women in Marienthal did not suffer in the same way as the men. The reason for this was that the women were not deprived of the requirement for regular activity as they still had to keep up with the duties associated with

keeping a home. In fact the duties associated with homemaking were made increasingly difficult in the face of material deprivation which meant that the women of Marienthal had to work even harder with fewer resources in order to keep the home running.

3.3.5 Work as a Means of Claiming an Identity/Social Status

This aspect of deprivation theory is probably the most straightforward as it posits that in the absence of work there is a similar absence in the type of self- identification available to the unemployed person. Social identity relates to 'the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities' (Jenkins 2004, p. 5). It is the means by which similarity and difference are codified and enacted along with the attendant processes of inclusion and exclusion. Work identities are sticky and people frequently hold a strong association between their sense of self identity and their profession. By way of example the question what do you do for a living is often among the first asked when people meet for the first time and are making small-talk. A person's work is more often than not a proxy for a host of other social markers such as their income, their level of education, their social class and even their supposed intelligence and diligence. As such the seemingly inane question of what do you do for a living can be seen as a means of the inquisitor socially placing the person they are speaking to within a number of categories drawn from the broader cultural milieu.

This is how conceptions of status are linked with professions, it is not simply a case that the more someone earns the higher their supposed status, there are to borrow from Bourdieu (1979) a range of forms of 'capital' which inform the levels of status afforded to professions. So there are some which may pay relatively low wages but are afforded higher social esteem such as a primary school teacher or nurse just as there are other jobs which may pay a high wage but are not held in high social esteem such as tradesmen or night shift manufacturing work. Gini associates the centrality of work identities with the sheer volume of time spent at work over a lifetime noting that we will spend the majority of our adult lives at work; we 'will not sleep as much, spend time with our families as much or recreate and rest as much as we work' (Gini 1998, p. 707). While for many work is unpleasant and to be endured rather than enjoyed (Frayne 2015; Lloyd 2018; Pemberton 2016; Scott 2018) there is still a strong sense of self identity which is enabled by one's profession. It is this sense of sameness and belonging which is associated with work which according to Jahoda is a casualty of unemployment.

This list of latent functions of employment is by Jahoda's own admission not exhaustive but they can be summarised in terms of the means by which they offer 'a person's strongest tie to reality' (Jahoda 1981, p. 188). The reality to which a person is linked to by work may be unpleasant, for example if they are working in a low paid, low status job with irregular or unsociable hours or lack agency and work with an overly coercive form of supervision. Yet even allowing for this it is Jahoda's assertion that 'we all need some tie to reality so as not to be overwhelmed by fantasy and emotion… even unpleasant ties to reality are preferable to their absence' (Jahoda 1981, p. 189). This is a questionable assertion as there is evidence that shows how poor work is even more detrimental to physical and mental well-being than unemployment (Chandola & Zhang 2017). Work situations where there are repeated physical exertions which can cause poor health or types of 'emotion work' (Hochschild 1979) which require the managing of affect in difficult situations (Lloyd 2018) are just two examples where work actually diminishes physical and mental health. Epidemiological research has found that 'poor quality jobs which combine several psychosocial stressors could be as bad for health as being unemployed, and transitions from unemployment to poor quality jobs may be even more detrimental to health than remaining unemployed' (Chandola and Zhang 2018, p.47).

The conception of work as being a core link between the individual and 'reality' is perhaps one of the more durable features of deprivation theory as it informs much of the work-first (Peck 2001) style of labour market activation practices. Such practices aim to get the unemployed person back to work and into any type of job irrespective of pay or suitability as quickly as possible and see this as the only solution to the myriad social, psychological and personal problems associated with unemployment. Even in common parlance starting work after attending college or returning to work from a holiday is frequently spoken of in terms of entering or re-entering the 'real world' and so reality is in this sense linked with work. The problem of unemployment as examined by Jahoda and deprivation theory is not one of material deprivation, instead it is characterised as the deprivation of the means of satisfying the latent needs described above. Framed in this manner the problems as described in the study can only be solved by paid work which is at best a questionable assertion. This veneration of work as a panacea to all social ills ties in with the overarching historical and moral discourse of work as the primary imperative of humankind. Unemployment is in these terms defined solely as the absence of work and when work is the central reference point of personal identity, social identity and psychological well-being unemployment is deeply problematic at the levels of both the individual and the social.

This is particularly the case with reference to masculinity, which is idealised in industriousness. The labouring subject is typically a male subject and masculinity is closely bound with ideal typical normative constructs such as the breadwinner, the provider and so on. These forms of masculinity are primarily achievable via paid labour and so unemployment in these terms is an affront to hegemonic normative masculinities as unemployed men are 'excluded from a prominent arena for the negotiation of male identities' (Diedrich 2004, p.107). While there are other statuses beyond employed or unemployed such as being a home-maker, being retired, or wealthy and without the need to work there is a difference between these out of the labour force (OLF) statuses and being unemployed. With these other statuses there is a higher likelihood of the person having access to some form of the latent benefits specified by Jahoda and as a result supposedly having better mental and psychological health. To give some examples a home maker may have an experience of time which is structured by the necessities of child care or of preparing meals at a given time of the day, a retiree may be involved in voluntary clubs or associations and have shared experience or collective purpose. The point however is despite these partial gains there is empirical evidence which claims that paid employment is the best means for achieving the latent benefits and being in better mental health. Such empirical evidence points towards a hierarchy with respect to achieving latent benefits with unemployed people on the bottom, out of the labour force people in the middle and employed people at the top (Creed et al 2003; Feather and Bond 1988; Paul and Batinic 2010). Further empirical work (Galic 2007) has linked the education level of the individual with the ability to 'moderate' against the psychological effects of unemployment with there being a direct positive correlation between higher levels of education and the ability to cope with the psychological effects of unemployment. This means that the negative effects of unemployment related to the absence of time structure are more likely to have negative consequences on people with lower levels of education who are also more likely to be unemployed.

3.3.6 Deprivation Theory and Contemporary ALMP

One of the consequences of the integration of Deprivation Theory and the latent benefits of work as described above into policy interventions has been the justification of work first active labour market programs. The biggest problem with defining unemployment as simply the absence of a paying job is that this logic would have it that the ills of unemployment can be eradicated if everyone has a paying job. Deprivation Theory has significantly contributed to the discourse of work for work sake; if work is psychologically fundamental to mental health

then people can justifiably be made work for free for the sake of the supposed psychological benefits. In this fashion the latent benefits of work which are espoused by Deprivation Theory have been co-opted by policy makers and are central to the turn towards active labour market policies. By way of example a seminal and influential paper by Layard (2004) is based around a central claim that 'human happiness is more effected by whether or not we have a job than by what kind of job it is' (Layard 2004, p. 1). In the case of the Pathways to Work scheme there is ample correlation between the beliefs of Deprivation Theory and the policy aims. Given the fact that the social situation of Marienthal was almost unique it is questionable as to whether or not the tenets of Deprivation Theory should be held in such esteem by policy makers operating in quantifiably different circumstances (Cole 2007). It is thankfully very rare that conditions such as those found in Marienthal are repeated, yet the findings and theoretical extrapolations from a study from such a rare set of circumstances have been unduly influential in formulating policy responses to massively varying situations.

There is also the unmistakeable conclusion to be drawn from Deprivation Theory that it is not really a theory of unemployment but is in fact a theory of work which happened to be developed in circumstances of mass unemployment. While many of the findings and assumptions of Deprivation Theory have been tested and developed (Karsten & Batinic 2009) there is a valid argument to be made that granting primacy to such latent effects serves to downplay the manifest effects of material poverty which are associated with unemployment. The Agency Restriction Model as described by Fryer considered that unemployment generally results in a 'psychologically corrosive' (1992, p. 270) experience of poverty, and it was this experience that 'severed the individual from a meaningful future and led to a reduction in psychological health' (Creed and Macintyre 2001, pp.5-6). Survey data gathered by Creed and McIntyre found that 'psychological wellbeing was most strongly correlated with financial strain' and that financial strain is 'the most important predictor of wellbeing' (2001, p. 17).

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined unemployment through a number of lenses. Firstly it outlined the empirical aspects of how unemployment is officially defined and measured, and then it described the ways in which unemployment relates to material deprivation and poverty. Following on from this there was be a consideration of the negative effects of unemployment on mental and physical health. The following sections situated the Irish welfare state by giving a brief potted history of its development. It then considered the place the Irish welfare state within the typology of the worlds of welfare capitalism. The remainder of the chapter examined

the theoretical underpinnings of how contemporary unemployment is conceptualised while paying particular attention to the seminal work of Jahoda et al (1971) on the Marienthal study and the resultant conceptual framework of deprivation theory. The next chapter will look at activation, conditionality and the use of sanctions in a social welfare context.

Chapter 4. Activation Conditionality and Sanctions

The previous chapter has examined unemployment and its myriad negative effects while paying particular attention to the influence of Deprivation Theory and the conception of unemployment as being solely the absence of a job. This chapter will examine the ways in which unemployment is managed under the aegis of activation. Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) is that which is concerned not just with the traditional welfare state function of income protection but increasingly is concerned with promoting labour market participation (Bonoli 2013, p. 11). It includes a broad remit which will be examined here with close reference to Pathways to Work and its various policy strands. The first section will examine the broader policy regime (May & Jochim 2013) of activation before proceeding to describe its various iterations and rationales. The two main models of activation to be discussed here are labour force attachment and human capital development (Peck 2001); both of these will be described in detail with close reference to the relevant policy aspects of Pathways to Work.

In broader terms the rationale for ALMP's states that for many social *rights* or entitlements there are or should be corresponding *responsibilities* (Giddens 1998, p. 65). As such active social welfare systems are frequently underpinned by the idea of conditionality which works to specify the conditions which must be met in order for people to qualify for and to maintain social welfare entitlements. Recent forms of ALMP's have begun to place an ever increasing emphasis on behavioural conditionality which attaches conditions of conduct to welfare payments. The penultimate sections of this chapter will look at the various types of conditionality and attempt to schematically define Pathways to Work in the context of conditionality. Systems which use behavioural conditionality are usually enforced via a corresponding system of sanctions where non-compliance with the terms of the conditional system provokes the punishment of a withdrawal or reduction of the payment in question. Such types of sanctions and their underlying rationale will be the focus of the final section.

4.1 Activation

The focus of the welfare state in general and unemployment assistance in particular has historically been that of reducing poverty and protecting individuals and families against the inevitable shocks which are built into market based capitalism and its attendant cycles of boom and bust (Hills 2015, p.50). Economic security is achieved by the redistribution of money and services towards those who find themselves in need. To this end the welfare state and unemployment assistance has historically aimed towards achieving the 'decommodification' (Esping-Andersen 1990) of people from the market. In the last thirty years or so however the

aims of reducing poverty and alleviating market based inequalities have been joined by a third priority namely the prioritisation of paid work in the labour market. This third priority has been brought to the fore of labour market policy across the world to such an extent that the period since the 1990s is referred to in terms of the 'activation turn' (Bonoli 2013, 2010; Raffass 2017). International agencies such as the OECD and the IMF have encouraged the widespread adoption of ALMP's with most OECD states adopting activation as a core tenet of their unemployment policies (Marsten 2005, p. 141). While the last thirty years has seen the development of the activation turn its roots can be found in Sweden in the 1950's when social welfare policy was firmly aimed at increasing employment. Job search assistance and the reluctance of the state to use public works projects as a means of creating employment were also hallmarks of the 1950's Swedish system (Kenworthy 2010).

The term activation or active labour market policy (ALMP) encompasses a broad spectrum of policy interventions with the two main forms being the human capital development model on the one hand and the labour force attachment model on the other. The Labour force attachment model is that which invokes the mantra of work first and focuses above all else on placing the unemployed person into work as quickly as is possible in the belief that work is the most efficient means of ensuring financial independence and wellbeing (Peck 2001). Human Capital Development is that which aims to develop the unemployed person through education and training in order to improve their employability and lead in the longer term to higher quality better paid and more secure work (Millar and Crosse 2017, p. 2). The differences between these two strands of activation have been described in terms of being 'hard' versus 'soft' workfare (Peck 2001) or alternately in terms of 'high road' versus 'low road' activation (Murphy 2016). Both Labour Force Attachment and Human Capital Development Policy will be considered in further detail below but first there will first be a brief interjection to consider some of the rationales for the use of ALMP's.

4.1.2 Why Activation?
In order to understand activation it is necessary to give some brief contextual remarks which outline the main reasons why activation was seen to be necessary and was promoted by supra national organisations. The activation turn was preceded by a lengthy period of economic stagnation across OECD countries. In particular the 1970's and 1980's witnessed large scale structural unemployment coupled with economic stagnation and rising rates of inflation (O'Brien and Penna 1999, p.78). Tied in with this is the fact of globalisation where regional economies of production have been undercut by global chains of production and heavy

industries have been moved to lower wage jurisdictions in the global south (Bauman 1998; McMichael 2004). The scale of unemployment meant that it became prohibitively expensive to maintain welfare arrangements as they had been. As well as this the global mobility of capital in the liminal 'space of flows' (Castells 2011, p. 408) has meant that large Trans-National Corporations (TNC's) are rootless entities which constantly move their capital and operations around the world so as to maximise profits. They do this by moving their operations 'away from high wage economies with restrictive tax and regulatory systems and towards developing countries and fragile democracies with desperate surplus populations' (Winlow & Hall 2013, p. 12).

In this sense global chains of production situate the Marxian 'reserve army of labour' (Umney 2018, p. 30; Wiggan 2015, p. 374) in the global south and in countries like India, China and Bangladesh which means that the downward pressure on wages works to the advantage of the various TNC's. In this fashion such organisations manoeuvre politically to shape the regulatory landscape in the areas across the world in which they operate. In simple terms the threat of them packing up and relocating and taking jobs with them to another jurisdiction is used to their advantage as leverage in negotiations with national revenue services and regulatory bodies (Baumann 1998, p. 66). In corporate language such practices are never described as tax avoidance and instead are described in more neutral terms such as tax optimisation, or minimising the tax 'burden'. This means that these organisations are extra territorial and the fact that such practices are widespread mean that states cannot rely on tax revenues from these sources on an ongoing basis. Thus state revenues have become increasingly reliant on taxes raised through labour which means that it is imperative that more and more people are in work and paying taxes. Active Labour Market Policies in this respect are a type of dual fiscal saving as money taken from a worker in labour taxes is also compounded by the savings from the social welfare payments which would have been made had the person not found work. This is also the reason why the main aim of most ALMP's is that of putting people in work which is unsubsidised as opposed to types of work which are state funded and 'constitute alternatives to market employment' (Bonoli 2013, p. 32).

A further reason why the welfare state has undergone change towards activation is that of the demographic composition in of the country. It is a demographic fact that many developed OECD countries are becoming older in their composition (CSO 2017) and as these populations age there is the significant risk of state expenditures on pensions and healthcare outstripping the amount of revenues raised. This so called pensions time bomb has meant that it is necessary

to reduce expenditures on unemployment benefits and to increase the take in taxation which again points towards the logic of the activation turn. In demographic terms Ireland has seen a precipitous drop in the number of births since the late 1970's as is demonstrated in figure 3.1 which shows the Birth Rate per thousand of population between the years 1950 and 2018.
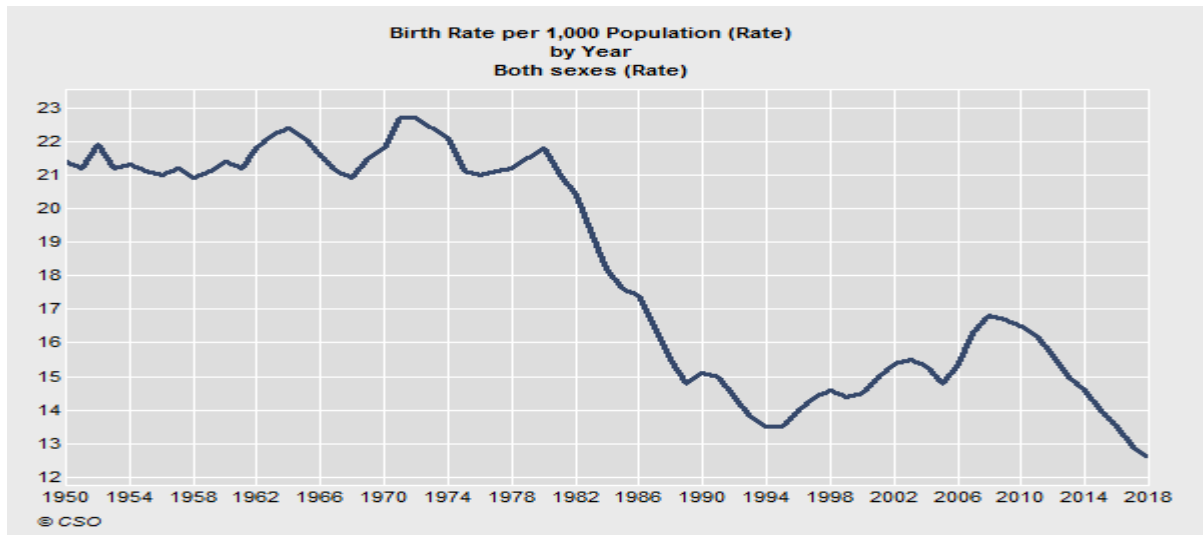
Figure 6 Birth Rates Per Thousand 1950 to 2018

Someone born prior to 1979 would be at least forty years of age in 2019 which means that there is a large cohort of people who are either in pension age or at the age where they are approaching it. During this time the death rate has remained reasonably constant as is evident in figure 6 below which compares the birth rate and death rate since the 1950's
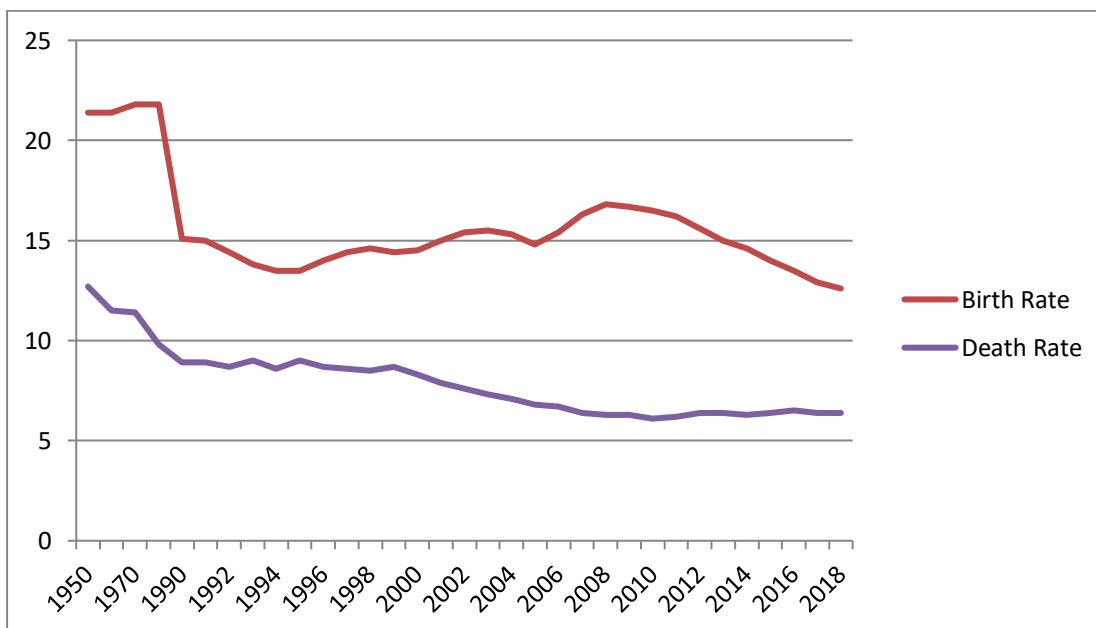

Figure 7 Birth and Death Rate 1950 to 2018

Such figures demonstrate how the severe drop in birth rates at the end of the 1970's coupled with a much more modest drop in death rates have meant that there is a large population of people approaching pension age and a smaller number of people of working age to keep paying taxes which will contribute to state coffers to fund these pensions. This again points to the logic of activation which seeks to ensure that all able bodied and capable people are put to work in order for them to contribute to general taxation. Figure 7 below is made of CSO Census data on the Age Profile of Ireland since 1971 and shows explicitly how the population of Ireland has been steadily getting older in the last forty five years. The Bar chart figures show the increase in numbers of the two oldest age profiles (45 to 64 and 65 and over); the line charts thus show these age brackets as a percentage of the overall population over time and so display an increasing percentage share of the population. The 2016 census shows that 37.2% of the Irish population were over the age of 45 which is up from 27.6% in the year 1986. These factors point to the demographic fact that the population of Ireland is getting older which again points to the need for activation programs to ensure that taxes on labour are maximised. In summary the basis for the introduction of work first activation is that of reducing benefit expenditure and of raising the levels of employment, this is presented as a necessity due to the reduction of fertility rates below replacement levels and the pressures of globalisation (Wright 2012, p. 319).
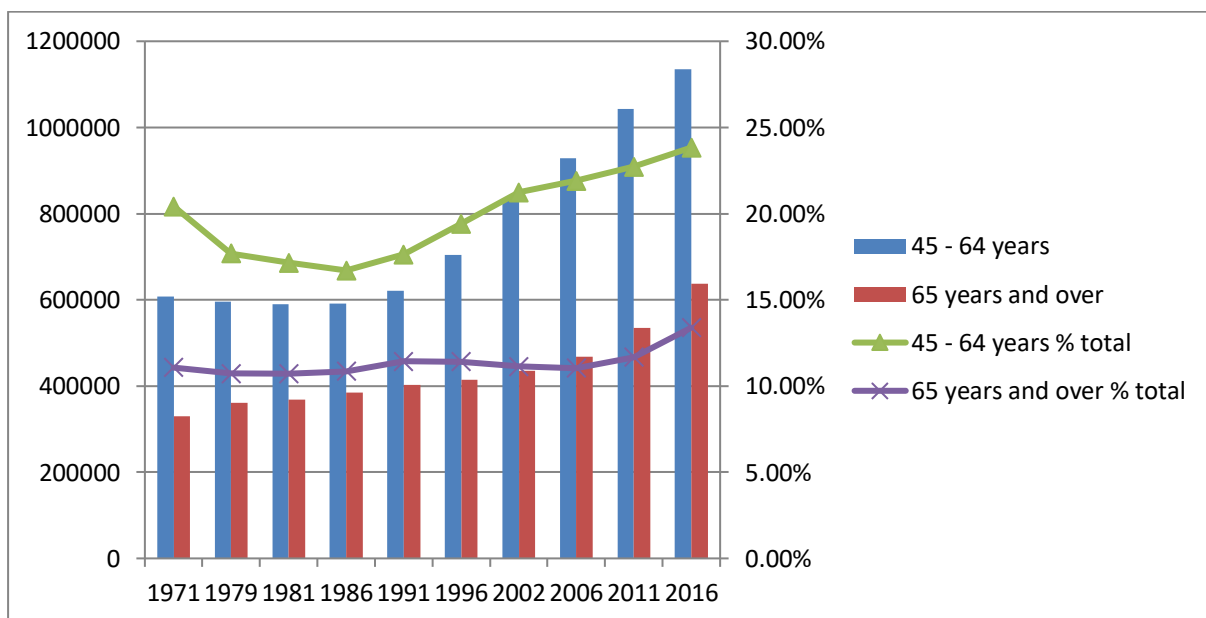

Figure 8 Population Age Profile

4.1.3 The Evidence for Activation

Activation measures backed by sanctions are widely accepted in labour economics as being successful at hastening the exit from unemployment. Recent years have seen a notable increase in the severity of sanctions in Austria, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Sweden and the UK (Knotz 2019). Writing about Switzerland Lalive (2005) notes how the threat of sanctions or the 'ex-ante effect' as well as their actual imposition has 'a positive effect on the exit rate out of unemployment' (Lalive 2005, p. 1386). In the Danish context Svarer notes how 'sanctions causally increase job finding rates by more than 50%' (Svarer 2007, p. 3) and that this effect increases with the severity of the sanction. Other research however claims that lower reduction rates are every bit as effective as more severe sanction rates with 5% reductions having similar outcomes to rates as high as 20% (van den Berg et al 2004). In the German context Uhlendorff et al note how sanctions 'increase the probability of finding a job but that these jobs go along with lower earnings' (Uhlendorff et al 2017, p. 1). This is an important distinction with regard to how the success or otherwise of policy actions are measured. If the only heuristic is that of exiting unemployment then activation measures backed by sanctions can often be seen as successful as they are strongly associated in the short term with increased exits from unemployment into employment. Yet measuring outcomes in this sole fashion obscures many other facets of policy outcomes including job quality, wage reservation rates, and how long people stay in the jobs they move to. As with Uhlendorff et al cited above when such considerations are made it is often found that unemployed people end up in lower paid more precarious work which they ultimately do not stay in. As such labour market activation programmes which are strongly backed by sanctions often serve to churn people into the labour market under terms that are not of their choosing which means they do not end up staying for a significant length of time. In this sense stricter forms of ALMP's which rely heavily on the use of sanctions can be seen to contribute to what McTier & McGregor (2018) term 'work-welfare cycling' or what Shildrick et al (2012) call the 'low pay no pay cycle'. Perhaps more presciently for this research it is worth noting how few of the research articles and papers which describe the successes of sanctions attempt to engage in any way with the experience of the people being threatened with them. Instead, the people at the sharp end of these policies are often seen as little more than units of labour which are either active or inactive. If the broader view of sanctions is taken and the outcomes on individuals are accounted for there are a number of negative effects evident. For example, research in the UK has reported an association between sanctions and adverse mental health with Williams claiming that 'for every 10 additional sanctions applied per 100,000 working age population per quarter, the rate of anxiety

and/or depression is 8.09 per 100,000 working age population higher' (Williams 2020, pp. 166-167).

4.1.4 Discourses of Activation

Alongside these elements of the activation turn has been a change in discursive terms of the role of the welfare state in general and the governance of unemployment in particular. This movement includes the recasting of unemployment as job seeking (Boland & Griffin 2015) as well as a recalibration of the relationship and causal links between the welfare state and poverty. In these terms social welfare is no longer defined in terms of its role as a means of protecting against and providing relief from destitution and poverty and all of their associated social problems. The refigured view of social welfare under the ascendant aegis of activation is that of it being a *cause* of these ills which fosters and prolongs them and thus plays a further causative role in the myriad associated social problems (Jensen and Tyler 2015, p. 472; Young 2007, p. 106).

In political terms perhaps the most influential proponent of this thesis is Charles Murray whose book Losing Ground (1984) argued that the provision of social welfare actively prevents people from escaping poverty by their own efforts and instead fosters dependency and prolongs periods of unemployment and poverty. It does this by providing perverse incentives which encourage laziness, a lack of industriousness and ultimately dependency. Murray claims that social welfare policy had made it 'profitable for the poor to behave in the short term in ways that were destructive in the long term… We tried to provide more for the poor and produced more poor instead' (Murray 1984, p. 9). Murray contends that recipients of social welfare who drop out of the labour market are acting rationally and in response to the perverse incentives proffered by an overly generous welfare system claiming that these are 'rational responses to changes in the rules of the game of surviving and getting ahead' (Murray 1984, p. 155). In a similar vein Murray claims that the American benefit Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) provided a range of perverse incentives which encouraged the formation of single parent families which lacked a male role model which had a further effect of increasing crime amongst this cohort.

The unintended consequences and outcomes of the perverse incentives caused by social policy led Murray to claim that scrapping welfare entirely would reduce poverty and end such types of induced dependency. As well as this scrapping welfare would mean that poor people would no longer be cosseted by the state and instead would be forced into the labour market to provide

for themselves and their families as they would be incentivised by the threat of destitution into working in whatever job was available. The subjectivity envisioned and employed by Murray in these writings is that of homo economicus (Fleming 2017) or the rational actor conjured up by rational choice theory. Such imagining of humankind posits that people coldly and rationally respond to incentives and disincentives which pattern and influence their behaviour as they act in cold calculation to maximise their utility. Murray thus 'positions the subject ontologically as a virtual sociopath, entirely unconcerned with conventional morality and the benefits of civilised sociability' (Winlow and Hall 2013, p. 50). This essentialist and reductive form of subjectivity is one which is divorced from any conceptions of morality, fairness, altruism or social cohesion. It posits the subject as being one which is driven solely by the various self - interested calculi envisioned by policy makers and the market. Furthermore this imaginary subject places no importance on the social world outside of these nudges and their various forms of carrots and sticks. This subject which acts solely in response to incentives and disincentives is one which is instantly recognisable in contemporary active welfare policy regimes. The creation and maintenance of such subjects will be discussed in further detail in chapter 4 with reference to Governmentality, neoliberalism and the ALMP subject.

4.1.5 Workfare/Work First/Labour Force Attachment

The next two sections will examine the two main paradigms of Active Labour Market Policy namely Labour Force Attachment (LFA) or Work First approach and the Human Capital Development (HCD) approach. While these are two conceptually distinct approaches to ALMP there are rarely if ever welfare regimes which are strictly LFA or HCD and there is usually a form of hybrid of the two. Accordingly this section and the next will treat the definitions of both in ideal typical terms. Labour Force Attachment (LFA) policies involve the supervised intensification of job searches with the jobseeker subject to sanctions if they are found to be in breach of their responsibilities. Generally speaking such policies are popular with governments as they are thought of as being cheaper and of having more in the way of short term gains. These twin characteristics of being cheap and of producing in the short term mean that LFA suits the political realities of democratic cycles as it allows for what Bonoli calls 'affordable credit claiming' (Bonoli 2013, p.6). It is more likely using LFA methods that politicians can claim in the course of a parliamentary cycle that they have ameliorated or even solved the problem of unemployment. LFA is also considered to be cheaper in the short term as it does not involve much in the way of spending on education and training.

It is initially cheaper to set up an LFA work first style system of interventions than it is to set up a system informed by the Human Capital Development approach. The argument in favour of LFA policies is that they show positive short term results, they reduce periods of unemployment as people are coaxed or even coerced off the social welfare registers and into the labour market. It is worth noting however that Work First policies involve the placement of people in whatever job is available which means that frequently the jobs found are of sub optimal quality that people don't stay in for prolonged periods of time. Many of these jobs are low skill, low pay and are typically contracts of short duration. Such precarious work is often further state subsidised by in work benefits such as the Family Income Supplement (FIS) which tops up the meagre pay on offer. Low wages are a feature of the Irish activation system as they are reinforced by a policy landscape which makes them sustainable by 'commodifying and pressuring people to accept such jobs and making available in work benefits to top up low wages' (Murphy 2016, p. 12). The precarious and unstable aspects of such work also mean that the people who are forced into them are quite likely to end up back unemployed before too long (Raffass 2016, p. 354). In this sense the short term gains of the LFA approach broadly speaking are not maintained and people who are pushed into whatever work is available frequently do not end retaining that work or progressing (Calmfors et al 2001; Kluve 2010; Kluve & Schmidt 2002). By focussing on the any job will do mentality underpinned with sanctions, LFA often acts as an engine in downward mobility in the labour market (Brown & Koettl 2015; Murphy 2017, 2016, p. 12; Murphy and Loftus 2015). Work First systems are set up to institute a direct relation between the individual and the formal labour market. In welfare terms such systems are frequently less generous and more conditional and such characteristics are evident in PTW particularly with regard to younger people.

The term 'workfare' is one which is ill defined in common usage and rarely if ever used by those who are its proponents. Krinsky describes workfare as having 'slippery political meanings' (Krinsky 2007, p. 2) while Jamie Peck describes it in terms of being a 'moving target' (2001, p.1) as it is used to describe different types of programs by different types of people at different times and in different places. Workfare is generally considered as being a type of activation program where unemployed people are required to carry out specific work placements in return for their welfare payment. In some cases these placements include a small top up of the welfare payment in return for participation as will be discussed below this is the case in most of such schemes in the Irish system. The Australian 'Work for Dole' scheme would fall under this category as would the Work Experience Program (WEP) in New York in

the 1990's (Krinsky 2007). Broadly speaking these types of Workfare schemes place people in community work settings or in work with charities or County Councils doing work such as maintenance or cleaning.

In Pathways to Work there were a number of different schemes which could be described in these terms as workfare. The Tús scheme is a community work placement initiative which is focused on people who are long term unemployed and thought to be distant from the labour market. Participants are recruited via random selection and are assigned to work placements which are mostly with community or voluntary organisations. Placements are generally twelve months in duration and participants receive a small top up on their Jobseekers payment in return for working for nineteen and a half hours per week. Participation in Tús is compulsory for those who are selected although interviews carried out with a Tús placement officer and a number of participants suggest that there is scope for participants choosing where they undertake their placement. As well as this any participant can leave the scheme at any time if they manage to find employment or if they sign off from receipt of jobseekers payment. The Tús scheme can thus be characterised as on being on the less 'demanding' (Raffass 2017) side of activation as it puts people into part-time community based work and gives them some degree of choice as to where the placement will be.

According to Peck 'workfare is not about creating jobs for people that don't have them; it is about creating workers for jobs nobody wants' (Peck 2001, p. 6) In this sense workfare or labour force attachment types of activation are entirely focused on the supply side of the equation and of reconfiguring and reconstituting people to fit into the available slots in the labour market. Such Work First forms of activation focus on 'quick re-entry in the labour market regardless of the quality of employment' (Daguerre & Etherington, 2009, p. 11). It often does this by disabusing them of any notions they may have regarding the type of work they are prepared to do, the hours in which they are available to do it and the level of remuneration they deem acceptable (Wiggan 2015, p.8). The logic which underpins activation and which is subsequently evident in Pathways to Work is that a significant number of unemployed people are seen as being in need of forms of active intervention to jolt them out of their supposedly passive status which has been engendered by being unemployed and inactive. These interventions are carried out with the belief that these passively unemployed people can be cajoled and managed out of 'dependence' and into the labour market.

This is a foundational aspect of Pathways to Work and its various offshoots and takes little or no consideration to prevailing labour market conditions. The case of Pathways to Work is particularly interesting in this regard as its introduction was heralded as a new departure in the way unemployment was managed. This new departure of activation and case management was frequently described in contradistinction to the preceding system which through its supposed passivity allowed people to 'drift without support into long term unemployment' (Pathways 2014). Under these terms unemployed people when left to their own devices and not subject to the monitoring and interventions typical of ALMP's would stagnate and degenerate into a passive condition of long term unemployment. In this sense unemployment services can be seen as being like a fastidious and overbearing parent supervising their child's efforts at completing their homework. It is by sitting over them and closely supervising, managing and cajoling them that the task is completed. In this sense labour force attachment policies are closely linked with controlling and directing the behaviour of unemployed people with the threat of sanctions being the means by which such power is used.

4.1.6 Human Capital Development

As has been outlined above labour force attachment aims to place unemployed people in any job as a means of getting them off unemployment benefits and into the labour market. On the other hand the Human Capital Development (HCD) approach aims to develop the person so as to make them more employable and to increase their ability to participate in the labour market. It does this by investing in the individual through training, personal development and education. In Pecks terms HCD is 'soft' (Peck 2001) workfare whereas Murphy (2016) terms it 'high road activation'. One of the key features of the HCD approach is the manner in which the unemployed person is not simply shoe-horned into whatever work is available and instead is given the skills to help them participate in the labour market on a long term basis by helping them build sustainable careers. It arguably thus takes a long term view of employment which is distinct from Work First approaches which have a short term focus. HCD approaches instead orient the jobseeker towards suitable work as opposed to available work. Accordingly this approach is a more long term and expensive undertaking which aspires to go beyond simply matching an unemployed person to a job. HCD aims to equip people to both find and retain work by giving them the skills and competencies to plot progression paths in work and earn promotions.

These differences point to the manner in which the different approaches have differing views of the individual, HCD characterises the individual as a project that can be worked on for a

long term basis. Work First on the other hand sees the individual as being responsible for their unemployment and as such they are in need of behaviour change which is usually invoked with the threat of sanctions. Lindsay characterises this relationship between Work First systems and the individual as being 'dirigiste' as it is 'informed by an understanding of labour market exclusion that sees behavioural and attitudinal failings as key' (Lindsay 2014, p. 10). Whereas work first style systems have a tendency to place people with complex needs at a disadvantage HCD is the opposite and can be particularly effective for people who are distant from the labour market. Work first approaches put pressure on people to enter the labour market as quickly as is possible. For people who are disadvantaged or have complex needs this can mean that they are pushed into whatever work is available for them which is most often low paid and precarious. The focus on upskilling the individual that is typical of the HCD approach means that this churn into whatever work is available does not happen and instead the individual is directed towards training and education that will enable them to enter the labour market on their own terms. This is also particularly beneficial for people who have caring commitments which makes the HCD approach far more gender friendly (Millar and Crosse 2017).

Both Work Fist and HCD approaches involve the use of personal advisors to assist unemployed people with Work First advisors generally being concerned with job matching their clients to whatever work is available. HCD approaches however require advisors who are 'capable of working with clients in a holistic way to improve their employability and empowered to direct them to appropriate learning and development opportunities' (Lindsay 2014, p. 8). From an institutional perspective this means that HCD is far more complex and requires advisors who are more skilled and knowledgeable than those who are working under a work first system. This means that such approaches are more expensive, time consuming and more difficult to institute which puts them at a disadvantage in comparison to Work First alternatives which are easier and cheaper to set up and are more cost effective in the short term (Daguerre & Etherington 2009). The relationship between advisors and service users is also a key difference between the two approaches with HCD involving less compulsion and a greater degree of trust that the person will choose and pursue an appropriate course of actions to get them back into work.

The relationship to the labour market is also a key feature of difference between the two approaches as work first systems are more suited to buoyant labour markets and tend to 'respond to, rather than adapt, existing labour market opportunities' (Lindsay 2014, p. 8). Accordingly Work First approaches tend to be less effective in times of recession or during

tight labour markets. This point is interesting as PTW was introduced under these exact conditions and were presented as an approach which was specifically tailored to ameliorating these problems.

The justifying rationale for ALMP's is most often an analysis of whether or not people who had passed through a given system were in work or not within a particular time period. Such modes of analysis will generally favour Work First ALMP's as their outcomes are more amenable to measurement, either someone is in work or they aren't meaning that the intervention has either been successful or unsuccessful. Such forms of analysis seldom measure rates of churn which would demonstrate the extent to which activated people who got into work stayed there or how many ended up back in unemployment. This has further distorting effects on how the 'success' of ALMP's are measured which tends to favour work first approaches. HCD interventions can have 'slow burn' (Lindsay 2014, p. 15) long term effects which can accumulate over time yet are not as amenable to measurement. The accumulator benefit effects of HCD interventions over a time period of five years or more is one which has been noted by Meadows (2006) who claims that the increases in employability and higher rates of both progression and long term job retention continue and increase over longer periods of time.

4.2 Conditionality

Conditionality is closely associated with Third Way politics and the dictum of 'no rights without responsibilities' (Giddens 1998, p. 65). At its essence conditionality refers to the way in which the exercising of social rights and entitlements has in some domains become conditional on the recipient behaving in specified ways. Welfare Conditionality 'links eligibility for collectively provided welfare benefits and services to recipients' specified compulsory responsibilities or particular patterns of behaviour' (Wel Cond 2018, p. 8). The use of conditionality in Welfare systems mostly dates back to the middle of the 1990's which is when the behavioural aspects began to be used in earnest. Clasen and Clegg (2007, p. 171) however note how 'individual social rights and benefits have to some degree 'always and everywhere been conditional' and that such conditions form the basis of risk management within welfare states by ensuring that assistance is granted to those who are deemed to be eligible. Thus the characterisation of conditionality as a new method of managing welfare systems is unjustified as welfare bureaucracies have always operated under certain aspects of conditionality.

Clasen and Clegg (2007) describe conditionality under three headings, conditions of category, conditions of circumstance and conditions of conduct. These headings are slightly reworked by Watts and Fitzpatrick to conditions of status, conditions of need and conditions of conduct (Watts and Fitzpatrick 2018, p. 18). Clasen and Clegg describe each of these types of conditionality in terms of being 'levers' (2007, p. 171) as each can be adjusted in order to alter the operation of a given welfare system. While the study of the use of conditional policies as a form of public management is reasonably recent the use of conditionality isn't as to some degree all social welfare systems are conditional and always have been. To receive any benefits there are always some conditions which must be met, even for universal payments such as child benefit there are the conditions that the child must be resident in the country and under the age of eighteen. This is an example of a condition of category/status.

4.2.1 Conditions of Category

Conditions of category/status are satisfied when membership of a defined category for which a benefit has been approved can be proven. For example old age pensions are set aside for people who have reached retirement age, disability payments are set aside for people with a physical or mental disability which hinders them in their ability to work. In each of these examples falling within the criteria of definition for each category is usually enough to qualify the individual for the associated payment. Further examples of conditions of category can be extended to universal payments such as child benefit or a basic income which are restricted to

	Job Seekers Allowance 2019	
Age	Rate	Penalty Rate
26 and over	€203	€159
25	€157.80	€124.80
18 – 24	€112.70	€87.70

Figure 9. Job Seekers Rates and Penalty Rates 2019

the category of people who are resident within the jurisdiction and aged within the set limits. An important factor to consider with conditions of category is the fact that all categories are malleable social constructions and so are constantly subject to change according to political, social, or economic circumstances. By way of example the pensionable age which determines the right to the category of old age is one which differs according to state jurisdiction and has

changed in Ireland in recent years from 65 to 66 and was set to change to age 67 by from the year 2021 and 68 by the year 2028. The age of retirement was raised across many OECD countries in the period after the financial crash of 2008 in response to diminishing state budgets and the fact of increasing lifespans. This demonstrates how categories are malleable and subject to change according to any number of social, financial, political, cultural or economic reasons.

In the budget of 2014 a new set of age related categorisations were inserted into the Irish social welfare system. This re-categorisation enacted tiered payment levels according to age and meant that a single person on a job seekers payment would not be eligible for the full rate of what was then €188 until after their twenty-fifth birthday. This meant by extension that people aged between 18 and 25 were given a reduced rate with the age category of 18 to 24 receiving €100 and 25 year olds receiving €144. By 2019 these rates had increased to the numbers shown in the table above.

The stated reason for this substantial cut in the rate of pay for young people was that of incentivising the take up of education, training and work opportunities and to avoid the onset of welfare dependence from a young age. Eamon Gilmore who was leader of the Labour Party at the time aptly summarised the position of the Government of the time regarding the management of youth unemployment.

> 'It is the Government's view the place for young people is at work, in job experience or in education and training. This is the best way for them to get out of unemployment…. Let me be clear we do not believe any young person should find himself or herself in a situation that he or she goes onto an unemployment payment at the age of 18 and are still on it at the age of 25….The place for any young person is not permanently in front of a flat screen television. It is at work or in education and training. This is where they get the best start in life' (Gilmore Dail Debate17- 10- 2014)

It was the final part of this statement which received the most publicity and criticism as it was deemed –perhaps correctly- to be pandering to anti-welfare stereotypes and to some degree blaming young people for unemployment in the midst of an Economic crisis. The previous parts of the statement however probably reveal more about Government thinking on youth unemployment as it is presented as a funnel towards long term unemployment and welfare dependence. Youth unemployment in these terms could be seen as a type of illness which once caught must be actively treated so as to prevent it becoming a long term condition. As such youth unemployment and by extension the youth themselves must be actively managed as the

absence of such management would lead to the 'drift' (Pathways 2014, 2015, 2016) into long term unemployment. The basis for this assumption is questionable at best and a briefing by the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI) claimed that 'the absence of jobs not motivation, is the central issue for young people looking for work' (McCarthy 2014, p. 1). Changes in category such as those outlined above are cost saving measures devised in times of fiscal austerity and demonstrate how the political and economic contexts can influence the composition and use of categories as a lever which can be adjusted according to broader social, political and fiscal circumstances.

4.2.2 Conditions of Circumstance

Conditions of circumstance/need are those which are often termed eligibility and entitlement criteria. Such conditions are almost universally present in welfare payments and have always underpinned welfare state provision with the only exception being that of 'pure' universal payments (Clasen and Clegg 2007, pp. 173-174). Conditions of circumstance relate to the material circumstance the claimant finds themselves in, for example if someone is unemployed but has financial means and no family dependents then they are less likely to satisfy conditions of circumstance. Thus such a form of conditionality is closely linked with factors such as financial need and family circumstances and aims to 'screen in' (Clasen and Clegg 2007, p. 174) those whose circumstances deem them to be in need of assistance, and by extension to screen out those who may be unemployed but have sufficient means to sustain themselves. As with conditions of category the definition of circumstances which are approved for assistance is variable according to social, economic and political factors and is thus a lever which is consistently subject to change and adjustment.

In Ireland in 2013 the eligibility period for Job Seekers Benefit was reduced from 12 months to 9 months and the number of contributions required to qualify for payment doubled (Dukelow 2014, p. 63). Eligibility for Job Seekers Benefit is determined by PRSI contributions and not according to means testing or spousal income meaning that a payment is made to anyone who has the requisite number of social insurance payments. The eligibility criteria for Job Seekers Allowance is means tested and includes any spousal or familial earnings as part of any reckonable income. This means that the lever of conditions of circumstance was used to reduce by a quarter the period of eligibility for non means tested payments in an action which was undertaken with the expressed aim of fiscal savings. In this example the categorical definition of non-means tested payments related benefit was adjusted as a means of making further changes in the conditions of circumstance.

4.2.3 Conditions of Conduct

The final lever of conditionality is that which relates to conditions of conduct. These conditions aim to regulate the circumstances for assessing eligibility and for the continuing receipt of welfare payments. With both Job Seekers Allowance and Job Seekers Benefit payments claimants face conditions of conduct in the assessment phase in order to assess eligibility and on a continuing basis once they have been approved for receipt of a payment. The main behavioural condition is that of genuinely seeking work which is taken from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and central to most unemployment systems. Conditions of conduct aim to manage the behaviour of the recipient and to direct their activities towards specific behaviours. They are behavioural in intent and aim to correct errant behaviour, foster new habits and transform the person subjected to them by directing them to act in a manner defined as useful and desirable.

By way of example the Australian Government brought in the Maternity Immunisation Allowance or MIA (Gray and Stanton 2016) which was aimed at ensuring that children received their full course of vaccinations. Initially the program related to a payment given to carers of children upon completion of their full immunisation program. This was an additional payment which was a form of reward or inducement which aimed to increase rates of immunisation of Australian children; as such this was a positive form of behavioural conditionality as it gave recipients a payment or reward in return for them carrying out an action.

Eventually the scope of the MIA increased and a number of childcare tax rebates became conditional on the completion of the immunisation schedule in a program which came to be known as 'no jab no pay' (Curchin 2019; Fielding et al. 2017). This scheme which was introduced in 2016 links the completion of a full vaccination schedule for all children up to the age of 19 with eligibility for a number of family assistance payments including Child Care Benefit, Child Care Rebates and the Family Tax Benefit part A. As well as this the no jab no pay scheme tightened up rules around exemptions for non-vaccination so that non-medical grounds for exemption such as conscientious objection were entirely discounted. This example demonstrates a movement towards a more punitive form of conditionality which takes away existing benefits in cases where people do not comply with directions given. In this instance the initial form of conditionality was positive, parents were induced via a payment to behave in a prescribed way. The subsequent iterations of this program introduced a form of conditionality which is punitive as parents have existing payments or tax rebates taken from

them if they do not comply. This is an example of a movement from conditionality which works via the use of inducements or 'goods' towards a 'new conditionality' (Gray and Stanton 2016) which is punitive and takes away existing benefits in response to instances of non-compliance.

With unemployment benefits conditions of conduct usually relate to the guiding of the recipient towards job search activities, training to bring them closer to the labour market or counselling and assistance with the overall aim being that of finding work or making them job ready. Under Pathways to Work there are and have been a mixture of both positive and negative forms of conditionality used. The main form of behavioural conditionality which predates the Pathways to Work program and forms a central tenet of almost all unemployment systems is the condition of genuinely seeking work or GSW. The re-formulation of unemployment in terms of job seeking is a noteworthy feature of Pathways to Work (Boland and Griffin 2015) and this is even reflected in the changes in nomenclature for payments as unemployment allowance and unemployment benefit have been changed to jobseekers allowance and jobseekers benefit respectively.

The GSW condition is one which aims to ensure that unemployed people are taking their role as a job seeker seriously. It is applied at the outset when the application for unemployment assistance payment is made and it is also an ongoing condition for retaining them. In the Irish system there are a number of factors which are considered in determining whether or not a person is genuinely seeking work. The INOU describe the GSW condition in terms of the person seeking employment which is appropriate for them according to their age, physique, location, education and family circumstance. Interestingly the reasons why people can be disqualified for payments under the GSW conditions are diverse and include those of location, rates of pay, length of contract and domestic circumstances. The criteria for judging someone as being in breach of GSW thus include many which are open to interpretation by the deciding officer of the DEASP. This means that the GSW condition is one for which there is a high amount of discretion in deciding whether someone is in breach or compliance.

By way of example a person who moves into an area where they are less likely to gain employment can be deemed to be in breach of GSW and thus denied payment. The reasons behind why people move house are myriad and complex and can be related to almost any facet of a person's life including health, family and transport among others. In particular the contemporary problems associated with fixity of tenure and affordability in the rental market mean that those in the low earning section of the labour market can be priced out of areas where

there are job opportunities. This means that they will have to move to places where rental costs are lower but where there is often a cost in terms of the availability of jobs. In Ireland it is a fact that urban areas are the ones which have the most buoyant labour markets with the highest numbers of available jobs. It is also the case that these areas are more expensive to live in with many of them deemed 'rent pressure zones' due to the high costs of renting. This means that many people on the lower ends of the labour market face a difficult choice in attempting to balance the need for housing with the availability of work. A further complication is introduced in terms of the GSW condition as they could be deemed to be outside of its terms if they move to a place where there are fewer jobs.

A further element of GSW which is open to interpretation relates to the type of work being sought. A person can be found to be in breach of this condition if they are only looking for a particular kind of work, if they have reservations about the rates of pay, or if they place unreasonable restrictions on the type of work sought due to commuting distance or due to family or caring commitments. It is worth noting there the recurrence of the word unreasonable as it is entirely within the remit of the DEASP to determine what is reasonable or unreasonable. While the complete range of personal circumstances must be considered in making such a decision there is some degree of opacity in how such determinations are made. This opacity is not consistent with ideas of procedural justice and legitimacy.

Conditionality is present to some degree in the administration of all social welfare payments. It is a factor in determining initial eligibility and under contemporary ALMP systems is also a factor in maintaining payment. What is new about PTW is the focus on behavioural conditionality or conditions of conduct as they are also known (Watts and Fitzpatrick 2018, p. 18). As the name suggests behavioural conditionality aims to change or regulate the behaviour of the people who are subjected to it. The core behaviour which PTW explicitly aims to manage is that of 'engagement' (PTW) with the employment services. To this end the most common form of behaviour encouraged by PTW is that of engagement with the various facets of the system. To be unemployed and subject to this type of system is to be under a particular form of supervision. It is a supervision where people are periodically called upon to account for themselves and their efforts at getting employment.

The aim of behavioural conditionality is primarily that of changing behaviour, with PTW the behaviour which was explicitly targeted was that of people supposedly settling into a life of dependency on unemployment benefits. There was a particular focus on youth unemployment

which was presented as a significant risk and the manner in which PTW aimed to assuage this risk is indicative of its overall strategy. Youth unemployment was to be tackled by mixing positive and negative incentives so as to prevent young people from settling in to long term unemployment and welfare dependency. Minister for Social Protection at the time Joan Burton stated that she wished to see an end to 'passive' social welfare payments and she described this move in terms of the reconstitution of the social safety net saying that 'I want it to be less like a safety net, I'd like it to be like a trampoline, it's there to protect you but it's also there to lift you up' (Duffy 2013).

The re-imagining of the social safety net as a trampoline may be a throwaway comment yet it is a surprisingly apt and well- worn metaphor (Cox 1998; MacLeavy 2011) for work first style ALMP such as PTW. Instead of there being a social safety net which catches people and prevents them from falling into poverty and destitution there is a trampoline which aims to bounce people directly back into the labour market. In concentrating on bouncing people back into the labour market as quickly as possible there are frequently trade-offs with regard to factors such as the quality of work. In times of high unemployment such as when the fieldwork for this research was carried out there is not a readily available supply of jobs for people to be placed in. In such times the aim is not simply that of bouncing people back into the labour market but instead is of ensuring the maintenance of what Bengtson (2014) terms 'standbyability'. This was one of the key features of PTW which was that of the mixed use of incentives and disincentives to encourage people to take up training and work placements so as to avoid long term unemployment.

4.3 Sanctions

Social Welfare Sanctions are the means by which systems of conditionality are enforced; generally speaking such sanctions involve the reduction, suspension or cessation of payments as a result of the claimant being deemed to be in breach of the conditions set out. Bonoli (2013, p. 33) posits the frequency of sanctions within a given system as being indicative of the level of emphasis placed on work incentives with higher a frequency of sanctions being related to a tighter focus on work requirements. The system in Ireland is one of graduated sanctions which operate predominantly as a threat. Under PTW unemployed people are directed to participate in the various activation measures such as one to one interviews, group engagement sessions or training. Failure to engage with these interventions incurs a sanction in the form of a penalty rate of 21% which is applied for three weeks. If after this period there is still no engagement forthcoming there is the scope for the welfare payment to be stopped entirely for up to nine

weeks. After nine weeks if there has not been the necessary engagement with activation measures the payment is cancelled entirely.
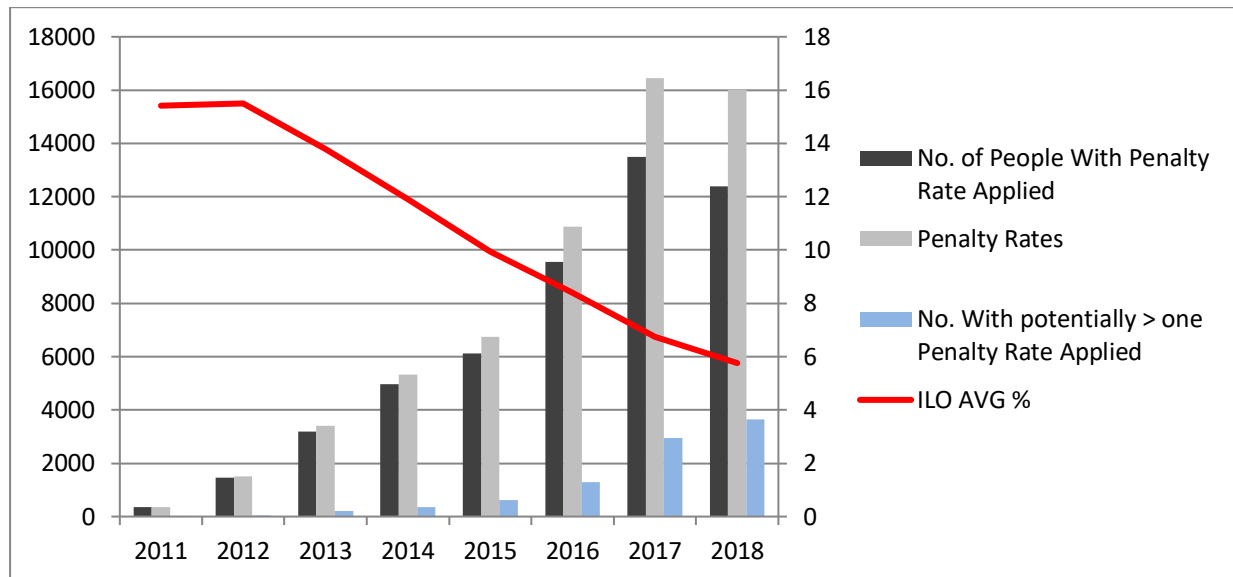

Figure 10. Number of Penalty Rates Applied and Number of People they are Applied To

This graph demonstrates an important point about the operation of the system for social welfare sanctions in Ireland. On the left hand side of the graph there is little variance between the amount of penalty rates applied and the amount of people that these rates are applied to meaning that for the first three years penalty rates were rarely if ever applied to people on more than one occasion. This suggests that initially the sanctioning system was used by the unemployment services as a means of getting the attention of the person. When a meeting was set up or a direction given to the unemployed person that they failed to adhere to a penalty rate was applied as a means of demonstrating the power held by the Department over the individual. In this sense the initial sanction which is a reduction of a little over 20% of the payment for a period of up to three weeks. However as time has progressed this use of applying penalty rates as a warning system seems to be in decline as more people are receiving more sanctions despite there being a considerable decrease in the number of people who are unemployed. This suggests a movement to a more punitive approach as there are an ever decreasing number of people who are being subjected to an ever increasing number of sanctions. This means that despite the fact that the amount of sanctions levied in international terms are comparatively low there is an ever increasing chance that people will be subjected to them. As well as this there is a related and ongoing increase in the number of people who are subject to repeat

sanctions which all point to a move towards a sanctioning system which is increasingly punitive.

Adler (2016) specifies a typology of sanctions which are levied by the state. Court fines are described as being 'punitive judicial sanctions' as they are levied by the courts, parking fines are 'regulatory administrative sanctions' as they are levied by local authorities and benefit sanctions are 'disciplinary administrative sanctions' (ibid p. 196). Punitive judicial sanctions aim to punish an individual in response to them committing a proscribed act and are only imposed after judicial consideration and deliberation has occurred and the person has either entered a guilty plea or been found guilty. Regulatory administrative sanctions are imposed impersonally and aim to regulate specific social problems such as speeding or incorrect parking, and these types of sanctions are levied directly with adjudication only occurring in the event that the sanction is appealed. The notable and differentiating feature of the benefit sanction according to Adler is that it blatantly attempts to shape the behaviour of the person subjected to it by putting them under pressure to apply for and accept low paid and insecure work. There are arguably behaviour shaping elements of other types of fines but these primarily act as a means of deterrence where rule breaking brings a punishment and so the purpose of the fine is to deter people from carrying out particular proscribed actions.

In describing each of these types of sanctions Adler also makes reference to whom they are typically applied noting that benefit sanctions are by definition applied to people who are amongst the poorest and neediest in society which makes justification of such sanctions difficult. Furthermore UK Research carried out by the DWP (Oakley 2014) found that the people who were most likely to have benefits sanctions applied were people with extra needs such as those with learning difficulties or addictions who would have problems comprehending the system and understanding the expectations which are placed on them. This research thus further demonstrates how benefit sanctions are disproportionately punitive against the most vulnerable people. As well as this benefit sanctions involve the removal of people's basic means of sustenance and they can also involve an element of collective punishment as a sanction to the head of a family will have obvious negative effects for all members of the family. Further evidence from the UK (Wel Cond 2018) describes the influence of benefit sanctions as a casual factor in survival crime, destitution and street begging.

Benefit sanctions are also uniquely severe in as far as the punishment is massively out of proportion to the breach of the rules. If someone is fined in a court setting they will never be

fined to the extent that all of their income is taken from them at once. In Ireland court issued fines are classed from A to E and range in amounts from class E which is not to exceed €500 to class A which is not to exceed €5000. As well as this the Fines (Payment and Recovery) Act of 2014 offers legal protections for people who are subject to a fine. In the first instance the Act takes into account the financial circumstances of the person and their capacity to pay any fine levied. The act also makes reference to the effect the fine would have on the dependents of the person to be fined which is a factor which is not considered by the regime of benefit sanctions. As well as this the act explicitly references the need to ensure that inability to pay does not lead to an escalation or abatement of sanctions. The Irish system also allows for any fine above €100 to be paid off in instalments.

Many of these protections are not in place in the operation of benefit sanctions, in Ireland the sanction is levied on the person who is in receipt of the social welfare payment yet there are undoubtedly spill-over effects on dependents. When the penalty rate is applied it is done on the basis of the actions of the main claimant and it is the overall payment which is reduced.   This does not take into account the fact that the dependents –spouse and children- who are linked to the claim of the main claimant are also punished when a benefit sanction is levied. In this sense the penal system of fines levied by the courts is more considered than the system of benefit sanctions with respect to the spill-over effects on other people related to the person being sanctioned.

Tickamyer et al. (2000) writing about the welfare system as experienced by Appalachian women in Ohio describes how sanctions were seen as arbitrary and unjust with no consistency as to when and for what reason they were applied. The primary reason for this perception was the 'lack of a clearly articulated, systematically applied set of rules governing sanctions' (Tickamyer et al 2000, p. 182). This lack which could be alternately described in terms of a lack of procedural justice (Tyler 2006, 2003) led the participants to the belief that sanctions were levied for personal reasons. This meant that the desired outcome of the sanction which is to alter behaviour did not occur in this instance, here the sanctions which were levied created confusion, anger, distrust, cynicism and a sense of victimisation amongst those who were subjected to them. These feelings were centrally related to a sense of arbitrariness and capriciousness as if the system did not operate on the basis of rules and so lacked legitimacy.

Procedural Justice -also referred to as procedural fairness- refers to processes of fairness and equity which are built in to procedural interactions between an organisation and an individual.

The majority of the research into procedural justice describes the relationship between organisations of authority such as the police, (Mazerolle et al. 2014) the courts (Tyler 2003) and the tax system (Braithwaite 2007; Doyle et al. 2009; Tyler 1990). Research indicates (Tyler 1990) that where characteristics of procedural justice are in place individuals are more likely to feel like they have been treated fairly and so are more likely to accept the outcome of the interaction even where it is not in their favour. Broadly speaking Procedural Justice can be encapsulated under four headings, 'dignity and respect, trustworthy motives, neutrality, and voice' (Mazerolle et al. 2014, p. 3). According to these headings Procedural Justice is present where

- the individual is treated with fairness, dignity and respect
- the organisation they are dealing with is perceived as having trustworthy motives
- the organisation is neutral
- the organisation allows for the voice of the individual to be heard in the process.

This means that Procedural Justice has strong links to legitimacy and compliance as when people feel as if they have been treated fairly they are more likely to accept the outcome and by extension the exercise of power as being legitimate (Braithwaite 2003; Mazerolle et al. 2014; Tyler 2005). Legitimacy is crucial to the operational exercise of legal and political authority (Tyler 2006), it is defined as 'the right to rule and the recognition of the ruled of that right' (Jackson et al. 2012, p. 1). As such it includes the levels of trust and confidence in authority and by extension the level to which people are prepared to obey their instructions. Legitimacy is closely linked with compliance because when people ascribe legitimacy to an organisation they are more likely to comply with its directives and instructions (Braithwaite 2003).

4.4 Activation in Comparative Context

The preceding sections have discussed conditionality in broad terms while describing features of it in the Irish context. It has also specifically examined the operation of the Irish sanctioning system which is primarily communicative as the initial sanction is low and is levied for a short period of time but escalates to a more severe sanction in the event of continued non-compliance. The system of graduated sanctions thus operates in a manner which allows the DEASP to demonstrate to claimants that they have the requisite powers to enforce participation in activation measures. The logic which underpins the Irish system is thus communicative and behaviourist where compliance is managed by administering a short sharp shock which serves

the purpose of demonstrating the broader and far more punitive powers at the disposal of the DEASP and the consequences of continued non-compliance. In this sense the logic of the sanctioning differs from the types of sanctioning systems found elsewhere. This section will briefly examine the operation of benefit sanctions in three countries, the UK, Germany and Denmark. These countries correspond to the different types of worlds of welfare as discussed above in chapter 3 with the UK being a liberal welfare state, Denmark a social democratic welfare state and Germany being a conservative/corporatist welfare state. By doing this it will be possible to draw out the similarities and differences of the Irish system of activation and sanctions in comparison to other states.

4.4.1 The UK

The UK has a longstanding and established system of behavioural conditionality and benefit sanctions. They were introduced in their present format in 1996 by the Conservative government as part of the measures which introduced the Jobseekers benefit payment. Included for the first time in these measures were many of the behavioural features of ALMP's that have since become common. These include Jobseekers agreements and job search diaries as well as regular meetings with advisors to prove job search activity. These measures were ramped up considerably by subsequent New Labour governments as they introduced the 'New Deal' which was based on the third way sentiment that 'the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe' (Giddens 1998, p. 65). This meant that coercive forms of work first behavioural conditionality underpinned with the threat of sanctions became normalised in the welfare system which had moved away from alleviating poverty towards a new imperative of changing behaviour. Fletcher and Wright note however the parallel developments of this period which aimed to 'make work possible' (Fletcher & Wright 2017, p. 6) including tax credits to top up low wages and a national minimum wage. In the aftermath of the financial crash of 2008 subsequent Conservative led governments increased behavioural conditionality and sanctions leading up to the introduction of the universal credit system in 2012.

Universal Credit combines 'the social security and tax credit systems (Dwyer & Wright 2020, p. 1) by merging six payments and tax credits into one benefit which is paid on a monthly basis. Universal Credit is 'backed by an extensive tiered system of very harsh benefit sanctions' (Dwyer & Wright 2014, p. 32). There is a degree of complexity in the range of possible sanctions as they differ according the type of benefit received and are tiered according to the nature of the 'offence' and ranked as either low, medium or high. Within this framework unemployed people can have their payment reduced or stopped from periods ranging from a

minimum of seven days to a maximum of three years. The UK system is particularly punitive, 'claimants who miss one Jobcentre appointment have their payments reduced or removed for 28 days. If they make the same mistake three times the penalty is 91 days' (Wright et al 2020 p. 278). Redman notes how the number of sanctions levied has increased drastically since 2012 with over a million sanctions levied in 2013. Between 2012 and 2017 'Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants have received the most sanctions with the vast majority either under 4 weeks (66%) or between 5 and 13 weeks' (Redman 2020, p. 87). The UK system is thus significantly more punitive than the Irish system as it levies a far higher number of sanctions and the penalties associated with these sanctions are far more severe.

4.4.2 Germany

Under Esping-Andersen's typology Germany is classified as a conservative/corporatist welfare state. In 2005 Germany introduced the Unemployment Benefits II package which replaced the previous system of unemployment assistance. This benefit, which is means tested is not related to previous earnings or rates of tax paid and as such it is the equivalent of job seekers allowance in the Irish system. It is not however a payment that is made only to unemployed people and it also given as a top up to people on low wages or in part-time work. Known in common parlance as the Hartz reforms these changes included the introduction of stricter forms of behavioural conditionality and a stronger system of sanctions for non-compliance. One difference between the German system and activation measures elsewhere is that of the types of jobs that people are activated to. While many other systems see any job as being better than none the German system 'is set up to place benefit recipients in jobs which require contributions to all major social insurance programmes … it this aims to transfer citizens from the tax funded to the insurance based social protection and minimise the risk of re-entry into public welfare' (Gshwind et al 2021, p. 505). In a similar vein to both the Irish and UK systems the Hartz reforms introduced a contract between the unemployed person and the unemployment services. Called an 'integration contract' this contains 'obligations with respect to program participation and job search activities' (Boockman et al 2014, p. 2). Failure to adhere to the conditions set out in the integration contract will mean a sanction will be applied although like the UK system there is a punitive scale which means minor 'offences' incur more modest sanctions of a 10% reduction of payment and more serious breaches incur larger sanctions. The vast majority of sanctions levied are a 10% reduction with 70% of all sanctions being this type and the average sanction between the years 2007 and 2019 was 22% of the benefit entitlement (Severin Lowe & Unger 2022, p. 4). Sanctions once applied last for three months and unlike the Irish sanctions

regime there is no warning given. There is however considerable discretion at the local level with regard to when a sanction is levied and this means that there are large regional disparities in rates of sanctions.

 A further similarity between the German and Irish system is the way in which there is differential treatment according to the age of the unemployed person. In Germany the under 25's face an entirely different sanctioning regime to those over 25 as they face a complete withdrawal of their cash payment for up to three months. The initial sanction for under 25's is 30% of their cash payment for three months, for their initial sanction the under 25's still receive their full payments for rent and heating yet these payments are at risk if they incur further sanctions within a given timeframe. (Uhlendorff et al 2017, p. 2). For a second sanction within one year this rises to 60% of the cash payment and this rises to a complete loss of payment for a third sanction. This feature of German ALMP has been strongly contested and in June 2022 the German government voted to scrap benefit sanctions in most cases and to cap the amount of the sanction at 10% of payment. This followed a 2019 constitutional court ruling which stated that cuts of 60% or more were unconstitutional.

4.4.3 Denmark

Denmark is included as it represents the social democratic model of the worlds of welfare. In ALMP terms it is often classified as being closer to the Human Capital Development model. As well as this 'Danish ALMP's have been viewed by the European Commission as the model to be imitated by other European member states' (Fernandez-Urbano & Orton 2021, p. 181). Denmark is one of the places where the paradigm of flexicurity originated in the early 1990's, this came from the requirement of balancing the need for flexibility in labour markets and security for workers. Flexibility in labour markets means it is easier to hire and fire employees which in theory at least benefits employers and means more jobs will be created. The creation of more flexible labour markets however means that there are a host of risks which are passed on to individual workers and it is the manner in which these risks are mitigated against which makes the model flexicurity unique. High rates of payments for unemployment benefit serve in theory to cushion the worst effects of unemployment which are created by the increasingly flexible labour markets. There are two main unemployment benefits namely the contributory Unemployment Insurance and the means tested Unemployment Assistance. Unemployment Insurance is a voluntary scheme which employees pay into while they are working. If they become unemployed they can be eligible for up to 90% of their former income although there are upper limits to the payments. The period of eligibility for Unemployment insurance is two

years within a three year period although there can be ways of extending this for up to another year by working up to six months. There is also the capacity for the benefit to be extended by recording hours worked into an 'employment account' which means that any hours worked can contribute to the calculations with regard to the extension of the insurance. Once the benefit is exhausted the person will have to requalify to fulfil the scheme eligibility criteria by working and making the necessary number of contributions. Alternatively if they cannot find work they can apply for Unemployment Assistance which is means tested. These payments are set a level which is higher than most other states yet the rate is reduced after a period of a year.

Both unemployment payments are subject to forms of behavioural conditionality, it is compulsory for recipients to be registered as a job seeker with the public employment services and to be available for work and interviews. Recipients are also required to register their job seeking efforts on the public 'jobnet' program and to have an up to date CV. In the case of Unemployment Insurance benefit Svarer (2007, p. 5) notes how it is the administrators of the UI funds that determine whether or not a sanction is issued and also the extent of the sanction. The Public Employment Service is the organisation who detects the activity that may incur a sanction and they in turn inform the Insurance fund administrators who make the final decision. When sanctions are issued they range from a temporary exclusion lasting two or three days, a complete cessation of payment for three weeks which is the medium level sanction. The highest level of sanction is that of the imposition of a requirement that the person undertakes 300 hours of work within a 10 week period. In summary the Danish system of 'flexicurity features good jobs, generous welfare and a human capital oriented but conditional activation policy' (Murphy 2017, p. 310). The labour market created by this system is one which is characterised by fluidity and mobility as hiring and firing of employees is facilitated by liberal rules yet the potential negative outcomes for individuals are softened by a generous welfare state.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined activation, conditionality and sanctions. After explaining the rationale commonly given for activation it described the discursive constructions it uses to present itself as a necessity. Following this the chapter proceeded to explain the different forms of activation looking first at the workfare/work first models which aim specifically to get unemployed people into whatever work is available as quickly as possible. The other main form of activation is the human capital development model which aims to develop the person so as to make them more employable and to increase their ability to participate in the labour market. The following sections then examined conditionality which refers to the conditions

which are attached to the receipt of social welfare payments. There are three main types of conditionality namely conditions of category, conditions of circumstance and conditions of conduct each of which were described in detail. These forms of conditionality are frequently enforced by the use of sanctions and the next section described how the sanctioning system works in Ireland. The final section attempted to internationalise the discussion of activation and sanctions by describing the systems in place in the UK, Germany and Denmark.

Chapter 5. Governmentality

Economics are the method: the object is to change the soul

Margaret Thatcher 3/05/1981

'We tried to provide more for the poor and produced more poor instead'

(Murray 1984, p. 9)

5.1.1 Introduction

The concept of governmentality is one which was originally discussed by Michel Foucault in the Lectures at the College de France in 1977 and 1978. The core theme of these lectures was the emergence and subsequent transformations in Europe of an 'art of government' in the time period between the 16th and 18th Centuries (Foucault, 2007, 2008, Walters 2000, p. 9). This chapter will examine the conceptual lens of governmentality by examining what Foucault terms 'the conduct of conduct (Foucault 2007, p. 92), it will then proceed to examine governmentality according to Dean's four questions of government and Foucault's analysis of power/knowledge. It will then proceed with a brief discussion on neoliberalism and the processes of subjectification before concluding with a focused discussion on the governmentality of unemployment under PTW.

5.1.2 Governmentality

This research aims to examine unemployment and to gain a deep and thorough understanding of how it is experienced by unemployed people. Unemployment is not just the state of being without a job and neither is it a 'natural' occurrence. If we consider those who don't have jobs but who aren't unemployed such as those who are retired or wealthy people who do not need to work we see that there are significant differences with regard to how they are seen and treated by others in comparison to unemployed people. Unemployment is a status which has to be applied for. To be successful in gaining the status of being unemployed it is necessary to enter the bureaucratic domain of filling in forms, of gathering the requisite paperwork and documentation to prove eligibility. Once eligibility has been established it is necessary to abide by the rules and meet the requirements that are associated with the status of being unemployed. Given these considerations it is important to examine how these facets of the assemblage of unemployment work. Unemployment systems with their attendant rules and regulations did not arise from a master architect or designer in a particular era that made them so. Instead 'over time, ad-hoc, trial and error and issue specific elements are put into place … so the system at

any point in time is made up of fundamentally uneven and often inefficient sets of practices that are continually reshaped by priorities interests and values that emerge in the short term' (Boland & Griffin 2015, p. 3). The theoretical paradigm of governmentality is thus the most relevant to exploring unemployment as it allows us to examine the ways in which these forms and processes operate and to explore the various facets of the institutional and bureaucratic assemblage which combine to structure the experience of unemployment.

Governmentality is characterised less as a theory in its own right and more as an 'analytical toolbox' (Rose et. al. 2006, p. 8). This is because it does not offer a comprehensive diagnosis or explanation as to if how, or why social transformation occurs nor does it attempt to philosophically interpret such change. Instead it offers a 'cluster of concepts' (Walters 2012, p. 2) which can be used in the service of critiquing past and present forms of governance. These concepts allow for governance to be understood and analysed in practical terms which allow for comparative historical critique. Since the 1990's scholarly interest in governmentality has increased and a host of others (Dean 2010; Lemke 2002; Miller et al 1991; Miller and Rose 2008; Rose 1990; Walters 1997, 2000) have expanded upon these lectures and developed Governmentality into a burgeoning sub discipline of its own often termed 'governmentality studies' which aim to pose the difference between government and the way it is studied. This sub discipline of governmentality studies aims to examine the practices of government and the operation of power according to governmental rationality while also examining what each specific mode of governmental rationality is and how it is formed enacted and maintained. Governmentality is a concept which combines both government and mentality (Miller and Rose 1990) it refers primarily to the rationalities of government, the ways of thinking and acting systematically in response to a given problem.

The French word 'gouverner' is one with dual meanings as it refers to both governing and steering (Chamayou 2021, p. 2). This duality is one which is important to keep in mind when considering the actions of government which are not solely about dictating to people or forbidding them from particular actions. Instead there is just as much of a role in government for steering or guiding people towards certain behaviours and subjectivities and away from others. It is similarly as much about creating the mileau within which people can act and of how government works to 'enjoin these agents to take on certain forms of self-government and responsibility' (Dean & Villadson 2016, p. 2). Government does not refer solely to the government of citizens by the state; instead there are an almost infinite number of governmental relationships including that between children and parents, teachers and pupils or in this instance

the unemployed and the various agents of the social welfare system to whom they are beholden. This means that government is not confined solely to the operations of the state and in fact it occurs in any interpersonal relationship where there is some element of guidance or control.

Governmental power is diffuse and makes decisions according to institutional practices and standards as well as policies. In this sense governmental power is almost extra-judicial or at least subject to legal oversight without being co-terminous with the law. According to the schema of governmentality the conception of juridical power which is concentrated in an office, location or individual and enacted through practices of interdiction, repression and denial is reconceptualised as a 'microphysics' of power which is capillary, pervasive, relational and heterogeneous. The state centred conception of governmentality is one which is both prevalent and durable leading Foucault to remark that 'in political thought and analysis we still have not cut off the head of the king' (Foucault 1978, p.89). What is meant by this is that the prevalent conception of government and power is overly state centred and doesn't include the vast array of non-state governmental relationships. These include among others the pedagogic government of children, the government of moral conduct by the church, the government of the self and of course in this instance the government of the unemployed. In fact government is an uneven and dispersed phenomenon which operates at all levels of society and is evident in almost every form of interpersonal relationship.

5.1.3 The Conduct of Conduct

Government can be most simply defined as 'the attempt to shape human conduct by calculated means' (Murray Lee 2007, p. 275). Foucault describes governmentality as the 'right manner of disposing things' (Miller et al 1991, p. 95) which is achieved through an array of tactics and strategies. It is not aimed at any one particular teleological destination but instead aims towards a 'whole series of specific finalities' (Miller et al 1991, p. 95) which aim to identify and enact the most optimal manner of acting and ruling. The broadest definition of governmentality is one which aims to examine the exercise of power in terms of the 'conduct of conduct' which is 'a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons' (Miller et al 1991, p. 2). The core concern of government is thus the 'conduct of conduct' (Foucault 2007, p. 192) by which is meant the directing of conduct or the conducting or orchestration of behaviour. As such governmental rationality does not adhere to a specific design or plan which is drawn up by a particular person or group at a particular time. Instead it is 'situated within a heterogeneous assemblage' (Murray Lee 2007, p. 276) of forms of authority, rules, techniques, modes of calculation, methods of classification and architecture to

name but a few. Governmental power is not that which is vested solely in a sovereign power such as a King or head of state; instead it is a methodical power which rests in rules and regulations which are routinely and rationally applied to all people as a means of directing them and their actions towards particular modes of conduct. Governmentality is evident in any instance where 'individuals and groups seek to shape their own conduct or the conduct of others' (Walters 2012, p. 11). Governmental power thus rose to prominence alongside the nation state and it operates as part of an assemblage which includes among others rules and regulations, statistics, institutions, architecture, and governmental actors such as state officials and functionaries. Dean expands upon the definitions of government as the conduct of conduct to give what is perhaps the most definitive account.

> 'Government is any more or less calculated rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes' (Dean 2010, p. 18).

5.1.4 Four Questions of Government

It thus follows that Governmentality begins by asking a number of questions which collectively can be described in terms of the problem of government. Dean (1995, p. 565; 2010, p. 26) characterises the problem of government as being based around the questions of what, how, who and why. These four questions of government are questions of ontology, ascetics, deontology and teleology. The 'what' question relates to ontology and asks what is it that is governed or acted upon? In psychiatry it may be the patient who is mentally ill just as in pedagogy it may be the student, in this research the ontological focus is that of the unemployed person. The substance of governance in these terms can be as much in ourselves as in others with the focus being on the 'ethical substance' (Dean 1995, p. 565) that is to be worked upon. The next question of government is the 'how' or ascetic question which asks how does government happen? What procedures are undertaken, what practices and methods are carried out, what forms of knowledge are drawn upon? In the field of mental health the ascetic question could relate to psychiatry or pharmacology, it could include the procedures associated with psychiatric care such as the bureaucratic means of getting someone admitted to a mental health facility. In terms of ascetics there is differentiation to be made between the techne of government and the rationalities of government. Techne refers to the techniques, instruments and skills which are used to accomplish successful government or rule over the governed.

Rationalities of government are broader and include expertise, 'the language and vocabulary of rule, the formation of administrative objects' (Dean 1995, p. 560).

The third question is the deontological question which asks who are we when we are governed, what is the mode of subjection inherent in this form of government and what type of ethical and governable subject is created in the process? As will be discussed below in terms of this research the deontological question relates to the form of subjectivity of the job seeker or the active labour market participant. The fourth and final question is the teleological or 'why' question and this relates to the end point of government, why does it happen what is its goal? All forms of government have a teleological point or a reason for it being carried out which can be both moral and instrumental. The telos is a goal or end to be achieved whether it is achieving mental health, reforming a criminal, teaching a student or getting an unemployed person into work. In many applied instances of government the teleological question is one which relates not just to the individual subject of government but is also a communicative act which is aimed at the broader population.

Dean notes the example described by Foucault of penology where the telos refers to 'discipline itself, the new political technology of the body designed to operate on the body so that the subject will govern him or herself as a docile and useful individual' (1995, p. 565). The teleology of penal practices is as much to do with communicating to the broader public and setting boundaries of normative and expected behaviour as it is to do with the direct subject of government. Punishment communicates to the wider public the consequences of breaking norms and of disobeying rules. In terms of unemployment, ALMP's and the coercive or punitive aspect of them, the telos is that of ensuring the norm that everyone must work. Hansen describes this in terms of the 'ceremonial' (2019, p. 178) function which demonstrates to everyone the cost of refusing to work. In this way the working of government upon one subset group serves to governmentalise the wider population by demonstrating 'the price that has to be paid for breaking the rules' (Peck 2001, p. 349). In a similar vein writing in the context of the United Kingdom Charles Umney describes how many of the communicative degradations of unemployed people are as much aimed at the state signalling to capital 'that they are serious about making workers afraid' (Umney 2018, p. 117). Irrespective of who the intended audience is, this form of communicative rationality serves as a 'moral exemplification' which serves to 'exercise disciplining effects well beyond their official clientele (Wacquant 2009, p. 293).

5.1.5 Power/Knowledge

To allow for a fully rounded understanding of governmentality it is necessary to include a brief note on Foucault's conception of power and particularly the discussion of the relationships between power and knowledge. A key facet of Foucault's description of power is the fact that it goes beyond the zero sum definition which posits power as being something that one person or group has and wields at the expense of another. Instead as mentioned above power is relational, capillary, pervasive and heterogeneous. The capillary aspects of power mean that it is not a top down relation and instead it 'arises in all kinds of relationships, and can be built up from the bottom' (Lynch 2011, p. 13). Power is thus something which circulates in all directions through the various and multiple forms of power relations, it is found in all social interactions rather than something which is solely exercised by powerful people at the expense of other less powerful people. The 'juridico-discursive' (Foucault 1990, p. 83) conception of power sees it as acting as a set of binary rules which permit or forbid particular actions. Power in these terms only makes itself known as a form of interdiction which prevents and forbids certain types of activity. Foucault however sees this as being an over simplification and notes how power creates specific forms of subjectivity. Instead of acting solely as a means of interdiction, the myriad and interweaving forms of power relations function with varying means and techniques and in a broad range of forms and arenas. These interweaving 'force relations' (Lynch 2011, p. 21) are immanent in as far as they exist within particular discursive arenas. This means that 'power is not an institution [or] a structure, nor an individual capacity, but rather a complex arrangement of forces in society' (Foucault 1990, p. 93).

Power/Knowledge is a formation which goes beyond the simple truism that knowledge is power. Knowledge is created by power when it imbues it with its status as knowledge while simultaneously using it as a means of exercising power. The type of knowledge that is examined by Foucault in this formation is that which counts as the implicit taken for granted common sense of a given period (savoir) which shapes the explicit forms of knowledge (connaissance) which are institutionalised through the disciplines and sciences (Feder 2009, p. 55). Power makes use of knowledge while also reproducing it and shaping it towards its own intentions. The designation of something as knowledge is in itself an act of power with the ability to designate something as being true perhaps being a supreme form of power. At the same time however 'knowledge follows the advances of power, discovering new objects of knowledge over all the surfaces on which power is exercised' (Foucault 1977, p. 204). In the

process of governing and of exercising power new types of knowledge are created, for example the operation of institutional power in a prison will produce forms of knowledge which can aid in its operation.

The interplay of knowledge and power thus can create new objects of knowledge which can be used to create institutional measurements which form the basis for the standards and parameters of normalisation. The institutionalisation of the norm structures and defines exactly what it is that comes to be counted as normal and to determine the extent to which deviations from the normal are deemed problematic. Normalisation 'indicates the pervasive standards that structure and define social meaning' (Feder 2009, p. 62) with the associated measurements and hierarchical standardisation acting as a means of shading individual difference (Foucault, 1977, p. 184).

The process of the production of knowledge which defines and calls objects into being frequently operates on a multi-level basis. If the concept of unemployment is examined it is evident that knowledge of what it is, how to measure it and how to remedy it is produced by multiple actors and institutions in many different ways. As was described in chapter 2 there are many different measures of unemployment which are compiled by different organisations under different criteria. The Quarterly National Household Survey which is compiled by the Central Statistics Office measures the Principle Economic Status of participants. The methodology by which this measure is compiled is in keeping with the standards of the ILO which aims to make the statistics internationally comparable. The Live Register on the other hand is compiled by the Department of Social Protection and measures the numbers of people who are in receipt of certain payments such as jobseekers payments or top ups. The LR figure is thus an administrative count of the numbers claiming certain specific payments. It often includes people who are seasonally out of work as well as those who are working part-time, it also includes people who are out of work and signing for PRSI credits yet are not in receipt of any payments. The LR figure has a much higher prominence in public discussions of employment and unemployment and can be seen as a totemic figure which is seen to be representative of the general condition of the labour market at a given time. This is primarily because it is reported monthly and is a simple number which either rises of falls each month making it an accessible heuristic device for assessing prevailing labour market conditions. This truth of the labour market is one which is problematic as the LR figures are not actually designed to measure unemployment.

The exercise of power/knowledge is productive as it creates the objects by which it measures its own efficacy. The JobPath program which was established as part of Pathways to Work demonstrates a real world applied example of such a process. Unemployed people who are sent to JobPath providers are administered with a psychometric style personality test which measures their aptitudes, attitudes, abilities and readiness for work. These tests are carried out periodically over the course of their year-long engagement with JobPath and in instances where people have not found work movements in these scores are used to demonstrate the 'success' of program. Here the power/knowledge of the ALMP creates the object to which the new type of knowledge is applied.
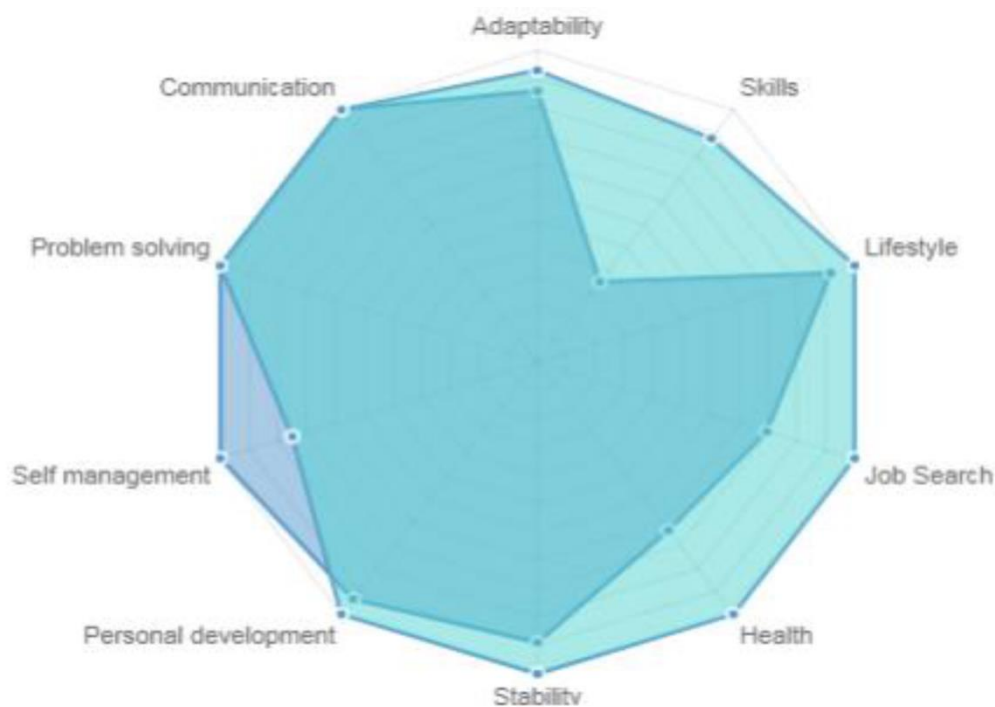

Figure 11. JobPath Psychometric Test Results

This diagram is taken from the website of one of the JobPath providers and shows the scores from a fictional participant who undertook the psychometric test. We can see that in this instance there are two sets of outputs which come from the test. The darker coloured shading represents the score that the fictional participant attained on their first day with the service. As is evident from the graph the initial test shows that there the person lacks 'skills' and could make improvements with regard to 'health' and 'job search'. The lighter coloured shading then represents the same fictional person who has been psychometrically tested after a period as a 'customer' of the service. The results of the fictional second test show that the person has

drastically improved 'skills' and has improved in all other markers apart from 'self management' which has decreased. What we see here is the institution of a number of norms which are supposedly associated with the ability to be a proficient job seeker. These norms are set by the JobPath provider and measured according to a psychometric test that they administer. The purpose of the test is primarily to demonstrate 'distance travelled' so that even when participants do not find work when they are in the program the provider can demonstrate that they have progressed, that the 'project of the self' (Foucault 1988) has been acted upon and improvements towards employability have been made.

What is evident here is that power -in this instance the unemployment services provider- has produced and institutionalised the normative knowledge of what constitutes the ideal job seeker and has set up a variety of 'tests' (Hansen 2019, p. 187) which aim to demonstrate for each of its clients how close or otherwise they are to it. It is worth pointing out the myriad interlocking forms of knowledge which have been called upon to define the parameters of what constitutes this normative figure with disciplines such as psychology, economics, human resources and so on informing the design and administration of the test. As well as this the test measures the distance from the normative and the results are used to determine the types of interventions the job seeker will be subjected to in order for them to get closer to it. The repeat administration of the test also serves to quantify the 'progress' made by the job seeker during their time as a participant of the scheme. The test creates the object of analysis and does so according to its own bounded rationality, for example the test purports to measure health yet it is solely a self-declaration measure. There are no doctors involved and no medical measurements are taken which would allow for definitive statements pertaining to health. Instead the person is asked how they feel and to what extent they feel healthy or otherwise. There are numerous epistemological problems associated with psychometric testing which call into question it's utility and objectivity. These problems include those of reliability and constancy, construct validity, participant reactivity and response bias (Cromby & Willis 2013, p. 245). Such problems are frequently acknowledged by proponents of psychometric testing yet in this case these tests are used as a means of measuring and assessing people to mark their progress or otherwise within the closed system of the ALMP.

5.1.6 Biopolitics and the Arts of Government

Governmentality is closely tied in with the notion of biopower which can be defined as the technologies and techniques which are utilised in the governance of social and biological processes. Disciplinary power operates primarily within designated arenas using techniques of

micro-management over small target populations at the level of the individual. These techniques are difficult to achieve at the larger scale of population as it is too cumbersome to individually monitor, regulate and coerce each person. Whereas power under disciplinary regimes is focussed primarily on the individual; biopower 'is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of the population' (Foucault 1991, p. 260). The administrative focus of biopower is on a population which is governed as a totality often towards specific teleological ends. Some examples of the objects of biopolitical governance include rates of births, deaths and population as a means measuring the biopolitical force of a state. In this research the broader biopolitical object of governance is that of the labour market which must be populated by subjects who are willing and able to work in the available jobs for the available rates of pay. Governmental power operates by arranging the habits, actions, aspirations and desires of people so they behave in a manner which is beneficial to the greater social order.

The focus on biopolitics draws attention to an art of government 'that involves sets of practices and calculated strategies that are both plural and immanent in the state' (McKee 2009, p. 466). Political power from a governmental perspective thus operates simultaneously at the level of the individual and the collective and acts in the manner of 'omnes et singulatum' (Foucault 1979) or of all and each. Such power operates simultaneously in a top down 'omnes' and bottom up 'singulatum' fashion as the subjects of governmental power are governed as both individuals and as members of a community, citizenship or group. Processes of subjectification act to create pliant and docile subjects who have internalised the logics and rationalities of the system and act to ensure its continuance. It is by this process of acting on and managing the habits, beliefs and practices of individuals that governmental power operates in a bottom up fashion by instilling its beliefs, practices and injunctions as doxa in the individual subject. In this fashion governmentality is not simply a means of looking beyond the state as a means of governance but by examining the subjects produced by neoliberal governmentality it demonstrates how such subjects are exhorted to self- govern in the interests of the social.

Governmental power thus often operates 'at a distance' (Miller and Rose 2008) as it inculcates in the governed the values and aspirations of those who are governing; in doing this it becomes possible to govern with as little intervention as is possible. This is a core element of contemporary forms of governmentality; as opposed to being fixated on the monitoring and strict enforcing of rules they are instead concerned with setting the terms by which circulation

can occur within the milieu (Foucault 1978, p. 20). By doing this and intervening only when the flow of the circulation is interrupted it is possible to govern at a distance and to intervene as minimally and as infrequently as is possible while optimising and sustaining the flow of circulations. The intervention which does occur under such regimes is carried out by experts who aim to remove and mitigate processes or circulations which are destructive and encourage and foster those which are beneficial. This minimal, infrequent government at a distance which Foucault terms economic government is a key element in the rule of advanced liberal societies.

While this may be how liberal government works in theoretical terms in practice it is worth noting the differentiations inherent in advanced liberal societies and how people from different social strata experience government in entirely different ways. Wacquant describes the 'centaur state' which is 'liberal at the top and paternalistic at the bottom, which presents radically different faces at the two ends of the social hierarchy' (Wacquant 2009, p. 312). Thus while middle and upper class people may well experience government in terms of distance and infrequency others below them in the social hierarchy are closely monitored and managed by increasingly interventionist and paternalist forms of government. Such forms of differentiation are even written into PTW as initial data gathered during the application process is fed into an algorithm which gives each applicant a Probability of Exit or PEX score which will determine the extent to which the unemployment services will intervene in helping them to find work. People with higher PEX scores are those who have higher levels of education, work experience, health and access to transport all of which are correspond to markers of social class. Thus middle class unemployed people are less likely to experience the same levels of intervention as their working class counterparts.

5.1.7 Subjectivation

In summarising a broad corpus of his work Foucault once claimed that the main point of his efforts was predominantly that of exploring the differing ways in which 'human beings are made into subjects' (Foucault 1982, p. 208). This links in with some of the key questions relating to the real world lived experiences of forms of governmentality such as those that are the focus of this research. How do particular domains of government seek to cultivate the personal attributes and capacities of those who are governed? How does government seek to designate the spaces 'for the supervised exercise and regulation of these capacities as arenas of freedom' (Dean 1995, p. 560)? These questions are particularly relevant to the current research which aims to examine the ways in which work first ALMP's act as a means of subjectivising their participants. Dufour notes some of the varying conceptions of subjectivity which include

the legal subject who bears rights and responsibilities while also noting in etymological terms the Latin roots of the term with the word 'subjectus' which 'designates the state of someone who is subjected, in submission' (Dufour 2017, p. 8).

Heyes describes the difficulty in accurately translating Foucault as the French word *assujettissement* has no direct corresponding word in English. In French the word 'describes a double process of the actions of power in relation to selves that is both negative and positive (Heyes 2009, p. 160). In terms of the negative the first shade of meaning refers to the ways in which power imposes itself on people via the imposition of norms and standards. Individual behaviour is encouraged or discouraged via the various agents of government as a means of furthering social needs or enhancing public needs. Subjects are enjoined through 'normalising judgements' (Foucault 1979, p. 177) to behave in accordance with the specified rules and to act in a manner typically expected of members of their group. They are thus subjectified in terms of constraint and limitation. The key point however is the creation of such subjects leaves open the possibility of positive forms of self, subjects can realise group identities, can form communities of solidarity and can even talk back to power and work to redefine the parameters of their subjectivity. Subjects are thus less a fully determined form and instead are more easily defined as a capacity which allows for some degree of agency and self- definition. In this fashion power by its nature constitutes the possibility of resistance as the process of remaking people always holds the possibility that they reject or adapt the parameters of subject-hood that are being thrust upon them. There is an inherent tension in the operation of power, modes of critique are always constituted by the society they address and in much the same way forms of counter subjectivities are constituted by the subjectivity they are formed in opposition to.

It follows that power will not function if it is enacted solely in a top down fashion through repression and limitation; the management of subjects must be at least partially enacted as a form of self- management. The point of government is thus to attempt to instil in subjects the means and the desire to self- govern and to act according to the normative demands of their subjectivity. This is what Dean refers to as governmental self formation which is described as

> 'the ways in which various authorities and agencies seek to shape the conduct, aspirations, needs desires and capacities of specified political and social categories, to enlist them in particular strategies and to seek definite goals' (Dean 1995, p. 563).

Governmental self formation can be seen as the intersection between the many 'numerous vectors of management and coercion' (Heyes 2009, p. 162) which aim to encourage and create

a form of self that is both productive and useful. It follows then that 'any process of assujettissement happens at two levels: the management of the social body, and the disciplinary forces acting on the individual's body' (Heyes 2009, p. 170).

5.1.8 Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a term which is subject to such broad definitions that it can be difficult to precisely explain. Brown describes it as a 'loose and shifting signifier' (2014, p. 20) while Wacquant describes it as 'an elusive and contested notion' (2009, p. 306). The term neoliberalism is one which while common to academic discourses is rarely used in mainstream political discourse with politicians and policy reformers only using the word when they are distancing themselves from it (Peck 2010, p. 14). In the birth of biopolitics Foucault dedicated the majority of the lectures to describing and analysing its roots which include the German ordoliberals and the American Neoliberals of the Chicago school. At its most basic, neoliberalism refers to the manner in which increasingly more areas of life are re-organised so as to allow them to be subject to market forces. Liberalism under the aegis of laissez faire aimed to allow the market to rule by simply keeping the state away from matters of economics. The operation of commerce aimed to limit the powers of state activity and sought to create 'parameters within which business activity could be left relatively untrammelled' (King & Kendall 2004, p. 42). Liberalism had at its centre the rational calculating homo economicus who weighed up each choice and made each decision according to the best available information. This figure was assumed under the liberal paradigm to be the natural state of humanity as is evident of Adam Smith's characterisation of human nature being typified by the 'propensity to truck barter and exchange' (Smith 1872, p. 26). Homo economicus was 'defined by an extreme form of individualism, driven largely by monetary gain and profoundly suspicious of anyone but themselves, particularly the public' (Fleming 2017, p.10).

The liberal conception of homo economicus was one which was in keeping with the broader principles of laissez faire was a figure which was mostly to be left alone and not subject to governmental interventions. As such the liberal form of homo economicus was 'an intangible element with regard to the exercise of power' (Foucault 2008, p. 270) as he or she was categorically exempt from government and therefore ungovernable. There is a change evident in the figure of homo economicus in the movement from laissez faire liberalism to neoliberalism. The neoliberal conception of homo economicus is one presented as being 'someone manageable, someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications… Homo economicus is someone who is eminently governable' (Foucault 2008, p. 270).

In this fashion neoliberalism can be seen as being simultaneously a 'prolongation and a rupture' (Lorenzini 2018, p. 2) of classical liberalism as in many ways it can be characterised as a stretching out of classical liberalism to its limits. Liberalism was concerned with the question of 'how to cut out or contrive a free space of the market within an already given political society' (Foucault 2008, p. 131). Neoliberalism on the other hand is concerned primarily with the question of 'taking the formal principles of a market economy and referring and relating them to, of projecting them onto a general art of government' (Foucault 2008, p. 131). This general art of government goes beyond the concept of laissez-faire and moves to the 'organisation of social relations on the basis of a rationality dictated by the market' (Lorenzini 2018, p. 2). The neoliberal state is one which to paraphrase Foucault is governed *for* the market rather than *because* of the market (Foucault 2008, p. 121 italics added). Lazzarato thus writes of how society has been transformed under neoliberalism into an 'enterprise society based on the market, competition, inequality, and the privilege of the individual' (2009, p. 109).

A key point of this is that the measure by which government is deemed to succeed or fail is that of the success or failure of the market. In the Birth of Biopolitics Foucault describes the change which occurred in the 18th Century where markets moved from being sites of jurisdiction to being sites of veridiction. The pre 18th century sites of jurisdiction were where the state intervened to regulate and set prices to ensure fairness and affordability and to protect buyers from fraud. Pre 18th Century markets were places where 'what had to appear in exchange and be formulated in the price was justice' (Foucault 2008, p. 31). By the 18th Century according to Foucault markets began to be seen as entities which were natural and had their own spontaneous mechanisms which due to their complexity and opacity were difficult to understand and even more difficult to govern. This difficulty in understanding the 'natural' laws of the market meant that government intervention came to be seen as something which should be avoided as it would impair and hinder its workings. This meant firstly that markets came to be seen as something that should be facilitated rather than regulated and secondly that the health of the markets came to be a heuristic for measuring the failure or success of government. Instead of prices being the result of government intervention and regulation as they were under sites of jurisdiction, they instead came to be seen as naturally occurring within the mechanisms of the market. When prices got too high or too low this came to be seen as a failure of government in facilitating the market, this means that the market has moved from being an object of direct regulation to being 'a site of verification – falsification for governmental practice' (Foucault 2008, p. 32). The smooth operation of markets and the

'natural' occurrence of just prices has thus become a marker of truth with regard to the operation of government.

5.1.9 Neoliberal subjects

Neoliberalism involved the stretching of a number of principles of liberalism, Laissez faire was jettisoned, competition replaced exchange as the motor of the market and there was a rejection of the state of competition being seen as a natural state. This meant that the conditions for market competition had to be adequately fostered which is the main focus of neoliberal governmentality. Under neoliberalism the characteristics typical of homo economicus are not assumed to be naturally occurring and so it 'actively seeks to refashion individuals along those lines with a range of political and institutional reforms' (Seymour 2010. p. 31). Neoliberalism sees what Wacquant terms the 'remasculinisation' of the state as the range of responsibilities and obligations typical of the paradigm of active citizenship see the movement from the 'kindly "nanny state" of the Fordist-Keynesian era to the strict "daddy state" of neoliberalism' (2009, p. 290). It is perhaps worthwhile to point out once more that the invasive paternalism of the daddy state is not aimed at everyone. Such behavioural interventions are broadly speaking a part of the 'fearsome and frowning mug' (Wacquant 2009, p. 312) of the centaur state which is aimed at the bottom end of the social hierarchy. Liberalism assumed the market to be the natural state to which humans would revert if left alone to behave as rational self calculating market subjects. The neoliberal project on the other hand 'adopts a more constructivist stance emphasizing the need to instil specific competencies and mentalities consonant with assimilation into market relations' (Schram et al 2011, p. 742).

This of course begs the question as to what these specific competencies and mentalities are with Chandler and Reid describing the typical neoliberal subject as 'a resilient, humble and disempowered being that lives a life of permanent ignorance and insecurity' (Chandler and Reid 2016, p. 3). Ideas of choice and freedom are central to the ideal typical individual experience of neoliberalism. Subjects are actors in the market who are free to choose yet they must do this with the knowledge that they will always bear the consequences of not choosing wisely. As well as this they must make their choices amidst the ever changing social and economic landscapes of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000) where whole industries quickly rise and fall and hard earned skills and qualifications quickly become redundant. In these terms Dufour characterises the subject of the postmodern world as being 'abandoned rather than freed' (Dufour 2008, p.85).

Drawing on Harrington (2001) Lane describes the contemporary form of 'protean career' (Lane 2016, p. 24) which is an individualistic form of career which prizes the flexibility and adaptability of the individual above all else. Individual workers no longer join an organisation and have a job for life, indeed such forms of working began to be seen as being stifling and unfulfilling. Instead individuals are conceptualised as a bundle of skills and aptitudes which are folded into the needs of organisations and institutions at a given time and often for a determinate period. Career is thus a pathway which is forged by the individual in an act of self creation; it is a pathway of their own design for which they must take responsibility. Beck describes this form of subject as the 'DIY biography' where each 'individual must learn on, pain of permanent disadvantage, to conceive of himself or herself as the centre of action, as the planning office with respect to his/her own biography, abilities, orientations, relationships and so on' (Beck 1992, p. 135). This necessity for self- creation comes with the significant risk that the wrong choices will be made and as such it is the individual who will feel the consequences of these choices.

In terms of job-seeking the neoliberal subject is one which must bear the weight and personal responsibility of the unknowability of the market based social world. This form of subject is an 'entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer being for himself the source of [his] earnings' (Foucault 2008, p. 226). It is the responsibility of the individual to maximise their own capital and to realise and make full use of their own talents and aptitudes. Neoliberal government thus operates by stoking desires for independence, freedom and creativity and linking them to the interests of business in a manner which reconfigures workers as entrepreneurs of their own skills and abilities which they must sell on the open market. These skills are disaggregated and reconfigured according to the given needs of the market at any particular point in time. This means that deeply held subject identities relating to profession are less valuable than is the ability of the individual to reshape themselves and their professional subject identities on a whim to fit whatever transitory niche in the market has arisen at a given time. In this way neoliberal subjects are 'shape shifting portfolio people' (Gee 2004), 'protean thespians' (Boland 2015) that are fluid and adaptable and can reconfigure themselves at a moment's notice. This means that individual workers undertake a 'journey' where they are constantly adapting themselves and adopting new skills and abilities. This conception of career is in keeping with the etymology of the word which McGee describes as having equestrian roots as it 'originates in the French word "carrier" for race-course, the Spanish "carerra" for road, and "carraria" for carriage road' (McGee 2005,

p.116). Indeed much of the discussion around career and job seeking is replete which metaphors of journey and pilgrimage (Boland 2021). In terms of PTW the program itself purports to offer the unemployed a 'pathway' to work and employment. There is also Turas Nua which was established as one of the main JobPath providers with the name literally meaning new journey although there are also some religious connotations in the word turas which are linked to pilgrimage.

A key feature of job seeking is the skill of self presentation and the ability of an individual to sell themselves and to demonstrate how their particular set of skills, experiences and aptitudes fit with the needs of any particular opening in the market. This requirement for manic changeability throws up the problem for the subject of balancing the tension between flexibility and legibility (Gershon 2016). At its core this form of anatamo-political governmental regulation aims to create pliant subjects who are content to labour in precarious and flexible post fordist labour markets. This subject is the entrepreneur of the self who absorbs the risks of the enterprise society and engages in various lifelong projects of the self for the purposes of fitting into ever changing and liquid labour markets.

This is not to say however that people are merely passive recipients of processes of subjectivation, social welfare claimants are not victims of the unemployment system who are entirely at its mercy. As was discussed above in section 5.1.7 the process of subjectivation is not totalising and there is always the possibility that people will reject it. The process of subjectivation is one which allows for some degree of agency and self- definition which in turn constitutes the possibility of resistance and the space to practice some forms of personal agency. People are not passive dupes and there are a number of ways in which they can reject or adapt the parameters of subject-hood that are being thrust upon them. People who are governed will often accept the parameters of government on their own terms and as such they will carve out 'spaces of personal control and autonomy' (Gilliom 2001) however small these spaces may be. Forms of resistance range from outright refusal and disengagement with an acceptance of the consequences all the way to minor acts of resistance such as creative compliance or subversion and wilful misunderstanding of the rules and regulations to suit themselves. Ruth Lister notes the ways in which people in poverty exercise agency by drawing the typology of getting by, getting back at, getting out and getting organised (Lister 2001, p. 130).

5.2 Governing Unemployment

The final section of this chapter will draw on the topics discussed above to give a description of governmentality as it is applied in contemporary active welfare systems with a focus on the Irish system. With respect to social welfare administration the neoliberal turn has seen a change from welfare systems merely assessing eligibility and administering payments towards the contemporary welfare bureaucracies which aim to actively manage the unemployed by altering their habits, aspirations and dispositions. Wacquant sees this as being a turn from passive 'people processing' to active 'people changing' (2009, p. 291). Writing in the context of the American welfare state Schram (2011, p. 739) contends that social welfare programs have always operated with a reformative aspect which aimed to improve poor people by socialising them into the norms and expectations associated with the labour market. Similarly Piven and Cloward (1971) have described the function of social welfare as a means of 'regulating the poor' by preventing the myriad social disorders associated with widespread poverty and inequality. In Piven and Cloward's account the welfare state expands in times of low labour market buoyancy and contracts in times where jobs are plentiful. The purpose of the expansion is mainly to circumvent the possibilities of mass social disorder in times of economic and social upheaval and despair.

Contemporary forms of welfare state regulation are closely bound with the active labour market paradigm which involves the reconfiguration of people so they can be funnelled towards the labour market as quickly as possible. The Active Society is an overarching conceptual framework initially proposed by the OECD which marked a new paradigm in the organisation of welfare states. This paradigm marks an attempted linkage between social policy, subjectivation and the politics of the ethical self discussed above. The main means by which such linkages are made are through the various methods of promoting self- government and entrepreneurialism at the level of the individual and positioning these activities as the main method of alleviating poverty. The promotion of activity as the means of ameliorating social problems is thus the main thrust of this paradigm which does away with the worker/non-worker dualism and instead 'seeks to make us all workers' (Walters 1997, p. 224). Key to this is the rejection of de-commodification (Esping-Andersen 1990, p. 21) for those who are fit to work and the normative imperative that everyone must be enjoined to work, to contribute and to be active. Further to this is the rejection of the idea that unemployment is a structural phenomenon and instead 'worklessness is typically named as a problem of "character"' (Clarke and Newman, 2012, p. 311) and therefore individualised. People who are workless or non-

productive outside of the labour market are thus characterised as being burdensome, passive and in need of activation.

The Active Society has been described by Walters as marking an 'ideological revalorisation of capitalism' (Walters 1997, p. 224) as it positions paid employment as the sole means of gaining fulfilment, belonging and participation in broader society. Accordingly discourses of poverty and wealth are replaced by those of exclusion and inclusion which are primarily based around labour market status. The Active Society also initiates a new way of conceptualising the work force. Welfare states were primarily influenced by the male breadwinner model of familialisation which had the able bodied male as the head of the household who worked full time and was recognised as such in policy terms. This had obvious repercussions for women as they were normatively confined to the domestic realm. Active Society discourses emphasise the desirability of all able people to participate in the labour market and this includes the carers and mothers who had previously carried out the crucial work of social reproduction at home and without pay. Further to this is the attendant change in the conception of what employment is, under male breadwinner type models employment ideally involved the earning of a family wage. Under the Active Society paradigm work becomes more fragmented as part-time, short-term and precarious work becomes more normalised. This change in employment structure allows for the inclusion of many groups in the labour market including lone parents, the disabled, students and so on, yet this inclusion frequently happens on diminished terms. The following sections will examine in applied terms the processes of governance typical of the Irish system under PTW. It will do this by describing the institutional process of becoming unemployed and the subsequent institutional interventions which aim to produce the job-seeking subject.

5.2.1 UP1

To be classified as unemployed in Ireland it is a requirement that all new applicants fill out the twenty page long UP1 form which is the official application form for Job Seekers Allowance/Benefit. In doing this people who by definition are complex, idiosyncratic and have any number of unique skills and experiences are reformulated and categorised through forms and bureaucratic processes in a manner which reduces them to an administrative essence which renders them institutionally manageable as governmentalised subjects. The reformulation of people into manageable administrative units is thus an act of translating heterogeneous lives into homogenous entities. Modern nation states 'are in part constituted by their capacity to

name, count and classify citizens' (Lyon 2009, p. 46) by linking them to documents and data which make them uniquely identifiable. A bureaucratic administrative identity is a categorisation which is constructed by the institution so as to make the complex facets of individual subject-hood manageable and in this way the institution 'imposes on individuals an interpretation of their social existence' (Dubois 2010, p. 61).

These processes are undertaken so as to make each individual both visible and legible to the bureaucratic institution by creating 'a decorporealized body, a 'data double' of pure virtuality' (Haggerty and Ericson 2007, p. 108). Koopman refers to these practices as formatting which are 'the ways in which data is used to format, render, or organise who we are and what we can be' (Koopman 2020, p. S10). Formatting is a three stage process of inputting, processing and outputting which 'instantiates a power that conducts our conduct' (Koopman 2019, p. 159). Formatting is an act of power which fastens people to their data in a manner which ensures they are put on a particular track and trajectory and treated according to the category to which they are fastened. The process of formatting means that our data doubles do not simply describe us but in many cases are constitutive of who are and the opportunities that are open or closed to us. The most common example of this is the simple data abstraction of the credit score which grants or denies access to consumer credit based on data compiled across a range of domains of consumer finance.

Such data doubles are created as a means of governing masses of people rather than people as individuals. People are grouped and categorised according to criteria of risk and sorted into different treatment categories making them 'dividuals rather than individuals, allocated to standardised responses on the basis of some type of typification or classification' (McNeill 2019, p. 12). Similarly others describe processes of 'datafication' (Mayer-Schonberger and Cukier 2013, p. 73) where the intricacies and complexities of individuals are flattened into simple categories which allow for ease of administration. By making people legible to the state through processes of identification it is possible to assess their eligibility for the rights and entitlements that are associated with their assigned categorical status. Citizenship rights are connected to the individual and so it is imperative from the institutional perspective to know with certainty who is who and to be able to keep records of payment, entitlement and so on. These records however are retrievable and searchable and can be used to categorically sort people and single out some for differential treatment. This is the basis of the PEX system as will be discussed below but the data upon which the PEX system operates is gathered by the UP1 form.

In completing the UP1 the applicant is forced to distil the essence of their personality so as to make it compatible with the category of jobseeker which is a category created, enacted and maintained by the welfare bureaucracy. In the Foucauldian sense the UP1 form is a 'technology of power' which 'produces the rational-technical truth of unemployment' (Griffin 2015, p. 110). The assignation of jobseeker is in itself a form of governmental subjectivisation, in the bureaucratic parlance people who qualify for unemployment payments are not unemployed but they are jobseekers. This shows the jobseekers payment not being a universal entitlement but instead being a stipend which is paid on condition that the beneficiary actively seeks work. Indeed the word entitlement is not used on the UP1 form and instead reference is made to the 'claim' being made by the applicant. The information requested from the form includes the applicant's age, address, living arrangements, relationship status, work history, education, access to transport and health. This data is required to assess eligibility but also as a means of assessing the applicants distance from the labour market and accordingly of categorising them into a distinct treatment category. It is worth pointing out that even at the initial stage of filling out the UP1 applicants are already being called upon to account for their efforts to find work.

Part 5	Details of Availability/Efforts to Find Work
32. Please State:	
• Type of work you are looking for?	
• Are you available for full-time work?	YES NO
• Are you looking for full-time work?	YES NO
• Would you accept any other type of work?	YES NO
If **No**, please give details	

Figure 12 UP1 Part 5

Drawing on Bakhtin, Griffin (2015, p. 110) notes how bureaucratic forms are dialogical and constitute a conversation of sorts between the institution who drafts them and the people who fill them out. This dialogical conversation is structured by the drafter of the form who uses it to elicit the required knowledge from the person filling it out but simultaneously it acts as a

means of communication from the drafter to the applicant. This section of the UP1 form serves as possibly the first instance where applicants are informed of their requirement to seek work. Not only does this section ask as to the type of work being sought it also asks applicants if they would accept any other kind of work with a requirement that if they answer no to this question they account for their reasons why. There is a sense of ambiguity in this section of the form as it is unclear to which question the statement 'if no give details' refers to. This gives the feeling that if the applicant answers no to *any* of the preceding four questions –what work are you looking for, are you available for full time work, looking for full time work, would you accept any other type of work'- then they must give an explanation. This is a means of communicating to the person completing the form that answering no to any of these questions is not acceptable and requires a valid explanation. In this case an applicant who answers no to any of these questions will be potentially invalidating their entitlement to either of the Jobseekers payments.

Figure13 UP1 Part11

The UP1 further serves to governmentalise applicants by requiring them to sign a declaration that is in keeping with the ILO definition of unemployment. This section of the form has a quasi-legal sense to it and reads as if one should solemnly raise their right while reading it aloud. Both sections begin with the phrase 'I declare that' and in both instances this phrase is highlighted in bold text. This declarative language gives this section of the form a weighty feeling of seriousness and legality, as well as having these declarations the consequences for being in breach of them are clearly spelled out.

> 'I understand that if any of the information I provide is untrue or misleading or if I fail to disclose any relevant information, that I will be required to repay any payment that I receive from the Department and that I may be prosecuted'

It is worth point out the repetition of 'I' in this section as it clearly demonstrates how applicants are individualised and responsibilised as active welfare subjects. In this manner the relationship between the institution and the applicants are clearly spelled out as applicants 'open themselves up to a potentially unending investigation' (Griffin 2015, p. 122) based on the data they have input into the UP1. The other key purpose of this section is to demonstrate the precarity and conditionality that are associated with jobseekers payments, not only are they conditional on the applicant fulfilling all criteria for eligibility but payments are also subject to repayment by the applicant if they are found to have misrepresented themselves on the form.

The UP1 also includes the 'Record of Mutual Commitments' which explicitly spells out what is expected of applicants by the institution and supposedly what they can expect from the institution. As such this section demonstrates how the relationship between the two will work. It is divided into two columns which display 'our promise to you' and 'your promise to us'. This is presented to applicants in the form of a service level agreement style document but in keeping with the dialogical conversation typical of such forms it cannot really be classed as an agreement. A person who is looking to claim social welfare benefits is most often someone who has no other means of income which means that they are entering the agreement under coercion as refusing the terms of the contract would mean the disqualification from payments. As well as this the terms of the agreement are entirely set by the institution and presented to the applicant on a take it or leave it basis, there is no place for discussing or negotiating these terms. The institution also holds the power to control the definition of the situation in all circumstances. They can decide if a person isn't working hard enough to secure employment, but they also can decide the terms by which their side of the deal is measured. In this sense the

truths pertaining to the efforts of the individual to find employment are entirely determined by the institution. It is the institution who decides what measures are to be undertaken by the individual, what is an acceptable level of effort and so on. As will be discussed below these truths of ALMP's are determined and tested via disciplinary procedures particularly the one to one interview. As a mode of governmental bureaucratic machinery the UP1 form is one which is constantly changing, at the time when fieldwork for this research was carried out the UP1 did not include the record of mutual commitments. Instead the record of mutual commitments was part of the one to one activation session.

Figure 14 UP1 Part 12

5.2.2 PEX

The data gathered by the UP1 form is primarily used to assess eligibility for assistance yet it also used to categorise people so as to determine the type of interventions which will be needed so as to assist them in getting to work. Data gathered from the UP1 form is collated and used to confer a Probability of Exit (PEX) score on each applicant. The data relating to the applicants age, address, living arrangements, relationship status, work history, education, access to transport and health are constitutive of the PEX score (O'Connell et al. 2009). People who are assigned a high PEX score are those who are deemed to be closer to the labour market and so have a higher probability of exiting unemployment quickly. As such they receive less attention and support in getting back to work than others who have lower scores. People who are assigned a low PEX score are deemed to be distant from the labour market and have a lesser likelihood of exiting unemployment without intervention. These people are thus assigned a more rigorous regime of interventions under active labour market policies which would include more frequent meetings with employment advisors, extra courses of training and so on. This process is in keeping with what Koopman's description of formatting as discussed above as people are subject to the processual flow of input, process and output, They are input via the UP1 form they are processed via the PEX algorithm and they are output as canalised subjects who are categorised according to the levels of intervention they are deemed to require. In this sense the data gathered by the UP1 and processed by PEX is not simply descriptive and instead it is constitutive as it creates particular categories and subjectivities and assigns people to them.

The PEX score is determined by taking the measures mentioned above and running them through an algorithm or equation which classifies the person as having a low, medium or high score. The algorithm primarily measures the risk of each person becoming long term unemployed and categorises people according to this calculus of risk. The PEX system is thus a 'systematic evaluation of multiple characteristics whose impact on the probability of becoming long-term unemployed have been assessed using statistical evidence' (Layte and O'Connell 2005, p. 89). It thus claims to operate under the neutral and impartial rubric of data science yet in effect it is a form of 'rational discrimination' (Gandy 2009) as there are inevitably class linkages between PEX scores. People who have low levels of educational attainment, no access to transport and a limited work history would get a low PEX score and people with these characteristics are also more likely to come from the bottom end of the social scale. Similarly people with high levels of education, work experience and access to transport are more likely to come from more advantaged social backgrounds. PEX is thus a system for 'social sorting'

which is defined by David Lyon as that which 'enables what current politics prescribes, the classification and categorisation of populations within regimes of risk management, in order that people from different groups may be treated differently' (Lyon 2007, p. 204). This system of rational discrimination engenders 'cumulative disadvantage' (Gandy 2009) where those who are disadvantaged relative to others are treated differently leading potentially to an accumulation of disadvantage and discrimination.

When the system processes people in this fashion it massifies them bundling people together into categories and managing them according to the imputed characteristics of these categories rather than as unique individuals (McNeill 2019, p. 12). It is thus as data images projected from information gathered during the bureaucratic process that subjects are created and this determines how they are dealt with by the Social Welfare bureaucracy.

5.2.3 Group Engagement Sessions

Once an application for job seekers payment is successful the newly designated job seeker will be summoned to attend a group engagement session. The stated purpose of these sessions is to inform jobseekers of their rights and responsibilities and to make them aware of all available supports. A core feature of the measures brought in under PTW was that of ensuring 'more regular and ongoing engagement with the unemployed' (PTW 2012, p. 13) and the first form of face to face engagement is that of the group session. The experience of these sessions as described by research participants will be discussed in later chapters but in terms of the government of unemployment the key factor is that the group engagement session happens soon after successful registration as a jobseeker. Prior to PTW jobseekers would be required to wait at least three months before they would attend any such sessions. The PTW system which gets jobseekers into activation sessions as soon as possible does so in order to communicate the imperative to jobseekers that they must actively seek work or undergo training.

Figure 15 Slide from Group Engagement Session

The graphic above is taken from a Group Engagement Session slide show and it demonstrates how the sessions are also a means of drawing attention to and emphasising the fact that jobseekers payments are subject to the behavioural conditions of seeking work or training and that failure to adhere to these conditions will incur sanctions. In this sense the group engagement is a means of demonstrating the fact that receipt of a jobseekers payment is temporary and that jobseekers will have to account for their efforts to find work or potentially face sanction. The group engagement session is thus primarily a signalling event with its purpose being that of demonstrating to participants that they are in an ALMP system and to inform them of their responsibilities as well as the consequences for not adhering to them. As if to further demonstrate this point another core feature of the group engagement session is that of making an appointment for jobseekers to undergo a one to one session.

What's next?

The Group Information Session today is the first step in a process through which we will help you to find employment.

We will explain the process _and_ provide some information on the services and supports that we offer

Next steps

- 1 to 1 appointment with a Case Officer/Mediator
- Agree a Personal Progression Plan
- Regular review meetings

- You must attend all appointments as Penalty Rates will be applied to your payment if you fail to do so, without good cause.   A Penalty Rate is a reduction in your weekly payment or a full disqualification for 9 weeks.
- Please be on time.
- If you cannot attend due to exceptional circumstances please let us know.

Group Information Session

Intreo

Figure 16 What Next?

The one to one engagement session is where jobseekers meet with a designated case officer and agree upon a plan to get to work. These sessions are presented to jobseekers as an opportunity to discuss not just their needs and requirements but also their strengths and aptitudes. The welfare case officer is thus presented as a labour market expert who can serve as a guide through the process of finding a job and point the jobseeker towards all available supports. It is once again worth noting the governmentalising tone of the language used in the slide above 'you must attend all appointments, please be on time' and the proviso that it is only 'exceptional circumstances' or 'good cause' that will permit the jobseeker missing the appointment without incurring a sanction. This presents the meeting not just as compulsory but also as being important. It points to the active labour market imperative that being unemployed should be treated as a job in its own right with goals and tasks set for the job seeker and appraisal style meetings with the case officer to judge progress. This is in keeping with what Southwood describes as the new form of unemployment which has 'its own job description person specification and disciplinary framework, so that if you do not perform your job seeking duties correctly you can be fired by your line manager' (Southwood 2011, p. 57). In these terms

Southwood describes the subject of ALMP's as being an 'unemployee' where unemployment is transformed into 'a pastiche of a job, complete with mock workplace, clocking in and out times, and managers to report to' (Southwood 2011, p. 49).

In this sense the one to one meeting can be characterised as being akin to a management appraisal which is a typical feature of many jobs. Management is reflective of social relations; it is a productive exercise of power which acts on people in an attempt to fold their attitudes, behaviours and actions into matching the requirements of the institution. A key rationale for management is that its absence would create a vacuum where institutionally speaking there would be an absence of control and direction and people would not be encouraged to meet their full potential. This is in keeping with the aims of PTW which are primarily to prevent the 'drift' into long term unemployment. Willmott describes management as the practice of being 'institutionally empowered to determine and/or regulate certain aspects of the actions of others' (1984, p. 350). As such it is relational and works through people rather than as an abstract and reified process. Management is actively constructed and reflects the perceived requirements of the institution (Townley 1993, p. 223). As such management is a form of subjectification which aims to produce docile subjects who while at work will act in accordance with the specified needs of the institution. One to one meetings under PTW aim to ensure jobseekers are closely monitored, assigned tasks to carry out and appraised on their efforts.

As was discussed above Power/Knowledge is that which creates the objects which it acts upon and this is undoubtedly the case with the one to one session. To make something governable it is first necessary to 'know' it, to have knowledge of it and to classify and make it legible, doing this makes objects amenable to governmental interventions. The output of the one to one session is called a Personal Progression Plan (PPP) which outlines the actions required to be taken by the jobseeker to increase the likelihood of getting them into work. It outlines the qualifications, training and experience of the jobseeker as well as any barriers they may face in finding work. It also serves as an action plan of sorts as it gives the jobseeker tasks which they much have completed before they are appraised at the next one to one meeting with their case officer. The knowledge of the individual which is gleaned from the UP1 form and processed via the PEX algorithm is thus determinative of the shape and structure of the one to one session. As well as determining how frequently such meetings will take place these data are instrumental in shaping how the meetings operate. In theory the PPP is a document agreed upon between the jobseeker and the case officer although the power differentials and the looming threat of sanctions make it unlikely that there is complete agreement.

Below is an example of a PPP given by Intreo from their website at the time of the launch of PTW. This shows how they imagined the shape such documents would take. In this imaginary example 'Lynne' has agreed upon the immediate goals of job searching and reviewing her personal finances with the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS). This imaginary example succinctly demonstrates the underlying rationale of individualising social problems. 'Lynne' who is recently unemployed is presented as having been referred to the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) to review her finances. This implies that while she had faced financial difficulties it was due to her own ill-discipline and inability to budget as opposed to her trying to subsist on poverty level social welfare payments.

Figure 17 Personal Progression Plan

Her longer term goal is that of setting up her own business and to this end the agreed upon task is that of exploring options for franchise businesses. Once again this fictional person who is imagined for the sake of an example demonstrates how the architects of PTW imagined the ideal typical client of the service. In much the same way as 'Lynne' is personally responsible

for budgeting and managing her own finances she is also personally responsible for working to create her own job. In this sense the imaginary character of Lynne is quite literally the entrepreneur of herself.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has examined governmentality as a theoretical perspective and applied it to contemporary forms of subjectivity under PTW. It has demonstrated how unemployment is not simply the absence of a job and instead is a governmental category which is enacted and maintained by Social Welfare bureaucracies. To become unemployed is to undergo a series of governmental interventions which aim to mould the person into the figure of the job seeking ALMP subject. To this end this chapter examined in detail the processes under PTW which make this happen by focusing on the procedures of the unemployment system. It is perhaps an obvious point to make that these procedural and bureaucratic elements are not uniformly accepted and taken at face value by those who are subjected to them and that there is always room for negotiation and forms of resistance. Despite this however the different facets of the PTW system combine to create a specific form of ALMP subject, one which is self-governing.

Chapter 6. Active Welfare Imaginaries

People reared in workhouses, as you are aware are no great acquisition to the community and they have no ideas whatsoever of civic responsibilities. As a rule their highest aim is to live at the expense of the ratepayers. Consequently it would be a decided gain if they all took it into their heads to emigrate

W.T Cosgrave May 1921

Admit it, Minister when you think about the poor – the working poor, the self-employed, the part-time unemployed, the long-term unemployed – you feel… secure

you're not some acne'd geek in a leisure suit, smoking on the street his snot-nosed brood of piglets – fruit of the mickey money – brawling around his feet,

you've never dragged your carcass into the Intreo offices to fill out forms, tick boxes, waiting ten, eleven weeks for processing of claim, subsisting on the Aldi super-six hiding from the meter-reader 'cos the estimate is cheaper

(Cursed Murphy Vs. The Resistance: The Poor Mouth 2020)

At the early stage of carrying out the fieldwork for this research I had completed a handful of interviews where participants had mentioned an upcoming jobs fair which was to be held at the local offices of the County Council. The fair was mentioned by research participants as they were all told that attendance was compulsory and that failure to attend would incur a sanction. Sensing an opportunity to recruit further participants I went to the jobs fair, at the doorway to the building I was refused entry until I gave the official my Personal Public Service Number (PPSN) which was entered into a computer. Upon entering the fair it was a large cavernous hall which was lined on both sides and through the middle with stalls. These stalls were comprised of welfare services and staff from local employment offices as well as a range of businesses from the region. The fair had been heavily advertised in the weeks leading up to it with media advertisements and roadside billboards. At the event there were politicians on hand to get their pictures taken for local media and it was widely reported afterwards as a success based on the fact that over 30 employers were present and that over 2000 job seekers had attended. I happened to know a number of people who were working on the stalls and found out that none of them were actually hiring. Despite making this fact clear to the organisers they had been asked repeatedly to attend the fair. When I spoke to attendees they told me something similar, that they were handing CV's out to companies but that none of them seemed to be actually hiring. As well as this most of the information stands were giving out the same

information and services that would be typically found in any Intreo office or local employment service.

Figure 18 South East Jobs Fair Advertisement

Figure 19 South East Jobs Fair

So this begs the obvious questions of what was the point of this event? Why were job seekers forced under threat of sanctions to go to a jobs fair where there were no actual jobs on offer? Why were local and regional businesses asked to set up stalls when they had made it clear to the organisers that they were not hiring at that time and would not be offering any actual jobs?

Why were the various actors in the institutional assemblage of the social welfare system so invested in the organisation of an event like this?

The answer to these questions can be at least partially found by examining the concept of the Active Welfare Imaginary. Faced with a lengthy period of worsening rates of unemployment and set against the wider economic backdrop of stagnation the jobs fair was an attempt to take control of the narrative around regional unemployment. It was a pseudo-event (Boorstin 1964) that allowed the various organisations involved in managing unemployment in the region to demonstrate to the wider public that *something* was being done about the problem of unemployment. It did not matter that there were no jobs at the jobs fair and it did not matter that from some perspectives it was an entirely pointless endeavour. Instead what mattered was the fact that those involved could show that they were aware of the seriousness of the situation and were busy doing something about it. This sense of demonstrating that something is being done irrespective of its efficacy is central to the Active Welfare Imaginary.

This chapter will introduce and develop the concept of Active Welfare Imaginaries. It borrows conceptually from the criminological literature particularly from Pat Carlen (2008) who has written of the existence of what she has termed Imaginary Penalities. It will begin by describing the concept of Imaginary Penalities and will extend the conceptual framework set out by Carlen and use it to argue for the existence of Active Welfare Imaginaries which are evident in the conceptualisation and government of unemployment. It will initially do this by drawing parallels between the penal system as described by Carlen and ALMP's. The practice of ALMP's are constituted through imaginaries of unemployment, the labour market and unemployed people which are discursively circulated via the media and politics to create a 'doxosophy' (Jensen 2014) of 'anti-welfare commonsense' (Jensen & Tyler 2015).

Much of the discursive framing around unemployment is highly flawed, based on half- truths and misrepresentations which serve to legitimise specific views of unemployment and unemployed people. These views are frequently based on assumptions of unemployment being an individual's fault due to laziness or inaction, but they also stretch to assumptions of criminality and fraud being associated with unemployment. The means by which these discursive circulations occur will be examined through the lens of Imaginary Victim Politics (Samuels 2016). The aims of which are to create a desirable in-group of dutiful and hardworking tax payers while simultaneously creating a stigmatised out-group who are 'abjectified' (Tyler 2013) and Othered (Lister 2004) and against whom ressentiment can be

fostered as a means of solidifying and strengthening adherence to in-group norms. This process will be examined with reference to the 'Welfare Cheats Cheat Us All' campaign (Devereux & Power 2019) and the broader discursive formation of the 'squeezed middle' (Meade & Kiely 2021). In attempting to draw out the workings of these various active welfare imaginaries it should be possible to explore the means by which some governmentalities are conditioned, determined and ultimately circulated. The chapter will then conclude by elucidating some facets of the Active Welfare Imaginary by examining the Pathways to Work Documents.

6.1 Imaginary Penalities

Imaginary Penalities are fictive governing rationalities which are enacted and sustained for the purpose of legitimising a system which in practice frequently operates in a manner which is completely different from the imaginary depiction. The key point however is that the people tasked with operating the imaginary penal systems 'address themselves to its principles and persist in manufacturing an elaborate system of costly institutional practices 'as if' all objectives are realisable' (Carlen 2008, p. 1). Imaginary Penalities are thus not a failure of institutional objectives, nor are they a case of dishonesty or deception, instead they are an assemblage of fictions which are actively produced and maintained by its participants as the concept of the imaginary 'presupposes that the rhetoric has become the reality' (Carlen 2008, p. 5).

As such imaginary penalities are

> 'primarily concerned with structures of ideological penal policies and practices; with how variously fashioned political and populist rhetorics about the most effective ways to combat crime, risk and security threat have ossifying tendencies to become closed and taken for granted realities of governance, inhibiting corrupting and atrophying any suggestions and opportunities for more open ended imaginative discourses on social cohesion and justice (Carlen 2008, p. xiv).

Carlen notes how the 'ideological form of knowing' typical of imaginary penalities can be used to 'supress some forms of knowledge in order to make sense of the anomic contradictions between the demands of governance and the social conditions in which those demands can be met' (Carlen 2008, p. 7). In a similar fashion Van Wel (1992) has written about Problem Figurations, these are ways of seeing institutional problems in a way which aims to make sense of a complex social reality in order for a justificatory regime for governmental response to be devised and enacted. This creates the imaginary which is a 'rational fiction' that attempts to

regulate social reality and judges the outcomes of the governmental interventions according to its own internal and closed logic.

In the example given above the Jobs Fair served as an institutional practice which did not address itself directly to the institutional objective of helping unemployed people find work. Instead it was a pseudo-event (Boorstin 1962) which was addressed to the principle of demonstrating to the wider public that *something* was being done and that the institution was taking the problem seriously. In this case the organisers acted *as if* the staging of such an event was enough in itself to get people into employment and subsequently it judged the success of the event according to metrics which bore no causal relationship to tangible outcomes. The justificatory regime of the Jobs Fair was one which was also imaginary; instead of measuring how many people got interviews or jobs, the Jobs Fair was deemed a success by the measurements of how many stalls were set up and how many people attended. In this manner the rhetoric –something must be done- had become the reality. Even though there were no jobs at the jobs fair the act of doing something and constructing flawed metrics by which these actions could be measured was in itself important as it demonstrated that something was being done.

6.1.1 Constructing the Active Welfare Imaginary: A Comparison of Penality and Welfare

Carlen's work is focused on penalities and the fictive rationality of rehabilitation within the prison system. There are however some key qualitative similarities between aspects of the penal system and the active labour market system. Both systems for example are based around the teleological imperative of transforming the people involved, penal systems aim to rehabilitate offenders back into law abiding society whereas ALMP systems aim to get people in to work. There are also qualitative similarities in how both systems operate, in particular forms of post-penal supervision are similar to work first style ALMP interventions as both set behavioural conditions for people to follow and closely monitor their adherence to them with set punishments designated for any deviance. A further common ground shared by both penal and welfare policies is that of their susceptibility to populist rhetoric which makes appeals to the wider public based on overstated conceptions of specific risks which are frequently irrelevant and not worthy of the attention they are given. Carlen refers to this as 'risk crazed governance' (2008, p. 1) and there are frequently political gains to be made by offering to counter these risks by getting 'tough' on their supposed causes. In penal terms Loic Wacquant has termed such posturing 'law and order pornography' where 'everyday incidents of insecurity

are turned into a lurid media spectacle and a permanent theatre of morality' (Wacquant 2004, p. 243).

In the case of penality it is usually populist discourses which make claims such as the breakdown of law and order, diminishing public safety, an alleged over indulgence of criminals and overly liberal criminal sentencing. Penal populism thus 'speaks to the way in which criminals and prisoners are thought to have been favoured at the expense of crime victims in particular and the law abiding public in general' (Pratt 2007, p. 12). There is thus in the populist conception an embattled majority who suffer from the criminality of a minority who are favoured by the penal system with its attendant rights and procedures. Penal populism thus agitates for an attempt to tip the scales back towards the system addressing the law abiding majority rather than the criminal minority as it assumes an existence of 'harsh public attitudes driving and justifying harsh crime and punishment policies' (Green 2009, p. 521). A core tenet of populism is that which divides society 'into two homogenous and antagonistic camps, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite" (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2017, p. 6).

Central to penal populism is the characterisation of the penal system as one which is elitist and has lost touch with the wishes of the majority who are categorised as 'the people'. Expertise in the penal field from practitioners, academics or any other experts is typically spurned in favour of the *feelings* of the broader public. This means that even where crime is decreasing in an empirically verifiable fashion it is the feelings harboured by the broader public at large which are more important politically in influencing penal policy as when people feel unsafe or at risk of being victimised they are more likely to agitate for political responses. This opens up a vista of opportunity for political actors who are in a privileged public position and can attempt to mould and influence the feelings of the wider public with regard to certain topics such as crime and safety. This is pretty much the standard conception of 'moral entrepreneurs' (Becker 1963) who seek to profit politically from presenting certain groups as being 'folk devils' Cohen (1972) who are positioned as a threat to the social order. Moral entrepreneurs can gain politically by presenting themselves as being the only ones taking the threat seriously and by appearing to be doing something about it.

Welfare states suffer particularly from mischaracterisation and misunderstandings 'based on myths and misrepresentations that pass themselves off as facts' (Garland 2016, p. 1). Arguments made for and against welfare provision by a range of populist European political actors are broadly speaking divided between either welfare chauvinism or welfare populism

(Greve 2019). Welfare chauvinism relates to right wing populist political groups who generally mobilise around anti-immigrant sentiment. It is a position which broadly accepts the need for a welfare state but does so with the condition attached that only 'natives' should benefit and no provision should be made for immigrants or refugees. The basis upon which such arguments are made are primarily those of costs and affordability with the supposed rationale being that of looking after 'our own' first. Welfare populism on the other hand is more broad ranging and similar to penal populism primarily in the way that it sees the welfare state as being captured by an out of touch elite of bureaucrats and establishment politicians who run it primarily for their own interests to the detriment of those who really need it. According to De Koster et al. 'populist parties aim to 'reclaim' those services from the 'bureaucrats' and 'welfare scroungers' that 'abuse them' at the cost of their 'rightful owners': the common man who is falling on hard times' (De Koster et al. 2012, p. 7). The similarities between welfare and penal populisms are striking and crucially revolve around the notion that the welfare and penal systems have been captured by a self- serving elite who are out of touch with the people at large and that these systems need to be reclaimed to work for 'the people' according to supposed logics of 'common sense' .

In welfare terms such discourses proffer stereotypical images of lazy workshy scroungers or malingerers who are mollycoddled by an over indulgent and overly generous system which works in their favour at the cost of the hard working majority who pay via taxation for these supposedly luxurious lifestyles (Greve 2019). In some versions it is the welfare state itself which is the focus of the attack with claims made that it incentivises such behaviours (Murray 1984; Mead 1993; Perkins 2015) such readings see the Welfare State in terms of it's carrying the 'diseases of welfarism and dependency' (Young 2007, p. 107). In others it is the unemployed people themselves who are targeted and attacked for their laziness (Bagguley & Mann 1992) or for their 'choosiness' (Dunn 2015) about the kind of work they are prepared to do. The key point however is that there is a similarity between penal populism and welfare populism as both mobilise a discourse of supposed favouritism in dealing with a stigmatised minority -criminals or the unemployed- and this favouritism comes at the expense of the idealised group comprised of the law abiding, hardworking and taxpaying majority. The characterisation proceeds to offer up an image of an out of touch elite who operate these systems for the benefit of the undeserving recipients of their misguided generosity. In the penal system it is the criminals who receive light sentences in overly luxurious prisons, in the welfare system it is the chronically unemployed who receive everything for free and live a life of luxury

and ease at the cost of the hard pressed, over taxed, hardworking majority. The adoption of such characterisations open up a space for political actors to present themselves as 'moral entrepreneurs' (Becker 1963) who will tell hard truths about these problems and will set themselves up to be the only people capable of solving them. This dynamic however involves more complex actions than simple blaming or victimising of imputed others and this complexity will be discussed in the next section which discusses Imaginary Victim Politics.

6.2 Imaginary Victim Politics

Imaginary Victim Politics can be characterised in terms of being a 'curious hybrid of grievance and self –valorisation' (Meade & Kiely 2021, pp. 2-3). While there is a well-developed literature on stigma, scapegoating and grievance (Jensen 2014; Jensen & Tyler 2015; Patrick 2016; Shildrick 2018; Tyler 2013, 2020) this is perhaps not as much the case for the self-valorisation side of this hybrid. Lister (2004, p. 100) notes how poverty is a social relation between the poor and the non-poor with the power of definition falling to the latter group. By this account the non-poor define the poor in terms of them being an 'Other' which designates them as being different by presenting them 'as a source of moral contamination, a threat, an undeserving economic burden, an object of pity, or even as an exotic species' (Lister 2004, p. 101). An important feature of the process of creating Others is the manner in which the creation of an Othered outgroup by extension defines the parameters of belonging to the in-group. The creation of Others thus establishes the line of demarcation between respectability and shame, between the poor and non- poor and between the deserving and undeserving poor with this dynamic acting as a form of governance which is influential in creating active welfare subjects.

The Lacanian concept of the Imaginary Order posits that there is a dyadic conception of the world which is divided between the self and the other. Accordingly each person is either satisfied because they possess the object of their desire or they are dissatisfied because they don't and they imagine that an 'other' possesses it and is satisfied (Samuels 2016, p. 8). In this fashion there is a dualism which is frequently called upon by political and media actors with the aim of creating a stigmatised out group of abject figures against which the supposedly virtuous can self identify. Such forms of rhetorical action serve to divide the world into victims and perpetrators where 'the victims are always pure, innocent and right while the perpetrators are always impure, guilty and wrong' (Samuels 2016, p. 9). Blaming others for a situation or occurrence places the blamer 'on the right side of an us-them boundary' (Tilly 2008, p. 101) and the victim/perpetrator dyad also allows those who identify as victims to keep a sense of

innocence and purity while allowing them to carry out 'vindictive' (Young 2007, p. 43) acts on those who are less powerful than themselves.

Imaginary Victim Politics thus allows people in positions of power and wealth to present themselves as disempowered victims and to attack others who despite their position of subordination are characterised as aggressors. This means that the poor and disadvantaged can be demonised, abjectified and subject to structural and institutional violence with the legitimising justification being that they are a threat to the established order which must be dealt with. Such institutional violence can take the form of the over policing of particular communities and the excessive mobilisation of the penal system against them just as easily as it could take the form of welfare retrenchment or the introduction of more 'demanding' (Raffass 2016) forms of activation.

6.2.1 People Like Them: Vindictiveness, Abjection and Scapegoating

Jock Young described similar dynamics in social policies which are informed not by the wish or desire to improve the lives of others or to assuage the problems associated with a market economy but instead are informed by a sense of 'vindictiveness' (2007, p. 43) towards those who suffer its worst effects. Vindictive policy is that which places behaviour ahead of need (Grover 2010) only offering assistance on a contingent basis to those who behave in a prescribed fashion rather than those who are most in need. Under vindictive policy styles entire groups of people are scapegoated with extreme examples of deviant behaviour presented publically as being commonplace and demonstrative of a wider problem which must be dealt with. In this sense 'the atypical is presented in a stereotypical fashion and then posited against the overtypical' (Young 2007, p. 113). The atypical is the extreme example which is presented as increasingly being the new normal state of affairs, it is the 'moral panic' (Cohen 1972) the shocking instance which is posited as being the new reality.

In Carlen's terminology the atypical is referred to in terms of 'risk crazed governance' (2008, p. 1) as it is the overdetermined risk that governance directs itself towards managing irrespective of its prevalence or importance in real terms. In this vein Jensen and Tyler (2015) describe how Mick Philpott who was convicted of the manslaughter of his family was presented as being emblematic of a welfare system that was not fit for purpose and was mobilised as a mode of justification for welfare reform which included the cutting of child benefit payments and the introduction of a welfare cap. In this case the risk crazed governance of the 'benefits

broods' was 'weaponised as part of an ideological arsenal in anti-welfare commonsense' (Jensen & Tyler 2015, p. 478).

Imogen Tyler has applied this analysis to conceptualise the various figures of the national abject who are 'ideological conductors mobilised to do the dirty work of neoliberal governmentality' (Tyler 2013, p. 9) they are symbolic scapegoats used in the service of inciting and legitimising harsh punitive measures against given out groups such as asylum seekers, illegal immigrants, travellers or in this case the undeserving poor. Jock Young has described such figures as being 'a negative point around which politics can be mobilised; their very exclusion an othering which gives identity to the politics of the normal majority' (Young 2007, p. 10). The boundaries of what the 'we' or in group who are the normal majority are defined by what we are not which is the figure of the abjectified other. National Abjects are by definition classed as being disgusting, they are characterised as being dirty and associated with disease and infection, and they are also frequently characterised as being sexually promiscuous and prone to violence (Nayak & Kehily 2014; Tyler 2013, 2008). The unemployed are a group who are particularly scapegoated in this fashion as they frequently have a range of collective social problems pinned on them or associated with them such as fraud, the black market and petty crime. Through such mechanisms of scapegoating unemployed and impoverished people can be not just blamed for their own situation but also for many other social ills and as such this serves as a means of justifying the harsh treatment they receive.

A further feature of abjection is that which is described by Miller (1997) as the formation of a disgust consensus, according to Mary Douglas (1966) objects are rendered disgusting via implicit social agreement. If an individual designates an object as disgusting then it could be seen as a quirk unless there is social agreement on this designation. The social agreement in question can foster a form of cohesion within an in-group as the label of disgust is performatively applied to members of an out-group. An example of this performative application is evident in the Irish context via television comedy shows which displayed abject figures which were presented as being representative of the urban poor.

Figure 20 Handy Sandy

This character appeared on the popular television program Republic of Telly in recurring weekly sketches. She is a grotesquely abject figure who is presented as a feckless, dirty, libidinous layabout who spends all her 'dole' on cheap beer and cigarettes while spreading STI's and having children. The publicity blurb from the television station that broadcast this program describes her as

> 'Handy Sandie is a total fla from Cork City. She's pure daycent at everything, particularly riding fellas and gettin' away without paying for shit. She's one of the main stars of RTE's hit TV show Republic of Telly and she can drink a can of dutch gold while standing on her head'.

The vituperative portrayal of welfare recipients deemed undeserving as seen in such television programs has reached such as pitch as to be dubbed 'poverty porn' (Jensen 2013) and it acts as a framing device by which unemployment and unemployed people can be imagined. According to Tyler 'fictional fabrications come to shape perceptual realities' and in turn these realities 'come to organise public opinion and incite consent for punishing the poor' (Tyler 2013, p. 165). Such 'mediascapes' offer 'a series of elements … out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives… these scripts can and do get disaggregated into complex sets of metaphors by which people live as they help to constitute narratives of the other' (Appaduri 1996 pp. 35-36).

The level to which these negative portrayals have become doxa is evident in research which has shown that claimants frequently claim less than what they are entitled to (Baumberg 2016; Garthwaite 2014) and delay seeking emergency help for fear of the associated negative labelling (Garthwaite 2016). Given the fact of fiscal austerity and the attendant retrenchment of welfare spending which has coincided with the introduction of more stringent behavioural conditionality and sanctions in Ireland it is perhaps unsurprising that this discursive

construction gained purchase in public discussion in this time period. It's also interesting in the Irish context to note how similar characters appeared on television screens at exactly the time when more punitive active labour market policies were being introduced.

A key element of resentment is that it is not solely comprised of a sense of disgust or disapproval, a further crucial ingredient is the sense of sublimated desire. This is where feelings of resentment towards poor or unemployed people are rooted to some extent in latent feelings of envy. Young notes how the stereotypical view of the underclass is one 'which represents all the traits which the respectable citizen must suppress' (Young 2007, p. 42) if they are to succeed in life. The cartoonish imaginary image of the idle poor is one of a leisurely alcohol and drug induced torpor, of long lazy days in pyjamas watching television and enjoying an easeful life. This facsimile image is the polar opposite of most versions of contemporary working life which is characterised by the requirements for self-discipline, good time management, affective control and maintaining professional appearance and demeanour. This of course does not mean that wealthy people wish to swap lives and live as or where unemployed or poor people do, but instead it means that they yearn for freedom from the strictures of living and working in contemporary societies with the attendant requirements for time management, discipline and self-control. The abject figure of the unemployed scrounger as presented in some forms of tabloid media and political discourses in many ways represents exactly this type of freedom.

A further method of discursively framing Social Welfare involves the use of anecdotes in the place of established facts with these anecdotes presented as being representative of broader practices. In Ireland this was evident in 2016 when former Minister for Social Protection Leo Varadkar publically spoke out about people 'on the dole' who went on holiday to Florida every year. This anecdotal framing was put to use in an attempt to demonstrate how some people were living a life of luxury while on social welfare. Once again the purpose of this was to create resentment among the working majority against an imputed group on social welfare. At this time under the broader rubric of austerity there were a raft of changes to taxation and government spending which had severely negative influences on standards of living for many.

Accordingly the presentation of people who were allegedly living in luxury while unemployed was an attempt to foster resentment which could ultimately be turned into a legitimising rationale for Social Welfare retrenchment as well as a legitimisation for the nascent forms of activation, behavioural conditionality and sanctions. In this way such changes to the welfare

system are reconstituted so they are no longer seen as attacks on the most vulnerable in society but instead 'they are framed as a means of tackling the putative abuse of the system and the irresponsibility of feckless groups that cannot and should not be tolerated in a time of austerity' (Devereux & Power 2019, pp 6-7). A further important point to be made here relates to the use of unverifiable, anecdotal evidence in the service of creating a new anti-welfare commonsense. There was no further supporting evidence asked for or given to verify such a claim yet it was accepted and reported on as fact and firmly placed into debates about Social Welfare. This points to a privileging of voice with certain media and political actors, that they have the power to produce and disseminate 'truths' about unemployment, unemployed people and the labour market and subsequently use these truths as a mode of justification.

6.2.2 People Like Us: Flattery and The Squeezed Middle

Imaginary Victim Politics are not just realised via attacks on the weak, it is just as important to the operation of the dynamic to create a desirable 'in-group' to which most people can belong. A central component of this dynamic is that of flattery, of creating an attractive category that people would wish to be included in. The in-group category of hard working people is 'given its appeal by the sense, reinforced by the government, that there were a lot of lazy people about' (Umney 2018, p. 10). Such rhetorical moves which are crucial in constructing the social welfare imaginary rely on a further construction which Shildrick (2018, p. 88) terms the 'messy middle'. If there are people who are consciously constructed as an undeserving out group in public, media and political discourses there also must be a simultaneous construction of an in group to which the majority of people courting respectability and belonging can claim membership. It is thus important that the parameters for belonging to this group are as vague as possible yet mostly centred on well- worn tropes of deservingness, hard work and paying your way. In broad terms this group is comprised of those who work hard -or at least try to- and play by the implicit rules of the neoliberal social compact. These rules state that if one works hard acts within the law and pays one's way then they should all things considered succeed in life and be welcomed into the realm of consumer capitalism and its attendant pleasures. Despite such striving many people feel as if they struggle to get by and so are not wealthy but are also not poor hence the title of squeezed middle.

The rhetorical construction of the squeezed middle in the Irish context served mainly as a means of validating middle class values and life-style consensus while simultaneously presenting it as being under threat. In the wake of the financial crisis and subsequent bail-out the threat to this consensus was posed primarily by rising taxes and levies, stagnant wages and

diminishing living standards. Blame for these trends was discursively pointed away from the fields of politics, banking or finance and was instead directed downwards towards the unemployed and the poor who in the interests of 'fairness' (Hoggett et al. 2013) could no longer be indulged. A political trope which was commonly used at this time was that of the people who pay for everything and get nothing in return. This trope was aimed at recognising the difficulties faced by many in the years following the financial crash but it was also replete with anti-welfare stereotypes and scapegoating. This discourse is evident in the excerpt from a speech below which was given by Leo Varadker defending the JobPath scheme while he was serving as Minister for Social Protection.

> 'There are people who have become institutionalised, going from welfare to training scheme to CE scheme and repeating that process on a carousel of dependency…. There are many people who get up in the morning every day, going to a job they may not like because that is how they get the money to pay bills and look after their family. These people pay taxes and fund the CE and welfare system. It is not okay for some people to say they do not want to work or they will keep claiming welfare until they get a job they believe they want or suits them' (Varadker 1-12-2016).

This statement is in keeping with many others issued by Irish politicians in the period after the financial crisis and bailout as it presents unemployment as being to some degree a choice. This statement plays directly upon many of dynamics discussed previously in this chapter; it presents one group of people who are dutiful and hard- working, even in jobs they may not like who pay for everything and get little in the way of benefits back. This particular canard was repeatedly invoked by politicians in the post- crash period in an attempt to recognise or even foster a sense of grievance amongst a supposedly put upon middle class. The flattering image of the dutiful and hard-working person who gets up early and pays for everything is presented in sharp contradistinction to the other group. The other group are presented as being choosy (Dunn 2015) in the type of work they are prepared to do. They are 'institutionalised' and on a 'carousel of dependency', instead of getting a 'real' job they languish in community employment schemes which of course are presented as being paid for by everybody else. This was by no means an isolated incident of such discursive dualisms being employed by political actors and nor were they restricted to any particular party. Indeed the previous Minister for Social Protection Joan Burton of the Labour Party when justifying the introduction of sanctions into the Irish system spoke in a radio interview of young people who made a 'lifestyle choice' of becoming welfare dependent.

'If somebody is 14 or 15 years of age, and perhaps they're not doing very well in school, what happens in the current climate of jobs, they tend to drift out of school and end up not working (and become) dependent on social welfare' (Burton 18/7/2011)

There were also further utterances from other politicians and media commentators in a similar vein which aimed to paint a picture of a widespread problem of social welfare dependence where people were purposefully 'choosing' to live on social welfare rather than working. This is despite the fact that Ireland during the years of the Celtic Tiger Economy frequently had marginal unemployment rates and in the aftermath of the financial crash faced an unemployment crisis and a turgid labour market. Devereux and Power claim that the marked increase in the use of such rhetoric was aimed at the audience of the wider public for the purpose of legitimising cuts which were to be introduced in subsequent budgets (Devereux & Power 2019, p. 5). While this may well be true it is also the case that such rhetoric also served to legitimise the introduction of behavioural conditionality and sanctions as they were presented as a means of getting tough with the supposedly recalcitrant unemployed who refused to work.

This form of discursive framing should also be seen as a form of governmentalising unemployment; by problematising it and framing it in such a fashion it creates a negative image which people will go to great lengths to distance themselves from. This means that in order to avoid appearing like someone who is unemployed by choice people will behave in accordance with the demands of the active labour market system. In mobilising such discourses very few people will accept that they are lazy or part of the out group and so will strive to be excluded from it. In terms of unemployment this in group is comprised not just of the people who are working but also of the people who are unemployed but are trying their best to get to work. This desire to be excluded from the out-group will frequently be enacted by performatively demonstrating hatred or disgust against them. As such the Active Welfare Imaginary acts as a means of government as it includes its own measures of reinforcement, the active welfare subject is one who will not only adhere to the strictures of active welfare subjectivity, they will also denounce others who supposedly don't (Boland et al 2022).

There were further examples of such discursive framing such as the claim of newly appointed Taoiseach Leo Varadkar that he wished to govern the country for the benefit of the people who get up early in the morning. Devereux and Power note the intimation of deserving/undeserving inherent in this phrase claiming that 'it was not only a coded message to his supporters within

the Fine Gael party; it was also a way of identifying (and othering) those members of Irish society that he, and thus by extension Fine Gael, do not represent' (Devereux & Power 2019, p. 2).
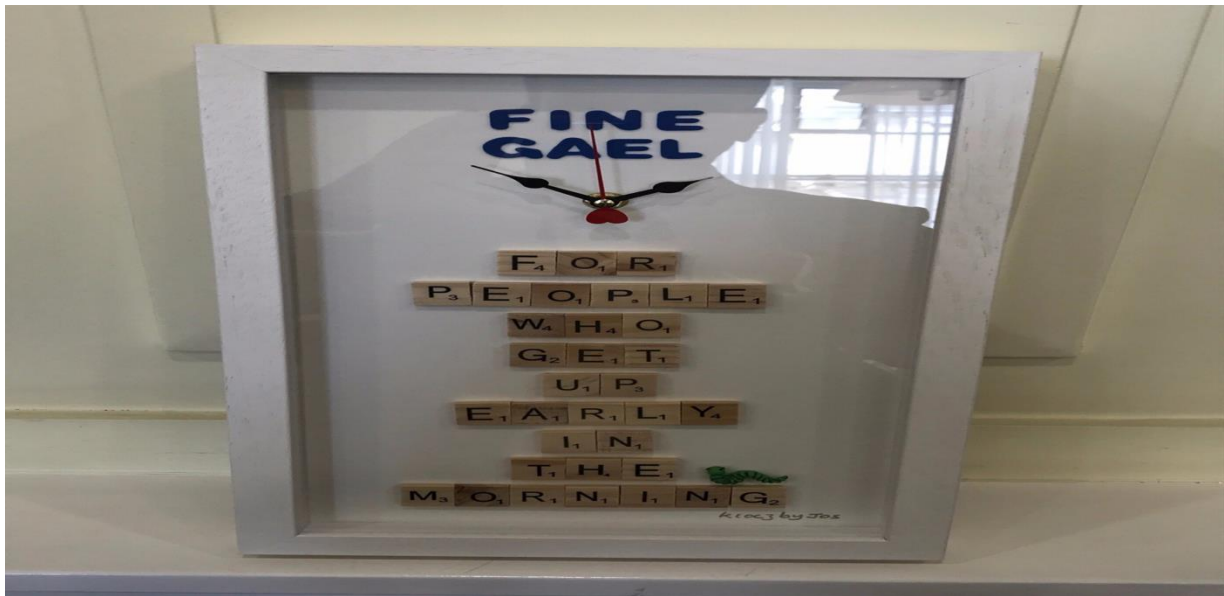
Figure 21 Those who get up early in the morning

At the time of writing Ireland is an outlier among the majority of EU states as there has been no successful political mobilisation of any right wing populist parties. Despite this absence of successful political populist parties in the Irish system there have been notable occasions where populist style rhetoric has been mobilised by political actors more widely associated with the political centre. The assimilation of such rhetoric into mainstream Irish political discourse has been particularly evident in areas associated with social welfare. In the aftermath of the financial crisis and with rising taxes, charges and levies, stagnant wages and a general decrease for many in basic standards of living there were pointed rhetorical and discursive mobilisations which aimed to 'elevate the moral superiority of the putative middle class, while at the same time denigrating those in receipt of welfare' (Meade & Kiely 2020, p. 2). The point of this discursive mobilisation was to foment and direct a sense of ressentiment and injustice which could be aimed downwards. Whereas resentment is a targeted feeling towards palpable and identifiable people or groups, ressentiment is more associated with a generalised amorphous and poorly defined other. This means that *'ressentiment* is susceptible to being shaped and amplified by political parties and movements' (Hoggett et al 2013, p. 578). It is this sense of the target of ressentiment being shapeless and vague which makes it easy for people or indeed

whole groups of people to be projected onto this vague image and included within its terms of definition.

6.2.3 Risk Crazed Governance: Welfare Cheats Cheat Us All

Without doubt the most egregious example of Imaginary Victim Politics was evident in the 'Welfare Cheats Cheat Us All' campaign which was a brazen act of political opportunism. In April 2017 there was a leadership contest in the ruling Fine Gael party and Leo Varadkar who at the time was the minister for Social Protection launched a prominent publicity campaign with the tagline 'Welfare Cheats Cheat Us All'. This campaign which ostensibly aimed to highlight the problem of social welfare fraud selectively used figures which vastly overestimated its occurrence. One way in which it did this was to link together control savings -which are made by systematic departmental reviews of claimant entitlements- with fraud savings which refer to savings made from monies saved from intercepting and preventing fraud. In this manner the astronomical figures of €500 million could be presented as 'fraud and control savings'. In reality this figure was an act of political chicanery akin to the infamous Brexit Bus in the United Kingdom. The quoted figure of €500 million was one which was estimated to be the cost of leakage in payments if there were no controls or checks whatsoever. The figure also included overpayments which would be made due to institutional error further inflating the figure beyond any semblance of reality.

This is a straightforward instance of 'risk crazed governance' (Carlen 2008, p. 1) as fraud was placed firmly on the political and public agenda as being a serious problem when in reality its occurrence was vastly overestimated and did not merit the attention and effort given to it. As such the campaign could alternatively be seen as a cynical piece of political posturing which aimed to give public prominence to Leo Varadkar at a time when there was a leadership contest underway which he would ultimately win. This campaign mobilised many of the prejudiced and negative associations with unemployment and did so for political gain. It is perhaps this type of action which most definitively demonstrates the affinities between the penal and welfare systems. It is almost always as politically profitable for politicians to attempt to appear 'tough' on crime and criminals as it is for them to attempt to appear 'tough' on the allegedly lazy and recalcitrant abusers of the generosity of the welfare system.

In terms of Imaginary Victim Politics the Welfare Cheats campaign did not just work by attempting to foster ressentiment against amorphous populations within the broader group of the unemployed. It also appealed to the flattery side of the dyad by making direct appeals to

the public at large to anonymously report others whom they suspected were guilty of making illegitimate claims. In this manner members of the public were urged to become 'whistle blowers' and act in the service of the state in rooting out welfare fraud. This was by no means the first time that the public were exhorted to report other whom they suspected of such fraud, indeed the previous two ministers for Social Protection had at different times made similar public appeals. In fact the website and telephone number set up to allow members of the public to report fraud were both in operation prior to the launch of the Welfare Cheats campaign. The difference however was that the wider Welfare Cheats campaign had drawn the issue into sharp public focus and there was a notable increase in the amount of accusations made.

Between January and June 2016 there were 11,689 disclosures made from the public compared to 7,092 in the same period of the previous year. In breaking down the figures reported there were five thousand instances of people anonymously reporting others for allegedly working while in receipt of a payment which was an increase of seventy percent on the previous year. There was also a fifty per cent increase in reports of people claiming one parent family allowance while allegedly living with their partner. By 2017 the Department were claiming that there was on average five hundred cases of fraud being reported every week. This increase in instances of the reporting of social welfare fraud made numerous headlines and served as a means of demonstrating how seriously the issue of welfare fraud was being taken by the department. The headline grabbing figures of savings allegedly made and of anonymous tip-offs received were also posited with newspaper editorials which warned of a forthcoming massive increase in welfare fraud prosecutions. This feted increase never materialised, while there were headline cases where people were publically prosecuted in statistical terms there was not a large increase in the rate of fraud prosecutions. In fact the number of them decreased in 2018 which saw 14,800 individual reports which resulted in 160 convictions.

Figure 22 Welfare Cheats Cheat Us All

The ideological representation of the imaginary is thus one which is created by political and populist ideologies which distort and obscure their realities with reductionist over simplifications which present supposedly simple solutions to complex problems. These ideologies structure an image or representation of policy which simultaneously acts to naturalise the dominant discourses of governance and obscure and exclude any others. Such overdetermined conceptions of risk or risk crazed governance allows for governance to obsessively tend to risks which often do not merit such attention. In this case the fetishisation of 'fraud' and 'cheats' served to point resources and attentions towards a problem that did not exist in anything like the extent to which it was portrayed.

6.3 Active Welfare Imaginaries

So far this chapter has examined Imaginary Penalities and has looked at the influence of Imaginary Victim Politics as a framing mechanism (Goffman 1974) that influences how unemployed people are interpellated in public and political discussion. The way in which unemployment is discursively framed also serves as a means of normatively reinforcing the values and expectations of Active Welfare Subjects. This however begs the question as to how these subjects are imagined by the active welfare system, what are the characteristics of the ideal typical active welfare subject and what are the institutional assumptions with regard to unemployment and unemployed people? Within the broader field of social welfare policy there are a series of rational and fictional imaginaries that are 'enacted through particular frames of understanding' (Crawford & Flint 2015, p. 793) and these frames of understanding are key to explaining the Active Welfare Imaginary.

For the purpose of this chapter these frames of understanding will be gleaned from the PTW policy documents. There are four PTW documents spanning the time period from 2012 to 2016, each document sets out the principles, priorities and aims of the relevant iteration of PTW as well as reporting on previous targets. Each iteration is also divided up according to 'strands' of activity broadly along the lines of institutional change, increasing engagement, incentivising activation, and incentivising employers to hire from the live register. More importantly for our purposes each document spells out the rationale for each iteration of PTW and this serves to explicitly spell out the problematisations of unemployment and the proposed measures to be taken in response. As such each iteration of PTW documents are products of their time which can tell us a lot about how the authors of the document saw the wider labour market conditions at each period and which aspects they felt needed to be prioritised. While there are obviously differences between policy as imagined by policy documents and policy as it enacted at street level (Lipsky 1980) it is still important to understand how each facet is imagined by high level actors in the policy process as this is crucial in informing how policy processes work.

Policy Narratives are constructed which define problems, identify their causes and set out the means by which these problems will be solved and by whom. Such 'Problem Figurations' (Van Wel 1972) underline the fact of how policy interventions are devised and enacted in a manner which is socially constructed according to a particular logic which serves as the reference point in all subsequent analyses and evaluations. Van Wel (1972) introduced the concept of problem figuration which aimed to place emphasis on the socially constructed nature of social problems and how this constructed-ness is a key influencing factor in the actions taken towards their amelioration. He states four elements which comprise the problem figuration: 'the object conceived to be the problem, the perceived cause or causes of the problem, the goals of intervention, and the means of intervention' (Van Wel 1972, p. 148). Problem Figurations are comprised of both rational and fictional elements and the manner in which such figurations are constructed and acted upon will have massive influence on how the problem is defined, who it effects and what action is taken to rectify it. Where there are faulty logics or inaccuracies in problem figurations they become to some extent baked into the whole process and in turn become a key element of the imaginary. If the object or perceived causes of the problem are poorly or inaccurately defined then the course of actions taken to improve it will be also be ill defined as will the means of assessing any interventions taken.

Interventions which aim to solve any problem are simultaneously reactive and active insofar as the process of defining the objects of the problem figuration serves also as means of socially

constructing them. A problem figuration can thus be described in terms of being a 'rational fiction' (Flint and Crawford 2015, p. 796) as it is rational and coherent in terms of its adherence to the logic of the figuration yet its constitutive parameters are

> 'based upon particular assumptions and prioritisations comprising historically embedded, shared fictional images and interpretations of the nature of the problem and the subjects of intervention that reflect the 'structure of bias' in a particular period' (Flint and Crawford 2015, p. 796).

It follows then that despite their rationality within the problem figuration such rational fictions are still fictive as the underlying logic of the problem figuration is faulty and subject to biases, distortions and inconsistencies.

6.3.1 Long-Term Unemployment and Jobless Households

The first PTW document begins with an auspicious tone and declares that 'Ireland is in the midst of a serious unemployment crisis, a crisis which gives rise to many negative economic and social consequences – for society as a whole and for individuals and their families' (PTW 2013, p. 5). This sets the tone for all subsequent iterations of PTW; a sense of crisis is presented for which decisive action must be taken. This crisis is not solely framed in terms of the negative outcomes for individuals but is also framed in terms of the scarring effects it can have upon families as well as the loss of productivity to the wider economy. In this sense the problem of unemployment is categorised as a biopolitical problematic as the pool of available labour is one that must be maximised to ensure a healthy and productive economy. The telos of governing unemployment is thus not solely that of individuals as workers but is also the labour market itself that must be carefully managed and adequately supplied with workers who are fit, able and willing to work in whatever available jobs arise.

The main problematisation evident in all PTW documents is that of long term unemployment which is associated with the permanent disenfranchisement of people within society (PTW 2012, p. 5) and is described as a 'scourge' that 'represents the biggest threat to Ireland's recovery' (PTW 2013, p. 5). As well as this long term unemployment is described as having a 'deep scarring effect on the people concerned' and causing 'a huge loss of productive capacity to our economy' (PTW 2013, p. 9). It goes beyond the scarring effects of the individual and also affects their wider families as well as the broader economy at large in terms of lost productivity. (PTW 2013, p. 9; PTW 2015, p. 16; PTW 2016) It is also qualitatively bunched with welfare dependency and people who are supposedly at risk of such dependency are

explicitly pointed out as targets of the nascent active system (PTW 2012, p. 10). Long-term unemployment is thus proffered almost in terms of being a contagion with the stated aim for the original PTW is that 'no-one who loses his/her job should be allowed to drift, with no support, into long-term unemployment' (PTW 2012, p. 7). This idea of unemployed people being allowed to 'drift' into long-term unemployment is an explicit critique of the Social Welfare system that preceded PTW. The introduction of more active measures to manage unemployment is thus presented as a means of adding structure and focused help to unemployed people who are implicitly described as being rudderless and at risk of aimlessly drifting into long-term unemployment and dependency.

Such dependency is described in terms of being a trap that has cumulative negative effects the longer people are unemployed making it increasingly difficult for them to get back into the labour market.

> 'People who are unfortunate enough to experience any period of unemployment of more than a few months face enormous challenges in re-entering the workforce. A newly unemployed person has a 50% chance of leaving the Live Register in their first twelve months of unemployment, this falls to under 20% during the second twelve months of unemployment and to less than 10% in the third year' (PTW 2015, p. 16).

This presents unemployment as involving cumulative negative effects that are amplified the longer someone is out of work and this is a further justification for early intervention for the purposes of prevention. Work first ALMP's are thus presented almost in terms of inoculating people against the worst effects of long term unemployment.

The second PTW document from 2013 is eager to explain how the 'drift' into long-term unemployment and dependency is not solely related to overarching conditions in the economy and labour market. Instead the previous pre PTW Social Welfare system is at least partially to blame as it is presented as being 'relatively passive in nature with historically weak linkages between payment of income supports and State employment services provision' (PTW 2013, p. 20). This presents the old system as being unsustainable and unfit for purpose and so in desperate need of being changed given the broader crisis in unemployment.

> 'we have traditionally adopted a passive approach to supporting job seekers compared with other OECD countries. One of the consequences of this in the past was the development of a significant core of long-term unemployed, even in the midst of an

economic boom, and the deskilling of many people in the labour market' (PTW 2013, p. 10).

The weakness of the old system is perhaps most forcefully underlined in PTW 2013 which gives particular prominence to the problem of 'jobless households' This problem 'calls for a radical reform of our welfare system and related public services' (PTW, 2013, p. 11) similarly the NESC report of 2014 on Jobless Households states that 'there are questions about the overall financial sustainability of the social welfare system if the high level of household joblessness is not addressed' (NESC 2014, p. viii). The Jobless household presents forms of inter-generational dependence that are socially reproduced within the family. Accordingly the stated role of Social Welfare is to 'lift those people who are in jobless households out of welfare dependency, offer genuine hope and opportunities to our young people and ensure that joblessness does not become an inter-generational phenomenon' (PTW 2013, p.11). They are defined as being households where 'no-one is working or has limited access to work' (NESC 2014, p. vii). They are also described in terms 'very low work intensity' which is where ' the total time in work over the year reported by all the working age adults (excluding students) falls below a threshold of 20 per cent of their working time' (NESC 2014, p. 4). The prevalence of jobless households is reported by NESC and by PTW as being far higher than any other country in the EU. Once again there is an implicit blame placed on the preceding 'passive' Social Welfare system as it was through a lack of engagement and support that the problem of jobless households was allowed to develop.

> 'The case for radical reform of our welfare system and other public services is evidenced by the fact that a high rate of jobless households predates the recession. According to the ESRI, the proportion of people in jobless households increased from 15% in 2007 to 22% last year, double the average across Europe' (PTW 2013, p. 9).

Given the prevailing discursive formations discussed above such dependence is presented as something that cannot be indulged in a time of fiscal crisis and as such there is a sense of urgency presented in the PTW documents in describing how this problem is to be fixed. Yet in spite of the discursive framing of Jobless Households and its inclusion in the PTW documents the composition of jobless households as presented in the NESC (2014, p. 10) report shows that such households are not solely comprised of unemployed people.

Figure 3:   The Composition of Very Low Work Intensity Households, 2010

Principal Economic Status Including Children

At work, 4
Ill / Disabled, 12
Other (incl student), 13
Home Duties, 18
Children, 32
Unemployed, 21

Principal Economic Status Excluding Children

At work, 4
Ill / Disabled, 18
Other (incl student), 19
Unemployed, 31
Home Duties, 26

Source: Watson *et al.*, (2012), based on Figure 2.5: 23.

Figure 23 Composition of Jobless Households

When children are included in the figures there are less than 21% of all people in jobless households whose principal economic status is unemployed. This figure rises to 31% of people in jobless households when children are excluded from the figures. Similarly if children are included 18% of people in jobless households have a primary economic status of being engaged in home duties, this rises to 26% if children are excluded. Finally 11% of all jobless households are comprised of people who are either ill or disabled rising to 18% if children are excluded. These figures are indicative of how the labelling of whole households as 'workless' is misleading as 79% of the members of these households for numerous reasons are not available for work.

Stephen Crossely (2017, p. 69) notes how the use of the household as a unit of measurement is problematic as there are almost endless variations in types of households according to their composition. Similarly households that have similar compositions can be fundamentally different according to the needs and requirements of the people in them. A household with a medically vulnerable or disabled member will have different requirements to an identically composed household that doesn't. Perhaps most tellingly the use of the phrase workless household demonstrates which forms of activity are valued enough to be considered as work. Under the schema implied by the use of this phrase domestic caring and activities are not classed as work as they are not carried out in exchange for a wage. This use of measurement also calls to mind the 'zombie argument' (MacDonald et al. 2014) of intergenerational worklessness. Despite the fact that it is rare and cannot be empirically evidenced it still holds salience as a policy discourse and is resistant to being killed off. The Jobless Household is one

defined by a deficit and its use in policy documents serves to conjure images of the social reproduction of welfare dependence.

The figures infer that jobless households are not solely a policy problem pertaining to unemployment and instead they can be seen as an inevitable outcome of aggregate policy shortcomings in other areas such as childcare, elder care, health and disability services. The problematisation of jobless households as is evidenced by their prominent inclusion in the PTW documents is one that presents them as a problem of unemployment and of intergenerational dependency. As we have seen this problematisation posits that they are a threat to the integrity of the whole welfare system and that they represent a key failing which needs to be remedied by its new active, work-first iteration. The inclusion of jobless households within this problem figuration (Van Wel 1992) thus acts as a mode of justification for the PTW system overall. The problem of jobless households is presented as preceding the financial crisis, being expensive and being an inevitable product of the passive welfare system that came before PTW. Yet given the composition of many jobless households it is undoubtedly the case that it is not just a problem which can be 'fixed' with ALMP measures and indeed there are wider structural deficits in the various institutional social care systems which have far stronger causal associations with jobless households.

6.3.2 Activation as Engagement

The most influential aspect of the Active Welfare Imaginary is that of 'activation' and this is based on the idea that some unemployed people require close monitoring and cajoling to keep them actively searching for work. This is the main method by which the 'drift' into long-term unemployment can be prevented according to PTW who mostly describe activation as 'engagement'. As we have seen the Social Welfare system prior to PTW is posited as being overly passive and of only attending to payments and entitlements of unemployed people. This supposedly passive system is firmly rejected in the PTW documents and the reconfigured experience for unemployed people is supposedly one where they are instantly enjoined to become job-seekers. This is best demonstrated by the dictum in the first PTW document which states as a key aim that for newly unemployed people that the 'First day out of work is also the first step on the pathway back into work' (PTW 2013, p. 5). This shows how the status of unemployment is institutionally re-imagined in terms of jobseeking (Boland and Griffin 2015). Arresting the 'drift' into long term unemployment is the key focus of PTW and at the policy level at least this is meant to start from the very first day of being registered as unemployed.

We have seen in the previous chapter how procedures of engagement work yet the underlying rationale is that there are some unemployed people who if they are not given specific tasks and goals and held to account for them will abandon their search for work and settle in to long-term unemployment. In order to avoid this happening unemployed people must periodically attend meetings with their advisor to account for the efforts in finding work. The operation of work-first ALMP's thus serves to make unemployment qualitatively similar to work. Job-seekers are given tasks that must be completed within particular timescales; they must appear at meetings with a supervisor and account for their activities. In this sense the work-first ALMP subject is the 'unemployee' (Southwood 2011), while they are unemployed their job is job-seeking and it is this which will prevent them from drifting into long term unemployment. The experience of activation is thus akin to supervision where unemployed people must attend meetings periodically to report on their progress in job searching. It is where they must account for their efforts since the last meeting with their supervisor, where they must demonstrate that they are still keeping to the behavioural conditions associated with their social welfare payment and by extension that they are still deserving of it.

The Active Welfare Imaginary sees these processes of surveillance, supervision and accountability as being central to the avoidance of long term unemployment. These are the processes which are presented as being crucial to the prevention of the drift into long term unemployment yet such solutions make no allowance for wider labour market conditions. Put simply there can be as much 'engagement' as is possible with people but if there are no jobs available they will not get work. Further, such styles of engagement are likely to put pressure on people to accept whatever work is available as opposed to whatever work is suitable to their qualifications and life circumstances. In this fashion work-first ALMP's such as PTW are a supply side labour market measure which keeps labour flexible and wages low. Bengtson describes how in a period of high unemployment work first ALMP's 'will not lead to active and employable individuals' and instead they are forced to be 'on standby' and 'to work on their ethical skills, keep up their motivation and increase their job-searching efforts, despite the slim prospects of finding a job' (Bengtson 2014, p. 55). This means that the problem of unemployment is individualised, an unemployed person is not a victim of a poor labour market but instead is someone who has not sufficiently applied themselves to the task of finding work.

The problem figuration (Van Wel 1992) of unemployment under work first ALMP's aims to make sense of a complex social reality in order for a justificatory regime for the governmental responses to be devised and enacted. This creates the imaginary which is a 'rational fiction'

that attempts to regulate social reality and judges the outcomes of the governmental interventions according to its own internal and closed logic. This problem figuration states that the problem of unemployment is caused by the individual characteristics of unemployed people. This gives rise to the interventionist governmental response which pressurises individuals with threats of sanctions forcing them into what is frequently unsuitable suboptimal work. The Active Welfare Imaginary which this process calls into being is one where the problem of unemployment can be fixed with these methods because the rational fiction of ALMP's measures its own success or failure on its own terms. A key feature of Imaginaries is that of the closure of avenues of causality for problematisations. By focussing solely on the behaviours of individuals as a means of explication for unemployment there is the simultaneous under-representation of any alternative causal factors relating to broader economic, social or structural factors which are most influential in determining the prevalence and duration of unemployment. In welfare terms this is particularly the case in the fact of the individualisation of blame and responsibility for unemployment which is undoubtedly a socio-structural and economic problem. This means that political and governmental failings can be projected on to the individual while exonerating state actors for the problem of unemployment. So a stagnant labour market which is characterised by a severe disruption in the number of available jobs cannot be invoked as a factor in the relationship of causation for unemployment. Instead it is the attributes and capabilities of the individual which are deemed to be the most important factor and this is where interventions are aimed and success or failure is measured.

6.3.3 Incentives and Dis-Incentives

A striking feature of the PTW documents is the prevalence of the language of incentives and dis-incentives. In Irish policy circles there was undoubtedly an interest in the modish discipline of behavioural economics at this period of time. The PTW documents make frequent reference to the need to incentivise people to work, to dis-incentivise welfare dependency and to incentivise employers to hire unemployed people. There is a passage that appears in both the 2013 and 2015 iterations of Pathways to Work which is worth quoting at length as it demonstrates the vision of what exactly the purpose of Social Welfare is under PTW.

> 'People who are unfortunate enough to experience unemployment should be able to rely on their fellow citizens, through the State, to help them cope with the loss of income and to enable them to lead a life of dignity until such time as they regain employment. The State does this through the provision of welfare payments to help with daily living expenses, through providing, or subsidising the cost of, suitable accommodation and

through providing free access to medical services. The provision of such supports should not however act as an impediment to the transition back to employment'. (PTW 2013, p.21; 2015, p. 30)

This passage makes reference to the forms of social solidarity typical of welfare states where people who are unemployed are allowed to live 'a life of dignity' but this solidarity is conditional and is only 'until such time as they regain employment'. This explicitly describes the operation of PTW as it shows how support is both transitory and strictly conditional, support is thus for a short period of time and the aim of it is to get the unemployed person back into work as soon as is possible. The second aspect of the PTW is also clearly spelled out in this passage as the solidarity and assistance offered to unemployed people with living expenses, accommodation and medical services is countered with the declaration that such supports must never 'act as an impediment' in getting people back to work. Once again this demonstrates the idea that Welfare benefits include a moral hazard and that if they are not properly designed they may encourage dependency. In this vein the PTW documents make repeated references to incentives and disincentives with unemployed people being incentivised to work, employers being incentivised to hire unemployed people and unemployed people being dis-incentivised from becoming 'dependent'.

One of the main forms of dis-incentive to work which is repeatedly presented by the PTW documents is that of unemployed or underemployed people do not look for full time work for fear that they may lose existing benefits. This is frequently mentioned with regard to lone parents or those with caring responsibilities.

> 'the interaction of tax and welfare can, in some instances act as an disincentive to work, the government is determined through initiatives such as a working family dividend to make sure that in financial terms at least 'work always pays' no matter the nature of that work' (PTW 2013, p. 5)

The phrase 'work always pays' is also frequently repeated across the PTW documents and it points to its guiding rationale which is that work is the most effective route out of poverty and as such should be the primary focus of welfare policy. Social Welfare policy is thus reimagined as having a supposedly broader remit, it is no longer solely about processing eligibility and making payments. Now it is focused towards guiding people as quickly as possible to the labour market so as to allow them to earn for themselves. In moving towards this new remit it is necessary to clear out any welfare traps where people would earn more on benefits than in

work. This type of dis-incentive is repeatedly referenced across the PTW documents as being a barrier between long term unemployed people and the labour market, albeit a barrier which will be removed under PTW.

> 'The Government will ensure that the social protection system incentivises rather than blocks the return to work for unemployed people, including those with families, through ongoing reform of the system' (PTW 2012, p.18).

> 'There should be no situation in which a person would be financially better off, in the long term, on welfare rather than in work' (PTW 2013, p. 30).

This points once again to the view of unemployed people as imagined by the Social Welfare System as being akin to homo-economicus of rational choice theory, who weighs up each decision in a simple either/or fashion whilst constantly attempting to maximise their own utility. In this sense PTW sees some people as needing to be 'nudged' (Thaler & Sunstein 2008) out of dependency and into work. This view sees the previous 'passive' welfare regime as having encouraged dependence among some cohorts like lone parents, carers or young people and states that such dependence must be replaced by work.

The reforms under PTW were particularly difficult for lone parents the majority of whom had low levels of educational attainment and limited work experience as the work first imperative pushed many of them into work that was low paid, irregular and short-term and thus not beneficial to them (Millar & Crosse 2017). As well as this many of the work-first style reforms that were aimed at lone parents were instituted with the promise that assistance with childcare would be forthcoming. The fact that this assistance never materialised in any meaningful way meant that once again long standing policy failures in other areas caused severe difficulties for this cohort. In order to enact the idea that work must pay PTW in some cases caused financial hardship for carers and lone parents as the enforcement of work first ideals could not serve to adequately mask policy failures in other fields. The institution of work first ALMP was carried out in a manner which did not account for other factors, the imperative of work must always pay took precedence meaning some people would be forced under pain of sanctions into low paying irregular work without adequate childcare.

As we have seen above youth unemployment is particularly visible as a target of PTW as it is seen almost in terms of being a contagion. A young person who 'drifts' into long-term unemployment will find it increasingly difficult to get into the labour market and will become

stuck in long-term dependence. Accordingly there must be early and decisive interventions to prevent this from happening and this seems to be a key justificatory rationale for dealing with youth unemployment under PTW. This meant that the imaginary view of young people 'choosing' a life on social welfare was explicitly influential in policy terms. The cut to payment rates for people under the age of twenty-six was informed by the logic of incentivising them towards work or training schemes and dis-incentivising them settling into long-term unemployment. Thus the dis-incentive of staying on social welfare was instituted specifically for young people with the age related payment grades amounting to a cut from €188 per week to €100 for fully qualified adults who weren't living with their parents.

While the bland, technocratic and inoffensive language of PTW describes introducing disincentives to people staying on social welfare in real terms it meant genuine financial hardship for young people as payment rates were drastically cut. They were thus incentivised to participate in the multiple types of employment and training schemes that appeared under PTW with the promise of being able to restore the money lost by age grading. This demonstrates perhaps the most influential aspect of behavioural economics on PTW, as has been demonstrated above the State was particularly worried about young people 'drifting' into long term unemployment which brings with it a series of social, political and financial problems. To avoid this they made it all but financially impossible for young people to live on the available social welfare benefits if they did not partake in any of the schemes on offer. This of course raises questions about the availability and suitability of schemes with the likelihood being that young people would take whatever was on offer rather than whatever would be generally most useful in finding them a job.

This logic of nudging young people away from unemployment does not stand up to the most basic levels of scrutiny however. There was no particular problem of youth unemployment prior to the financial crash and despite the claims made by the government there was no credible evidence that young people did not want to work. Also the insistence of successive Ministers for Social Protection that cutting rates of pay for young people was necessary to incentivise work is illogical. At the time these changes were brought in the minimum wage was €8.65 per hour which meant that even working at minimum wage they would bring home over €300 per week. This meant that the financial incentive to work was already there prior to the introduction of the reduced rates. The problem at this time was not that young people were happy to be out of work, instead the problem was that there was not enough work to go around with the National

Youth Council of Ireland estimating that there were approximately 32 jobseekers for each advertised job (NYCI 2015).

6.4 Conclusion

The imaginary is one that starts from the distorted lenses with which some in political, media and policy circles view the unemployed and ends with a constellation of institutional practices and methods that act 'as if' the problems of unemployment -defined in these terms- are solvable by these methods. The problem figuration of unemployment as evident from the PTW documents and the institutional modes of action they engendered are replete with distortions and inaccuracies that were subsequently sedimented into practice at street level. The erroneous yet influential view of unemployed people being unwilling to work was countered in policy terms by the range of incentives and disincentives that were rolled out under PTW. Similarly much of the interventions introduced were aimed at the individual job seeker and failed to account for broader labour market conditions. This meant that there would inevitably be downward pressure on wage expectations and the types of work sought as the work first imperative took hold. The logic of the Active Welfare Imaginary thus acts not just to structure the institutional operation of employment services but it also serves to mask the realities of unemployment which are more linked to the demand side.

Chapter 7 Analysis 1: Experiencing Unemployment

This chapter will examine the experiences of unemployment as described by participants in this study. There is a distinction to be drawn between the experiences of unemployment as described here and the experiences of dealing with the unemployment services as will be discussed in the next chapter. The governmentality perspective posits that unemployment is a status which is actively constructed by the various institutions which govern the unemployed yet this chapter will examine the lived experience of unemployment outside of these institutional interactions. The institutionally constructed nature of unemployment means that such considerations merit a separate chapter and unit of analysis with this chapter examining the ways in which participants experience unemployment outside of the unemployment services.

This chapter will consider the individual lived experience of unemployment under four main headings, the first looks at how the initial phase of unemployment can be a pleasant experience almost like an extended holiday. This holiday however can quickly give way to negative experiences as the feeling of an extended holiday gives way to feelings of boredom, uselessness and of difficulty passing time and it is such experiences which comprise section two. This section will examine the various ways in which respondents deal with the abundance of free time which unemployment entails while also examining why some people seem better equipped to deal with it than others. Section three will examine the descriptions given by participants of the financial difficulties associated with unemployment and the ways in which such difficulties are negotiated and managed. The final section will examine how the combination of financial problems and the difficulties associated with doing nothing lead to mental health problems such as depression and feelings of low self-worth.

7.1 Initial Holiday of Unemployment

As has been discussed in previous chapters unemployment is frequently characterised in terms which are unanimously negative. It is worthwhile however to consider some aspects of unemployment which are seen by participants as being positive or even enjoyable. Work by its nature is frequently draining in both physical and mental terms and holidays or times away from work are periods which are planned for, anticipated and enjoyed. From this it is logical to assume that there are aspects or time periods of unemployment which are enjoyable and this is an assumption which was partially borne out in the data gathered here. It is worth noting however that the subject position bestowed on most unemployed people is one where they are reluctant to admit that aspects of their unemployment can be enjoyable. As per the workings

of the Welfare Imaginary, subject positions of unemployed people determine that those who enjoy any aspects of their unemployment are part of the out group of othered (Lister 2004) people who are sponging and malingering. Thus the way to ensure that they are not included in this out group is to rhetorically situate themselves as being eager to get a job and to express a hatred of all aspects of the experience of being unemployed.

Despite this there were participants in this study who spoke about some of the enjoyable aspects of unemployment although interestingly and perhaps in keeping with avoiding being associated with the out group most of these accounts describe events in the past and which were short lived before the 'reality' of unemployment and its associated negative features set in. The initial period of unemployment can be characterised as a step into the de-structured, normless and rule free period of liminality. When people become unemployed they are no longer bound by the rules and strictures of the workplace such as that of time keeping, maintaining a suitable professional appearance or indeed broader aspects of social interaction which are a core feature of professional life. In the absence of such norms and rules people make their own, an example of this is seen in how newly unemployed people frequently report problems sleeping and even a reversal of day and night where they sleep later into the day and stay awake later into the night. Such a sense of agency and freedom can be intoxicating in its initial stages as in many ways people can do what they like, yet this wears away relatively quickly as it becomes apparent that this initial period of the liminal phase is not leading into something new and thus the sense of stasis and limbo sets in bringing with many of the associated negative experiences of unemployment.

Rites of passage between statuses are enacted 'through a limbo of statuslessness' (Turner 1967, p. 361) what is problematic for unemployed people is the realisation of the indeterminate length of their period of liminal statuslessness. This perhaps partially explains the common experience of an initial enjoyment of unemployment before anxiety and worry sets in as people realise the indeterminate time period of the liminal phase of unemployment. This indefinite period could last weeks, months or even years with some participants particularly the older cohort worrying that they are going to be unemployed for ever and that they are now 'on the scrapheap'(Fevre 2011).

> I think I'm just a little bit too old I know some people say you're never too old but you know I think I'm in a catch 22 you know I'm 57, I'm nearly 60 (Lorcan)

(sighs) there's nothing going on around here, plus the fact I've got my age against me now anyway … they prefer young lads (long pause) I would say someone who they think is gonna give them 20 years … I can't see any light at the end of the tunnel put it that way (long pause) (Shane)

I've applied to different agencies with my cv and that's why I really think it's my age … I'm 59 so who is going to employ me for 7 years … they'd probably be thinking I'd want big bucks when they can get somebody in for less (Jill)

As is evident from these excerpts there are a number of reasons given as to why their age could disqualify them from getting back to work. All three see their age as a barrier to re-employment because there would be a defined limit of years for which they would be available to work before retirement. This means that they are not in a position to give a lengthy period of service to any potential employer yet the belief that this is what employers are really after is perhaps erroneous given the move away in broader structural terms from contracts of indefinite duration or the 'job for life' as it's colloquially known.

Edgar became unemployed after the illness and death of his Mother. In the wake of this he felt that he was no longer able to continue his customer service job in a hotel. His unemployment was thus closely experientially entwined with the process of grieving for his mother yet despite this there were periods which were enjoyable and which he remembered and described fondly.

I: but do you remember how you would spend a typical day when you were unemployed first

R: I tell you at first let me see, obviously it was late nights so I wouldn't probably, I wouldn't get out of the bed until two in the day sometimes, obviously get up, wash, something to eat and then from there it was just out of the home straight to a friend's house (pause) pretty much I'd laze around all day doing consoles or just playing soccer, when I drove then we would just drive around all day doing *absolutely nothing* until all hours of the morning, just, and then home

I: is there any part of it you would have enjoyed do you know when you have free time to play

R: yeah you would, obviously on the fine days the summer days there could 10 or 11 of us going out and playing soccer d'you know or just hanging around the town messing around they were the good days, being with your friends obviously you wouldn't think about anything when you were with your friends you don't worry about your sleep pattern or work or anything like that (Edgar)

In this excerpt Edgar describes the feeling of communality and camaraderie with his friends who were in the same situation of unemployment as him. The memories of having nothing to do and nothing to worry about but having people to do it with were recounted as a profoundly time 'they were the good days' which was important in helping him deal with bereavement. These good days are also described in distinction with the present and more recent past which are

characterised by worries about finding work as well as problems with sleeping at night and keeping regular hours. His description of this sense of communality matches what Turner (1967) terms 'communitas' as the group of friends who are united in the liminal state of unemployment enact a strong sense of kinship, solidarity, equality and togetherness. These feelings exist within the normative framework of the liminal phase of unemployment and outside of the normative social structures typified by daily working life which enforces standards of conduct and appearance as well as a strictly defined adherence to time keeping. Therefore the description is one of joyous communal leisure which is untethered to any sense of duty or obligation. The activities of the group 'playing soccer… or just hanging around the town messing around' distinctly lack purpose and are not oriented towards any type of goal or achievement and the emphasis he puts on describing doing '*absolutely nothing*' is one which conveys a positive memory which he enjoyed. They were hanging around not really doing anything but enjoying themselves and each other's company as members of a group.

This time period is recounted as a fond memory which was from before the worries about the future and work had set in. Noticeably the final sentence of this excerpt mentions worries about work and sleep which Edgar had described in the interview. As with many other participants the sense of a holiday or normlessness which is felt at the initial period of unemployment gives way to feelings of anxiety, worry and depression when it is realised that they are likely to be in this situation for some time. It is this movement into the feeling of an indefinite period of liminality which is what causes troubles for people as financial problems mount up and feelings of boredom and helplessness set in. This extended liminality is thus different from the initial period which can be enjoyable and experienced as a form of holiday from work. The period of extended liminality of unemployment is problematic as it is a rite of passage in which there is no new status into which unemployed people can enter. It is thus associated with feelings of being in limbo or in stasis, of being stuck in a rut and of feeling helpless and devoid of any agency to change the situation.

A further instance where there was a sense of communitas is that of Niamh who along with a group of other colleagues was made redundant from a factory job. As there were a group of people in the same situation this meant that there was a shared experience of the adjustment from working life to unemployment. The key advantage of this was that the tendency for individual self- blame was assuaged by the fact of there being a group of people who were laid off.

I: did the fact that there was a few of you in the same boat did that kind of soften, make it a bit easier or

P: em it did in the way that (pause) it stops the paranoia in your head from thinking (pause) is it just me … is it like I could say to one of the other girls like yeah they said the same thing to me, that it's not paranoia that it's not that they just don't want me

Being laid off in a group meant that the feelings of individual inadequacy could be put aside and the initial period of unemployment could be enjoyed. A further aspect of this case however is the fact that at the beginning there was not a definitive program of redundancy. Instead members of staff were told that the lay-offs were temporary and that there was a chance of getting back to work. This meant that for Niamh the initial period of unemployment was one which was temporary and as such was enjoyable.

at first when they said that they're laying me off on a week to week basis I thought mmm that's ok, a little holiday you know … you know catch up on things that I have on sky planner that I can't watch in front of the kids and you know… the holiday was over then, the holiday was grand for 3 weeks to a month, got a bit of painting done you know little bit of things to catch up on (pause) but then it was a big change

Niamh enjoyed the early period of being unemployed as she had assumed it was to be a short-term situation which could be managed and which would not have overly negative financial impacts on her and her family. She used the time to catch up on television programs and relax and to do some DIY work around the house. For Niamh the initial period of unemployment was characterised in status terms as being liminal as she was not unemployed but was also not working meaning that in terms of status she was in a state of being 'betwixt and between' (Turner 1967). This status however meant that for a time period she could hold on to the status of being a worker as she was not unemployed she was by her own reckoning still a worker even if she was not actually working on a day to day basis. This self-appointed status of being a worker meant that she could enjoy the initial period of doing nothing as she characterised it as being earned leisure which would be for a limited period of time only. Yet as with Edgar described above it was the realisation that the period of unemployment was not to be short lived which set off feelings of worry and anxiety which made it impossible for her to characterise her time off work in terms of leisure or a holiday.

In this sense the initial holiday of unemployment is sandwiched between the movement out of work and into the extended liminal phase which can be described as a 'limbo of statuslessness' (Turner 1967, p. 361). At the initial stage it is less the experience of unemployment that participants describe and is more the experience of not being in work, it is enjoyable because

it is a period of freedom, of making one's own rules and setting one's own timetable. This is particularly the case in instances where people have left or lost a job and it is the fact of not having to go to work that fosters this sense of enjoyment during the initial phases of unemployment.

7.2   Doing Nothing

Among the most difficult aspects of a prolonged period of unemployment is the fact of having nothing to do and a seemingly endless period of time in which to do it. It is perhaps uncontroversial to claim that prolonged inactivity is anathema to contemporary subjectivities, in fact historically speaking inactivity or idleness was deemed to be immoral with Christian moral teaching making sloth one of the seven deadly sins. As well as this contemporary norms see being busy as desirable and being productive and doing something as imperative. Contemporary normative standards also see leisure as something which must be earned before it can be properly enjoyed. This means that in the absence of the means to 'earn' legitimate leisure unemployed people are stuck with a surplus of unearned free time which they must use in a manner which is in keeping with their desired status as active subjects.

Work is possibly the most influential means by which time is shaped; workers must be in a particular place at a given time and ready to carry out whatever tasks are associated with their work. The fact of the influential nature of work in structuring time is evident in parole and other forms of post penal supervision which place a high value on work as a means of bringing structure to the lives of those under supervision. Regular work imposes a habitual time structure and the removal of such structures can be disorienting and confusing to some people. While the preceding discussion above noted the initial enjoyable aspects of unemployment there was also evidence in the data which showed how some people were completely cut adrift once they were made unemployed. Such feelings were predominantly based around the difficulties in adjusting to life without the structured sense of time associated with work. This is in keeping with Jahoda and Deprivation theory which posits that the loss of work means a loss of a structured sense of time. Participants who had gone from work into unemployment keenly felt this loss of temporal structure with some even struggling to put into words the extent to which they were affected by it.

> I: how did you find because like how did you find going from that where you were always busy to suddenly doing

> R: (long pause) no one has asked me that (longer pause) dunno I don't have an answer for that, nobody ever asked me that question before so I don't have an answer for it, it was different because when I woke up and I wasn't doing anything and I thought (long pause) I dunno, (pause) I don't have an answer for that, I don't have an answer for that (long pause) … it was different because I always had, work to go to, and then I didn't (Lorcan)

In attempting to describe this adjustment Lorcan falls into incoherence and is unable to adequately put his feelings into words as he repeats the phrases 'I dunno' and 'I don't have an answer for that'. Lorcan had lost his businesses in the wake of a relationship breakdown, had been out of work for a number of years and was suffering from depression. Despite being in this situation for a lengthy period he was not able to describe in any way how he made the adjustment from the busy and time consuming life of running multiple businesses to doing nothing.

A further response to the problem of having too much time to fill and nothing to do is that of entering what could be described as a form of stasis or an interminable present where even everyday tasks are not carried out and instead are put off to be completed some unspecified time in the future. Parkinson's Law states that 'work expands to fill the time allotted to it' (Parkinson 1942), while this adage is usually brought out in the service of a critique of bureaucracy and work organisation it raises some interesting questions with regard to unemployed people. If you have an abundance of time then the most basic of tasks can be stretched so as to get the most time out of them as possible. At the same time in cases where people have an over-abundance of time the most trivial and day to day tasks can be neglected as they can be put off to be done sometime in the future. The best of example of this type of occurrence relates to participants describing how they stopped getting dressed every day or washing as frequently as they had done while they were working.

> I: mm and how did you find the adjustment from like working to
>
> R: dreadful … getting up in the morning, not getting dressed, sometimes not even getting washed and that's being honest with you and ok I can do that later or I can do that tomorrow do you know what I mean (Jill)

Not getting dressed in the morning was reported by a number of participants with the quote from Jill above being representative of the experience of others. It speaks to the commonly recounted experience of feeling in stasis or limbo where the absence of having anything to do seeps into and alters daily practices, rituals and routines. Not getting dressed is an outward marker of the fact that the individual has not left the house and has worn the clothes they woke up in for the duration of the day. It is usually recounted by participants as a means of

demonstrating a particularly low period of their unemployment which they associate with depression, lethargy and a pervasive sense of pointlessness.

Getting dressed is an activity which is socially patterned as the places and situations in which a person will be on any given day will determine the type of clothes they wear and the way in which they present themselves. If someone is going to work in an office they will most likely wear different clothes than if they were going to the gym and so on. The absence of having anywhere to go or anything to do means that participants frequently reported either staying in pyjamas or wearing comfortable house clothes which they would be embarrassed to be seen wearing in a public situation. Some types of leisure clothes, tracksuits or slouch suits are specifically designed for comfort, for lazy days around the house where the wearer does not plan on going anywhere or seeing anyone. In Goffman's terms such clothes would be worn in the 'backstage' (Goffman 1956) areas of social life where only intimate others such as family members will be. Yet as with the implicit principle of leisure being 'earned' it is also the case that according to broader social conventions these types of clothes are set aside for earned or sanctioned periods of leisure. Wearing pyjamas is a contextual act which is strictly limited to specific social domains and activities; to wear them outside of these socially permitted domains is to attract censure and moral opprobrium.

By way of example in January 2012 a Social Welfare office in Damastown in Dublin made international headlines when it banned the wearing of pyjamas in their office. The public was notified of the ban via the sign which is pictured below which states 'Please be aware that pyjamas are NOT regarded as suitable attire when attending community welfare services at these offices'. The condescending and haughty tone of this message is simultaneously couched in the bureaucratic language of officialdom which is typical of notices which are on display in social welfare offices (Boland & Griffin 2015 p. 129). The ban was discussed in international media outlets which were broadly in support of it with discussion centring on the 'message' wearers of pyjamas were sending by wearing them in the welfare office. It is in such a context that wearing pyjamas or house clothes for extended periods of time should be considered here as the act of wearing pyjamas all day or of not getting dressed is that which symbolises a low point. Not getting dressed is thus a type of metonymic communicative act which is recounted to denote hopelessness and despair.

An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Social Protection

NOTICE

Please be advised that Pyjamas are NOT regarded as appropriate attire when attending Community Welfare Services at these offices.

Thank you.
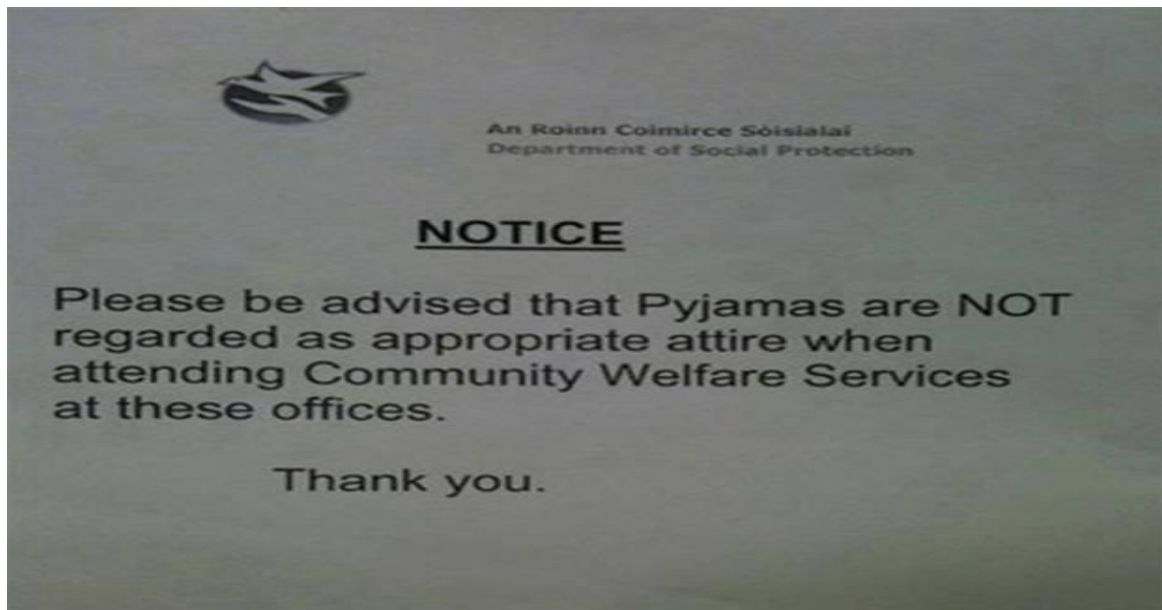
Figure 24 Pyjamas are NOT appropriate attire

As was discussed in chapter 2 there is quite large variation evident in how unemployment is defined with some people getting occasional casual work and signing on as unemployed for days where such work was not available. Nora was an unemployed primary school teacher who worked as a substitute if and when she was needed. This meant that she had very irregular patterns of work and she would often only find out via a phone call in the morning that she was needed as a substitute that day. This meant that almost every day she had to be up early, dressed and presentable on the off chance that she would get a phone call offering her substitute work.

> being unemployed is hard, I mean if you're the type of person that can get up every morning at half 7 and does get up every morning at half 7, you can only begin to imagine how long the day is until it's dark at half 6 or 7 at night when you're unemployed, and things feel drawn out and long and difficult and you feel like you're never going to get ahead (Nora)

The image of the unemployed person who sleeps long into the morning or early afternoon is a common trope which is frequently used in media and political discourses to denigrate the unemployed and cast them as being lazy and slothful. Yet in Nora's case getting up early and preparing for work is more often than not a pointless task which leaves her with days which are 'drawn out and long and difficult'. This quasi-ritualistic practice of getting up early every morning and getting ready to wait for a call which most times never comes is almost Beckettian in its futility. Yet what Nora is doing is attempting despite being unemployed to maintain temporal control and discipline and to ensure that she is ready and available for any work which does come her way. In doing this she is keeping herself 'job ready' or 'close to the labour

market' to use the terminology of the ALMP's. This type of behaviour is frequently evident in the kinds of advice that are given to unemployed people. In this sense she is a paragon of the active labour market subject who displays 'standby-ability' (Bengtson 2014) and is primed and ready for any opportunity which arises. Despite this such practices are described as being difficult as most of the time it is empty preparation which only serves the purpose of reminding her of her subordinate place as a contingent quasi-employed professional who is forced to periodically rely on social welfare payments.

7.3 A Typology of Pastimes

An interesting facet when considering unemployment and the hard work of doing nothing are the differences between how people face prolonged periods of inactivity. As we have seen above for some people it is an unmitigated bad which is experienced negatively. For others however such periods of inactivity allow for the pursuit of hobbies, pastimes and other types of projects which are enjoyable and fulfilling in and of themselves. There are a range of motivations evident in the pastimes discussed by participants with some being pursued in a purely instrumental fashion as a means of gaining or honing marketable skills with the intention of improving future employment prospects. Other participants undertook pastimes as a form of pseudo work which acted as a form of simulacrum of working life. Such pseudo work was thus used as a means of gaining some of the latent benefits of work.

Seamus for example who is long term unemployed has used the time to learn Japanese. As he has a primary degree he is doing this so as to have the option of travelling to Japan and teaching English as a foreign language. Similarly Dave is an aspiring musician and trained sound engineer who used his period of unemployment to practice and to improve as a musician. This disciplined period of practice did improve his prospects as a musician and he ended up involved in new projects on the back of it. As well as this Dave used the time to get involved as much as he could in the local arts and music scene, as a self-taught photographer he organised a group exhibition and embedded himself in the local arts network. Although he did this for the non-instrumental purposes of keeping busy and enjoying himself it did actually lead to him finding work as a sound engineer. In this sense his activities could be described in terms of being instrumental projects of the self which at some level aimed to improve his prospects of earning a living.

A further form of pastime is that of pseudo-work which is that which is done in a community setting on a not for profit basis where payment is not expected. One example of this is from

Shane who was in his sixties when interviewed and had worked a long career as among other professions a builder. He became unemployed for the first time in the aftermath of the financial crash and had struggled in coming to terms with inactivity. It was in this context that he got involved with a local Men's Shed where there was a long term community project of creating an intricately wood carved mural which depicted a scene from local history.

> R: I started carving the last 4 or 5 years ago and I just got into it
>
> I: yeah, is it a good hobby
>
> R: it's something I've never done, I'd never done but I found it interesting you know to have work, it's got to be hard work you know because you've got to make it look right
>
> I: yeah
>
> R: you know there's some stuff there that the guys they just beat the hell out of it fuck sake look at that and clean it up
>
> I: yeah, and do you think it's important to kind of learn new things or
>
> R: oh yeah, that's why I went on the computer course etc stuff like that you know carving course it is quite good
>
> I: yeah
>
> R: but you can't make a living out of it

Work in this sense is valued for the sense of communality that goes along with working on a shared project, what Shane gains from this endeavour is not just a means of passing time it is the sense of pride in doing something well. There is a sense of pride in the work itself which is intrinsically valued as being hard work which he can do better than others 'it's got to be hard work you know because you've got to make it look right'. When the interview was complete Shane demonstrated the mural and showed with pride which bits of it that he had worked on. Despite this he is quick to point out that this is not something which could be a route out of unemployment 'you can't make a living out of it'. This type of pseudo-work then is something which is carried out as a means of getting some of what Jahoda (1981) terms the latent benefits of work. In this sense it is not necessarily a hobby but more like a simulacrum of work which is carried out in the local men's shed and is aimed at an intangible community benefit rather than a financial or instrumental benefit of money or wages.

7.3   Financial Strain

So far this chapter has looked at the experience of unemployment in terms of dealing with what Jahoda (1982) terms its latent effects. This section will look at what is arguably the most important aspect of unemployment, namely the material deprivations which are associated with it. Living on the meagre allowance paid by unemployment benefits is difficult and was reported by participants as being a struggle which had to be closely managed by strictly budgeting and monitoring all expenses and outgoings. In this sense the strict regime of budgetary discipline serves as a form of 'agency restriction' (Fryer 1986) as the options open to unemployed people are severely curtailed by a lack of financial resources. In this sense much of the affective experiential aspects of unemployment described above are mirrored in and reinforced by the lack of material resources which is associated with unemployment.

To further complicate matters during the fieldwork when interviews were taking place the Irish government introduced a tiered system of jobseekers payments which were divided according to age with people aged 25 and under receiving a lower payment than the over 25's. As was discussed in the previous chapter on Social Welfare Imaginaries the rationale behind this drastic cut in welfare rates was that of incentivising young people to take up training or work opportunities and to avoid long term unemployment and inactivity. In personal financial terms the most common feature described by participants who were totally reliant on social welfare benefits was that of living a hand to mouth existence.

> you know you're living week to week as it is right like I mean you know yourself you're literally living week to week like Wednesday in this house used to be poor day like do you know we were just scraping whatever was in the cupboards so you'd be there going thank God tomorrow is Thursday right lads (Jane)

In this case the tight budget meant that Jane and her family were regularly stretched even for basic essentials such as food. This was the case to the extent that the family had a name for the night before payment day when the budget was stretched to its maximum 'Wednesday in this house used to be poor day'. The necessity for budgeting and for careful management of resources to ensure that bills could be paid and basic essentials could be covered was commonly described in the interviews. It was frequently when discussing the financial constraints associated with unemployment that participants expressed frustration and the desire to be working so as to be rid of these financial constraints.

> I do whatever I can to survive you know what I mean I do things on a weekly basis rather than monthly you know there are ways I can micro manage finances but it's not very fun I'd like to be working you know I want to get out working (Kai)

Kai describes the process of getting by financially while unemployed at an elemental level I do whatever I can to survive. This description also rings true for other participants who are trying to make ends meet while unemployed. The process of getting by on social welfare payments is one which involves strict monitoring of budgets and of having the very minimum required to be able to survive. For the participants who were long term unemployed and for those who thought that they would never work again this way of living was particularly challenging and caused depression.

> can't see any light at the end of the tunnel put it that way (long pause) it's just an existence, and that's all it fucking is (Shane)

Shane describes his life in terms of existing rather than living, the use of a passive verb indicates a complete lack of agency or power to determine any aspects of his own life. In this sense living is something which happens to him or is inflicted on him as opposed to something that he can take an active part in shaping and managing himself. By describing his life as merely existing Shane is describing himself as being helpless and entirely subject to the whims of an unemployment service which as we will see in the next chapter is routinely described by participants as being uncaring, impersonal and belittling. To this end many participants described feelings of helplessness and of being stuck which were related to their lack of financial resources.

Many of the negative effects of unemployment are directly or indirectly linked to the problems associated with trying to get by on the meagre social welfare payments. It is possible by devising and strictly adhering to a budget to scrape by on social welfare benefits but it is to paraphrase Shane above an existence rather than a life. While it may be possible for some to budget and manage money sufficiently to get by on social welfare payments there are always events which throw these tight budgets into disarray. Christmas or birthdays become a burden to be endured rather than celebrated as they serve as a reminder of the fact that people are on such tight budgets and have no room for anything outside of the bare essentials. It is worth mentioning how stresses relating to managing at Christmas time appeared a number of times in this data. As well as this however are the more mundane events which can cause financial chaos for people living on such a tight budget. The breakdown of a car or any essential

household appliances such as an oven or washing machine can make a mockery of attempts at budgeting.

When people live under these conditions for any period of time their possessions, their home and their appliances all age and fall into disrepair without people having the means to fix or replace them. Amongst the participants spoken to this also happened with regard to cars which would ultimately have to be scrapped or sold causing particular difficulty for people who lived rurally. This also was evident with people talking about their clothes which would become frayed and worn having a knock on effect of making people conscious of their appearance and making them feel visibly poor.

As well as this a commonly described aspect of attempting to get by financially is that of constantly balancing different needs and bills and creditors and keeping them all paid alongside the more everyday needs such as food. Kathleen was aged 20 at the time of the first interview and both of her parents had died when she was a teenager, while she inherited the family home she describes the trouble she has trying to maintain it on such a small income.

> I got a letter from the county council saying it was a health hazard and I'm like it's never ending with me I feel like I can't do anything else because I don't have the money to get rid of all those bits I can't afford a skip eh I can't afford to get bins yet properly because I'm only on a hundred a week well the last few weeks I've been on 70 so I really can't get bins like you know on top of food electricity and everything else you know it's ridiculous … it's just hardship (Kathleen)

Here she describes how she fell behind in paying her refuse charges and was unable to catch up meaning that her bins stopped being collected. This lead to problems with her neighbours and with the local council as she couldn't afford to have the rubbish taken away and her problems literally began to pile up. As well as this in trying to manage her finances by juggling payments of creditors she ended up with her electricity cut off as she left the bill unpaid for too long and couldn't clear the arrears. Her low income from social welfare was due to the fact of her age, but also as we will see in the next chapter she had a sanction applied for missing an appointment. In the course of the interview she described having to go to the Saint Vincent De Paul for help when her washing machine had broken down and she frequently described the difficulties she had in managing on such a low income.

> yeah it's ridiculous like it's ridiculous I can't live on the money I'm on and they think it's grand like they think I'm just squidding money off them being young and running around and spending it like aimlessly like but I'm not like (Kathleen)

The trope of the unemployed person who lives a life of slothful ease and leisure at the expense of the hard working tax payers once again returns in this passage. As Kathleen describes in detail the difficulties of living on less than €100 a week and having to rely on charity for occasional help this trope is one which is particularly annoying for her. As such it is a theme she returned to a number of times during the interview as a means of demonstrating how distant from these imaginary conditions that she actually lives. As with other participants the prevalent tropes pertaining to unemployed people are seen as an affront to their own lived experience; as such it becomes essential for them to distance themselves from these caricatures. In most instances this is done by explicitly comparing their own lived experiences of unemployment with the imaginary versions that are put out in public discourse.

By demonstrating the distance between their lived experiences and these imaginary constructs they are attempting to show the reality of living on such a low income. With Kathleen above the statement is first a demonstration of how the welfare imaginary constructs the image of unemployed people 'they think I'm just squidding money off them being young and running around and spending it like aimlessly like' followed by a rejection but I'm not like'. This statement came at the end of a lengthy discussion on how difficult she found it to live on the benefits she received and the suggestion that she could be spending money aimlessly was one which seemed to greatly annoy her. Other participants also used the tropes of the welfare imaginary but in these instances the purpose was to apply opprobrium on an amorphous and ill-defined group of others. These others are those who supposedly match such negative portrayals and they are used as a means of demonstrating difference. They were thus used as a negative point of reference where participants portrayed themselves in contradistinction to these imaginary figures.

> yeah it's just I think I don't know how people can do it and how people can sit at home all day long you know (Rachel)

> I'm like I do want to get back to work, I'd go around the bends if I was off 'cos I said to my sister like my sister never worked like you know (pause) (louder voice) what do you do all day (laughs) (pause) how many times can you walk that fucking town (laugh) it's not my cuppa tea you know, what do you do you do all day (Niamh)

In doing this there is recourse to a type of reverse interpellation where people define themselves by discursively calling into being a figure which they are not. Whether it's the person who can sit at home all day described by Rachel or Niamh's description of her long term unemployed

sister who is supposedly happy spending her days walking up and down the town both of these figures were discussed as a means of participants distancing themselves from them.

Given the difficulties in managing financially on unemployment benefits it is perhaps unsurprising that pretty much all participants expressed a strong desire to be in work. The dictum of ALMP's in general which was one of the founding principles of Pathways to Work is that work must always pay. For most people getting a job would increase their income in comparison to what they would receive in unemployment benefits. It is perhaps worthwhile considering the extent to which the universally stated desire for unemployed people to be working is accurate. In cases where the work available is poorly paid, unpleasant or even just unsuitable it is most likely not the case that people would prefer it than to be unemployed. It is thus worthwhile considering the extent to which this universal claim that unemployed people would rather work is an adaptive preference. This is 'a preference for some state of affairs within a limited set of options formed under unjust conditions' (Cholbi 2018, p. 2). In the case of a stated desire for work being an adaptive preference it is reasonable to assume that it is less the case that people desire work in and of itself and is more likely that they desire the ability to satisfy material needs. If it is impossible to meet these needs outside of work then it is not a choice which they have freely made and is one which circumstances have pushed them into.

> you can't expect to stay on social welfare your whole life like you know and like why would you want to anyway because like you don't it's not enough money like I'd rather be working you know like it doesn't cover what you've to pay for like your rent your bills you know especially when you've a child as well (Rachel)

While it is possible to eke out an existence on social welfare payments as we have seen above this is mostly possible via processes of strict budgeting, of balancing and prioritising payments to different creditors and by doing without essentials from time to time when they cannot be afforded. The ability to undertake these practices however is made more difficult when there are dependent children in the family. Indeed periods of unemployment or of sporadic precarious employment were influential in making large scale life decisions such as whether or not to have children.

> R: it just seems to be this like, caught in this cycle of where we can't save you know we can't, we can barely make rent, heaven forbid if we had a child you know if one of us if I got pregnant we wouldn't be able to cope … we really really wouldn't
>
> I: and does (pause) I know it's a very personal question to ask but does that situation effect decisions like having a child or

R: (emphatically) oh absolutely! We have been engaged for 2 years we can't get married (pause) you know what I mean, and we're not going to be able to get married for at least another 2 years

7.4 Mental Health/Self-Confidence

The final section in this chapter will examine how participants spoke about problems with their mental health which they associated with unemployment. There is a distinction to be made between depression or anxiety which was linked by participants to the aspects of unemployment described above and depression or anxiety which was linked directly to being a 'client' of the social welfare system. It is of course impossible to authoritatively determine causal links between unemployment and depression or any other mental health conditions and indeed not every participant mentioned depression anxiety or mental health problems. Yet each participant who did bring up these subjects believed that being unemployed was at the very least a participating factor. The most commonly described feelings of depression were linked to a sense of hopelessness and the feeling of not knowing how long the situation of unemployment and its' associated negative features described above would last.

I: did you find it difficult when before you were on the job bridge and unemployed

R: oh big time I suffered with depression

I: really

R: yeah and eh I got very down and you know very despondent and just couldn't, couldn't see light at the end of tunnel like, I didn't know which way was up (pause) and I think a lot of people find themselves in the same position that they suffer with their mental health because there's no help there for you if you're unemployed (Jason)

This excerpt accurately represents the feelings which accompany unemployment as described by a number of participants. Jason describes being despondent and mired in feelings of helplessness and confusion. Jason lives in a Dublin suburb and due to the high cost of travelling into town and was frequently stranded at home because he could not afford to travel. As well as this feeling of being stranded or trapped he also spoke of feeling left out and isolated when everyone else was going to work and of being unable to participate in everyday life because of his financial situation.

Niamh was another participant who explicitly mentioned her suffering from depression as being directly related to being unemployed.

R: yeah, you see I was never used to it you know I worked when I was 16 you know what I mean I worked full time the only time I ever had time off was maternity leave and stuff like that and I'm just finding it very hard (pause) first of all you think brilliant holiday day time television but now that's not funny no more like

I: yeah

R: do you know what I mean when you're on anti- depressants because you don't have a job it's not funny no more (Niamh)

In this case Niamh describes how she has experienced great difficulty in dealing with having nothing to do. In the first interview with her she had recently lost her job and was expecting to get back to work within a short period of time. She made frequent references to her working life and to the sense of communality and sociability she had experienced in her workplace. It was this that Niamh seemed to miss the most, while it was the case that being unemployed had negative financial consequences for her and her family they were not of the magnitude that they could not manage. So it follows that what Niamh found most difficult to adjust to was the movement from work which was on a busy factory floor and involved constant talk with her colleagues to a house which was empty for most of the day when her children were at school. In this instance it was the case that it was the condition of loneliness and social withdrawal which Niamh described as being central to her suffering with depression. As such it was not that she had suffered from depression, anxiety or any other type of mental illness prior to being unemployed and she placed the blame for her depression entirely on her being unemployed. While there are similarities in how people describe the depression which can accompany periods of unemployment there are also a range of differences in the extent to which it manifests itself, whether or not they seek out help and also the reasons given to account for it.

7.5   Conclusion

This chapter has examined the various facets of the experience of being unemployed by looking closely at how they were spoken about by research participants. The themes covered here were those that were raised by participants and it is worth pointing out how due to the open ended semi-structured methodology used in the interviews participants were not primed to cover these topics and as such they were raised organically. The topics covered here are not unique and in fact much of the thematic content of this chapter can be found in research on unemployment carried out in almost any other similar country which points to some aspects of the experience of unemployment which are almost universal. These experiences relate to the transitions between activity and inactivity such as when people move from work or education to

unemployment. The initial period of becoming unemployed can be restful even enjoyable, but the realisation of the indeterminate length of this liminal period soon impinges upon this and financial worries and worries about the future set in which can have serious detrimental effects on mental wellbeing. As well as this broader cultural mores which valorise work and purposive focused activity serve to position the unemployed person as being inactive and therefore flawed. This negative subject position is one which unemployed people battle against in numerous ways with varying levels of success. The aspects of unemployment discussed in this chapter are those which primarily relate to the subjective experience outside of the institutions which manage it. The next chapter will bring the institutional experiences of unemployment to the fore.

Chapter 8 Analysis 2: The Unemployment Services

when did we agree to live and lie and die in embers

of a cold old fire nobody remembers?
They hand the ashes back to me

down the button factory,

 we're cattle at the stall

(Lankum Cold Old Fire)

Introduction

This chapter will examine the experiences described by participants of the unemployment services with a focus on the social welfare offices, the staff working in them and some of the administrative processes that operate therein. Under the perspective of governmentality these serve as a feature of the techniques and technologies of discipline which aim to create specific forms of subjectivity which are conducive to diminishing the length of time spent unemployed. While unemployment research which uses the governmentality paradigm usually focuses on activation, behavioural conditionality and sanctions it is undoubtedly the case that administrative and procedural actions also serve to governmentalise unemployed people making them visible objects upon which institutional power can be enacted. This chapter will begin by analysing the site of institutional interaction between the unemployment services and unemployed people. The social welfare office –or dole office as referred to by many participants- is a site of complex institutional interactions where the status of being unemployed is both enacted and maintained. As a site which enacts 'divestment passages' (Ezzy 1993, p. 49) which bestow lower status on people it is also associated with stigma, shame and embarrassment. These aspects of the dole office will be examined before proceeding to look at how participants spoke about the staff working in these offices.

The interactions between staff and unemployed people are frequently fraught and strained with participants almost universally describing them in negative terms. The descriptions of these interactions will be examined as well as the justifications given by participants to explain why given the unpleasant environment such negativity is inevitable. What are important amongst the descriptions of interactions with staff at social welfare offices are the instances where participants describe positive encounters. By examining these interactions through the lens of procedural justice it is possible to account for some of the aspects of them which determine whether they are experienced positively or negatively. The chapter will then conclude by

examining the administrative order associated with the unemployment services. It will do this through the lens of legitimacy and will make the assertion that the breakdown of legitimacy as described by participants is frequently related to concomitant breakdowns or failures of administrative or bureaucratic procedure.

8.1 The Dole Office

The Social Welfare Office is perhaps a unique space in many ways it is characteristic of what Mark Augé (1995) calls a 'non place' as it is a transient space whose purpose is predominantly for the 'accelerated circulation' (Augé 1995, p. 34) of people as they are categorised and processed. Indeed the process of accelerated circulation is evident in the offices as unemployed people have scheduled signing on times outside of which they will not be dealt with. It is the place where people go to apply for benefits, to be granted the official status of jobseeker and once this is done to return periodically to sign a declaration that they are still unemployed, looking for work and available for work. In doing this people who by definition are complex idiosyncratic and have any number of unique skills and experiences are 'categorised through questionnaires, forms and bureaucratic processes' (Boland and Griffin 2017, p. 102) in a manner which reduces them to an administrative essence rendering them institutionally manageable as governmentalised subjects. When the system processes people in this fashion it massifies them bundling people together into categories and managing them according to the imputed characteristics of these categories rather than as unique individuals (McNeill 2019, p. 12). It is thus as data images projected from information gathered during the bureaucratic process that subjects are created and this determines how they are dealt with by the Social Welfare bureaucracy.

In one sense the social welfare office is like any other non-place, broadly speaking such offices are uniform, functional and characterless, they are places where people go to apply for and to manage services and entitlements from the state. In this way it doesn't differ from a tax office, a post office or a registry yet in many other ways it is indeed an entirely unique space. Research conducted by Delaney et al describes how welfare offices were uniformly described as 'chaotic and unpleasant environments' (2011, p. 43) and indeed such sentiments were similarly expressed in this research.

> the environment there isn't exactly very (pause) you know (laughs) it's not very warm or conducive to, it's not, it doesn't do anything to like your self- confidence like you know you do leave it feeling, you leave it feeling kind of grubby and dirty and just kind of like you're just (pause) oh I don't know just the whole process it just isn't pleasant like it's not that they're unpleasant it's just that there's nothing (pause)

there's nothing warm, there's nothing friendly there's nothing up em … I can't, I can't articulate what it is, it's just a vibe that you get and you feel like, I'm a bad person for being here (pause) you know, and I hate when you have to go in to them (Jane)

This excerpt is laden with information which will form the basis for the following discussion on the social welfare office. Firstly Jane prefaces her remarks by mentioning the environment of the office saying how it is 'not very warm' and that it has negative effects on her self-confidence. Aside from the interactions with staff which as we will see below are frequently strained, and aside from the bureaucratic procedures and processes which as we will see below are frequently experienced as being frustrating and quixotic it is the actual place with which she has negative associations. While she does not see the staff as being unpleasant she does emphasise the cold transactional nature of being processed and of being seen and treated as a number rather than a person. This description of most interactions being cold and transactional is common amongst participants with phrases such as talking to a wall or talking to a window being used to describe them.

As we will see below it is when people feel listened to and that they have an input into the process that they feel like they are treated fairly and as a human being. This is much in keeping with the precepts of procedural justice as described by Tyler (1990, 2003, 2006). A further aspect of this excerpt which is interesting is that of how Jane tells of how she feels like a 'bad person' for being there and feels 'grubby and dirty' once she has left. As will be discussed below this type of stigma is almost universally described by people who use the social welfare office. A common response to it often involves a process of passing this internalised stigma onto 'abjectified' (Tyler 2013, 2020) others who are described in a stereotypical fashion which often coalesces around the cartoonish and exaggerated figures of the Welfare Imaginary such as the drug or alcohol abuser, the young welfare dependant mother, or the criminal. Tyler (2020, p. 192) notes how stigma relating to social welfare is utilised as a technique of governance. This thinking is perhaps best exemplified by Charles Murray (2009) who claims that stigma is a necessary feature of welfare systems as it discourages dependence by attaching a feeling of 'disgrace' to any receipt of 'charity'. The use of such methods thus act as a means of dissuading people from making claims unless they are in dire need.

At the initial stages of the fieldwork for this research social welfare offices were in the process of being rebranded from being offices of the Department of Social Protection to being Intreo centres with attendant changes in the colour schemes and décor of the offices. Boland and Griffin point to how this change communicates an attempt to have social protection 'de-

exceptionalised' (2017, p. 104) in an attempt to reconstitute it as just another service. A further manner in which an attempt is made to render social welfare as unexceptional is the way in which claimants are referred to as customers and even have recourse to a customer charter which sets out the standards of service that welfare customers can expect from the department. This attempt at de-exceptionalisation is evident if we briefly examine the process involved in this redesign as described by CI Design studio who were contracted to carry out this work.

The initial focus of the restructuring of the Department was to be limited to the inclusion of activation and job search measures which had been previously under the remit of Fás. The new service was originally to be called the National Employments and Entitlements Service which would have been known by the acronym NEES. According to Niall Corcoran the manager and brand director of CI Design this name was unacceptable as the use of the word entitlements conveyed a 'negative message' and there was a 'potentially restrictive focus on employment services' (Corcoran 2015). With this in mind CI Design set to the task of 'challenging' the thinking of the department and of building 'a consensus around the need to change the name' (Corcoran 2015). The name that was settled upon is 'Intreo' which is a portmanteau of the word 'intro' and the Irish word treoir which means direction or instruction (Boland 2015). The attempt in rebranding the social welfare offices was thus to scrub all the supposedly negative connotations associated with the 'dole' office and to replace them with a bland inoffensive and quasi-corporate sheen. In this manner the rebranded Intreo offices bear a passing resemblance to any other retail or commercial offices.

Figure 25 Department of Social Protection Logo

Figure 26 Intreo Logo

Figure 27 Intreo Office

The time during which the fieldwork for this research was carried out coincided with the roll out of these new redesigned offices. What this meant is that while some offices were still branded and decorated with the older materials some of them at the same time had become Intreo offices.

> R: there is one of these in xxxx as well like like it's a tiny little dingy office in xxxx like it's probably been like that since the sixties or something like it hasn't changed a bit
>
> I: and the one in (larger town close by) is?
>
> R: it's kind of like a big branch you know of a bank (Sarah)

To some extent this comparison between the 'tiny dingy office' in one town and the big branch of a bank in another demonstrates the intention of the movement from Department of Social Welfare Offices to Intreo offices. By de-exceptionalising the larger office and making it more like a retail bank with its studied blandness the rebrand was at least partially successful. Yet in many of the offices visited as part of this research and by others – particularly Boland and Griffin (2015, 2017) - there was a sense that the new branding with its pervasive motif of lime green had in many instances been 'grafted on' (Boland and Griffin 2017, p. 104) to the existing environment and as such had not been as experientially transformative as had been envisaged by its designers.

The Dole Office is also a space which is clearly and deliberately divided with staff working there frequently behind counters and glass. This division serves to demarcate the line of difference between unemployed people and the staff who are managing them (Boland and Griffin 2015; 2017; Dubois 2010, p. 47) with most staff being ensconced in a separate back office area behind the counters which are often furnished and fitted differently to the main hall. In this sense the social welfare officers inhabit a space which is markedly different from the main hall meaning that the counter can be characterised as a type of interface or threshold between the two spaces. As part of the roll out of the redesigned Intreo offices there was an attempt to soften this division between staff and unemployed people by removing some of these windows. This was undertaken in an attempt at further de-exceptionalising the space of interaction in the social welfare office and making it more like a typical retail or commercial space. This aspect of the plan ran in to some problems however as the Civil Service and Public Union (CSPU) who represent social welfare officers claimed in subsequent annual conferences between 2015 and 2017 that assaults on staff had increased. These assaults which included instances of staff being punched spat at and threatened as well as having furniture and fittings thrown at them led to calls from the CSPU for the re-introduction of security glass screens in all offices for the safety and protection of social welfare office staff. These events partially explain why the vision of the Intreo designers was not quite fully realised as in most offices around the country and indeed in all offices used by participants in this research the glass partitions at the counter were still in place.

In larger offices the main hall is roped off in such a way as to closely regulate the movement of people through the office as they queue to get to one of the service windows which are situated along the walls.

of late it seems that you just go in there and you just, it's just they want you to (pause) go, bang, go it's just the whole lot the office has now been changed it's now physically even to make it in such a way as you will spend as little time in there as possible (Kevin)

This is an example of the 'accelerated circulation' (Augé 1995, p. 34) described above where the layout and design of the office is set to process large amounts of people as quickly as is possible when they are doing the quotidian and repetitive tasks such as the monthly signing on. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter the manner in which people are dealt with differs when they are partaking in any activities of activation such as the one to one meetings. Yet for the administrative tasks they are processed as quickly as possible and with a minimum of interaction.

One of the main reasons why social welfare offices are seen and experienced negatively is due to their function as sites where status degradation ceremonies are enacted. These are 'any communicative work between persons, whereby the public identity of an actor is transformed into something looked on as lower in the local scheme of social types' (Garfinkel 1956, p. 420). Social welfare offices bestow the status of unemployment on people who attend them and participate in the often arduous and lengthy administrative process of becoming officially recognised as unemployed and eligible for assistance payments (Griffin 2015). In a similar vein Ezzy describes divestment passages as being those 'which emphasise separation from a status and often contain extended transitional phases of indeterminate duration' (Ezzy 2001, p. 49). The social welfare office thus performs the ceremonial function of bestowing the status of unemployment on people with the rituals associated with unemployment centred on the social welfare office and its administrative technologies.

In speaking of the experience of attending the social welfare office a recurring complaint amongst participants was that of a lack of privacy.

the office where you've to go in everybody hears what you're saying you know … like it's kind of you are out in the open telling the whole room what your situation is which I think is ridiculous I think it should be done privately (Rachel)

Privacy is defined by Westin as 'the claim of individuals, groups, or institutions to determine for themselves when, how and to what extent information about them is communicated to others' (Westin 1967, p. 7). By their nature interactions with the social welfare services are personal and include the transmission of highly sensitive information about oneself. The layout of the offices which mostly include a security window which separates the staff from the

service users means that there is frequently the need for people to speak loudly so as to be heard through the glass. This means that by necessity personal and sensitive information is spoken out loud in a crowded hall and that this information is disclosed to anyone else who happens to be within hearing range. The ability for people to determine how and when personal information is communicated is thus severely diminished by the simple fact of the architectural layout of the social welfare offices. In offices in smaller towns this was particularly problematic as people were more likely to know others who happen to be in the queue behind them and so this highly sensitive information was being publically communicated.

8.2 Staff

Other qualitative studies which have examined Irish social welfare offices have noted the presence of hostility towards staff (Delaney et al 2011, p. 13). This hostility was also evident amongst participants here with many participants describing feeling as if the staff were looking down on them for being unemployed.

> there never seems to be enough staff you're always waiting ages and ages and ages to be seen and then when you do get seen they're extremely rude and extremely unhelpful you know and make you feel very small … they're anything but helpful they're all they all seem to have the same attitude that we are an annoyance to them (Jason)

The office that Jason describes is located in a Dublin suburb which had undergone the rebranding and been transformed from a social welfare office to an Intreo office. Despite this however many of the same complaints that were evident in the study undertaken by Delaney et al in 2011 were still present. In answering a question about the office Jason answers by discussing the staff saying that there are too few of them and they are rude and belittling. While this was not how every participant described staff in the social welfare office it was common for participants to describe the staff and interactions with them in negative terms. The most common descriptions were similar to those from Jason where participants felt as if they were being spoken down or condescended to. In cases where participants didn't speak negatively of staff they did speak negatively of the office, the procedures and the general environment there.

> it is the frontline (pause) of social welfare and what do they call them Intreo, the frontline is always defensive and (pause) and threatening you know (long Pause) … yeah and I think eh I can see why they have to because I'm sure they get an awful lot of stick like, I'm sure they get an awful lot of people coming in and giving out to them I'd say their first reaction is to just be defensive and you know em

Here Dave describes how impersonal much of the interactions with the social welfare office are 'there's no human element to the conversation you're having with them'. At a later point in the conversation Dave describes interactions in the main hall of the social welfare office as talking to a window rather than to a person and this type of imagery was frequently used by participants when talking about staff in the welfare office with other participants describing interactions with staff as being akin to talking to a wall. These interactions are impersonal and perfunctory with participants describing being treated like a number more than a person and of being processed rather than spoken to. Dave is unusual among the participants as he attempts to justify the defensive and threatening attitude of staff by attributing it to the negative and hostile environment in which they work. By way of comparison Dave also notes how the one to one activation meetings in the social welfare offices are everything that these interactions are not as they involve being spoken to and treated like a person. This is proffered in contradistinction to the cold and impersonal bureaucratic interactions which occur on signing days. The key difference is that activation meetings involve the person being engaged with and spoken to as these meetings include a strong element of the individual participating in and contributing to them. This is in distinction to much of the interactions with the counter staff at the social welfare office which leave people feeling as if they are no more than a number to be processed. In the activation meetings there is often scope for a conversation to be had and for the unemployed person to have some input into it meaning that they often feel as if they are being listened to and have some input into the process.

This is in keeping with the notion of procedural justice (Tyler 1990, 2003, 2006) which posits that the best way for achieving compliance with a given set of rules is not via punishment or deterrence. Instead of gaining compliance by applying sanctions procedural justice aims to achieve compliance by treating people with procedural justice and respect so as that they see the rules of the system as legitimate (Tyler 2006, p. 308) and adhere to them. As will be described in the next chapter not all facets of the activation services and processes were seen as legitimate and not all meetings were conducted in a manner which was in keeping with procedural justice.

Procedural Justice -also referred to as procedural fairness- refers to processes of fairness and equity which are built in to procedural interactions between an organisation and an individual. The majority of the research into procedural justice describes the relationship between organisations of authority such as the police, (Mazerolle et al. 2014) the courts (Tyler 2003) and the tax system (Braithwaite 2007; Doyle et al. 2009; Tyler 1990). Research indicates (Tyler

1990) that where characteristics of procedural justice are in place individuals are more likely to feel like they have been treated fairly and so are more likely to accept the outcome of the interaction even where it is not in their favour. Procedural Justice research also suggests that models of governing that rely on people self-regulating can be viable where there is legitimacy and where people feel as if they are treated fairly. This also points to the possibility of governance without sanctions or the threat thereof and the myriad negative associated consequences (Tyler 2006, p. 309). Broadly speaking Procedural Justice can be encapsulated under four headings, 'dignity and respect, trustworthy motives, neutrality, and voice' (Mazerolle et al. 2014, p. 3). According to these headings Procedural Justice is present where: the individual is treated with fairness, dignity and respect, the organisation they are dealing with is perceived as having trustworthy motives, the organisation is neutral, the organisation allows for the voice of the individual to be heard in the process.

This means that Procedural Justice has strong links to legitimacy and compliance as when people feel as if they have been treated fairly they are more likely to accept the outcome and by extension the exercise of power as being legitimate (Braithwaite 2003; Mazerolle et al. 2014; Tyler 2005). As well as this actions of governance which adhere to principles of procedural justice also avoid the negative consequences which occur when punitive sanctions are applied. Legitimacy is crucial to the operational exercise of legal and political authority (Tyler 2006), it is defined as 'the right to rule and the recognition of the ruled of that right' (Jackson et al. 2012, p. 1). As such it includes the levels of trust and confidence in authority and by extension the level to which people are prepared to obey their instructions. Legitimacy is closely linked with compliance because when people ascribe legitimacy to an organisation they are more likely to comply with its directives and instructions (Braithwaite 2003).

The most obvious way of examining the importance of procedural justice is to examine situations where it is lacking. Such a situation occurred with Rachel when she had a meeting in the social welfare office. It is unclear whether this was an activation meeting or whether it was an administrative meeting relating to her claim but it is clear that the exchange was entirely lacking in principles of procedural justice and as such is worth quoting at length.

> R: I was just asking her about my options you know she was talking about getting back into work and stuff and I, I was saying to her that like my partner is not working at the moment he's an actor and he's out of work and he's em he's trying to you know get something and I was just saying to her if we were both working at the same time is there any kind of community crèches around the area that we could like

for child care you know and she basically said to me eh what was it she said do you expect people like me to pay for your childcare

I: (surprised) really

R: yeah that's what it was because I went I left the place and I went oh my God she was speaking to me like a piece of dirt (long pause) like it was *horrible*

I: how did that make you feel

R: (quietly) I felt like a piece of dirt you know like I even said to her you don't honestly think that I want to be sitting here on the dole do you and she said well to be honest it looks like you've a lot riding on it (pause) I said I don't I'm just asking

I: em and did that upset

R: yeah it was really upsetting … to be honest well the woman that I had the meeting with I honestly thought it was like she was on a power trip you know like I'm able to speak to you whatever way I want you know kind of thing like I can cut your dole right now if you don't do what I tell you, you know (Rachel)

This reported interaction happened in the summer of 2017 in an urban Intreo centre. It is indicative of how such meetings can be experienced negatively as Rachel describes being dictated to, belittled and disrespected. This is evident in her repeated mentions of how the interaction made her feel like dirt. As an unemployed young working class mother Rachel is subject to a range of stigmatising discourses such as those of the 'chavette' or 'pramface' (Nayak and Kehily 2014; Tyler 2008). Interactions such as the one described above serve to reinforce such stigmatising and abject labels and happen within institutional relations of power of which Rachel is plainly in a subordinate position.

This interaction also demonstrates an entire absence of any of the principles of procedural justice. Rachel is spoken to in an entirely disrespectful manner and is explicitly 'othered' (Lister 2004) by the welfare officer. The cost of childcare is a significant barrier to re-entry to the labour market in Ireland. A 2018 report conducted by the Nevin Economic Research Institute stated that the cheapest childcare in Ireland would cost the equivalent of a third of the take home pay of a minimum wage earner and more than a quarter of the take home pay of a median wage earner in the age 25 to 34 group (NERI 2018). Given this it is perfectly reasonable and expected for Rachel to make enquiries about the availability of subsidised childcare. Such disrespectful treatment belies any claim of neutrality on the part of the welfare officer and her manner of speaking to Rachel was one which entirely discounted her voice and input 'it was like

she was on a power trip you know like I'm able to speak to you whatever way I want'. This statement also negates any sense of legitimacy that Rachel felt about the exercise of power over her which as is evident from this excerpt was experienced as being entirely arbitrary and capricious. While this interaction is exceptional and Rachel was subjected to particularly unpleasant treatment it is common amongst the data for participants to describe feelings of being condescended to or of staff being rude and unhelpful in social welfare interactions.

> Besides from just basic rudeness it's not really em … they treat you like a second class citizen you know what I mean, they think that you're not trying to work … em it's just generally condescending … I don't know how to describe it, it is just condescension really yeah (Seamus)

This description of interactions with social welfare staff was common amongst participants in this research. Similarly information on complaints made to the department of social protection were gathered by a journalist under the Freedom of Information Act found that welfare officers were described as being 'snot-nosed, hostile and passive aggressive'(Hennessey 2017). Despite an abundance of such negative descriptions of social welfare staff there were instances in this research where participants described positive interactions.

> I've never had an unpleasant experience with them
>
> I: mmm
>
> R: never like, they've always been nice to me and they've always explained things and I've never been sort of like going oh God I can't believe I'm in there now (laughs) (Imogen)
>
> now I have to say people down there, they are doing their job they have their rules that they follow and I, they were always very nice and polite (Niamh)
>
> yeah very supportive like em I thought, I kind of thought like that they were gonna be very hefty like like they were gonna be forcing me but he was very very helpful em eh they're like em very very helpful (Barry)

In each of these examples participants described their interactions with staff in positive terms; the common feature of each is that they felt that they were treated as human beings rather than as numbers to be processed. Simple things like smiling, being courteous or making small talk make a noticeable difference in how interactions with staff are recounted. Such positive interactions with staff correspond with more positive descriptions of the social welfare office and by extension correspond with positive descriptions of the overall institution. In this way an outcome of this research is that a more person centred approach to dealing with unemployed

people would increase legitimacy and improve the overall experience of unemployment as it is managed by the unemployment services.

8.3 Emotional Reactions

The section above which describes the alterations to the layout of the social welfare offices as part of the Intreo rebranding briefly noted instances described by the CPSU of assaults on social welfare officers. Such incidents are inexcusable and it should go without saying that nobody should be subject to threats or violence in the course of doing their job. Amongst the data gathered for this research however there were incidents where participants described losing control of themselves in frustration at the social welfare office. While none of the incidents recounted involved violence there were examples of threats made to social welfare staff.

> they made me feel like shit in the office and there's people watching me and I was thinking I'm not even from (XXXX) and I said I must look like some eejit standing here and begging for money, but I said to myself I even said to her look (XXXX) is an awful thing to happen God forbid you ever come out in front of a car in front of me because I won't stop, and she just looked at me like that and I said yeah trust me I won't (long pause) but it is like it's maddening like (pause) and then you regret what you said to the people as well because you're in a huff as well and then you think to yourself if I have to go back down here sometime or you know they won't be as lenient with you I hate like and you're thinking, I hates that like I'd rather work now, I'd love a job than rather have to go through all that shit (Niall)

In this example Niall was sanctioned for missing a JobPath appointment due to the fact that he moved house and didn't get the letter of notification. He was sent by the JobPath provider to the social welfare office to plead his case only to be told there that he would need to speak to the JobPath provider. Facing the prospect of a sanction and reduced income and being passed from one organisation to the other without getting any answers Niall lost control and threatened the Social Welfare officer. While this certainly does not justify making such a threat it is worthwhile to mention as it demonstrates the sense of frustration and futility which frequently accompanies dealing with the Social Welfare system.

There were a number of other incidents described by participants where they lost emotional control in the social welfare office in frustration. Most of these however involved crying or of leaving the office abruptly rather than threatening or abusing the social welfare staff, in one instance a man who had been accused of fraud threatened to commit suicide after being subjected to a prolonged period of control measures. A number of participants also noted the prevalence of instances of other people losing their temper or raising their voices or leaving

abruptly or in anger. In most cases such events were in response to participants being told that they were ineligible for assistance.

> I had em one of my daughters at that stage so I dunno I was kind of I remember crying actually in there at one stage because I was kind of panicking, rent and baby and what am I going to do (Elaine)

> there was times when we had meltdowns coming out of the social welfare offices where we cried both of us, (pause) because we were so (pause) stressed out (Nora)

> ah you'd see it, I see commotion often, like it's never quiet and boring there's always like someone giving it socks at the counter you know what I mean there's always at least two or three people that storm out of the place, grabbing all their papers up and storming out, (Seamus)

These excerpts demonstrate how the social welfare office is a space which is often emotionally charged and where there are frequent incidents of people losing their temper or crying. The reasons for such events range from frustration at the feelings of being bureaucratically processed in the manner described above to desperation and anxiety relating to the difficulties in making and maintaining a social welfare claim. The social welfare administration is one which by its nature 'generates intrinsic and fundamental conflicts' (Carrabine 2005, p. 897) between unemployed people and the staff. Social Welfare benefits are frequently the last resort for people in avoiding destitution and so the processes by which they can be granted, denied or withdrawn involve very high stakes and as such are experienced as being very stressful. This stress is further compounded by the cold, functional and bureaucratic manner in which many people are dealt with by the staff and the set-up of the office.

By the same token each social welfare benefit has by necessity a range of conditions which must be satisfied before someone qualifies for payment. Similarly the institution has rules and procedural means by which these conditions are judged. Within these procedures there will inevitably at the edges of eligibility be situations where the process seems petty, arbitrary or unfair. To some degree the frequency of descriptions of emotional outbursts in the social welfare office mean that they can be characterised as being part of its routine interactions. In fact given the impersonal, cold and bureaucratic manner in which people are processed in the social welfare office it seems as if in some cases it may even be a necessary tactic to have such an emotional reaction so as to break through the veil of indifference and to be listened to.

> you have to have a conniption in the middle of the dole office and cry to get sorted, like that's happened on two occasions to me a good few years ago something happened and I just bawled in front of them and

they were just like whoa ok shhh do you know what I mean and like recently they were like ok we'll sort this but I just didn't care I let it all out tears everywhere (Kathleen)

Here Kathleen describes the only way she knows of getting help from the staff at the social welfare office or to get any assistance outside of routine quotidian interactions. It is by having 'a conniption in the middle of the dole office', by crying and prostrating oneself publically that she can get the attention and help she needs. This then is a particularly public form of 'shameful revelation' (Wolff 1998, 2010) where people are forced to admit their shortcomings and inability to look after themselves (Mounk 2017) in order to get the help and assistance they need. The point made above about the routine occurrence of emotional outbursts is also evident in this excerpt as Kathleen describes how often she has seen others do the same thing. The prevalence and intensity of strong emotional outbursts make the social welfare office a highly charged place which is fraught and combustible. In this manner emotional outbursts whether they are manifested in threats, violence, crying or running out of the office are predictable reactions to the stresses and antagonisms that are evident in an environment where people are subject to high levels of regulation such as the social welfare office. This fact makes the job of social welfare officers difficult and stressful particularly for those who work on the counter in public facing roles. Given these findings in the context of Irish Social Welfare offices this is an identifiable area which warrants considerable further research.

8.4 Administration

Given the complexity and seeming inscrutability of the rules and procedures that govern the administration of the social welfare system and given the aspects described above of how both the staff and the environment of the office are routinely described in negative terms it is worthwhile briefly considering some of the strategies employed by participants in managing their interactions with the social welfare system. The process of applying for and maintaining a social welfare payment is one which involves a range of bureaucratic procedures including that of getting documents from many different organisations and institutions which demonstrate eligibility and prove any claims made on the application form. One striking feature among the participants of this study is that of the difference in capabilities of participants in managing these bureaucratic demands. Some had experience working in an administrative or clerical environment and so were well fixed to manage and were highly organised in their dealings with the social welfare office.

> yeah but see like I know they're gonna ask me for all these documentation I have it ready you know so ready that I don't even have to ask the landlord you know I have a photocopy I mean I have it ready to go like I'm hugely organised (Elaine)

> I do understand the system yeah like sometimes I've gone in open minded thinking well let's just see what happens, but I've found that I'm better off knowing as much if not more about my situation or what I'm entitled to than say the clerk or whoever is working there (Nora)

All participants quoted above have both third level education and experience working in an office environment which meant that they were each experienced in administrative and bureaucratic procedures. As well as this both mentioned using the citizens advice website in advance of going into the social welfare office so that they would have at least an approximate knowledge of what they were entitled to, what was expected of them and what documentation they needed to advance their claim. In this sense they have been governmentalised into negotiating their way through the labyrinthine procedures and requirements of the social welfare system by themselves. This form of anticipatory socialisation (Handley 2017) is the result of people being processed through a system which offers little in the way of bureaucratic assistance meaning that people work things out for themselves when they have the aptitude, experience and ability to do so. Not everyone however has the aptitude or experience to self-manage their claims in this fashion and people who had difficulties with literacy found it particularly difficult and reported a distinct lack of assistance in managing their claim.

> I mean like when you can't read and write you know (voice quieter) the way they looks at you, or they give you a whole load of maybe forms or they send you out things like that they're em and when you can't read and write like you know it's (long pause sentence left unfinished) (Amy)

In this sense there is a distinct difference in the manner in which some people engage with the unemployment services as some people who have the requisite forms of cultural capital (Bourdieau 1986) are better equipped to manage their engagement. Others who do not possess such form of cultural capital or like Amy above have literacy problems are thus at a distinct disadvantage. When the services treat everyone the same in a one size fits all fashion of bureaucratic people processing some are placed in a position of severe disadvantage. While some simply floundered and muddled through occasionally losing out because of their inability to self-govern and manage their claim others sought help. The most common form of assistance used was that of the Citizen's Advice Bureau which participants frequently described attending in advance of going to the social welfare office.

I usually find out before I go in there so I don't have to do the running around I usually go into the citizens advice as well … the citizen's advice give you more information than what the dole office does well I find that anyway (Mary)

While the most common source of help was the citizen's information office another source was that of politicians as described by Adam.

it was a good experience, it was better than (XXX) Street … I was trying to contact about trying to get disability like there was no, there didn't seem to be any middle man of it it was just I had to go to em (POLITICIAN NAME) and he had a secretary there who did all the paperwork, made sure it was all filled out properly and that there was going to be no delays and it was all getting done properly and she was an absolute dream to deal with and that was a politician, … the assurance I had from her that everything was being filled out and that this is the step you need to take, that was such a help it was unreal, but then again like the, from the governments point of view they're like treating you like you have your hand out or you have you know .... so I didn't have to go back and forth I was just in an office with her and she was like oh you'll need this form and she looked it up and said I'll print it out now and I'll get you to sign these and come back to me when they're filled out and all, it very em that's what I well believe that's what (XXX) street should have been doing (Adam)

Ireland's political system is one which tends towards a form of localised clientelism with political representatives typically careful to manage constituency work such as getting passports, filling pot-holes and navigating the various facets of state bureaucracies to assist constituents in claiming their entitlements. Such clientelism has been shown to be beneficial to a considerable number of citizens as 'politicians really can deliver either because they understand the bureaucratic system better or because they have more information about the voter's circumstances which they can use to make a more compelling case for their claim' (Hourigan 2015, p. 102). In this case Adam who at the time had low levels of education and a work history which was primarily in manufacturing was finding it difficult to manage the Social Welfare bureaucracy. The constituency office staff served as guides who could traverse the bureaucratic maze and give him the assistance and guidance which was lacking at the Social Welfare office with the assumed quid pro quo being a vote in the next election. In this sense both the citizen's advice bureau and politicians constituency offices fill a gap in the landscape of public service provision. Other instances where civil society actors stepped in to fill gaps in provision of welfare which were evident in this research included men's sheds where advice and experience relating to making and managing social welfare claims were discussed.

According to the logic of rational bureaucracy such systems should operate in a manner which is rule bound and predictable and it is these characteristics which ensure legitimacy and fairness

of treatment. Legitimacy deficits are particularly noticeable where there are breakdowns in the administrative and procedural order of the institution. Such breakdowns give an impression of institutional and bureaucratic failures as well as individual incompetence and a lack of diligence. In some cases these breakdowns are described by participants as if there are personal animosities at play. Shane described a number of instances where forms sent out from the social welfare office were never delivered to him; these forms which he was meant to post back required him to list the jobs he had applied for. As he never received the forms he could not fill them in and so his payment was stopped.

> R: I went in to get (pause) nothing, nothing
>
> I: in the post office
>
> R: yeah in the post office and nothing's due (pause) so I have to eh phone up and go in etc and oh we sent you a form out you haven't filled I said I never got a fucking form I never received it if I received it you would have got it (pause) oh ok so its filling in and you've got to start again (pause) that happened twice
>
> I: so
>
> R: 'cos they said they sent a form which they said I hadn't replied to, they automatically stopped it, they couldn't contact me to say it's gonna be stopped because you didn't thingy
>
> I: yeah
>
> R: and on both occasions even though I had the thing from the decider in Dublin which overruled it they still wouldn't take it, you know there's a proper way of doing things they should have contacted the decider in Dublin could you sort these bastards out but I just went through it because I had no fucking money I had to go their lines

This stopped payment seemed to lead to a chain reaction of errors with Shane's claim all of which lead to his payment being stopped and to him being left for lengthy periods of time without any money. Shane also had an instance where he was sent a letter which gave conflicting and incorrect information. He was told of a requirement to attend an activation meeting yet the day of the week and the date of the meeting did not match. When he went in for the meeting according to the date on the letter he was told he was there on the wrong day and sent home. As well as having his payment stopped on a number of occasions due to problems with written correspondence. He made a complaint to the Department and had an appeal hearing which ruled in his favour but even with this he still faced difficulties in

managing his claim. After he had faced a lengthy period without payment he was required to get letters from people who had helped him out.

> I've had stuff sent to me I've hand delivered and they've fucking lost like when my mum and dad sent me some money over years ago when I was stuck (pause) I had to get a letter to prove that they did and I handed it in and fucking months later I went in and said I hand delivered a letter from my Dad I was over from the funeral I said, and he says can you get another … and I had to get letters to say 'cos I'd no money at the time that friends out here which was true they were (pause) feeding me (pause) giving me dinners stuff like that … they asked me to prove that I was being fed

The absurdity and insensitivity of being asked to get another letter from his father who had since died is surpassed only by the humiliation of having to ask friends and neighbours to verify in writing that they had been helping him out with food. Unsurprisingly these events coupled with a number of confrontational incidents in the social welfare office meant that Shane was angry and resentful towards them and spoke bitterly when asked to describe how he was treated.

> I feel like, getting a gun as I say and shooting the bastards I wouldn't hesitate me (long pause) like the Isis crowd I wouldn't fucking hesitate I'd just mow the bastards down for what they did … they're not bothered about you they couldn't care less even if you were homeless they couldn't care less

Despite the litany of errors and lost letters and petty humiliations that Shane had to endure it is worthwhile to note how he answered when asked if anyone in the social welfare office had been helpful.

> R: there's only 1 or 2 in that fucking office in (XXX) Street that's (pause) I've met and I've met quite a few of them

> I: and what is it that those 1 or 2 did that was kind of

> R: they were more helpful and understanding in their manner of talk to you, they listened to you

Once again principles of procedural justice act as a means of fostering a sense of legitimacy even in an instance where there had been repeated failures and bureaucratic breakdowns which had severely negative consequences. Shane describes being listened to and being treated in a manner which has helpful and understanding as being crucial which once again underlines the importance of procedural justice in obtaining legitimacy.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the experiences recounted by participants in dealing with the social welfare services by focusing on the social welfare office, staff and procedures. It has

demonstrated how the social welfare office is a unique type of space which is imbued with power relations as well as the production of stigma and the enactment of divestment passages. It has also demonstrated broadly speaking how the architectural and bureaucratic design of the social welfare offices contribute to their being experienced as unpleasant by the people who are forced to use them. This is much in keeping with the limited amount of research carried out into Irish social welfare offices (Boland and Griffin 2015, 2017; Delaney et al 2011). The unpleasant experiences of the social welfare office were also contextualised via a consideration of the emotional stresses and outbursts which are seemingly commonplace in these spaces. With this in mind further research into the working conditions and experiences of social welfare officers is recommended. This chapter also underlined the importance of legitimacy in institutional interactions such as those described here and outlined the uses of procedural justice in maintaining fairness and of earning legitimacy. Where participants recounted interactions with the service in a positive fashion it was generally the case that they had been treated in accordance with the broader principles of procedural justice.

Chapter 9 Analysis 3 the Pains of Activation

9.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine the experiences of activation as described by participants. It will characterise the processes of engagement with the various activation services in terms of the 'pains' (Crewe 2011; Durnescu 2010; Sykes 1958) which are associated with being a client of PTW. The first section will describe the concept of pains as applied to the penal context. The chapter will then proceed to describe some of the pains of activation under PTW. These sections will demonstrate how the processes of being governed as an active welfare subject involve the loss of personal agency and choice. The tight (Crewe 2011) form of government typical of PTW is one which is beset by contradictions and absurdities (Finn 2021) as unemployed people are forced to apply for all manner of jobs irrespective of their suitability and forced to attend training sessions which are frequently condescending and infantilising. The section following this will examine how systems such as PTW can bring forth multiple forms of governmentality which occasionally serve to act in competition with each other.

9.2 From Pains of Imprisonment to Pains of Probation

The concept of 'pains' was initially described by Gresham Sykes in 1958 in his seminal work The Society of Captives to describe how the experiences of imprisonment brought forth a number of negative experiences. These deprivations and frustrations which characterised the experience of being a prisoner are broken down into five main categories. These are the deprivation of liberty, the deprivation of goods and services, the deprivation of heterosexual relationships, the deprivation of autonomy, and the deprivation of security (Sykes 1958). Sykes wrote about a time period where prison reform had all but done away with the physical forms of punishment such as the treadwheel or beatings, yet he aimed to demonstrate how the 'deprivations and frustrations pose[d] profound threats to the inmates personality or sense of self-worth (ibid 1958, p. 77). Prison as a form of punishment thus goes beyond the deprivation of liberty and its pains 'carry a more profound hurt' (ibid 1958, p. 87) which attacks the person and their sense of selfhood. In this sense the more humane features of imprisonment in the era post physical violence still carried with it serious assaults on the personhood of prisoners. The pains as discussed by Sykes are 'subjective and unpleasant' (Haye 2015, p. 2) experiences which go beyond the realm of physical pain and into that of the psychic and psychological.

In a similar fashion supervisory forms of punishment such as parole, probation or being on licence are often characterised as being lenient forms of punishment which are levied instead

of imprisonment. Yet in practice the forms of close regulation typical of such systems are tight, pervasive and experienced as fundamentally limiting and so as being profoundly painful (McNeill 2019). Durnescu (2010) describes the eight pains of probation which are based around the costs of time and money, the deprivations of autonomy and privacy, the stigmatising effects and the fact of living under constant threat. While probation is undoubtedly preferable to being sent to prison it is still a punishment which involves being closely regulated and managed with the constant suspended threat of imprisonment. 'Pains' in the criminological literature are related specifically to punishment, however many of these punishments in the governmental sense are aimed towards changing behaviour and it is this aspect which is most similar to behavioural conditionality. The pains of ALMP's are based on the counterintuitive idea that some types of activation despite being presented as a form of help actually produce 'pains' and so can be experienced negatively. ALMP's are not punishment and instead can be presented as a form of rehabilitation yet there is a penal logic used to justify them. The rehabilitation of unemployed people is underpinned by the threat of sanctions which are justified with the logic of deterrence. The following sections will elucidate some of the pains of activation as described by participants in this research.

9.3 Any Job Will Do

Under PTW Ireland's social welfare system was transformed from being a laggard in international terms with regard to activation to being a relatively strict work-first style system (Finn 2021; Murphy 2016). There were numerous instances in the data where participants described being pressured into applying for and taking whatever kind of work was available. These were by far more common amongst those who participated in the JobPath scheme which operates on a payment by results model and so places considerable pressure on its clients to get them into work as quickly as possible. Imogen was initially referred to JobPath when she was 5 months pregnant which meant that any job she could get would be almost immediately interrupted by maternity leave. As well as this she had no means of transport and was homeless and sleeping on her mother's couch. Despite this her advisor still put considerable pressure on her to accept a job in a call centre in a town some distance away from where she lived.

> a few weeks into that she basically said there's a job going in a call centre and I said I don't want to work in call centres, oh but you have the experience for it … there's not even a bus, I think there's a bus once a day or something and I'm like great well I have no car, I rely on public transport I'm pregnant (laughs) how am I supposed to get out there? Oh you'll get the full time job before Christmas and then you can make friends and car pool out there, like (pause) are you kidding me? Like she was pretty adamant that I apply for that position and I said I wasn't going to, I didn't want it, I didn't want call centre work

> anymore and, (laughs) then she said well I'm after putting in an application for you there so just remember to make friends and you'll get a car pool to work after you're finished maternity leave (Imogen)

As well as the practical barriers which would prevent her from taking the proposed job there was also the fact that Imogen had worked in similar roles before and had explicitly told her adviser that she did not wish to do so again. It is telling the extent to which her voice and input to the situation were entirely discounted as her advisor ignores her and puts in an application for a job she will not be able to do and has distinctly expressed an aversion to. This lack of voice and input is an important facet of the experience of work first ALMP's for many people. In terms of the operation of government a key feature in the exercising of power is that of legitimacy which is constituted by the inclusion of the voice of those who are governed. The absence of such inclusion thus fosters a sense of power being enacted upon somebody rather than them having an active part in matters pertaining to themselves. This was reflected in a number of participants describing how their advisors spoke 'at them' rather than to them and how they felt infantilised and as if they were being spoken down to. Accounts such as these where advisors acted in this manner broadly speaking were more likely to happen in cases where the participant had lower levels of education and less experience in the workplace. The lack of voice and input points to a paternalist rationale that the advisor knows best and that the client must acquiesce and do what they are told or face sanctions.

This was also apparent when other participants described the types of work they were encouraged to apply for, the hours that they were to make themselves available and the rates of pay they could feasibly expect. This was demonstrated by Niamh when she was with Turas Nua and was told that she must be available to work any hours for minimum wage.

> you were told that you had to be available for work 24 hours and if you're not we **will** cut your money we have the power to cut your money and that's what you were treated like (pause) … you had to be available 24 hours and I said straight off I'm not available at night time… you know I will work I've no problem working a 10, 12 maybe even 14 hour day but I cannot do night time… you know, I've no problem doing Saturday or Sunday I'm available for all of them I cannot do night time… and I was told well you can't be telling me that because I'll cut your money we'll take 50% of you money like (Niamh)

As was common with many interactions with the activation services the threat of a sanction was always near the surface. It is interesting from this excerpt how Niamh performatively displays her willingness to work long hours and weekends as a way of demonstrating how she is not averse to work. Despite this for family reasons she was simply not available to work

nights yet she was still forced under threat of sanctions to apply for a number of jobs that involved night-time work. This meant that she was set up for interviews for jobs that she was simply unable to do which had further negative effects on her confidence as she was essentially being set up to fail (Reeves & Loopstra 2017).

R: I've applied for bar work which I'm not I don't have the experience for I, I applied for numerous like, the likes of (RETAIL 1, RETAIL2) (RETAIL 2) were looking for night time staff there I remember during the summer you know but again that form they sent me this yoke from (RETAIL 1) for this 4 AM I think it was 10 'til 4 AM and I cannot do nights that's the only thing and I'm not being a drama queen I'm not being (pause) I just cannot do night work

I: yeah and eh how much did you have to argue to get them to accept that you couldn't work nights

R: oh I argued with her every time I was down there

I: really

R: oh every time I was down there 'cos she was telling me that I **have** to do, and I **have** to go to interviews that they send me for (Niamh)

Once again it is telling how the Niamh's voice is entirely disregarded; despite her repeatedly stating that she cannot work nights she is made apply for a number of jobs which involve working at night. She describes getting an interview for one of these where she started the interview by stating that she couldn't work nights. She was then treated dismissively by the interviewer who asked her why she had applied for the job and this made her feel 'like an eejit' as she was forced under threat of sanction to attend an interview that she was plainly unsuitable for.

The JobPath providers Seetec and Turas Nua are both predominantly sales organisations and as they operated on a payment by results basis they did not get paid a full fee unless they placed a client in a full time job that they stayed in for a year. The table below shows the payment schedule that JobPath providers operated under.

Registration	13 Weeks	26 Weeks	39 Weeks	52 Weeks	Total
8.4%	16.5%	19.8%	24%	31.3%	100%
€311	€613	€737	€892	€1165	€3718

Figure 28 JobPath Payment Schedule

Providers received a flat fee of €311 for every client that was referred to them by the DEASP, in return for this they were registered with the service and an action plan to get them back into

employment was drawn up. From this point it was only when someone found work that further payments were made to the providers with these payments made in tranches according to how long the person stayed in the job. The full payment of €3718 was made to the JobPath provider once the person had been in the job for a full year. The manner in which the service was structured meant in theory that providers were incentivised to find work for people that they would stay in with over 50% of the potential payments to providers being made after 39 weeks. In practice however there was evidence from participants that there was pressure placed on them to accept any job and that the threat of sanctions was an ever present. We have already seen above how Niamh described being told she must be available for all types of work. There were other instances where participants described being pressurised into applying for work which they otherwise wouldn't have and there were instances where high pressure sales type techniques were used on them.

> when they start getting desperate for you to find you work they send you to the almost like the leader and eh he was like basically saying to us to all of us in the room that he was going to find us a job it might not be the job we wanted but he was going to find us one (Ann)

This encounter reads like one which is imbued with the threat that if you don't find a job for yourself we'll find one for you and you will be compelled to accept it no matter what it is. This type of threat was one which was reasonably common among the different activation services. Another example in the data was where Kevin described the threat that if one activation service could not find work or suitable training then he would end up with a JobPath provider and would be forced to work in a specific call centre with a very high staff turnover and a particularly poor reputation.

> he was warning me if we don't get you settled somewhere soon Turas Nua are gonna get a hold of you and you're going to end up in (CALL CENTRE) (pause) and she goes once that has happened we have absolutely no, their claim to you is stronger than ours … she said it absolutely directly she said you're gonna end up in (XXXX) that's whats going to happen because that's what this is, they're just filtering people straight through into jobs that have very very high turnover (Kevin)

It is worth pointing out that when he did end up with Turas Nua he informed them from the outset that he was not prepared to work in this call centre and they fully accepted this. Yet what this shows is that there is pressure put on people across the activation services. At each point in the scale they are told that if they don't succeed they will be put onto something worse or they will lose a further aspect of agency and will be forced into something unpleasant over which they will have no control.

There were other examples where participants described being forced to apply for jobs that were so unsuitable they bordered on the absurd. Stephen was a skilled tradesman who had years of experience as a painter and decorator. As an immigrant he spoke English as a second language and could easily make himself understood although he had a strong accent. Despite his obvious abilities and skills he was repeatedly made apply for jobs that he had no ability to do including jobs as a helpdesk operator for Apple and as a receptionist in a pharmacy.

> (XXXX) told me eh yeah you can send a cv to, to apple, computer, for what? In my cv is nothing about my IT skills … I don't have the skills for working for Apple eh with the spoke with customers eh or something like that my language is not good enough for working for person with phone … I said that was stupid … if I sent him my cv (pause) what I put there, I'm the welder and the builder (laughs) it's stupid, I waste my time and I waste their time his time ….what I know about the eh medicine or something like that? Nothing ! but what I have to go to take cv to chemist shop and say oh sorry I am looking for job I am the welder and the painter but I can work in here, what I be do there? Smiling to people say hello hello? But they don't care (Stephen)

Despite being a skilled tradesman with years of experience Stephen was forced into applying for jobs that were entirely unsuitable and that he had no chance of getting. This lead to feelings of helplessness and despair as he was continually sent to apply for such jobs and was repeatedly rejected. These feelings were exacerbated by the fact that he was forced into wasting his time in this fashion under the constant threat of sanctions. This helplessness at the loss of agency and control over his own affairs was a significant harm which was evident in his interaction with the work first ALMP's.

The approach taken by JobPath providers of pushing people towards whatever work is available also had negative consequences for those with education and skills. Where there was not work immediately available in their field they were often pushed towards whatever was available. In one instance a lady with a range of Architectural qualifications up to Masters level was told to lower her expectations and to apply for a secretarial role in a construction company.

> R: it is a bit demeaning and degrading to be honest with you because she did tell me a couple of times now that I have to dumb down
>
> I: and what do you think she meant by that
>
> R: oh I have just to forget about the masters or whatever and just get any kind of a job at all, you know don't be thinking I'm going to be walking in there to a really good job, which I'm not like I know I'm gonna have to start at the bottom because I don't have the experience but you know when, I know there's

> not a whole lot of jobs out there in the field that I'm looking but at the same time I'm not prepared to go completely in an opposite direction

The high pressure sales type approach which pushed people into applying for whatever types of full-time jobs that were available also had further negative consequences. Such an approach will have outcomes such as those described above which are counter- productive and serve to discourage people from job-seeking as they are repeatedly set up to fail. This scattergun approach which is a one size fits all style measure is also particularly poor for people who have complex needs. For example people with caring responsibilities found that there were no allowances made for this, and in fact the offices of the JobPath providers explicitly forbid children from attending them which means that when people are called in they are required to find someone to look after their children.

Other examples of people with additional needs not having them accounted for are evident when we look at the experience of participants who belong to the Mincéirí community. As an ethnic minority group this community are routinely and institutionally discriminated against in Irish society. The 2016 census for example found an unemployment rate amongst the Mincéirí community to be at 80.2% and the National Traveller Survey conducted in 2017 found that just 15% of those surveyed would employ a traveller. Statistics such as these are frequently reported across a number of public surveys and such views have been stubbornly durable and unchanging. Given such levels of discrimination particularly with regard to employment it is unsurprising that the work first approach to activation was unsuitable and unsuccessful for the three participants of this study who were put through JobPath. There was evidence of them describing being parked (Koning & Heinrich 2010) which is where those who are particularly difficult to put in work are ignored by the service or 'parked' because effort expended on them is less likely to pay off. All three left school illiterate and none of them had any experience in the formal labour market meaning that they would have very low PEX scores and be difficult to place in work.

> I'll be honest with you the Turas Nua in (XXXX) …. I tell you to be honest with you I goes up there …. and they sit you down and ask you how are you keeping you're fine right then I'll see you next week you know the whole way from that side of town to up there for five minutes for someone to say how are you keeping (laughs) (Justin)

According to the logic of PTW these participants are in need of intensive and focussed help to access the labour market. As members of an ethnic minority group who are heavily discriminated against in Ireland both men also face significant and tangible disadvantages

particularly in the area of employment. Instead of receiving this extra assistance both men have been put on to JobPath where the sole focus is finding them full time paid work in the formal labour market. As these three participants are illiterate, have no work experience and are members of an ethnic group who face routine discrimination there is little hope of this happening. Accordingly their interactions with Job Path take the form of the minimal contracted requirements, they are called in for the sole purpose of carrying out the minimum level of engagement specified by the service level agreement. This is an empty bureaucratic ritual which is experienced as a demoralising waste of time which offers no help in getting any form of work or training. Jack was the first to be referred to Turas Nua and he describes the difficulties he faced when the work first approach was applied to him.

> I went to Turas Nua, … that's just a waste of time they got me two job interviews, one they were giving me a job and eh I think they realised, she put down on my, on my eh job application form she sent out two or three of them with (NAME) on them and I never copped it and I said it to her in the end I said you changed my name, I said would you like it if I changed your name… she told me well lookit anything at all to get you a job you know what I mean, then a job interview came in with (NAME) on it and I drove down to (XXXX) and I went in for the interview (starts tapping a pen on the desk) and yer man knew straight away the minute I sat down what was goin on (pause) you know what I mean (Jack)

What Jack is describing here is an egregious form of institutional racism where his employment advisor changed his name on the job application she put in to a factory so as to hide his Mincéirí ethnicity. In the region in which he lives Jack's surname would make his ethnicity instantly identifiable so the advisor subtly changed his name by adding an 'O' and dropping a letter from the end. This speaks to far wider reaching levels of discrimination where the only way Jack could get an interview is if his name is changed to hide his ethnicity. Looking at the 2017 National Traveller Community Survey 92% of travellers surveyed said some or a lot of travellers change their appearance and presentation when looking for work. Similarly qualitative research carried out for the All Ireland Traveller Health Study (AITHS) found 'thematic prevalence in ROI and NI on travellers hiding identity to get access to employment and leisure' (AITHS 2010, p. 30). Yet tellingly the advisor was not apologetic and saw it as a necessary and acceptable measure to get him an interview. This can be thus seen as an institutional acceptance and validation of the subaltern position of the Mincéirí community with regard to the formal labour market. This again raises the point of how a one size fits all style work first intervention is entirely unsuitable for people who are materially disadvantaged due to endemic racism and discrimination.

9.4 Training

Across the full rubric of PTW there are myriad different forms and types of training ranging from the Human Capital Development programs such as Springboard to the most basic forms of Work First training. Springboard allowed people to study at a third level college up to Masters level in areas for which there were direct shortages in the labour market. Initiatives such as these are expensive and time consuming and as such are used infrequently. Most of the training discussed by participants was of the Work First variety and there were varying levels of quality and relevance amongst these courses.

A number of the interviews for this research were carried out in a jobs club which participants were mandated to attend. All participants interviewed about the jobs club were positive about the training they received and all talked about how well they were treated. This training was particularly focussed on job searching and as part of it there was a focus on managing affect and outward emotional behaviour while job-seeking.

> R: all I was doing was just handing in cv's and that was it like so I think em eh that kind of changed and I think more of my like the way that if I want to talk to someone on the phone he taught me all of these tips on how to smile when you're still speaking to someone on the phone kind of like what I'm doing now …
>
> I: yeah and how do you do the smiling down the phone
>
> R: em well he just said … like just like em any time you're making a call to just keep smiling em keep your chin up em go to like em near the window like because he said like if you go near a window and like face your back to the window it em it like em lifts your voice more and it makes you like em feel more confident em and stuff like that and it makes you feel like em your voice is more hyped like it, it like makes you pronounce more words like even more it does like so like that's one of the tips that XXX kind of taught me like so I thought it was like a very very good like how to like go about it so it was like so yeah (Barry)

This is but one example of the manner in which ALMP's attempt to governmentalise those who are subjected to them as they attempt to modify not just their behaviour but also their way of thinking, their sense of self and perhaps most importantly their form of self-presentation. Here there is the assumption that appearing positive and cheerful is imperative in job seeking. This compulsion towards happiness and wellness is one which typical across many domains of both work and job seeking with Spicer and Cederstrom (2015) describing it in terms of being a Wellness Syndrome. This equates these things with morality and by extension posits those

who are unhappy or unwell as being immoral or lacking in the requisite discipline to make these things happen themselves.

Writing about the UK Friedli and Stearn (2015) describe a process of 'psychocompulsion' where enforced positive affect forms part of the strategy for getting people into work. This idea again at least partially places the blame for unemployment on the 'attitude' of the unemployed person and sets about fixing any supposed deficits in attitude in order to make the person seem more employable (Marsten & McDonald 2008). In practice the extension of such a belief would have it that such deficiencies could be remedied by the active management of affect via pseudoscientific self- help and motivational materials which aim to transform the emotional and affective state of the individual. In this example the advice of smiling while talking on the phone is attempting to train job seekers in projecting a positive image to potential employers. This may well be an innocuous example of psychocompulsion but nonetheless it demonstrates the logic of enforced positive affect as a job seeking strategy. As we have seen in previous chapters, periods of unemployment are associated with anxiety, depression and poor mental health. In teaching long term unemployed people to project a positive demeanour and affect in this fashion this type of training is attempting to counter these negative effects of long-term unemployment even if it is in an entirely superficial manner.

Amongst the cohort of JobPath participants there were noticeably poor standards of training as perhaps would be expected of a program with such a strong focus on Work First style interventions. There were also plenty of examples of affective management similar to that described above which attempted to governmentalise clients into being confident Job Seekers. Upon being registered with JobPath each person is psychometrically assessed for their aptitudes and abilities, included in these assessments are tests which supposedly measure confidence. A striking pattern to emerge from the qualitative data is that almost all participants were told that they were lacking in confidence and sent on training courses or made to complete online training modules which supposedly would improve this deficit. These training courses were described as being low quality and superficial and often left the participants feeling as if a problem had been diagnosed but then ineffectively remedied.

> when you first go there they get you to do this questionnaire about your abilities and one of the things I failed on was assertiveness and she got me to do an online assertiveness course … before the next meeting now I did that it took about half an hour it's from their actual Seetec website but it's basically not very helpful I mean it basically tells you oh you're not very assertive (pause) be more assertive (Ann)

The contents of these courses are very well summarised by Ann in the last line of this excerpt and it was a common bugbear amongst JobPath participants that they were sent on these courses which were uniformly described as being pointless. As well as confidence and assertiveness training there was also evidence of training which aimed to instil a positive affective state.

> they have things like em positive em sort of thought processes and stuff like that you know which I'm, I'm not totally into but I just think it's a bit of a waste of your time you know …. it's basically you know it says things like em oh you know it's only your inner you that's not helping you find a job you know it's stupid stuff like that you know the em positive em energy places and things like that you know (pause)… it's sort of like it's all about positive thinking and how you know like if you have negative thoughts then it can stop you from achieving what you want you know em (laughs) crap basically (Ann)

Such specious forms of training which are heavily indebted to superficial self-help style interventions are again forms of psychocompulsion which aim to governmentalise people into accepting individualised responsibility for the social problem of unemployment. In this sense it is demonstrative of 'a government over the poor that strives to remake dispositions and behaviours rather than socio-economic structures' (Dubois 2014, p. 41). In this case Ann firmly rejects the premise of the training and indeed this was common amongst participants who undertook it.

> well I can't remember anything but it's just your usual (pause) mantras that you'd expect you know kind of (pause) eh things like the strength is you like you know there's no external thing but it's in a very poppy way you know, be positive and to be focused and all of this kind of thing I think they even had a few like with exclamation marks and the usual nonsense (Kevin)

It is important to remember that while participants describe such engagements as nonsense and crap as Kevin and Ann did above they are still forced under pain of sanctions not just to attend them but also to participate in a meaningful way. Stating to the people doing the training that it is crap or nonsense is simply not an option and participants have to go along with these training courses even when they feel they are useless and a waste of their time. As well as this undertaking such courses can involve getting childminders, arranging travel and so on and these are all investments of more than just time into these pointless engagements.

It was not just courses which aim to influence affect that participants spoke disparagingly about as there were also very basic courses in literacy and numeracy which people who had degrees were sent on.

> I had, I had to go on courses with them at the start, I had to do a self- confidence course, and a (pause) what was the other one no, no I had to do (incredulously) a letter writing course? (Natasha)

The types of training available under JobPath mostly seem to conform to the cookie cutter one size fits all approach and this means that much of the training is entirely unsuitable for a large cohort of the people assigned to them. The types of training that JobPath clients are sent on can frequently serve to infantilise them and this has further negative effects on self-esteem and feelings of self-worth as is demonstrated by the quote below from Kathleen.

> it's really, it feels really degrading to be honest with you … I feel it made me feel stupid and it made me feel like scum to be honest with you 'cos I feel like they are judging you for not having a job yet they're not helping you they're just sitting there laughing at you judging (Kathleen)

This section has looked at the operation of the work first side of PTW and has particularly focused on JobPath. It has demonstrated how it is a one size fits all, work first, sales type system that operates under the premise that any job will do. It has also demonstrated the range of contradictions inherent in the operation of such a system as it is applied to real people and their attendant complexities. People with multiple needs are poorly served by such a system as broadly speaking they are churned into whatever work is available which for those with a lack of qualifications or experience usually means work which is low paid and precarious (Millar & Crosse 2018). For those with high levels of education and skills the practice of pushing them into whatever is available rather what is suitable means that there is inevitably an enforced downward mobility of expectations.

9.5 Contradictions of the ALMP Assemblage

There were instances evident in the data where participants described how they were simultaneously registered with more than one service and as such were subject to what were occasionally overlapping and even conflicting demands. Both Stephen and Natasha were registered for the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme which allowed for them to keep their job seekers payment for two years while they were in the process of setting up their own business. This scheme involved a complicated and rigorous process of application and it took them both considerable time and effort to get accepted onto it. Despite their participation in BTWEA they were both signed up to JobPath and both were still required to engage fully with Turas Nua.

> In April I got a letter from them again, they love picking me for things (laughs) and it was this Turas Nua thing so I thought (exhales) oh my God because actually in February, March I did a start your own business course with em the local enterprise and em I got that funded as well so em I was really lucky then and em so yeah then I got the letter and I, I went down to the social welfare and I said I've just finished a start your own business course and I'm really trying to get set up as soon as I can so this, this Turas Nua thing trying to find me a job is not really relevant, and they said are you a job seeker? Yeah,

> then you have to attend so I attended and, the meeting and I explained, I got my advisor and eh I explained to the advisor look this is the situation and they were like ok well you still have to attend as long as you are a job seeker,.... yeah so you know that you are tied in, you can't back out of it you have to attend the meetings (Natasha)

We saw above from an excerpt with Kevin where he was told by a community employment agency that 'Turas Nua are gonna get a hold of you' ... and once that has happened we have absolutely no, their claim to you is stronger than ours. This speaks to the fact of how people end up with the JobPath providers, they are randomly assigned and once they are put on the books there is a process which kicks in which is seemingly difficult to get out of. There is a similar statement made by Natasha as she reports being told by Social Welfare official that it's a 'box that has to be ticked if you're a jobseeker then you have to go and we can't take you off that, the computer put you on' Here it is presented not as a conscious decision made by a human being but instead it is a system that runs by its own logic and rules which cannot be reversed or subverted. If you are a jobseeker who is assigned to JobPath you must engage with them and act as directed.

The interview with Stephen took place in the direct aftermath of the financial crisis when there was very little happening in the building trade. As there was little use for his skills he set up a new retail business under the Back to Work Enterprise Allowance scheme. We have seen above in the previous section how he was forced into applying for jobs that he was not suitable or qualified for and all of this was happening while he was concurrently on the BTWEA scheme. It took a number of weeks for him to get an official recognition by Turas Nua that he was on track to become self-employed. Until this happened he was dealing with the possibility that he would have to attend job interviews even though he was in the process of setting up his own retail business.

> I was in Turas Nua (NAME) told me I can't wait anymore... I have to send you to do some interview and send you to job ... I said, listen to me (pause) I open my own business my own shop why you would like send me to work if I be working for myself... I have to do something with you (pause) but I said again listen to me (Advisor Name) that's stupid because I open my own shop, I be working for myself what I have to do, take some work because you sent me there? (Stephen)

In this case Stephen was able to argue his point and refuse to go to job interviews while he was in the process of setting up his business. As someone with a long career as a tradesman he was used to being able to handle his own affairs and he had been accepted onto the BTWEA scheme. This meant that he knew he was in the right and stood up for himself accordingly. In the other similar instance with Natasha this was not exactly the case, there was a delay with suppliers

which meant that her business launch was put back by a couple of months. During this time she was forced by Turas Nua to apply for jobs in café's even though she was due to launch her own business, was being funded to do so and was working very hard in preparation. In both cases these respondents who were far along in the process of setting up their own businesses were signed up to Job Path and in both cases they could not get themselves signed off. Both had to continue attending meetings with their advisor and both had to manage this relationship so as to avoid getting sanctioned for non-compliance. While Stephen who was a little bit older was confident enough in himself to refuse and argue his point, Natasha who was younger and perhaps not as self-confident did not react this way.

9.6 Creative Compliance

Natasha was in the process of setting up a business but had been referred to JobPath. She had recently graduated with a degree and it was in this field that her burgeoning business was in. With JobPath she was told to apply for jobs in area where she had experience, in her case this was in café's and coffee shops as she had done this type of work to fund her studies.

> I was attending the meetings with the Turas Nua and having to do the questionnaires and they were giving me, (sighs) (voice goes lower) doing up a cv for me and em giving me a log sheet and going out sending my cv out to cafes (long pause) which I found really stressful because (laughs) I really didn't want to go back there I mean I did the cafes for just a means to an end

The logic to explain why Turas Nua wanted her to apply for jobs was that the BTWEA scheme can take some time to get going and Natasha could do with having something 'to tide her over' in the meantime. Yet there is no escaping the fact that she had expressly stated that she did not want to return to working in café's and despite this was being pressured into doing that. This pressure of being forced into JobPath while she was setting up her business took its toll on her eventually yet she devised a strategy of creative compliance to manage the demands of JobPath.

> I did as I was told and I went around with my cv's into places and I, hoping not to get the job obviously … and not being very friendly so it was just, it was really horrible … I was *really* very stressed over it like em I, I remember when I went around with the cv's I kind of had to have a personality transplant because normally you go around and you're kind of like you know you're just trying to be friendly and even if you just go to the shop and you're not applying for anything it's just you know normal and so when I was going around I was trying not to, I like, I was scheming basically so I said I'll go at lunchtime they're gonna be busy they're not gonna have time to talk to me I'll just throw in the cv's and …. and em that's what I did so I went in at lunchtime when I thought they would be busy and em I tried to get away from the counter as soon as I could before they could ask me any questions (Natasha)

The form of creative compliance that Natasha devised was to do a cv drop in all the cafés around town at the same time, the time she chose was one where she knew they would be too busy to engage with her. As well as this she describes having 'a personality transplant' and not being as friendly or polite as she would be in normal circumstances as she knew that this would lessen the chances of her being offered a job that she didn't want. This performance of creative compliance however was one which was incredibly demanding and emotionally draining and was fraught with the worry that one of the cafés might hire her. Had this happened it would have been incredibly difficult to continue the work of setting up her business and this was a stressful possibility.

> I mean I just had such a headache I mean I was really, just like so kind of stressed about it I was, I was upset over it like, I was worrying about it, I like I spoke to a few people like, family and friends or whatever and I know I started crying about it at one point because I was just, I can't do that like there's so many times when in those years that I did work in those cafés where I didn't know what I was going to do where I was going to go and I needed to work somewhere and I worked in the cafes and I did a good job and I you know looked as if I was happy there but you know at times I really wasn't happy there, and em so it was never em going to be where I wanted to stay … so, to be brought back there I just felt like it was so many steps back and that if I got caught in there again you know it could, it could somehow delay from getting what I want to do for some reason I don't know I had that fear

This passage clearly demonstrates how harmful the placing of conflicting demands on people can be. Natasha was working hard towards setting up her own business, a process which by any standard is stressful enough and yet she was required at the same time to satisfy the demands of JobPath. She had spent four years working in the service industry as a means to an end so as to fund her degree and to allow her to work in a field that she enjoyed and had studied hard to get a qualification in. Being sent to apply for work in coffee shops felt to her like a retrograde step in career terms and she never seriously entertained doing this type of work again. She had also done a significant amount of work to set up her own business yet despite this she was thrust into a situation where under threat of sanctions she had to perform the role of a jobseeker. Even if she purposely sabotaged her performance in an attempt to wrest back some aspect of control over her own career the whole process was incredibly stressful as well as being entirely pointless. Despite her best efforts to avoid being hired in a café she did get a call for an interview which caused further stressful situations. The story as she tells it is that 'luckily' she was sick with the flu on the day the interview was to be held, yet she had to conceal the fact that she had got an interview from her JobPath adviser.

> I actually ended up having to lie because (laughs) when they rang me for the interview and I was sick and I couldn't attend …. I never told them that and he asked me the next time did anybody contact you about a job, and I just said look you know, I eh no and I really just, I felt awful like I just can't lie I don't like it but em (pause) I just said (sighs) what's the point in telling him so I just, (pause) I got away with it like he's not going to know so I just said no, and there was like ten on the list and he just pointed at the one right and he said what about this one? Now I don't know how this happened and I was there like oh em, no I already lied I had to continue (laughs) it was terrible and he said I actually know the guy who owns that, the café what I could do is I could ring him I could ask if he got your cv, and I was there going (whispers) oh my god! This isn't happening he's gonna know that I didn't turn up and this is gonna backfire and then

She did not inform her adviser that she had been called to an interview out of a fear that the interview would be re-scheduled and when she was asked about it by her adviser she 'ended up having to lie'. Despite concealing that she had got an interview from her advisor and being forced into lying about it she describes an even further stressful situation where adviser had seemingly caught her out in the lie as he knew the owner of the café where she had the interview.

This whole situation as with the similar one described by Stephen was entirely unnecessary as both were in the process of setting up their own businesses. Yet once they were captured by the JobPath system there was seemingly very little they could do to get themselves away from it. Finn describes the Irish system as being characterised by 'superficial engagement reflective of an indifference toward claimants' needs and desires. This in turn is generative of a constrained form of agency where claimants perform feigned compliance to protect their interests' (Finn 2021, pp 68-69). This facet of the Irish ALMP system is particularly evident with regard to JobPath. The indifference towards what claimants need results in a one size fits all formula which aims to put them into full time work as quickly as is possible. As is evident from a number of examples here Finn's contention of the type of agency generated by these practices is indeed correct.

9.7 Conclusion

Being unemployed under PTW means a definitive loss of agency and personal choice. There is a loss of agency primarily with regard to the type of work that is deemed to be suitable. Many of the interviews carried out for this research took place in areas that were outside of major cities which are typically hubs of employment typified by a wider variety in the types of work available. Smaller towns and rural areas by definition have tighter labour markets and less variety in the types of work available. For work first ALMP's this tended to mean that once they didn't find work immediately in their chosen field people were pushed towards types of

work that are available rather than types of work that are suitable or desirable. In many occasions this meant that people were encouraged towards work which was not commensurate with their expectations, qualifications and aptitudes. This frequently represented an enforced downward revision of expectations with regard to the type of work that people were sent to apply for.

Durnescu in writing about people on probation describes this as the 'deprivation of autonomy' (2010, p. 5). Unemployed people who are and in receipt of benefits are financially vulnerable and so the threat of having their sole means of subsistence taken away is one which is taken very seriously. Avoiding this outcome means complying with all measures required of them by the department even if they are felt to be pointless or even counterproductive. As we have seen a common complaint by participants was that of them being forced into participating in empty bureaucratic rituals which served little purpose outside of being an exercise in bureaucratic box ticking. Finn (2021, p. 67) characterises this in terms of it being a 'systemic indifference' which operates as a 'bureaucratic formality'. Perhaps the most striking instance of this was where Mincéir men who were illiterate were required to attend one to one meetings with their JobPath case officers where they did nothing more than exchange pleasantries before being sent on their way. There were numerous other instances where the demands of the system required that people attend activation meetings which had no real purpose outside of satisfying the bureaucratic imperative that the meeting takes place and these served to make people feel as if their time was worthless. They had to take time to travel to attend these appointments often making childcare arrangements and so on and the perceived pointlessness of the meetings contributed strongly to feelings of worthlessness and that their time was not of value.

As well as being made to attend meetings which they felt were pointless people were forced under threat of sanctions to do other things that they felt were pointless or even counter-productive. For example many participants described being pushed into applying for jobs they had no hope of getting and that they were patently unsuited to. This meant that they were forced into a scattergun type approach to jobseeking where they applied to whatever job was available. This approach inevitably meant an increase in rejections which had a significant effect on confidence and served to engender a feeling of hopelessness and despair with the process of job seeking. In this sense it was directly counter- productive as it served to have the opposite of the desired effect. As well as this it is worthwhile noting that many job applications are lengthy documents that are time consuming to complete. Even in cases where application is via a cv and cover letter the general advice given is that one's cv should be tailored to the

advertised job description which again means that it is a time consuming process which is frequently wasted effort.

The scattergun approach to jobseeking was not just aimed towards available advertised positions, in many cases participants were required to apply prospectively for jobs. In practice this was a form of cold calling where they had to turn up at the premises of would be employers and drop in their CV and make an introduction. As with many other such endeavours this was unsuccessful and at times counterproductive. Firstly it was experienced as series of rejections with the vast majority of drop offs being met with indifference. This contributed again to feelings of pointlessness and despair as it encouraged the negative idea that there were no jobs available and that applying was pointless. As well as this however there were instances in the data where people with specialised skills and qualifications were made apply to every potential employer within range. In both instances where this happened it involved a sense of embarrassment as these potential employers were known to participants within their professional network. When they were sent out to prospectively apply to these companies it was with a cv that their JobPath adviser had written up for them. In one case an architectural technician recounted how the cv that was drawn up for her was replete with off the shelf buzz words and phrases such as 'works well in a team' but was shorn of the actual skills and software packages she was trained in. This meant that she was sent around her local professional network with a cv that was not suitable for her profession. This points to yet another pain of ALMP namely that of the lack of agency with regard to self- presentation.

People who are referred to work-first style systems are assumed to be lacking in the ability or know how to find a job and interventions such as those evident in JobPath aim to assist them in overcoming this. This means that they are seen as being in need of help in job seeking and so are subordinate to their advisers and are beholden to the advice that is given. In situations where the advice given is incorrect or even damaging to their prospects they are mostly loath to challenge their adviser as they are disempowered by the threat of sanctions. In the case of JobPath there are serious questions to be asked about the competence of the advisors. Research carried out on JobPath staff has noted how 'fewer than 38% of JobPath Staff held a degree level qualification and nearly a quarter had no post- secondary qualification' (McGann 2022, p. 21). Further McGann notes how 26% of JobPath staff had worked in retail or hospitality and a further 17% had worked in financial and insurance companies prior to working as a JobPath advisor. Other research (Doyle 2017) has examined the job advertisements for working as a JobPath adviser noting how the ability to meet sales targets was the primary characteristic

sought for potential employees. This means that JobPath advisers were underqualified and generally recruited for their ability to reach sales targets rather than their knowledge of local labour markets or experience in dealing with unemployed people.

There were other pressures that went along with the work first aspects of PTW as participants recounted how turning down work would be enough to have their social welfare benefits cancelled. This meant that when they were forced to apply for unsuitable work they ran the risk of actually getting a job that they could not do yet would have to or face the risk of sanctions. Vincent Dubois (2010) writes of how the vagueness of rules and responsibilities serve in themselves to act as a form of government as such vagueness forces people to interpret the rules themselves. In such cases they will generally tend to be cautious and interpret the rules in the most literal sense. In this case the requirement to accept any 'reasonable' offer of work is one which is made abundantly clear to unemployed people without ever elucidating what is meant by reasonable. In the gaps between rules and interpretations there are a host of anxieties which serve to governmentalise people into anticipatory conformity.

A further aspect of the pain of loss of agency relates to the types of training on offer which was often described as being substandard and useless. The low quality of some activation measures fostered feelings of pointlessness and illegitimacy. Participants who were engaged with JobPath for example described the sub-standard training courses that they were forced to attend including courses on self-confidence as well as basic literacy and numeracy. In many cases being forced to take these courses was experienced as being condescending and a waste of time. For many of the training schemes there was a one size fits all style approach adopted and this inevitably meant that people with complex needs were poorly served (Beck 2017). This was particularly pronounced in regional areas as when a training course was put in place there would often be a dash to get enough people on it. There were also occasionally absurd outcomes as a result of this approach as in the case where an illiterate man sent on a confidence course which entirely unsuitable for his needs and was experienced as a deep and public humiliation.

To be unemployed in Ireland under PTW is to be pressganged into a system that tightly regulates, manages and monitors people by numerous means. It is a system which is contradictory in places and forces people under threat of destitution to carry out actions which range from being pointless to being counter-productive. It is a system which is typified by empty rituals of engagement and participation which frequently do not benefit the unemployed person yet serve to clearly communicate to them their position as a subaltern governed subject

who has surrendered much of their personal agency and choice. This subaltern subjectivity further characterises unemployed people as inherently suspicious and subjects them to repeated trials and tests to ensure that as well as being active job seekers they are not 'defrauding' the system or getting any money above that to which they are entitled to. The unemployed are thus constructed as people who are inherently untrustworthy and as such they are denied the agency to exercise self-determination (Kiely & Swirak 2022, p. 38) and instead are akin to wards of the active welfare state that must play along with the empty rituals of engagement irrespective of their pointlessness or absurdity.

Chapter 10 Analysis 4: Sanctions

That is how the world works

I hope you learned your lesson

I did and it hurt

That's how it works

(Bo Burnham How the World Works)

As described above the system of behavioural conditionality under PTW is underpinned by the use of sanctions. The following sections will differentiate between two different types of sanction namely control sanctions and activation sanctions. Control sanctions are levied when the basis for eligibility of a claim is reassessed and a request is made for a claimant to submit or resubmit relevant supporting information. Such processes occur periodically with almost all Social Welfare payments and not just the jobseekers payments. For example mailshot circulars are periodically sent to recipients of child benefit payments to ensure that all details held are correct. If recipients do not reply within the given timeframe the payment is stopped. Activation sanctions are levied when someone does not engage with the activation services or they miss activation meetings without good reason although there is no specification as to what constitutes a good reason. Activation sanctions take the form of an initial reduction of payment but can escalate to a full cessation of social welfare benefits for a period of up to nine weeks.

One of the key departures of PTW was the introduction of a formalised graduated response style system of sanctions which increase the punishment applied if people continue to be in breach of the rules. Prior to PTW the only sanction for non-compliance with activation measures was a complete withdrawal of payment and because this was such a harsh penalty it was rarely if ever used (Murphy 2019). The initial sanction under PTW is a reduction in payment of approximately twenty per cent for a period of twenty-one days. The stated reasons for the application of a penalty rate are refusal or failure to attend any meetings requested by the DEASP, and the refusal or failure to participate in any appropriate employment support schemes, work experience or training. Upon completion of the twenty-one day penalty rate period if the requested action has not been carried out and the person is still in breach of conditions their payment is stopped completely for a period of up to nine weeks. If after this nine week period the person is still in breach of the rules their payment is stopped entirely and

they are required to reapply for social welfare benefits all over again. In this sense the Irish social welfare sanctioning system operates primarily on a warning basis where the initial sanction is low and is levied for a brief period of time but escalates to a more severe sanction in the event of continued non-compliance. The system thus operates in a manner which allows the DEASP to demonstrate to claimants that they have the requisite powers to enforce participation in activation measures. The logic which underpins the Irish system is thus communicative and behaviourist where compliance is managed by administering a short sharp shock which serves the purpose of demonstrating the broader and far more punitive powers at the disposal of the DEASP and the consequences of continued non-compliance.

The initial sanction is a means of getting the attention of the unemployed person and of showing them what potential punishment they face if they continue to be in breach of behavioural conditions. Borrowing from and paraphrasing Ben Crewe (2011) the initial sanction can thus be characterised as being *shallow*, a twenty percent loss of income for three weeks will be difficult for most unemployed people and will cause material pain but it will not drive them to destitution in the way that a complete withdrawal of payment would. The primary purpose of this sanction is thus to reveal the *depth* of the potential further sanctions which could be imposed if there is continued non-compliance. The 'coercive potential' of the full sanction is thus always 'coiled in the background' (Crewe 2011, p. 513) and it is this coercive potential which is the key feature of how benefit sanctions operate in the Irish system. This view of the sanctions system was made clear by Anne Vaughan of the DEASP when speaking in the Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection on the 15th of October 2014.

> 'To be clear about penalty rates or where payment is suspended for a period, *the whole purpose of having penalties is not to impose them, rather it is to make people engage*. A success would be the imposition of fewer penalties because people would be engaging'…. A warning is given, followed by another warning, a letter is issued and all of that. We might find in another arena that somebody might be accusing us of being a little soft in this space. It is all about trying to assist people to be job-ready or course-ready and we all know … that there are some people who are well behind in that respect and need a lot of hand-holding' (Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection 2014, p 13 italics added).

A key point to be taken from this statement is that of the official procedures followed in using a benefit sanction. According to this statement and to subsequent statements made by successive ministers any reduction in payment is prefaced by at least one written warning. This statement also clarifies the intent behind the operation of activation sanctions under PTW. They are predominantly used as a threat and the stated claim that 'the whole purpose of having

penalties is not to impose them, rather it is to make people engage' is particularly demonstrative of this. Social welfare sanctions in Ireland are thus primarily a communicative form of sanction where it is the *threat* of sanction which works to gain compliance. The fact that the full weight of the sanction is not applied until after three weeks of the penalty rate is evidence that the intended effect of it is communicative. The point is that of showing the stick and using the threat of punishment in a behaviourist sense to ensure compliance as opposed to using sanctions up front in an overtly punitive fashion in an attempt at 'disentitlementarianism' (Peck 2001, p. 117). The outcome of this is that sanctions are not used in an overtly punitive fashion and instead are used as a type of suspended threat which is only called into action in instances where people are deemed to have repeatedly failed to engage with the services. The fact that it is a suspended threat however does not mean that it less anxiety inducing for those who are subjected to it and it is in their operation as a threat that sanctions are most prevalent.

10.1 The Threat of Sanctions

The most common way that sanctions were evident in the data was in their use as a pervasive and constant threat which the DEASP seemed to mention at every opportunity. Accordingly almost all interactions with the institution whether by letter or face to face are book ended with a threat.

> they are always saying like if you don't come to this we will cut you off and that would be your fault like, that, that then it's always like that's the sort of beginner is like woah … they usually would start the conversation like if you don't do this we can cut you off like, end of (pause) that's what they usually would say like at the start of it like and it's kind of like woah that's not really how you open with a presentation like (Barry)

This excerpt from an interview with Barry is typical in participants descriptions of activation meetings with the DEASP and the JobPath providers as it emphasises the constant repetition of the threat of sanctions which preface every meeting and bookends every written communication. There is a straightforward requirement for people to be made aware of the possibility of sanctions and as discussed above the sanctions in the Irish system are predominantly communicative. Yet despite this the constant reiteration of the threat creates a particular mood where people describe feeling constantly threatened and dictated to.

It is also worth noting how sanctions are communicated to Barry 'we will cut you off and that would be your fault'. This responsibilisation is a further key aspect of the sanctioning system under PTW with the message being that any sanctions imposed are fully the fault the individual who bears

sole responsibility for all outcomes relating to the process. Both control and activation sanctions put the responsibility for their application and escalation on those subjected to them. If a mailshot letter is not replied to within the given timeframe the administrative sanction is the fault of the individual who did not reply. If a penalty rate is applied then it is the responsibility of the person sanctioned to ensure that they meet the requirements and avoid further escalation. In this reckoning the institution is merely applying a rule and it is the individual who doesn't keep to the rules that is entirely responsible for the subsequent consequences. This system of sanctioning enjoins those subjected to it to a form of self-governance which responsibilises them and 'harnesses them in their own subjection' (Crewe 2011, p. 519).

This pervasiveness of threats in all communications and interactions with the DEASP are also linked by participants to feelings of anxiety and dread.

> well they say in the letters you're required to attend this meeting you're required to accept any position that's offered to you or else (laughs) you know it's (pause) it is the frontline (pause) of social welfare and what do they call them Intreo, the frontline is always defensive and (pause) and threatening you know (Dave)

Dave describes how correspondence with the DEASP can cause anxiety and worry due to the threatening tone typical of the letters. He goes on however to say that once he is at the meetings these feelings subside and that he is generally treated well at activation meetings. The point however is that the tone and content of the letters are unnecessarily hostile and threatening, have negative effects on many of the people who receive them and taint activation meetings with feelings of dread, anxiety and fear. In a similar fashion Jason also describes how correspondence with the DEASP always includes the threat of a possible withdrawal of payments.

> that's in every correspondence you get from them … every correspondence you get, failure to attend will result in the non- payment of benefits … em yeah it makes you feel like a victim like it makes you feel like oh crap I have, I have no choice but to go to this you know, what if you have a doctors appointment or if something happens unexpectedly you know do they take that into consideration because it doesn't say it does it's em (pause) yeah it's really demeaning actually you know and belittling (Jason)

What Jason describes here is the feeling of a lack of agency, an enforced removal of personal choice as he must submit entirely to the whims of the activation system and do whatever is demanded of him. Further to this he asks the question as to what would happen if he were

unable to attend for a legitimate reason. This is in keeping with sense of uncertainty with which some aspects of the activation services operate. The threat of sanctions is pervasive yet much of the language used in the regulations is vague and open to interpretation with some phrases lacking precise operational definition. The regulations state that a sanction will be levied if a meeting is missed without good reason yet there is no definition forthcoming which specify what constitutes a good reason and this opacity in definition of terms further contributes to the feelings of anxiety and dread.

It is imperative for the DEASP to keep unemployed people informed of the possibility of sanctions or penalty rates being applied. Without this happening there is always the risk of someone receiving a sanction due to a lack of knowledge. The DEASP has been entirely successful with regard to ensuring that each claimant is aware of the possibility of sanctions as is evidenced by each participant in this research mentioning them without prompting. There is however a balance to be struck between keeping people informed and repeatedly threatening them. Many of these threats are issued to people who are clearly complying with the directions they are being given and so are entirely redundant, in this sense much of the pervasive threats are counterproductive. The constant reminder of sanctions which is written in bold letters at the bottom of each correspondence and which prefaces each interaction with the DEASP creates a relationship of subordination. This relationship is one where the institution prominently and constantly displays a threat to the people it is working with and as is evident from the excerpts above this causes anxiety and for people to feel belittled and demeaned. At present engagement the activation system is run primarily around the threat of punishment, this section has demonstrated the ways in which this is counterproductive and redundant. If the aim of the system is that of ensuring compliance and engagement a more effective approach would be that of attempting to get people to buy into the aims, objectives and methods of the system. Such an approach would be in keeping with the aim of fostering legitimacy and in purely instrumental terms would be more likely to gain compliance.

10.2 Control Sanctions

The field work for this project was undertaken amidst the introduction of a range of harsh austerity measures which aimed to control public spending. Alongside the changes in the social welfare system outlined above which introduced codified sanctions and tightened up behavioural conditionality and activation there was a concurrent imperative to police fraud and overpayments. In practice this meant that control measures were actively pursued by the

department that aimed to check and double check that there was nobody in receipt of payments beyond which they were eligible for and entitled to. As part of these control measures there was also a ramping up of mailshot letters which are sent out to all recipients of social welfare payments. In essence these letters require people to reaffirm in writing that all of the details about them held by the department are correct and have not changed in any way that would alter their eligibility for the payment. In all cases with these mailshots failure to respond within a given timeframe means a suspension of the payment. This in itself is also a form of governmental intervention which enforces a particular specified response and it is interesting to examine how this is experienced.

Niall for example spoke of how he felt that he was always getting letters from the DEASP which demanded he account for himself and that he frequently resubmit data relating to his claim. He felt that this was a further part of the disciplinary apparatus of the social welfare system that victimised and controlled him.

> I: and why do you think they keep sending the stuff out then
>
> R: to annoy you, to keep you in check to tell you, you know it's like you're being blackmailed you know if you don't fill out this form within 7 days your payment will be cut that's all it says like … they do cut it, they cut it without even asking you what the reason is (Niall)

These letters are communicative of the fact that unemployed people are under the control of the DEASP and must act as directed at all times if they wish to retain their payments. They are thus an instance of government by remote control and are experienced as a form of coercive governmentality that extends the controlling reach of the institution into the homes of the people who receive them. Returning to Crewe's conceptions of punishment this type of supervision can be described in terms of its *tightness.* Being unemployed under an ALMP style system means being the subject of almost constant surveillance and supervision that can be switched on and intensified at almost any time. The forms of supervision of unemployed people under such active labour market policies are both 'diffuse' and 'pervasive' (McNeill 2019, p. 4) and the effects of it are felt far beyond the social welfare office. In this sense the sites of government are stretched beyond the Social Welfare office and into the homes and private lives of unemployed people. The use of letters as a means of directing people towards particular behaviours or of informing them of audits or appointments means that among participants of this study there was a strong feeling of dread communicated with regard to receiving correspondence from the DEASP. In the Irish context this sense of dread upon receiving

correspondence from the DEASP was also noted in a study carried out by Whelan who described it in terms of a 'fear of the postman' (Whelan 2020, p. 10).

10.2.1 Stretching Sites of Government

Discussions of the government of unemployment are often focussed on the sites where unemployment is governed such as the Social Welfare office and the various offices and sites of activation. A notable feature of PTW is that it has engendered a stretching of the sites of government from beyond these locales and into the homes and everyday lives of benefit recipients. The dual axes of government act simultaneously under the aegis of both an administrative/control axis and an axis of activation. Administrative governance operates by the constant checking and rechecking of entitlements, these processes are aptly described by the Department as 'control measures'. At the centre of the mode of justification for rolling out such measures is the assumption that in their absence fraud would proliferate. Once again this demonstrates how unemployed people are seen in an inherently negative fashion. Control measures are instituted to prevent fraud and deception just as activation measures are instituted to prevent malingering or long term dependency.

Once people are deemed eligible for a payment they are frequently called to re-prove their eligibility often with the requirement of documentary proof. In some instances this will involve no more than signing a declaration and posting it back to the office but in other cases it can include the requirement of re-gathering the necessary documentary evidence to support their claim to eligibility. Such measures give people a task to complete which is time limited, if it is not completed within a given time period their payments are stopped. Crucially the gathering of the requisite documentation can be a time consuming and even expensive task involving travelling into offices and having to pay for printing, photocopying and document retrieval from a meagre social welfare payment.

Mailshots form just one part of the process of periodic reviews of entitlements which are carried out by the Department. Other practices include the use of predictive analytics to try and predict instances of fraud or error as well as algorithmic data matching across state agency databases. There is also of course the anonymous fraud tip off line which allows concerned members of the public to inform on those who they suspect of welfare fraud and there has also been the foundation of a Special Investigations Unit (SIU) which includes staff on secondment from the Garda Siochana. The SIU is specifically tasked with policing welfare fraud and the shadow economy. As was demonstrated in chapter 5 the fetishisation of Social Welfare fraud is a form

of 'risk crazed governance' (Carlen 2008) as it is a problem which is massively over determined. The figures of fraud savings put into the public domain which claim to be the result of anti-fraud initiatives are misleading and sensationalist. They also serve as a means of justifying the close policing of social welfare recipients as they are all under suspicion of engaging in fraud.

The experience of being governed via such control measures as is evident from this study is that of an arbitrary, capricious form of government where people frequently describe feeling as if they are being victimised. The often random nature of the application of control measures make those subject to them feel as if they are being singled out or picked on. This is entirely at odds with the precepts of procedural justice which in turn has negative effects on the feelings of legitimacy amongst those who are subjected to them. They are experienced as a 'process punishment' (Feeley 1992) which is in place to make the life of an unemployed person unpleasant and to incentivise them into finding work as quickly as is possible. To be unemployed under this system is to be subject to constant categorical suspicion (Lyon 2007, p. 198) where every unemployed person is treated as if they potentially committing fraud or claiming more than they should and so everyone must be investigated, interrogated and put under surveillance by everyone.

What is common among the descriptions of control measures herein is that of surprise and confusion when they are levied and afterwards of constant worry about them reoccurring. Whether it is a knock on the door out of the blue from an inspector, a malicious and false accusation of fraud or indeed even more prosaically a letter from the Department it is a form of government which can be applied to any unemployed person at any time and at any place. As such these forms of government are seemingly random and have effects which last long beyond their actual application as people describe the constant worry that they will be singled out for investigation again. These actions of government coalesce and serve to condition social welfare recipients into particular subjectivities and forms of behaviour. As well as this these measures serve to stretch the site of government beyond the social welfare office and into almost all areas of social life including most crucially the home making them multi modal forms of government which are neither site specific nor temporally specific.

Control measures are thus a particularly 'painful' form of government because people's circumstances frequently change and they are required to manage how they present themselves to the institution, for example at what point does a relationship become something that must be

declared? As well as this the rules which determine eligibility are constantly changing which means that even if someone's personal situation hasn't changed the rules may well change around them. This was particularly the case during the time period when the fieldwork for this research was carried out as successive budgets introduced cost saving measures which tightened rules around eligibility. This 'pain' of indeterminacy (Durnescu 2010) makes control measures particularly opaque and difficult to understand which frequently means that people feel as if the Department is trying to catch them out and as if they are constantly under suspicion. As well as this control measures which are supposedly in place to detect welfare fraud and error do not come with the same procedural protections that activation sanctions do. As such they do not seem to be subject to similar levels of oversight and seem to be operated according to the whims of the department. Control sanctions and the institutional practices around them are thus characterised by their 'depth' (Crewe 2011) as they can be visited upon people at any time or place and seemingly for any reason. At best control measures will mean a hurried scramble for documentation, a gathering of administrative documents and forms which are necessary to prove eligibility. At worst such measures will mean disqualification from payment. As we will see below the ability to manage the institutional demands of activation and control measures are unequally distributed and people with experience in white collar work are far more likely to be able to comply than others who don't. With exceptions (Whelan 2020) this is a massively under researched aspect of the Irish Social Welfare system yet it in practice it seems to be more prevalent and far reaching than activation sanctions. As such the use and impact of control measures and associated sanctions is an area which warrants detailed further research.

10.2.2 Procedural Aspects of Control Sanctions

Control sanctions also differ procedurally from other forms of sanctions, as discussed above there are warning systems in place which mean that a person will know in advance that they are at risk of incurring a penalty rate. With control sanctions however it seems to be the case that once someone is deemed to be outside of eligibility or unresponsive to control measures they are simply cut off without warning. Control sanctions similarly do not follow the same pattern of escalation of punishment that starts with a twenty per cent penalty rate as is the case with activation sanctions. Instead the penalty involves the immediate and complete cessation of payment until the person can prove their entitlement. There were three instances of control sanctions among the sample gathered for this research. The first related to a participant having difficulty with her status as a student and of having her rent allowance payment stopped for

over four months leading to financial difficulties as she had to borrow money and to use her other benefits to keep her rent paid. The same participant also had her payments stopped entirely for three weeks until she could get a letter from the college she had been attending stating that she was no longer registered as a student. On each occasion that her payments were frozen or stopped she only found out when she was at the post office collecting the payment.

> in the instances that it all happened, I wasn't even told beforehand they just stopped and then I was like eh, what's happened, with my payment … and then a letter would come a few days later, oh well there was a letter sent out and I'm like I didn't get a letter … Yeah no warning nothing just stopped … you go and it's like what the fuck and you just feel, you actually feel winded like where's my money? Oh my God, what the fuck, what's happened now what the hell and you're there going what have I done now? Do you know? Even though I know I haven't actually done anything but it's like I've been you know, there, I've been, I'm punished here for doing something and I don't know what I've done but now I have to go and find out what I've done and like you know sometimes by the time you find out and get a hold of them it's late in the afternoon and they're like oh I don't know that will have to be referred back to XXX Street and I don't know contact this person and you're like Jesus Christ will someone just tell me! (Jane)

This demonstrates how the procedural steps taken in levying a control sanction differ from sanctions related to non-compliance with activation. Firstly there was no advance warning, in these instances Jane found out that her payments were stopped or reduced when she was at the Post Office and received less money than expected. This means that it was not possible for her to proactively engage with the DEASP to fulfil the conditions they were setting out for her to avoid a control sanction. Instead as she describes it the sanction was levied prior to her even knowing that she was in breach of any conditions. This makes the application of the sanction feel arbitrary and capricious 'I'm punished here for doing something and I don't know what I've done'. This type of operation of sanctioning fosters feelings of illegitimacy and resentment and often leads to the people subjected to them feeling as if they are being personally targeted rather than being subjects of a rational, impersonal and rules based system.

Another instance of a control sanction was described by Nora who had her payment stopped after a mix up with her address. She was living with her partner at the time who was also unemployed and they were registered with the DEASP as being a cohabiting couple, at some point however they had made an error on a social welfare form which meant that there were two different addresses for them on file. This discrepancy meant that they were subjected to a home inspection.

at about 10 past 6 at night we got a knock on the door and we opened the door and he said social welfare inspector and he literally walked into the house without any invitation and separated us, and he sent me to the kitchen and he sent (PARTNER) to the sitting room … I didn't really know what this was about and when I came back into the room he invited me back in after about 20 minutes 25 minutes I could see that (PARTNER) was upset and he was shaking (pause) and I said well what's going on here and he said you guys (pause) are you doing fraud? Or something like this and I was like (makes exasperated sound) how can we be fraudulent on the system I said when we are both claiming together? And he proceeded to make us feel like we were doing like we were committing a crime and interviewed me then in front of (PARTNER) after interviewing (PARTNER) separately (pause) had nothing to say but kind of shook us up and intimidated us … he interviewed me about my work situation and about em how long have we been living together and em and how long was I working how much (PARTNER) had been applying for work all these sorts of things or how much has (PARTNER) tried to get work (pause) … he left and afterwards we were so stunned we were upset and we were like why does that happen to us you know? … I felt like you know as though we were easy targets like we were being bullied by the system

This inspection was a deeply traumatic and disempowering experience that came entirely unexpectedly. This scene as described by Nora is one of intimidation and accusation; it was an institutional invasion of the home where some of the most unpleasant aspects of the social welfare office were transposed into the domestic realm. This again is a form of mobile governmentality where the seemingly random institutional interjection reached into the home lives of the claimants and subjected them to an ordeal that occurred primarily due to a clerical error. This ordeal was one where they were interrogated, intimidated and made feel as if they were criminals with blunt accusations of fraud being made against them. The sense of invasion of the home space is evident as Nora describes how the inspector 'literally walked into the house without any invitation and separated us'. In this instance the reach of coercive power extends beyond the expected confines of the institution and into the home arriving unprompted and unbidden.

 Social Welfare claimants under these enhanced control measures 'open themselves up to a potentially unending investigation' (Griffin 2015, p. 122). They are subject at any time and seemingly in any place to interrogations which serve to remind them that their situation is 'provisional and precarious, instead of considering 'entitlement' as a permanent and secure status' (Dubois 2019, p.184). Their status as unemployed deems them a suspect to be continuously monitored, investigated and interrogated. Control measures are unending and at any time benefit recipients can be called to account for their eligibility, they can be interrogated under suspicion of fraud and can be required to compile and resubmit all documentary evidence in support of their claim.

This brings to mind the idea of 'apparent acquittal' from the novel The Trial by Franz Kafka where there is an acquittal for the accused person in the lower courts which brings a temporary stop to the proceedings. This stop however is tempered by the knowledge that they can be reactivated at any time by the higher courts and the ordeal of accusation and the trial can be restarted over and over again. Apparent acquittal is thus where defendants have the status of temporarily 'being detached from the charge, but it still hovers over you and can be instantly reactivated' (Kafka 2000, p. 124). The court 'never forgets' (ibid p 124) and defendants can be called back at any time in future to account for themselves over and again. In this sense the defendant is eternally accountable to the court. In a similar vein control measures bring forth the potentially recursive necessity of accounting for one's eligibility, of being interrogated or having to interminably produce documents and resubmit forms.

The main outcome of Nora's experience was that of instilling a sense of trepidation and fear in all dealings with the DEASP which meant that both her and her partner became pliable and meek Welfare subjects who were less likely to stand up for themselves or to question decisions made relating to their entitlements. After the inspection their payment was stopped and it was not until they followed the instruction of the citizen's advice bureau and reapplied that they got their payment reinstated. Crucially however they missed out on a number of weeks back pay to which they were technically entitled.

> R: it wasn't backdated all the way back like we were meant to get but it was something
>
> I: and did you ever push to try and get back
>
> R: (quietly) no (pause) I was (pause) just happy to have *something* you know, and you don't want to you know, you feel sometimes that you should be so gracious for this money you don't want to push anyone's buttons or upset anyone (Nora)

This type of meek acceptance of a decision that cost them financially corresponds in broad terms with what Braithwaite terms the motivational posture of disengagement. Motivational postures 'capture the ways in which regulatees position themselves in relation to regulatory authority' (Braithwaite 2003, p. 17). There are five postures described, namely commitment, capitulation, resistance, disengagement, and game playing. Commitment and capitulation are forms of deference to the regulatory authority, in both cases they are motivational postures which are rooted in the regulatee feeling a sense of legitimacy towards the regulatory power. Disengagement on the other hand is not rooted in a sense of legitimacy yet sees little point in challenging the form that regulation takes. In Nora's case she did not accept the legitimacy of

the regulation and felt she had been unfairly singled out and mistreated but she did not challenge her treatment as she didn't 'want to push anyone's buttons or upset anyone' despite the fact that as she describes it they were eligible for back pay.

In a similar fashion Jane displays a posture of capitulation when after a number of instances of problems maintaining her benefits due to control measures being applied she seemingly gives up.

> I: did that change how you dealt with them when you went back in afterwards
>
> P: well yeah I mean (pause) … yeah I was very kind of anxious and I suppose I did have kind of my back up a little bit with it as well like but (pause) at the same time there's nothing I can do (pause) do you know you just have to play the game, you have to play *their* game you have to play along with it and you just have to go, yeah, no, ok, mm, alright ok, that's great, you can cut me off anytime you want, ok just you know, you can't (sigh) (Jane)

This is an unintended consequence of the tightening of control measures for social welfare payments. Interactions with the DEASP relating to control measures are stressful and are fraught with the possibility that saying the wrong thing –even if you don't know what that is- could mean that your payment is stopped. The fact that eligibility criteria are constantly subject to change can mean that even though your circumstances haven't changed you may have become ineligible. This means that in this case at least Nora would rather have taken the financial hit than entangle herself in the bureaucratic machinations that would be a part of appealing the decision. In this way control measures such as house visits can act as a means of deterrence that acts against people challenging decisions or putting their case forward. Experiences such as these serve to instil a sense of fear around dealing with the institution and this sense of fear acts in a disciplinary sense to mould meek and passive subjectivities where people are less likely to challenge decisions and stick up for themselves. It is an unanticipated finding of this research that control measures and control sanctions have turned out to be more punitive and cause more confusion and hardship than activation sanctions. One reason for this is that control sanctions do not have the same protections and warning systems that activation sanctions do. The period directly after the financial crash in Ireland is that which is most closely associated with the ramping up of these control measures. To this end they were part of a heavily publicised attempt to cut costs and to save money for a beleaguered exchequer. It is questionable however the extent to which this approach actually saves money and there are questionable practices evident in the way that the Department reports the extent of savings made.

10.3 Malicious Accusations of Fraud

As part of the broader control measures that aimed to reduce social welfare spending a specialist unit was set up for the investigation of fraud. This much-publicised Special Investigations Unit (SIU) included twenty members of the Garda Siochana who were specially seconded. The founding of this unit alongside the subsequent welfare cheats cheat us all campaign served to form a discursive coupling of unemployment and crime. The increased control measures also included the setting up of a confidential 'hotline' that would allow members of the public to report any suspicions they may have of other people committing social welfare fraud. It was and still is possible to make such allegations anonymously which means that it is possible for people to make malicious fraud accusations against people. This is exactly what happened to Justin, he left one GAA club to play for another and when he returned to face his old team he was involved in a number of on field fights.

> R: I was playing and there was murders on the field anyway and they were trying to kill me and yokes but em I was having a bit of a row with a fellas son so, two or three weeks passed … and em I got a letter from the social welfare inspector so I knew straight away like I said I knows exactly what that's over, that's your man that done it like so, I was fairly worried like 'cos says I like they could cut me off the dole or something … she said that I was working for some fella this is what she told me she said I have reports of you working for a fella and I started laughing
>
> I: so someone rang in and said
>
> R: yeah someone rang in and I was after having an argument with yer man and he told lies about me and said I was working for a, for em oh what was it I can't think of the man's name, some fella anyway so I started laughing like and eh you're getting so much for wages, says I if I was sure why would I be on the dole like? Something like six or seven hundred pound says I I'd love to have that I'd love to, I'd love it if I had six or seven hundred pound a week I wouldn't bother coming down to see youse so they told lies like he told lies because I was a traveller (claps hands) she jumped straight away at it bang straight into me, so she was haunting me for about months she keeps sending me letters

Justin was involved in a fight while playing hurling for his new club against his former team, as he tells it the father of the person he was fighting with made the false allegation of fraud against him. He was accused of working for cash in hand while claiming a jobseekers payment which is referred to elsewhere as 'doing the double' (Howe 1990). He also makes mention of the fact that because he is a traveller the official at the DEASP was more inclined to believe the allegations made against him. The Minceirí or Traveller community in Ireland are undoubtedly discriminated against (Fanning 2002, 2012; Joyce 2015) particularly in the domains of employment and accessing services. Institutional racism is that which occurs 'when

racism within society becomes reflected within organisations and institutions' (Fanning 2002, p.180). In this case the imputed belief that Minceirí are more likely to commit fraud is what Justin believes has been reflected by the DEASP official and the decision to further investigate these claims. There is no way of verifying this version of events as such allegations are made anonymously. The key point here is that despite being the victim of a malicious and false accusation there were serious negative consequences for Justin as he was subject to close scrutiny and had all aspects of his claim reviewed along with the necessity of resubmitting all the paperwork to support his claim.

As part of the additional scrutiny that arose due to this allegation Justin was required to regularly attend the DEASP offices and was subject to intensive questioning and personal scrutiny and faced the full range of control measures which included resubmitting all data and documentation pertaining to his claim. This was especially difficult for Justin as he was illiterate which obviously made such processes far more difficult than would be the case for others. Over time this repeated and intensive scrutiny became particularly stressful and distressing and took its toll on him.

> at the end of it I just said look says I, I'm just gonna throw meself in the river says I to be honest I'm fed up listening to yis you know, so I said to her as well, listen, have you anything on me? Have you caught me working, I don't work or do nothing says I, have you done anything with me? Have you anything to stop, stop me coming down here to sign and cut me off me dole says I have you anything to do that? No she says, well then say I why do you keep bringing me down here? … so she said listen she said I won't have, I'm happy I'm satisfied now so there'll be no more (Justin)

Eventually after a continued and sustained period of scrutiny the stress of the situation forced Justin into a confrontation with the DEASP official. In the previous chapter we saw how strategic crying was part of the response to stressful situations in the DEASP office. In this instance the prolonged stress boiled over and resulted in an angry confrontation where Justin challenged his treatment and threatened to kill himself. It was only after this that he was relieved of the extra scrutiny and accusation of working while claiming. This incident demonstrates how the broader campaigns to police social welfare fraud can be used maliciously. It shows how some unemployed people are viewed with 'categorical suspicion' (Marx 1988, p. 219) where they are viewed as being suspect by the sole fact of their being a member of a particular group. In this case the accusation of doing the double was unfounded yet Justin still had to bear the consequences and face intense institutional scrutiny.

10.4 Activation Sanctions

As described above control sanctions are those that are levied in the process of recertification for continued eligibility. Activation sanctions are those that are levied in response to a perceived failure on the part of the claimant to engage with the activation services. At the initial stages of becoming eligible for a job seekers payment the claimant must attend a group activation session and subsequently a one on one meeting with an Intreo advisor. At the one to one meeting an agreement is made between the individual and their advisor that outlines the actions to be taken to assist them in getting to work. According to the official documentation and to the information on the website of the citizens advice bureau failure of the claimant to keep to the 'promises' contained in this document is enough to merit the imposition of a sanction. In practice however the imposition of penalty rates primarily occurs in response to a claimant missing an activation meeting with Intreo or the JobPath provider.

There were few participants in this study who had been subject to an activation sanction with only two people having a penalty rate applied with one person having it applied on two separate occasions. This is in keeping with the broader regime of activation sanctions in Ireland that levies a low number of sanctions in comparison with other countries. A further reason why there were few activation sanctions recorded in the data relates to the time that the fieldwork was predominantly carried out which is in 2015 and 2016 which corresponds to a period of time when the system of sanctions was yet to be fully bedded in. The number of sanctions levied was low until 2016 and they more than doubled between 2015 and 2017. This increase in sanctions however has to be set alongside an overall decrease in rates of unemployment meaning that the higher number of sanctions were levied on a decreasing number of people.

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Penalty Rates Applied	359	1519	3395	5325	6743	10,867	16,451	16,022
People with PR Applied	353	1471	3179	4969	6115	9565	13,503	12,380

Figure 29 Penalty Rates by Year

10.4.1 Niall

As has been discussed in the previous chapter Niall had a penalty rate applied after he missed an activation appointment with Turas Nua. By his account he had recently moved house and claimed that he never received the appointment letter and only found out about the appointment when he received an email informing him that he had missed it and was likely to face the prospect of having a penalty rate applied.

> I moved house to, a month ago and I got a text message no I got an email saying you missed your appointment and I text back saying no I never got an appointment and they said they sent one down and I said yeah did you get me new address she said yes well I said I never got a letter then they said well you're gonna get cut now and I said well I'm being cut for an appointment I never missed like because I never got the appointment and I got told I got cut €45 …   I told them I said to the one here's you cut me off the dole without even asking me why I missed the appointment was there some kind of situation, no you just cut me off and she said that's the way it is and all

In this version of events Niall had a penalty rate applied due to an administrative error that was not his fault, he moved house and claimed that the appointment letter did not make it to his new address. A similar thing happened to Amy who lives in the same town as Niall and used the same Turas Nua office.

> they eh there was a while back there about 2 months ago they told me I used to go down every week or every couple of weeks down to (TOWN) and eh she rang me up and told me I missed me appointment but I hadn't got appointment she never give me the appointment the last day I was down and eh she rang up and told me I missed I said I didn't because you didn't give me appointment so she said that's alright then so she sent me out one but she never cut me now 'cos she knew then she wasn't after giving me appointment … she told me I missed me appointment but she never give me appointment … I told her I hadn't got appointment because she never she didn't give me one like (Amy)

In both of these cases an activation meeting with Turas Nua was missed with each participant claiming that they had not received the letter of appointment, both participants were from the same town and so were dealing with the same people. While Niall ended up being sanctioned Amy didn't and instead had her appointment rescheduled for a later date. The difference in these outcomes is stark and can mostly be explained by the difference in their respective reactions. While Amy seemingly played along with the process she was firm but respectful in making her case; Niall on the other hand reacted to these events by going aggressively on the attack.

> R: I told her what she was on the phone and eh I doubt you want to hear what I said to her

I: no go on tell me

R: I just told her yis are a crowd of pricks the whole lot of yis, yis are ripping us off for no reason, the only reason I missed it because em I didn't get a letter

After this exchange that happened on the telephone Niall went to the Turas Nua office to confront his advisor who Niall claims admitted to him that it was likely that they had made a mistake and not sent out the appointment letter to the correct address.

I: and when you went in to say I never got the letter, what did they say to you or

R: they said it sent to your address and I said of course here's of course you're gonna say that here's I don't care about cover ups ah here's I know it's only €44 or whatever but look at the end of the day that's a lot to me and then they said well look we don't control the dole office n'all here and I said are you (exasperated) this like I know, yis aren't even sorry for it yis are delighted you sound delighted and all and then (advisor) came over and said look Noel em (pause) it probably was a mistake on our part but we can't change our minds now if they're after cutting you … they made the mistake and they never owned up for it that's what annoys me about them … I said … look I don't care I didn't make that mistake I got no letter in the post saying I had a, I never got an email and they can't say they forgot because they're well able to text me 2 minutes after the appointment was supposed to start saying I missed it, I, I ate that (advisor) fella I said, I said em I didn't get eh or do you not think I'd be sitting down there with you if I got the appointment I hadn't missed one yet (pause) he said look sorry about that Niall look just tell them that up in the dole office and they'll probably go easy on you (voice raises considerably) I said why can't you not tell them you made the mistake you sent out the letter and here he was I'll see what I can do and I emailed him twice after that here did you tell 'em? I never got one back, I emailed him again did you tell him, I never got one back, I haven't heard from him since

The appointment that Niall missed was with Turas Nua who are one of the contracted JobPath providers. None of the JobPath providers have the power to levy sanctions against their clients yet they do inform the DEASP when a client misses meetings or is not engaging. When this happens a decision as to whether or not to sanction is taken by an official in the DEASP. This explains why the advisor in Turas Nua could not simply reverse the process and he sent Niall down to the DEASP office in the hope that they 'go easy' on him. In doing this the advisor is effectively telling him that despite admitting to the likelihood that it was his mistake he will not do anything to remedy the situation and Niall will have to go to the DEASP office and make his case. While recounting this event in the interview Niall became visibly agitated and by the end of the passage quoted above he was shouting which demonstrated how the anger and frustration brought on by these events were palpable even weeks after they had occurred.

so then I had to go up from Turas Nua up to the post to the wherever the dole whatever you call it in (TOWN), had to wait an hour for the woman to come out … she was really ignorant … I said em I received a letter I received a letter and I just want to say here's I didn't get an appointment here's you can go down to Turas Nua here's what, what did she say em we, we don't travel from one building to another asking questions Noel and I said yeah but yis are after cutting me €44 for nothing

According to Niall's version of events he ended up being drawn into the sanctioning process through no fault of his own and that once it had started there was no way of stopping it as both Turas Nua and the DEASP passed him back and forth between them without ever giving him any constructive help or advice. In this sense it is akin to getting caught in a machine that once he is dragged into it he has little power or ability to extricate himself and there must submit to its operation. Faced with this situation frustration once again got the better of him and as discussed above in chapter 8.3 he reacted in anger and threatened the DEASP official.

Niall described in his interview how he was expelled from school when he was 14 and he had completed his leaving certificate outside of the school system with the help of tutors. He was in the process of writing a novel and was evidently an intelligent person yet he had never held down a job outside of training course placements and had difficulty engaging with institutions. Amy and Niall started from the same position, they both received a message saying that they had missed an appointment for which they both claimed they were never informed of in advance yet Amy managed to get the situation cleared up without a sanction being applied. Niall on the other hand lost his temper and reacted with anger meaning that even though by his own account he was entirely in the right he ended up having to accept the sanction due to his angry reaction and the threats he made.

Didier Fassin writing about the court system describes how some people possess the requisite 'social competences' (Fassin 2018, p. 108) to argue their case and to assert their rights while others who lack such competences can end up faring comparatively badly in disciplinary situations. Such competences are often closely linked to broader sociological categorisations such as social class where membership of a given social class will also mean a concomitant social habitus that includes the possession of some types of social capital. This will allow some people to know implicitly the rules of interaction with the institution and to manage the interactions in a way that will ensure a positive outcome or at least avoid the most negative outcome. In this instance Niall lacked these social competences and reacted to the unfair imposition of a sanction by going on the attack meaning that ultimately he had to accept the consequences even though he was in the right. In this situation the absence of the necessary

social competences required to manage the institutional interactions meant that even though he had a legitimate reason for not attending the meeting he had to accept the negative outcome of the penalty rate.

10.4.2 Kathleen

The other participant in this research who had a penalty rate applied had it happen on two separate occasions. Kathleen who was described in the previous chapter was a teenager when her parents died, she managed to finish school and had intermittent part-time work and education in the meantime interspersed with long periods of unemployment and casual work in the 'grey' economy (Venkatesh 2006). As was evident in the previous chapter she experienced many difficulties in dealing with the unemployment services and these difficulties were noticeably exacerbated by activation measures. The first instance where she had a penalty rate applied happened because she missed a monthly Intreo activation meeting.

> I went down and I said eh I had an interview for Intreo and I went to the interview on the 29th of February I think it was and they said you have another appointment the next day for the 1st of March and I said that's fine I got an interview for a job that morning for (CALL CENTRE) and I rang in and I have witnesses that even heard me on the phone saying em will my money be affected if I go to this interview like will it be alright will I cancel that and she was like that's fine, that's fine no bothers

What is firstly worth making mention of here is the fact that according to Kathleen two Intreo one to one meetings were scheduled so close together. This is not in keeping with what the supposed aims of these one to one meetings as the point of each meeting is to set targets for actions to find work or training and to review the progress made on targets set in previous meetings. If there were two monthly meetings arranged within days of each other it would not be possible for this to take place and the second meeting would be pointless. When Kathleen managed to get a job interview for a position in a local call centre she made sure to ring the Intreo office to inform them of the job interview and to make sure that she would not be penalised for missing the meeting. This message however was not properly recorded and Kathleen had a penalty rate applied for missing the second Intreo meeting.

> I had the interview on the 1st of March and then that following, that Friday coming was when they said basically nah so that was it, they said basically you are reduced on the Friday and then I couldn't go in 'til the Monday 'cos they only sent it on the email and I got home and found the letter and I was like what, and then Monday morning I went straight down and she said well your case officer isn't here at the moment but I'll leave her, she said email me the email you got from (CALL CENTRE) proof of the interview, which I did she gave me the email address I didn't hear anything she said I'll give you a phone

call in the morning as soon as that goes in, I had no phone call so I went back down that day and said what the hell is happening and eh they were like no one's here at the moment but we'll let her know, they just kept like telling me

After the mistake being made and a penalty rate being applied erroneously it was further compounded by the delay of Intreo in rectifying it. When she went into the office to explain what had happened she was asked for documentary evidence that she provided and was told that her advisor would be in contact with her. This contact did not happen for almost a week despite Kathleen frequently calling in to the office and asking for help. This meant that even though the penalty rate was applied in error it ended up in effect for two weeks which caused her significant financial difficulty.

It is worth pointing out again that this sanction occurred because Kathleen had missed an Intreo appointment to attend a job interview. The entire focus of work first ALMP's such as Pathways to Work is that of getting people into work so under normal circumstances an actual job interview should be the top priority. Despite this, her non- attendance at an Intreo activation meeting was erroneously recorded as an absence without good reason, which meant that she faced a penalty rate

> so basically I thought well I'd rather go for an interview for a job rather than go for an interview about getting one

A further point from the excerpt of Kathleen's interview relates to the *depth* of the punishment, in a description above of the operation of the sanctioning system the underpinning logic was described in terms of the initial sanction being shallow. This would be the case in most instances as the initial reduction of approximately twenty percent would not lead to destitution. Due to her age however Kathleen was in receipt of a lower rate of payment and this meant that every cent of her money was carefully accounted for and managed. This meant that 'getting by' (McKenzie 2015) was the product of an almost forensic level of planning and manging money, of delicately balancing and scheduling the payment of debts and bills so as to keep essential services intact. The application of a penalty rate knocked these carefully managed plans into disarray and caused long lasting financial hardship that had knock on effects with regard to her ability to keep bills paid and essential services and utilities active.

> I had no electricity in the house n'all like and they knew that, they absolutely knew that … they cancelled the bins because I couldn't pay them and then there's just rubbish piling up then I got a letter from the

county council saying it was a health hazard and I'm like it's never ending with me I feel like I can't do anything else because I don't have the money to get rid of all those bits I can't afford a skip eh I can't afford to get bins yet properly because I'm only on a hundred a week well the last few weeks I've been on 70 so I really can't get bins like you know on top of food electricity and everything else you know it's ridiculous, there's no help from them, there's no help at all they really don't help especially with me anyway it's just hardship

In this instance her electricity was cut and in order to get it reconnected she had to use money that would usually be set aside to pay for her refuse collection. This of course meant that her rubbish was no longer collected and it began to pile up. The ever expanding pile of rubbish in her back yard thus became a very literal metaphor for her ever increasing financial problems, the bigger it got the less likely she would be able to get it cleared. This in turn meant that she came to the attention of the local council who deemed it a health hazard meaning that she risked further fines and prosecution. It is evident therefore that even allowing for the fact that the Irish system of sanctioning is relatively benign in international comparative terms it still has the capability of causing extreme financial problems which can have serious negative knock on effects. Unemployed people by necessity must keep to a strict budget and juggle bills and payments so as to keep services and utilities operational. As is evident from Kathleen's description above even a minor change in circumstance such as the application of a penalty rate for two weeks knock these carefully planned budgets out of kilter and cause serious and long lasting financial difficulties.

Despite the initial penalty rate being low there is evidence from interviews of them causing long term financial difficulties that were incredibly difficult for those subject to them to recover from. This was particularly the case with younger people who were placed on the age related lower rate of payment although others who were not on the reduced rates also reported struggles in balancing their finances for quite some time after being sanctioned. This is because the rates of payment for all unemployed people are far below what is required to live comfortably. This is plainly evident if we look at how the rate for the initial rate for the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) was set at almost 75% higher than the existing Job Seekers payments. To live on social welfare benefits is to bring the practice of budgeting to the level of a fine art. It involves 'getting by' (McKenzie 2015) through strategically managing which bills are paid when so as to keep all services and utilities in operation. Scheduling and managing what gets paid when is an intricate balancing act that is quickly thrown off kilter by a reduction in payment. While the design of the Irish system is undoubtedly less punitive than that of other

jurisdictions the fact still remains that sanctions by their nature involve taking money from some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in society. To this end they are morally indefensible yet in functional terms of utility there is also an increasing consensus that they are ineffective (Calmfors et al. 2001) and while they may increase the likelihood of exiting unemployment (Lalive et al 2005) they serve to push people into lower paid (Arni et al 2012) more precarious jobs that they are less likely to stay in long term (Card et al. 2010; Kluve 2010; Rubery et al 2018).

10.5 Stratification and Sanctions

Even though the numbers of participants of this study who incurred activation sanctions are low it is nonetheless worthwhile to note the cases where it did happen and to examine the circumstances. The previous chapter noted differences in participant's capability in managing the bureaucratic imperatives of the social welfare system. In particular people with experience in administration or with higher levels of education were more capable of managing these demands than others who did not have these characteristics or were lacking in these types of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieau 1986). What is clear from the limited sample here is that similar factors apply to managing the processes around activation sanctions and avoiding them. People with lower education and less experience of an administrative office type environment were more likely to end up facing an activation sanction. In much the same way that people with higher levels of education and experience in administrative work environments were better equipped to manage their claim they similarly were better equipped at avoiding sanctions and penalty rates.

An overarching feature of the harms of both activation and sanctions are the ways in which they are unequally distributed. Pathways to Work introduced a form of data-based discrimination that aimed to sort people according to their Probability of Exit (PEX). The logic behind this was that people who needed more help to get work would be prioritised above those who needed less help and would be more likely to find work themselves. In this sense data based discrimination is written into the processes of PTW, it is a codified system of 'social sorting' (Lyon 2007, p. 204) which facilitates practices of rational discrimination. As well as this significant aspects of the activation system are geared towards a predominantly middle class sensibility, as was shown in chapter 8 people who are more educated and particularly those who have experience in administrative white collar type roles were far better equipped to manage their responsibilities as an Active Welfare subject. Similarly people who lacked such experience were far more likely to find it difficult to keep up with the administrative demands

placed on them. Social capital is the key point here as people who have higher levels of education and/or white collar types of work experience are at an advantage to those who don't. If we consider both administrative and activation sanctions to be a form of punishment then the question relates to the 'distribution' (Fassin 2018, p. 91) of these punishments. Both control sanctions and activation sanctions seem to be primarily levied on those who do not have the experience or know how to manage administrative institutional relationships. In this sense there is a regressive distribution of punishment under PTW as it is primarily levied on people who inhabit the lower rungs of the social scale.

As well as the fact that the punishment of sanctions are regressively distributed there is also a marked social difference in how people are capable of dealing with a sanction once it has been levied. The data gathered here demonstrates how people with stronger social ties and family networks to fall back on are better insulated and indemnified against their worst outcomes. We saw for example how when Jane temporarily lost access to her housing payments she was able to borrow money from family to tide her over. In comparison when Kathleen had an initial sanction put on her Jobseekers payment there were numerous knock on effects which caused long term financial problems. While in pure monetary terms Jane was subject to a much higher sanction and had more money taken from her for a longer period of time she had recourse to a network of social and family ties which allowed her to soften the financial blow of the sanction.

Kathleen on the other hand was already on a low rate of Jobseekers payment due to her age and was operating on a tight budget. While the sanction that was levied on her was only a portion of her payment for a few weeks she did not have the familial or social network and could not borrow money to tide her over. This shows how financial sanctions have different effects on people according to their broader circumstances. The control sanction of cutting housing benefit caused serious upset and harm yet it did not cause the same extent of financial hardship despite it being a much higher amount levied for a far longer time.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the operation of sanctions under PTW as described by participants in this research. There are two types of sanction which were discussed namely control sanctions and activation sanctions. The most common way in which sanctions operate is in their usage as a suspended threat which hangs over all interactions and communications with the DEASP. This constant threat causes unnecessary stress and anxiety to unemployed people the vast majority of whom are engaging with the system and doing exactly what is required of them. In

this sense much of the use of sanctions as an ambient pervasive threat is redundant as it is directed at people who are in total compliance. This chapter also described how control sanctions caused chaos for people subjected to them. Since control sanctions do not have the same procedural protections as activation sanctions they are experienced as being capricious and applied randomly. The prevalence of control sanctions also speaks to a form of government which is stretched far beyond the site of the welfare office and we have seen how they reached into people's homes. As well as reaching beyond the site of the welfare office this stretching of government also went beyond welfare officers being governors. We saw how Stephen was subject to intensive institutional scrutiny due to a malicious and anonymous accusation that he was committing fraud. Finally this chapter demonstrated how both types of sanctions disproportionately target those on the lower rungs of the social scale. By definition social welfare sanctions are already aimed some of the most vulnerable people yet we have seen furthermore how there are stark differentials which determine firstly whether or not people get sanctioned but also in cases where they do some people are in a far stronger position to manage the sanction than others. As such both forms of sanctions are regressively distributed and serve to levy harsher punishments on those who are least equipped to bear them.

Chapter 11 Discussion and Conclusion

'If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin' (Charles Darwin 1845)

11.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to examine the experience of being unemployed under PTW with a particular focus on how people were treated under the nascent system of behavioural conditionality which is underpinned with a graduated response style system of sanctions. A key starting point herein is the assertion that unemployment is not simply the lack of a job; it involves the application of an administrative and governmental status and the introduction of a new form of status was at the core of PTW. This new status of the active jobseeker is one which is subject to a series of actions which aimed to incentivise certain behaviours and dis-incentivise others as unemployed people are 'nudged' out of unemployment and into work or training. A key aspect of the legitimising rationale for PTW was that of avoiding the occurrence of long term unemployment. The fieldwork for this project coincided with the direct aftermath of the fallout from the financial crisis and the subsequent bail out. It was a time of crisis when unemployment rates ran consistently high and there were fears of this leading to a lengthy economic depression.

It is notable how under these circumstances far reaching institutional transformations occurred most notably in the operation of the social welfare system. There is much in the design of PTW that is less severe in comparison to other jurisdictions. For example the rates of sanction incurred are far less severe than OECD norms with less of a financial penalty being levied for a shorter period of time. As well as this despite massive increases year on year in the numbers of people being sanctioned these rates are still proportionately far lower than are found elsewhere. As such the Irish system of benefit sanctions is not overly punitive and is not geared towards disentitlementarianism (Peck 2001). Despite these caveats this research along with others (Boland 2015, 2021; Boland & Griffin 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018; Finn 2019, 2021; Gaffney & Millar 2020; Millar & Crosse 2017; Murphy 2015, 2017; Whelan 2020, 2021, 2021a) has found evidence of many negative features of the Social Welfare system in Ireland under PTW. This concluding chapter will begin with a brief summary of this research before listing the theoretical and policy based contributions to the literature. It will then discuss the core findings which relate to the experience of activation, behavioural conditionality and sanctions in the Irish context in terms of the 'pains' (Sykes 1958) that they engender which are regressively distributed among the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

11.2 Summary and Aims

The aim of this research was to critically examine the lived experience of behavioural conditionality, activation and sanctions in the Irish context under the raft of changes introduced as part of PTW. As such the aims of this study were

- To investigate the policy origins of the 'Pathways to Work' with particular emphasis on social, economic and political discourses on the regulation of work and poverty
- To examine the institutional operation of the nascent system of increased behavioural conditionality and the system of formalised graduated sanctions
- To contribute to the understanding of the lived experience of activation, behavioural conditionality and sanctions
- To examine how unemployed people are governed under PTW and how they are enjoined to embrace the subjectivity of being a job seeker and to examine whether they accept the underlying rationale
- To investigate how claimants experience and negotiate the various new interventions and sanctions
- To explore how the threat of, and in some cases the actual imposition of, sanctions impacts on claimants' well-being and behaviour
- To investigate differences between the experience of activation according to location and demographics. To ascertain whether people are treated differently according to their social background and circumstances (lone parents, gender, age, ethnicity etc.).

This was done by carrying out in depth interviews with 33 participants with 15 of these including repeat interviews. These interviews covered a range of topics which included the circumstances by which participants became unemployed. This demonstrated the range of pathways into unemployment as amongst the sample there were many varied stories which detailed personal troubles such as bereavement or relationships breakdowns. As well as this larger structural causative elements were evident such as the poor economic situation at the time or institutional racism and discrimination. In the process of describing the various facets of unemployment there were notable divisions between the experiences of unemployment and the experiences of being institutionally governed as an unemployed person.

Chapter 7 described features of the experience of being unemployed which are commonly found elsewhere including that of the material deprivations, financial difficulties and

constraints of living hand to mouth on a limited income with some participants describing how they exist rather than live (Edminston 2020, p. 47). These problems were particularly pointed for participants aged 25 and under as during the period of the fieldwork the rate of jobseekers payment for those aged 18 to 25 was drastically cut with the stated rationale being that of incentivising participation in activation measures. This severe 'agency restriction' (Fryer 1986) meant that mobility was curtailed and occasions for social interaction were increasingly limited. The financial constraints of being unemployed also meant that many participants were required to expend considerable mental energy in budgeting. Bills were strategically delayed and balanced from one month to the next so as to manage expenses while keeping all services intact. The stress and mental energy expended in doing this took a cumulative toll. Unsurprisingly and in keeping with much of the literature on the effects of unemployment there were frequent discussions about the negative impact on their mental health. While impossible to authoritatively determine causal links between unemployment and any mental health conditions each participant who discussed them believed that being unemployed was at the very least a participating factor. A recurring theme amongst these discussions was feelings of hopelessness and despair as unemployment was an ordeal which must be faced for an indeterminate period of time. Outside of the difficulties of getting by on a small fixed income the other main problems discussed were those of social isolation and loneliness as descriptions of being excluded from occasions of sociability were common.

While this is common in much of the literature on unemployment a rarely remarked upon feature was that there can be periods of unemployment that are enjoyable. Many forms of contemporary work are stressful and physically and mentally taxing and so there were instances where initial periods of unemployment were experienced as a welcome break. It was a time to watch TV box sets, to redecorate the house or to spend time with others. An important point however is that the negative features of unemployment as described above did set in after the initial holiday of unemployment.

Chapter 8 looked at the social welfare office and staff and the processes involved in getting and maintaining a job seekers payment. As a 'non place' (Auge 1995) the social welfare office is set up to process large numbers of people with ticketing systems and queue management railings in place. As such participants often described them in terms of being treated like a number rather than a person. These offices are complex sites of institutional interaction which enact 'divestment passages' (Ezzy 1993, p. 49) which bestow the status of unemployment on people. They are sites which are imbued with stigma shame and embarrassment and as such

they are sites which are frequently highly emotionally charged. Outbursts of anger and people crying were described as commonplace and a number of participants described instances where they were upset in the social welfare office. Social Welfare benefits are usually the last resort for people and as such problems, delays or disqualification from payment carries with it the threat of destitution. It is thus perhaps unsurprising that emotions frequently run high. The prevalence and intensity of strong emotional outbursts make the social welfare office a highly charged place which is fraught and combustible. In this manner emotional outbursts whether they are manifested in threats, crying or running out of the office are predictable reactions to the stresses and antagonisms that are evident in an environment where people are subject to high levels of regulation such as the social welfare office.

Chapter 9 described the experiences and outcomes of the close regulation typical of work first ALMP's in terms of them engendering specific 'pains' (Sykes 1958). These activation measures seemed to mostly involve the attempt to get people into whatever work was available rather than suitable. This was particularly the case for people who were forced to engage with JobPath as they reported being pressured into applying for work that was unsuitable. This demonstrated a complete lack of agency for some people as they were forced under threat of sanctions to apply for whatever work their supervisor deemed appropriate. This speaks to further problems with the sense of legitimacy felt by participants. In the absence of their own voice, input and agency into matters pertaining to their own careers there was a sense of power being enacted upon them rather than them having an active input into their own affairs. This was perhaps best exemplified by participants describing being spoken 'at' rather than spoken 'to'. Being forced to apply for every available job meant that participants reported some absurd examples where they had to apply for work for which they were patently unsuited. In this sense there was an aspect of many participants being set up to fail (Reeves and Loopstra 2016) and the repeated rejections took their toll with a number of participants becoming dejected and disillusioned with the process of job seeking. In this sense rather than encouraging people into work PTW acted to have the opposite effect and caused disengagement with the process of jobseeking.

As well as being a means of setting people to apply for work there was a strong emphasis in PTW on training. As was demonstrated in chapter 9 much of the training was of a poor standard and was of a one size fits all type variety with this particularly being the case for people who were on the JobPath scheme. Given the overarching features of behavioural conditionality under PTW participation in training was mandatory and non- engagement was punishable with

a sanction. Types of training included that of confidence courses which were aimed at addressing personal deficiencies and creating a jobseeker with the outward countenance of being happy and confident. Such affective management or 'psycho-compulsion' (Friedli & Stearn 2015) locates the problem of unemployment at the level of the individual and their attitude and behaviour and addresses the solutions to unemployment at this level. Chapter 9 also discussed some of the superficial self-help style training given to unemployed people in this context, while most participants described these courses disparagingly as being a waste of time it is worth considering the fact that not only were they forced to attend them but they were also forced to meaningfully participate. In a similar vein some of the training undertaken such as in literacy or numeracy was of such a basic level that it was experienced as being condescending and infantilising which had stigmatising effects on feelings of self-esteem and self- worth. It is also worth considering how for some people participating in these training courses involved a heavy burden of arranging childcare and travel. This meant that while these courses which were seen by many participants as being entirely pointless and condescending they incurred a significant burden for some people as they had to participate but also make significant arrangements to attend them. This further compounded feelings of pointlessness and disengagement. This forced engagement with meaningless training courses and pointless job search activity served as significant 'process pains' (Feeley 1979) as people found themselves devoid of personal agency or choice and pulled into these absurd engagements.

Chapter 10 looked at how sanctions are used in the Irish social welfare system under PTW. It described the two types of sanction in the present system, the first is the activation sanction and the second is the control sanction. The present format of activation sanction is a graduated response style system where the initial penalty is low and is applied for a short period of time. The sanction escalates however if there is continued non-compliance and the person does not engage sufficiently with the activation measures. The point of this sanction is that it is communicative and demonstrates the 'coercive potential' (Crewe 2011, p. 513) of the broader system. As such it is a suspended threat which is used to encourage compliance with activation measures. Indeed activation sanctions were most frequently discussed by participants in terms of their being a constant and ambient threat which pervaded all interactions with the unemployment services.

The other type of sanction is the control sanction which was more prevalent among the data here. Control sanctions primarily occur when a claimant's eligibility is reassessed, if there are any discrepancies or the claimants do not produce the requested documentation the payment is

stopped entirely until clarification. Control measures were increasingly common during the time period when the fieldwork was completed as there were institutional and political imperatives towards cost savings in the wake of austerity and the professed requirements of controlling public spending. Control sanctions are not given as much public consideration as activation sanctions and they are under researched as statistics relating to their frequency are seemingly not kept. Control sanctions do not have the same protections as activation sanctions, there are no graduated responses and instead once someone is deemed to be outside of eligibility or unresponsive to control measures they are simply cut off. The lack of procedural protections and warnings often meant that control measures were experienced as capricious with participants describing feeling singled out or being victimised.

11.4 Theoretical Contribution

11.4.1 Deprivation Theory

Chapter 3 described in detail the influence of Deprivation theory on contemporary active welfare regimes. In particular it spelled out how the belief that the worst features of unemployment were the deprivation of the latent benefits of work had fed the idea that work itself was a worthwhile endeavour irrespective of the financial benefits. This idea influenced the faulty assumption that work for works sake was a worthwhile target which was evident in the rationales given for the Job Bridge internship scheme. The biggest problem with defining unemployment as simply the absence of a paying job is that this logic would have it that the ills of unemployment can be eradicated if everyone has a job or failing this an approximation of one such as an internship. If work is psychologically fundamental to mental health then people can justifiably be made work for free for the sake of the supposed psychological benefits. In this fashion the latent benefits of work which are espoused by Deprivation Theory have been co-opted by policy makers and are central to the turn towards active labour market policies.

While some facets of deprivation theory deserve such critique on this basis it is important to recognise how other aspects of it were indeed confirmed by the present study. In particular chapter 7 spelled out some of the difficulties associated with the lack of time structure when it was suddenly taken away from people when they lost their job. Regular work imposes a habitual time structure and the removal of such structures can be disorienting and confusing to some people. While there were aspects of the initial period of unemployment which some participants described as enjoyable there was also evidence in the data which showed how other people were completely cut adrift once they were made unemployed. These problems were

predominantly based around the difficulties in adjusting to life without the structured sense of time associated with work. Similarly the feeling of not having 'earned' leisure time meant that activities that under normal circumstances would be enjoyable such as watching television or films were experienced differently. The absence of time structure meant people described feeling as if they were in a form of stasis or an interminable present where they could not plan for the future because they were in the extended limbo of unemployment. This is in keeping with Jahoda and Deprivation theory which posits that the loss of work means a loss of a structured sense of time. As such one of the most common pains of unemployment corresponds closely with this facet of deprivation theory.

11.4.2 Interrogating the Active Welfare Imaginary

In theoretical terms this thesis aimed to merge three core perspectives to give a description of PTW. The paradigm of governmentality was described in detail so as to look at the ways in which unemployed people are governed. Yet feeding into this assemblage of government is a further system which acts to justify and inform these governmental practices. Drawing on Pat Carlen and her work on Imaginary Penalties I have dubbed this system the Active Welfare Imaginary. The Active Welfare Imaginary serves to offer distorted and simplistic 'truths' about unemployment and unemployed people which become reified and harden into a form of 'anti-welfare commonsense' (Jensen 2015) or 'poverty propaganda'(Shildrick 2018). Imaginary depictions of poor or unemployed people produce real effects and influence how people are treated and how they see themselves (Shildrick 2018, p. 132).Where this happens the practices which are informed by these faulty logics act to cause considerable pains to those subjected to them at the street level.

Many of the 'truths' of unemployment and unemployed people posited by political and media actors and discussed here under the rubric of the Active Welfare Imaginary are false. There is no evidence to suggest that people 'choose' to be welfare dependant and this is particularly the case with younger people who were the particular targets of such political and media discourses. Chapter 5 demonstrated the ways in which forms of governance of unemployed people are justified and it showed the rationales behind PTW. The majority of these rationales were unjustified 'imaginaries' which were not found in the data here or indeed elsewhere (Boland & Griffin 2015; Finn 2021; Whelan 2020,). As such the use of these imaginaries serves primarily as a mode of justification for the government and regulation of unemployed people. It is worth noting however the extent to which the imaginary pejorative depictions of

unemployed people are sticky and how far people go to differentiate themselves from them (Boland et al 2022; Fletcher & Redman 2022; Redman 2020).

Discourses of worthiness were frequently repeated in the interviews carried out for this research. Thus the imposition of negative and stigmatised identities further operates in and of itself as a form of governmental action as it impels the rejection of these negative identities by passing them on to abjectified others (Tyler 2013). The performative rejection of these negative identities is a key aspect in making a claim for the positive identity of the good jobseeker (Boland et al 2022; Garthwaite 2016; Patrick 2016; Redman 2020). In this sense the interpellation (Althusser 1971) of the scrounger (Baggely 1992), the welfare cheat (Devereux & Power 2019), or the waster serves to impel people to define themselves as the complete opposite. Stigma and negative discursive interpellations serve as a mode of government in and of themselves as they posit negative identities which are disavowed by fulsome participation in activation measures. Indeed the common refrain among participants was not that behavioural conditionality and sanctions were bad policy but instead that they were directed at the wrong people (Fletcher & Redman 2022). Through this mechanism the discursive interpellation of some unemployed people as being a burdensome drain on the common good is not challenged by many unemployed people and as such is 'reified rather than resisted' (Gustafson 2011, p. 3).

Discursive formulations such as these which eventually took the form of the 'welfare cheats cheat us all' campaign go beyond the realm of political posturing and have real world outcomes. In broad terms this type of rhetoric served to fuel the 'doxosophy' (Jensen 2014) of 'anti-welfare commonsense' (Jensen & Tyler 2015) which served to present many unemployed people in negative terms as being lazy and in need of a firm hand to get them back into work. The over determination of fraud and its explicit association with social welfare also served to present it as being linked to criminality. These negative associations with unemployment and claiming social welfare payments served to create a particularly stigmatised identity which undoubtedly made the experience of being unemployed worse.

Included in the rationale for PTW was a fetishisation of fraud with it being presented as a threat to the very continuation of the social welfare system. As part of this there was a concerted effort to paint in the public mind a vision of a malingering and swindling 'out' group who were fraudulently claiming tens of millions in welfare payments to which they were not entitled. As part of this there was a further creation of an 'in' group of hard working, put upon tax payers,

this 'squeezed middle' (Meade & Kiely 2021) were enlisted as 'whistle blowers' (Devereux & Power 2019) who would report any potential instances of fraud they believe they may see. Actions such as these make the government of unemployed people mobile, muti-modal and not site specific. In this schema it is not just the social welfare office where government takes place and it is not just welfare officials who govern. Here everyone is called upon to monitor and govern unemployed people, to make sure they aren't working while in receipt of payment and to report all suspicions for further investigation.

11.4.3 Stretching Sites and Practices of Government

The phrase 'the border is everywhere' (Lyon 2005) is often used in the context of migration to describe how border control is no longer solely carried out at border checkpoints and indeed has been written into many of the facets of everyday life. These include routine traffic stops, medical appointments, job applications, background checks, credit applications and any other practice where it is necessary for people to produce documentary evidence of their identity. This means that border policing is no longer the sole preserve of specialised immigration officials and has been functionally dispersed rhizomatically through society. In a similar fashion the government of unemployment and unemployed people is no longer the sole preserve of Intreo staff. By appealing to the broader public to become whistle blowers there is an injunction for them to monitor and police the unemployed, to treat them as suspected cheats and fraudsters. In this sense the unemployed are treated with 'categorical suspicion' (Marx 1988, p. 219) where they are treated as suspect not because of their behaviour or actions but because they belong to a particular category of being unemployed. In this manner the sites of governance are stretched under PTW, it is not just in the social welfare office where unemployed people feel the need to account for themselves.

This research offers an empirical analysis of governmentality as it is enacted on unemployed people. It did this firstly by examining the governing rationalities found in policy documents, public discussions and debates and secondly by carrying out in depth, repeat qualitative interviews with unemployed people. This empirical focus allows for a comparison to be drawn between the ideal type form of government from the top down view of the governers and the actual lived experience of being governed. The key theoretical focus of this research was that of analysing the ways in which unemployed people are governed under the ALMP paradigm of PTW. In particular this research has demonstrated how the core feature of this form of government is that of the *threat* of sanctions. The forms of government which are evident under sanctions based ALMP's and PTW in particular are underpinned by assumptions of

behavioural economics particularly those which relate to incentives and dis-incentives. The Irish system primarily seeks to govern by foregrounding the threat of reducing or stopping benefit payments. In this sense it is a 'nudge' which aims to superficially influence the behaviour of unemployed people to get them to show up for meetings and to engage with activation measures. While this type of system is undoubtedly preferable to other more punitive approaches as has been shown in chapter 10 it is not without its own particular problems and causes specific 'pains' for the people subject to them.

11.5 Policy contribution

This study is a snapshot of a particular time period when PTW was being rolled out across Ireland. As such it shows the initial implementation of these ideas in the Irish system and demonstrates some of the problems and failures inherent in them. By the nature of both its design and implementation the sanctioning system was not set up to be overly punitive. Yet despite this there are numerous pains and harms associated with an active welfare system which is imbued with a threat. In policy terms this research has also demonstrated the ways in which many measures introduced under PTW can be counterproductive, for example the national internship scheme served to displace entry level positions. As well as this in policy terms this research demonstrates the flawed reasoning behind some of the work first style activation measures particularly JobPath. Closely managing jobseekers and assisting them in applying for jobs may well have some utility but the first question of activation should always be what are people being activated to? If there are few jobs available in a given place then it is pointless and even counterproductive to make people apply for everything. This scattergun approach to job-seeking which was particularly evident JobPath is counterproductive on a number of levels. For job-seekers it causes anxiety as they are pushed into applying for work that is unsuitable for them and which they are unlikely to be successful. This frequently caused feelings of despondency and despair as people received frequent rejections and this frequently contributed to an overall feeling of hopelessness. This approach is also counter- productive for employers (Ingold 2020) as they are faced with a raft of job applicants who are patently unsuited to the advertised job.

Public discourse relating to unemployment in Ireland is very much a top down affair. Influential voices are primarily those of politicians, civil servants and the various lobby groups that represent business interests. The effect of this is that the view of unemployment and unemployed people is mostly one which sees them as workers in waiting or as a labour market resource which can and should be cajoled back into work as soon as possible and under any

terms.. Aspects of this research relating to JobPath were presented to legislators in an Oireachtas committee in January of 2019. Media coverage of this focussed particularly on the story of Jack from chapter 9 and how as a traveller man he had his name changed on a job application. This lead to a situation where there was an Oireachtas debate about JobPath and a Dáil vote for its discontinuation which was subsequently carried. During the course of the debate the sitting Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection made public statements on twitter and on radio criticising this work for being anecdotal and unrepresentative.

Regina Doherty ✔
@ReginaDo

It's a debate between facts vs anecdote in the Dáil tonight regarding Job Path. FACT: 41,000 individuals have found full time jobs while engaged with the JobPath service. FACT: JobPath has contributed to the reduction of unemployment from a peak of 16% in 2012 to 5.3% in Dec2018

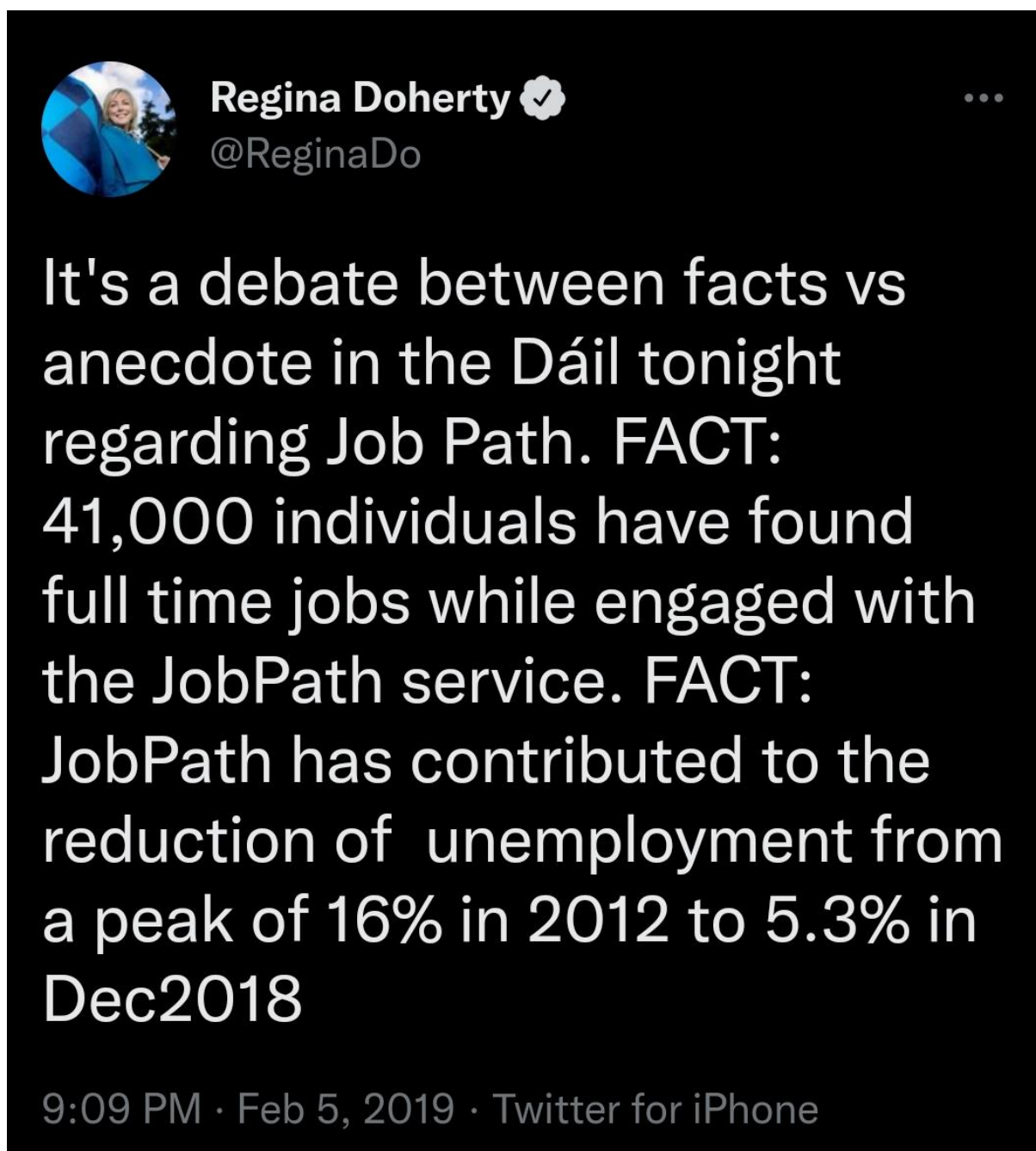9:09 PM · Feb 5, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

Figure 30 a tweet from the minister

The tenor of the ministers argument was that the 'anecdotes' such as those contained in this research were not as epistemologically sound or reliable as the 'facts' which demonstrated the supposed success of the programme. The disparaging dismissal of lived experience accounts of unemployment as being mere anecdotes is interesting as anecdotes are seemingly justifiable depending on the source. In chapter 5.2.1 above we saw how anecdotal stories told by politicians formed the basis of regimes of justification for enhanced behavioural conditionality. In particular Leo Varadkar spoke of how people 'on the dole' managed to take annual holidays in Florida with the assertion being that some unemployed people were living a better standard of life than others who were working. In this instance this anecdote for which no proof was asked for or given was reported on extensively as being a fact. This demonstrates how some privileged voices determine the parameters of how certain issues are defined and discussed while others are discounted and derided as being anecdotes. This research has strived to give voice to unemployed people who are mostly absent from the very conversations that have profound influence on their life experiences. In this sense this research offers a bottom up perspective which sees how the government of unemployment works according to those subject to it. In policy terms this research has aimed to speak back to how unemployment and unemployed are characterised and to explain from the perspective of lived experience how many policy assumptions are incorrect.

11.6 Discussion

This research has demonstrated how the contemporary experience of being unemployed is characterised by repeated pointless bureaucratic rituals of engagement. It has shown how unemployed people are drawn into a system of close supervision where they surrender many aspects of agency and self-determination in return for a meagre job-seekers payment. PTW primarily operates by foregrounding the threat of sanctions which is the primary means by which participation is encouraged. While many of the engagements are pointless bureaucratic rituals they are compulsory and failure to properly participate carries with it the possibility of being sanctioned and of losing vital income. The various imaginaries around poverty and unemployment discussed in chapter 5 have contributed to the creation of a social welfare system which is fixated with ensuring there is no room for the undeserving poor to free-ride. In doing this the system of threats and superficial engagement is aimed at a zombie category (McDonald 2014) of scroungers or malingerers who simply do not exist in the numbers imagined by many.

The myriad facets of activation can thus be seen as form of process punishment which acts to make unemployment even more unpleasant so as to induce in unemployed people a strong desire to exit unemployment as quickly as possible. As was discussed in detail in chapters 2, 7 and 8 unemployment is an inherently unpleasant experience yet much of the underlying rationale for PTW is that of making it even more unpleasant so as to expedite the exit from claiming social welfare. As such the system operates at a fundamental level to inflict a series of harms, to closely regulate unemployed people and to alter their habits and actions so as to shape them into the desirable subjectivity of the job-seeker. PTW induces a form of self-government but it is one which is premised upon faulty logics and as has been demonstrated above is frequently counter-productive in its outcomes. The key factor which makes these measures feel repressive is that of the punitive dimension of activation. The practice of sanctioning and the coercive management of people into the labour market are unfair practices with a dubious evidence base. Scrapping sanctions and ensuring that there is meaningful inclusion of the voice of the unemployed person is of primary importance if some of the harms outlined by this research are to be mitigated against or eradicated.

The harms which are engendered by the contemporary welfare system are in some ways more punitive than aspects of the penal system. For example chapter 3 described how the levying of penal fines by the courts had a number of protections for those subject to them that are entirely absent from activation sanctions. This is even more pronounced in the case of control sanctions as there are absolutely no procedural protections or warnings and payments are unceremoniously stopped. Many facets of the system are applied seemingly at random and so are experienced as capricious and lacking in legitimacy. While the design of the Irish system is undoubtedly less punitive than that of other jurisdictions the fact still remains that sanctions by their nature involve taking money from some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in society. To this end they are morally indefensible yet in functional terms of utility there is also an increasing consensus that they are ineffective (Calmfors et al. 2001) and while they may increase the likelihood of exiting unemployment (Lalive et al 2005) they serve to push people into lower paid (Arni et al 2012) more precarious jobs that they are less likely to stay in long term (Card et al. 2010, Kluve 2010, Rubery et al 2018,).

If the evidence base for the utility of behavioural conditionality and sanctions shows how they are ineffective then it begs the question as to why such policy has proven to be both popular and durable in the face of such critiques. Stephen Crossley writes of the need for research to 'study up' so we can 'explicitly link the behaviour of rich and powerful groups in society with

the conditions experienced by marginalised and less powerful groups' (2017, p. 114). Research is most frequently carried out with a distinctly downward gaze towards the poor and marginalised people who have policy enacted *upon* them. Taking into Crossely's injunction to study up would mean research into ALMP's and the social and governmental construction of unemployment be focused not on unemployed people but on those for whom the present system is beneficial. The main output of ALMP systems underpinned by behavioural conditionality and sanctions is that of the creation of a flexible, docile and cowed work force prepared to work for less money in conditions of ever increasing insecurity. Those who are forced under threat of sanctions to take a job irrespective of rates of pay or suitability are less likely to complain about working conditions or pay. In this sense with regard to ALMP's studying up would involve looking at the companies, organisations and industries that benefit from them. JobPath has involved the partial privatisation of services into a 'delegated welfare state' (Morgan & Campbell 2011) that puts vast amounts of public money into private hands. JobBridge and the subsequent iterations of the national internship scheme provided free labour paid for with public money. Such forms of corporate and commercial welfare are widespread and usually presented as being for the greater good. This begs the question of who exactly are the beneficiaries of such state largesse and why money given to them is not conditional or subject to public opprobrium and shame.

This points to what Wacquant describes as the 'centaur state' which is 'liberal at the top and paternalistic at the bottom, which presents radically different faces at the two ends of the social hierarchy' (Wacquant 2009, p. 312). Thus while unemployed people face surveillance, micro-management, enhanced regulation and the pervasive threat of sanctions those at the top of the hierarchy including business owners and employers face a landscape of tax breaks, grants, and free or subsidised labour. Unemployed people are posited as belonging to 'defamed categories that sap the social order by their dissolute morality and dissipated behaviour and must therefore be placed under severe tutelage' (Wacquant 2010, p. 204). The centaur state which is light touch and laissez-faire for those at the top is characterised by the close and tight regulation of those at the bottom. This close regulation is a form of 'violent proletarianisation' (Grover 2019) which forces people into the labour market under conditions of 'flex-insecurity' which serves to 'disempower vulnerable workers and promote different forms of labour market precarity' (Murphy 2017, p. 308). In this sense the introduction of sanctions and behavioural conditionality can be seen in terms of it being a means of disciplining the labour force (Greer 2016). It is a means of eroding the autonomy of workers and acting to 'facilitate a pattern of

differentiated activation, where segmentation and stratification of the non-employed population (re)produces an insecure, disciplined, segmented and stratified labour power for insecure, segmented, stratified labour markets' (Wiggan 2015, p. 369). The introduction of these types of measures is 'not about creating jobs for people who don't have them; it is about creating workers for jobs nobody wants' (Peck 2001, p.6).

11.7 Conclusion

As was stated at the outset, unemployment is not a naturally occurring phenomenon and instead is a political, institutional and governmental creation. As such it is important to consider what form unemployment takes, how it is created, how it is enacted and how it is experienced. This research has made clear that the present form that unemployment in Ireland has taken is one which for many is experienced as being coercive and involves a distinct stripping of agency and personal choice. The injunction that one must work is the doxa upon which active labour market policy is based. Yet in practice many forms of work first ALMP's such as those under discussion here serve mostly to push people into work that is low paid precarious and short term, (Wright 2011, p. 102) as such work first ALMP's act to fuel the 'low pay no pay' (Shildrick et al 2012) cycle. The system which is overly focused on putting people into whatever work is available also serves to send unemployed people on frantic quests to find work frequently sending them to apply for jobs for which they have no experience or knowledge.

The present system is one which has a one dimensional view of unemployed people. It sees them as economic subjects who are to be governed solely by balancing incentives and dis-incentives so as to make them behave in a particular prescribed manner. We have seen how unemployed people are stigmatised and painted as lazy and at fault for their predicament. Much of the underlying rationale for work first ALMP is concerned with the individualisation of socially produced problems (Bauman 2006). This one dimensional view forms the justificatory rationale for the system of behavioural conditionality and sanctions yet it is inherently flawed. The overwhelming response from all participants in this study was that they wished to work and in this sense the mandatory and faintly coercive nature of PTW is unnecessary, expensive and counterproductive.

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