From Welfare to Warfare: Class Struggle on the Margins

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Candidate Declaration

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Abstract

Since the mid-1980s, UK welfare reform has seen policymakers incrementally re-design the framing, structure and delivery of the UK's social security system. Britain's network of benefit administration and employment service offices have experienced a range of expenditure cuts and are increasingly governed by a new 'workfarist' mesh of behavioural conditionality and labour market activation policy. The overarching purpose of this, or at least according to a number of key politicians, has been to ensure labour market discipline among the UK's out-of-work claiming population by transforming the social security system into a device for altering behaviour.

In recent decades, a number of critical interpretations of welfare reform have emerged; two of which have been dominant above all others. One interpretation—heavily influenced by Marxist regulation theory—suggests that welfare reform has emerged as a logical social policy compliment to wider processes of labour market restructuring and a rise in low-paying, contingent 'jobs that nobody wants'. This interpretation suggests that the services tasked with delivering welfare reform are experienced as sites of discipline and deterrence; ensuring that out-of-work claimants engage with unattractive jobs. A second interpretation—evolving partially out of regulation theory but significantly developed and heavily influenced by Wacquant—suggests that welfare reform has emerged as one part of a dual regulatory response to manage a surge in social unrest and urban marginality. This interpretation suggests that the services tasked with delivering welfare reform are experienced as sites of criminalisation and suffering in order to correct behavioural dysfunction and bend out-of-work claimants towards dependency on low-wage, precarious work.

The present thesis offers an alternative interpretation. It is suggested here that UK welfare reform has emerged in response to an *accumulation of working class struggles*. Drawing on longitudinal interviews with 15 young male claimants and 11 interviews with frontline benefit administration/employment service workers, it is also suggested here that the services tasked with delivering welfare reform are experienced as *sites of class struggle*. On one side of the desk, frontline workers operate in pressured conditions to probe for claimant resistance, ensure work-related compliance and, in some instances, antagonise claimants in efforts to secure their resignation from benefit receipt. Whilst, on the other side of the desk, claimants use a range of methods to struggle against and subvert frontline service delivery in favour of prioritising their own individual needs and interests.

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With man we enter *history*. Animals also have a history, that of their descent and gradual evolution to their present position. This history, however, is made for them, and in so far as they themselves take part in it, this occurs without their knowledge and desire. On the other hand, the more that human beings become removed from animals in the narrower sense of the word, the more they make their history themselves, consciously, the less becomes the influence of unforeseen effects and uncontrolled forces on this history, and the more accurately does the historical result correspond to the aim laid down in advance. If, however, we apply this measure to human history, to that of even the most developed peoples of the present day, we find that there still exists here a colossal disproportion between the proposed aims and the results arrived at, that unforeseen effects predominate, and that the uncontrolled forces are far more powerful than those set into motion according to plan. And this cannot be otherwise as long as the most essential historical activity of men, the one which has raised them from the animal to the human state and which forms the material foundation of all their other activities, namely the production of their requirements of life, i.e., in our day social production, is above all subject to the interplay of unintended effects from uncontrolled forces and achieves its desired end only by way of exception, but much more frequently the exact opposite. In the most advanced industrial countries we have subdued the forces of nature and pressed them into service of mankind; we have thereby infinitely multiplied production, so that a child now produces more than a hundred adults previously did. And what is the result? Increasing overwork and increasing misery of the masses, and every ten years a great collapse. Darwin did not know what a bitter satire he wrote on mankind, and especially on his countrymen, when he showed that free competition, the struggle for existence, which the economists celebrate as the highest historical achievement, is the normal state of the *animal kingdom*. Only conscious organisation of social production, in which production and distribution are carried on in a planned way, can lift mankind above the rest of the animal world as regards the social aspect, in the same way that production in general has done this for mankind in the specifically biological aspect'

- **(Friedrich Engels, Dialectics of Nature, 1883 [2012]; 35-6)**

1. Introducing the Thesis

Prelude: A Formative Struggle

This thesis is about class struggle. And the way I came to this thesis, not just the ideas contained within it but the funding I managed to get to complete it, was through a somewhat related class struggle of my own. It wasn't a particularly profound, uncommon or disturbing class struggle like the ones you might read about if you have an interest in the violent history of the proletariat. It most certainly doesn't resemble anything near some of the struggles of those who live in poverty and on the margins in our society, some of whom will feature later on. It was a very prosaic, ordinary form of class struggle that most people who sell their ability to work will likely experience on a daily basis. A form of class struggle that most of those same people likely wouldn't even think of as a class struggle, but as an inescapable norm of everyday life. It was a struggle against a job I hated; a job which ended up making me really unwell. And it was a struggle which turned out to be a formative experience underlying much of what follows, so I'm going to tell you a bit about this struggle and how it led me to this thesis.

Ranging from nightclub promotion to retail to casual labouring to washing cars, like many young people in transition from education to work, I'd took a number of jobs that people might ordinarily consider hateable or bad jobs in my mid-to-late teens and early twenties. I can't say I ever enjoyed any of these jobs, but the job I ended up hating actually wasn't any of them. It wasn't meant to be a job I hated. In other words, it wasn't one of these low paying, precarious jobs with no stability or longevity. The job I hated was a graduate job which I took immediately after finishing my undergraduate degree. It was relatively well paid, came with a brand new company car and was under the command of a small firm that seemed to look after its workers for the most part. Even the job description (on paper) was pleasant. My role was to carry out very basic topographical surveys of old mining locations. I was provided with an electronic GPS/mapping device full of locations where centuries-old mine shafts—think of small bell pits, not huge industrial mines—were previously in operation. I would then carry out a simple check on the general topography of these locations for any sign of undulation, collapse or emerging gases. The purpose of this was to protect the public

from the various hazards of old mining activity. For two years I spent Monday-Friday living in and travelling around the dominant mining regions of the UK. From Scotland and the North-East to the Welsh Valleys in the South West, I would pass through village, town and city observing them in all their rural beauty and social decay.

It sounds quite good doesn't it? At least that was what I thought when I was first told the job description. But there were a number of catches. The first catch, which might not be a catch depending on what kind of person you are, was that I had to work alone and stay in foreign places where I wouldn't know anyone for the standard working week. The second catch was that I couldn't visit these places at my own leisure, every week I had a target to visit and survey 175 different mine entry locations. This was owed to the fact that the job was for a private for-profit firm who had won the contract from a government agency on the basis that they could provide a higher volume of more efficient, budget-saving surveys. The third catch was that, to prove I had visited and surveyed 175 different mine entry locations, I would have to get the GPS/mapping device within 20 metres of each mine entry, log it on the device and then take a photograph. The fourth catch was that the majority of these mine entry locations weren't in close proximity with one another and were located sporadically, often on private rural land.

The second and fourth catch were where the job first got tricky. Given the geographical distribution of the mine entry locations, my superiors were fully aware that if I was to visit and survey 175 locations in a week, it would be next to impossible to find out who owned the land, contact them and arrange convenient times and dates to secure access. My superiors also knew that if I was to pre-arrange access to these locations, they could no longer deliver on their promise of higher volume and more efficient surveys, so their utility as a contractor would be under threat. Their solution was simple. I was to turn up unannounced to each location. If the location was clearly on private land and there was a visible residence or dwelling nearby I would first have to knock on and ask permission. If the landowner didn't live in that residence, or there was no nearby residence, or there was just no answer, then I was expected to trespass private land and carry out the survey. Initially I refused to enter private land and logged a high level of surveys as incomplete on the grounds that I was unable to acquire access. This frustrated the contractee and I was met with a swift suspension and disciplinary procedure from the

contractor. So I began to trespass and over the months and years this became increasingly difficult. Not only was the feeling of trespassing itself quite an uncomfortable, anxiety inducing experience. But the pressure of the targets meant that I had to trespass on a daily basis. In the first few weeks I was fortunate enough to avoid detection. But eventually my initial 'luck' began to run out and I got into a number of physical and verbal altercations with angry, suspicious landowners who, despite my best efforts to make my presence known, caught me unannounced on their land. A lot of these mine entry locations were also situated in large open farmlands full of unpredictable livestock so a number of times I was confronted by alarmed horses and cows.

Within a few months of daily trespassing, and after a series of altercations, the job was starting to become unbearable. At first it was the fear of not knowing what uncomfortable, awkward or potentially dangerous situation I was going to encounter from one mine entry location to the next. Most days were like living in a perpetual state of fight or flight. But as well as this, the first catch started to take greater hold and the isolated nature of the job (particularly in the cold winter months) began to depress me. There were many weeks where I would lodge at a B-n-B and go the full week without having any form of meaningful interaction.

These feelings ended up manifesting in two behavioural responses. The first response was what I understand as a form of class struggle. I started resisting the instruction and will of my employer. This wasn't a grandiose form of class struggle. I didn't join a union or start a picket line outside my employer's office. But I started to lie to my employer and find ways of reclaiming little bits of time. Outwardly, I would still be complying and hitting their targets. However, I found ways of cutting corners to hit the targets. I would find ways to simulate aspects of the work, making out it took far longer than it actually did and I would lie about my whereabouts so I could leave for home earlier. I can honestly say I was never driven by a desire to actually do the job as intended. I was only ever driven by a desperation for the feelings of anxiety and depression to subside.

The second behavioural response was escape. As soon as I returned from a week in a foreign town or city, I felt this overwhelming pressure to sedate the misery and enjoy myself. After all, if I couldn't enjoy the fruits of my pain then what was the point of a life where five of the seven days in a week were spent miserable? So I started spending the

weekends by going out more and resting less. Quicker than I cared to realise, my two days of free time had turned to a fleeting blur of mindless hedonism rapidly followed by a protracted and excruciating period of dread waiting for Monday morning to roll around. Eventually the things I did to sedate the misery ended up fuelling it and for a period of time I lost enjoyment in my life for the full seven days of each week.

In spite of all the misery it caused, the job did have a saving grace (which is what kept me in it for two years). Unlike a lot of workers in this world, I was paid enough to carve out a genuine opportunity for permanent escape. Every month I saved half or more of my wage on the promise to myself that I was going to go back to university and pursue a more meaningful line of work relevant to my undergraduate degree—sociology. But unlike the first time I'd gone to university, I promised myself that I wasn't going to make the mistake of 'living for the moment' or 'going with the flow' and falling into a job. This time around I was going to get my head down, put the hours in and, most importantly, I promised myself that I was never going to go back to the misery and despair of a bad job ever again. So as soon as I saved enough money I left and began a master's degree. Throughout that master's degree it was a fear of that misery and a hatred of bad work, combined with a re-discovered love for research, theory and knowledge, which led me to applying for the PhD that you are reading now.

So this is one way in which a class struggle and a subsequent escape led me to the present thesis. But there is actually another, more specific way in which this struggle actually informs its content. When I applied for the PhD, the advertisement suggested that a professor called Del Roy Fletcher was looking for a student with an interest in pursuing a project on people's experiences of something called 'welfare reform' and 'welfare conditionality'. I didn't really have a clue what these terms meant. But I quickly discovered they were often used to describe a series of policies concerned with getting unemployed benefit claimants in to work by making sure they did various work-related activities in return for their benefit, which was broadly related to my longer standing interests in youth unemployment and work sociology. At the time I was at a stage in the masters where I had to decide on a topic for a dissertation. So I thought I'd kill two birds with one stone by writing out a PhD proposal around young people's experiences of welfare reform and then conducting a master's dissertation project on the same idea. After writing the proposal, I spent the next month standing outside a Jobcentre—after I

discovered that this was one of the key spaces where welfare reform and conditionality takes place—recruiting young people and quizzing them about their experiences. Much of what I found out from those interviews was identical to the excellent work of many academics who had conducted similar research before me and the general narrative about welfare reform/conditionality that seems to exist within the UK's social policy academy (something I'll come onto very shortly). But there was also something in a number of these young people's accounts (not all) that I could barely find any trace of in previous research. It was something I didn't even really consider or anticipate finding before I started standing outside the Jobcentre. It's something that seems to be quite a taboo subject in the realm of social policy and research on welfare reform, poverty and unemployment. I found that some of these young people were doing similar things to what I did when I was doing that job I hated. Despite the radically different context in which our behaviours were situated, they too were lying to their superior (for welfare claimants this is usually called a Work Coach) and outwardly appearing compliant. They were cutting corners to reclaim bits of their time. They were escaping jobs they found made them miserable. They, like me, were struggling against something that wanted to make them do things they didn't want to do. After a period of reflection, I proposed to my PhD supervisors that I base my research on unearthing and learning more about these struggles.

Introducing Welfare Reform

My supervisors concurred that there was comparatively little written about struggles within and against the spaces and places where welfare reform and conditionality takes place. But before I was ready to go out and do the research, they said I should first survey the surrounding literature and answer the following question: *what is welfare reform?* In the three years since I have not stopped trying to answer this question and by the end of this thesis I will provide a comprehensive response as to what I think welfare reform is.

The Basic Narrative of UK Welfare Reform

But putting that to one side for the moment, what I quickly discovered after my initial forays into the literature was that within the social policy academy there is a 'basic

narrative' (cf. Adler, 2018; 22) around mid-to-late 20th/early 21st century UK welfare reform which runs something like as follows. In the immediate years after the Second World War, under William Beveridge's (1942) recommendations, the Attlee government introduced a new National Health Service and implemented a wide range of social security and education reforms (Digby, 1989). These new services and reforms cumulatively came to be famously known as the 'Welfare State'. Their unifying objective was to provide 'cradle-to-grave' social insurance and protect the citizenry from spells of poor health, unemployment and old age (Lowe, 2005). Within this cradle-to-grave arrangement was a relatively generous and relatively permissive social security system of cash-transfer provision for the unemployed. This system ensured that all citizens had a 'minimum income' (Deacon, 1995; 75), which provided sufficient consumption power to eliminate the material risks and harms typically associated with unemployment and (absolute) poverty. It was a radical departure from almost any form of social security provision that had preceded it (cf. Ogus, 1982). Quite unlike its antecedents in old and new poor law, no longer were out-of-work provisions to be principally founded on 'workfarist' logic of deterring anti-work behaviour/values and enforcing compliance via work-related activity (Slack, 1990). Rather, workfarist logic within out-of-work provision was to be subordinated, not eradicated, to a new objective prioritising the welfare of the British citizenry and the abolition of absolute poverty (Beveridge, 1942).

For around thirty years, between the 1940s and the 1970s, relatively generous and permissive 'post-war' social security provision remained broadly popular within government as the best direction to eliminate poverty and ameliorate the social risks (i.e. unemployment) generated by the volatilities typical of an untrammelled market economy. This all began to change from the mid-to-late 1970s onwards. In the face of an economic crisis and increasing economic competition from abroad, British politicians and policymakers became increasingly disillusioned with the idea and practicalities of post-war social security provision (Bacon and Eltis, 1978). From the late 1970s, the general orthodoxy among many politicians and policymakers has been that relatively generous and permissive social security provision, as well as 'cradle-to-grave' post-war welfare more generally, is too costly, acts as a drag on the marketed sector by fuelling inflation, and undermines national economic performance (see Thatcher 1983; see Osborne, 2010). Moreover, politicians and policymakers have become more

sympathetic towards the idea that unemployment primarily exists because people are either 'resting on the register' and/or are in possession of new anti-work cultural values (Price, 2000; 240). By extension, politicians and policymakers have become increasingly sympathetic to the idea that, rather than protecting citizens from social risks, relatively generous and permissive social security provision actually drives poverty and unemployment (Wiggan, 2012). Generally speaking, they tend to believe it does this by encouraging a range of irresponsible behaviours and cultural values including voluntary unemployment, an entitlement mentality and dependency on the state (see Thatcher, 1987; Blair, 1997; see Cameron, 2011).

In light of this, since the 1980s, policymakers have continually pursued welfare reforms in *two* broad directions. *On the one hand*, in the spirit of improving economic performance, repeated attempts have been made to discipline public services deemed unproductive (cf. Bacon and Eltis, 1978) and, where politically feasible, slash state expenditure on key services and cash benefits (see Atkinson and Micklewright, 1989). In this direction, policymakers have continually pursued 'new public management' reforms (see Clarke et al., 2000) to 'reduce waste, bureaucracy and over-government' in the social security system (Price, 2000; 197) and welfare domains more generally (Talbot, 2001). Relatedly, policymakers have also sought to curb unproductiveness in the public sector by exposing key welfare services to the (quasi-) private market and channelling social expenditure into new investment opportunities (Freud, 2007).

On the other hand, since the mid-1980s, 'the idea that those claiming welfare should be required to fulfil conditions regarding their own behaviour and that of their children has been extended across a swathe of social policy; from welfare to work, to education, health, and, of course, housing' (Deacon, 2004; 911-12). In the more specific domain of social security, policymakers have 'incrementally' redesigned the framing, structure and delivery of out-of-work benefits and employment services towards creating a new 'workfarist' system centred on a 'tightly intertwined' mesh of behavioural conditionality and labour market activation policy (Kaufman, 2018; 15; Dwyer, 2008). Behavioural conditionality has ensured that eligibility for the most basic of social security provisions—particularly unemployment benefits—is conditional on claimants agreeing to undertake 'compulsory' work-related 'duties or patterns of behaviour' (Dwyer, 2004; 269). While activation policy has been redesigned to focus less on the provision of

education and (re)training towards in favour of encouraging rapid labour market (re)entry through negative incentives pertaining mostly to (threat of) benefit suspension/termination and mandatory work activity (Bonoli, 2010).

To achieve this 'tightly intertwined' mesh of behavioural conditionality and labour market activation in practice, policymakers have transformed the way social security benefits are *delivered* through a network of public benefit administration-cum-employment service offices—currently known as Jobcentre Plus—and quasi-private 'marketised' employment service offices—currently known under the banner of the 'Work and Health Programme' (see Appendices 1.1. for more detail). *For those claiming social security benefits*, this has generally meant having to perform a widening range of work-related activities in exchange for their benefit such as job-searching for 35 hours a week or attendance on 'work preparation' schemes led by quasi-private sector employment services (Finn, 2016; 81-89). These activities are usually made compulsory, with failure to perform to an agreed standard potentially resulting in a disqualification from benefit under the rubric of an increasingly severe and farther-reaching sanctioning regime (Adler, 2018). Meanwhile, *for those administering benefits and employment services in public and quasi-marketised offices*, ensuring a stricter regime based on behavioural conditionality has entailed a sharper focus on targets and results pertaining to moving 'people off benefit, into employment, as quickly as possible' and reducing 'the monetary value of fraud and error' (Finn, 2016; 79-80). The purpose of all of this, according to some politicians, is to save on the public purse and simultaneously reduce poverty/unemployment by liberating those 'trapped in dependency on the state' and getting more people back into work (Duncan-Smith, 2014).

Critical Interpretations of UK Welfare Reform

As I surveyed the literature to learn about this 'basic narrative', I also found out that there have been a number of critical interpretations of welfare reform—two of which have been dominant above all others. Now of course, anyone with an interest in welfare reform will know that there are actually many competing interpretations. And these competing interpretations are perhaps best typologised on the basis of their deep roots in distinctive political philosophical approaches to economic and social life (see White, 2003). But the two *critical* interpretations I'm talking about here stand out because they

each provide *two* main (not exclusive) original contributions to contemporary understandings of welfare reform. *First*, and most importantly, these critical interpretations situate welfare reform within wider processes of historical development. In other words, they try to make sense of welfare reform not simply as a coalescence of random policymaking and political decisions. But they seek out its interconnections and complementarities with other outwardly appearing unrelated political, economic, social, cultural (and so forth) phenomena to illustrate a more comprehensive picture of society *en masse*. *Second*, relatedly, and ostensibly as a direct result of the first, they provide a distinctive interpretation of how welfare reforms manifest in their delivered and received forms. In other words, they provide a distinctive interpretation of how welfare reforms are (generally speaking) experienced in everyday contextualised social interplay between frontline practitioners and benefit claimants within benefit administration-cum-employment service offices. Let's have a very brief but closer look at these interpretations.

The Regulation Approach to Welfare Reform

The first interpretation can be seen as emerging out of a 20th century branch of neo-Marxism called the 'regulation school' (see importantly Appendices 1.2. for more detail). Generally speaking, regulationists argue that the two broad directions for welfare reform mentioned above (expenditure cuts and 'workfarist' conditionality/activation) have emerged as a 'logical social policy compliment' (Peck, 2001; 341) to a broader 'Competition State' project seeking to create economic 'conditions favourable to inward [domestic] investment' in the face of stiff international competition and a protracted period of economic decline in the mid-to-late 1970s (Jessop, 2002; 126). According to the regulationists, from the 1970s, policymakers became increasingly concerned about an inflationary threat posed by a growing social expenditure bill (Gough, 1979) resulting from a sustained period of economic decline and a subsequent 'inability of the political system to prevent and compensate for economic crises' (Offe, 1984; 61). Thus, persistent expenditure cuts have emerged as a part of an attempt to prioritise inflation control (Lavery, 2019).

Moreover, policymakers have also sought to respond to economic decline (as well as 'techno-economic' developments in production, exchange and consumption; see

Jessop, 2002) by re-regulating Britain's key labour market institutions. This has been done to support the emergence of new labour processes primed on 'flexibilised' production, weakened labour securities and (relatively) low wages (cf. Harvey, 2007). For some regulationists, the latter has resulted in a sharp growth of precarious and low-paying 'jobs that nobody wants' (Peck, 2001; 6). Successive governments have since taken the view that, in the face of a growth in 'jobs that nobody wants', reasonably generous and permissive social security provision is now untenable on the grounds that it undermines the incentive to work. As such, policymakers have pursued a range of 'workfarist' welfare reforms to discipline the unemployed and 'create flexible, enterprising workers' (Jessop, 2002; 168). Workfarist welfare reforms also ensure people take the 'jobs that nobody wants' by 'forcibly attaching' the unemployed 'to the lower end of the labour market' (Peck, 2001; 356).

In order to achieve this in practice, regulation theorists in more recent years have argued that benefit administration-cum-employment service offices are increasingly experienced as a sites of discipline and deterrence. Peck (2001; 184) argues that service delivery has become increasingly focused on motivating the unemployed 'through deliberate exploitation of uncertainty and fear'. Peck (2001; 184) also argues that employment service delivery incentivises the uptake of unattractive jobs through the production of a 'deterrent effect'; whereby the exploitation of uncertainty and fear is 'coupled with systematic erosion/withdrawal of alternative means of subsistence' to increase levels of disengagement with out-of-work benefits. Tyler (2020; 28) argues that a productive 'stigma power' is intentionally 'embedded in the design of social policies, and infecting the culture, practices and attitudes of welfare workers'. This serves to 'lubricate' structures of 'discipline and social control' (Tyler, 2020; 17) by inducing feelings of shame among welfare recipients so as to foster more intensive engagement with undesirable jobs (Redman, 2020). Grover (2019) has argued that more recent welfare reforms not only reflect stronger efforts to force the unemployed into precarious wage labour, but they end up doing so in a way that 'socially murders' some of the unemployed through penury and suicide. Regulationists also suggest that, through their tendency to expand the supply of available labour, 'workfarist' welfare reforms can assert further downward pressure on wages/working conditions and thus have a wider disciplinary effect on workers as well as the unemployed (Peck, 2001; 350).

The Criminalisation Approach to Welfare Reform

The second interpretation (see importantly Appendices 1.3. for more detail), developed by Loïc Wacquant, can be said to have partially emerged out of the regulationist interpretation of workfarist welfare reforms (see Wacquant, 2008; 26-7; 2009; 5-6; 102). However, Wacquant (2009) suggests that workfarist welfare reforms have not only (re)emerged as an attempt to secure engagement with aggregately declining pay and conditions in the labour market. Rather, they are also part of a 'double disciplining' (2012; 242) strategy to *criminalise* the poor in efforts to contain 'urban disruption' (2008; 19) and manage social marginality fuelled by 'ethnoracial injustice', 'economic deprivation and widening social inequalities' (2008; 22; see also Flint, 2019). Wacquant (2008; 22; 24-5) argues that the 'impoverished', urban inner-city dwelling 'fractions of the working class' have been subject to a structural 'violence from above' from the late 1970s pertaining to (1) mass unemployment and 'labour precariousness'; (2) intensified 'competition for access to scarce public goods' from 'settlements of immigrant populations'; and (3) 'heightened stigmatisation' of 'residing in a degraded and degrading neighbourhood' (Wacquant, 2008; 24-5). Wacquant (2008) argues that this violence from above forced a '(socio)logical response' (2008; 24) from the 'impoverished fractions of the working class', which took shape in 'the most effective, if not the only, weapon at their disposal, namely, direct confrontation with the authorities and forcible disruption of civil life' (2008; 22). In efforts to manage these confrontations as well as social unrest/marginality more generally, Wacquant (2009) believes that, from the 1980s onwards, politicians and state managers have taken a distinctively punitive approach. They have done this by reforming the 'two modalities of public policy' that are customarily directed towards the urban poor—namely, 'welfare and criminal justice' (Wacquant, 2012; 242). More specifically, state managers have re-designed them as 'workfare' and 'prisonfare', wedding them together in order to simultaneously 'bend' the urban poor toward 'precarious wage work' and 'warehouse their most disruptive or superfluous elements' (2012; 240).

According to Wacquant (2012; 242), the synergies between 'workfare' and 'prisonfare' lie not only in this mutual objective, but they are both 'guided by the same philosophy of moral behaviourism and employ the same techniques of control, including stigma, surveillance, punitive restrictions, and graduated sanctions to "correct" the conduct of

their clients'. Developing Wacquant's theory in relation to UK welfare reform, Fletcher and Wright (2018; 338) have since argued that recent welfare reforms imposed a 'wholesale criminalisation of benefit receipt'. This has occurred as policymakers have borrowed 'the stock-and-trade techniques of the correctional institution' (Wacquant, 2009; 101) and redesigned benefit administration/employment service delivery to '*deter* claims, subject recipients to *surveillance* and *punish* by harsh sanctions' (Fletcher and Wright, 2018; 338). As such, according to Wright, Fletcher and Stewart (2020; 284), unemployed populations increasingly experience the claiming process as a 'criminalising' site of 'symbolic and material suffering'. In some instances, they even 'mirror offender adaptations to prison' (Wright, Fletcher and Stewart, 2020; 281) through variations of 'ill-discipline' and (re)engagement with 'the informal economy or criminal endeavours' (Fletcher, 2019; 418; see also Fletcher and Flint, 2018).

Rethinking Welfare Reform: An Un(der)used Theoretical and Practical Approach

One thing I kept noticing as I continued to read and learn about these basic narratives and critical interpretations of welfare reform was that—quite unlike the examples I had unexpectedly stumbled across in my previous master's research—none of them discussed struggles against work and/or welfare reform in any great detail. Of course, when regulation and criminalisation theorists conceive of welfare reforms as establishing control over claimant behaviour and ensuring compliance with 'jobs that nobody wants', it is tacitly implied that unemployed claimants could be struggling against the imposition of work. But they don't actually factor these struggles into their research, analysis or subsequent interpretations of welfare reform. In the vast majority of research on welfare reform claimants are portrayed as something like 'passive victims' that don't really have any stake in shaping policy (Jordan et al, 1992; 38). This has even led some established social policy academics—particularly those of a neo-conservative persuasion (Dunn, 2014)—to suggest that there is a 'denial of agency' within debates on welfare reform (Deacon, 2002).

But then I came across a compelling interpretation of welfare reform, by Jay Wiggan (2015), which was unlike anything I had yet encountered. It seemed to in some ways resonate with the unexpected findings of my master's research. At its core, Wiggan

(2015; 385 [*my emphasis*]) argued that workfarist welfare reforms 'function as an integral part of a broader strategy of underdevelopment adopted by the state as the means to erode labour power's autonomy over waged work in response to *labour power's contestation that any job is better than no job'*. In simpler words, Wiggan (2015) was suggesting that unemployed people's struggles against the imposition of 'jobs that nobody wants' were actually the driving force underlying the formulation, implementation and intensification of certain workfarist welfare reforms in Britain. He made this argument by drawing upon a branch of neo-Marxist theory that I'd never heard of before called *autonomist Marxism*.

A Very Brief Introduction to Autonomist Marxism as a Theoretical Perspective and a Practical Approach to Conducting Social Research

Excited and intrigued, I started going through and beyond all the autonomist Marxist literature Wiggan cited in his article. I discovered *two* important things about autonomist Marxism which have ended up informing this entire research project. *First*, I discovered that autonomist Marxist theoreticians have an original yet seriously un(der)used theory of historical development and a series of fascinating concepts to understand life and the social world within and under capitalism. I found that these theories and concepts have been marginalised even among Marxist and radical left circles over the last forty years. Yet, I also found that they possessed enough explanatory power to provide an in some ways competing and (in some ways) novel critical interpretation of UK welfare reform (compared to dominant regulationist and criminalisation critical interpretations hitherto described).

Without going into detail, this theory suggests that historical development is rooted in the autonomy of working class people and, more precisely, in an inherent, irreconcilable class struggle between the two dominant classes typically found in capitalist societies: 'capitalists' and 'workers'. The theory suggests that, *on the one hand*, working for a capitalist is inherently exploitative and often harmful; so workers have a natural tendency to resist the imposition of capitalist domination and exploitation typically mediated through (the 'commodity-form' of) wage and reproductive labour (Cleaver, 1979; 71-85). Sometimes, through collective direct action, workers seek 'a way beyond work, wage and profit', which can end up threatening capitalists' ability to make profits

(Potere Operaio, 1973). *On the other hand*, in the face of workers who are not only resistant and potentially insurgent but indispensable to capitalists' profit-making ability (and hence their survival as capitalists), both the capitalists and their 'vehicle of system maintenance' (Skocpol, 1980; 171), the state, constantly develop and harness new (political, economic, technological) technologies to (re-)establish/preserve control over workers. The ultimate purpose of this is to ensure workers are subordinated to working for a capitalist and thus suitable for exploitation (Tronti, 2019). As such, this theory argues that a continuous cycle of binary struggle between capitalists and workers—fuelled by the workers' innate compulsion to resist the imposition of domination/exploitation and the capitalists' corresponding efforts to re-establish control—is the catalyst for political, economic, cultural, social (and so forth) change and thus drives societies forward onto new terrains (Negri, 1992).

The *second* thing I discovered was that autonomist Marxists tend to have their own methodological approach to doing social research. This methodological approach tends to inform their theory and concepts and thus their interpretation of the world. The autonomists re-designed and adapted Karl Marx's own 'workers' inquiry' method to infiltrate workplaces in efforts to specifically examine working class people's 'actual struggles: their content, how they have developed, and where they are headed' (Cleaver, 1979; 58). However, research for the autonomists wasn't and isn't just a way of updating existing social theory (Woodcock, 2014). On the contrary, the main point of their inquiries into workplaces was to, where possible, find ways of magnifying working class struggles through modes of self-organisation within and against capitalism.

Research Objectives, Questions and Design

So after a period of reflecting on these two discoveries about autonomist Marxism and the wider literature on UK welfare reform hitherto described, I decided to base my whole PhD research project on these two discoveries. This led to the development of two corresponding research objectives. The *first* objective I decided on was that I wanted to closely

> *(1) examine the (re-)emergence, delivery and receipt of social expenditure cuts and 'workfarist' welfare reforms in Britain*

But unlike the basic narrative and the dominant critical interpretations of welfare reform hitherto described, *I wanted to see what (if anything) could be learned by approaching welfare reform through the specific lens of autonomist Marxist theory*.

The *second* objective I decided on was that I wanted to, where possible, deploy the same inquiry method that autonomists tend to use to when conducting social research. More specifically, I wanted to get as close as I possibly could to the encounters between frontline practitioners and benefit claimants in benefit administration/employment service offices. I wanted to do this to investigate the spaces where struggles against work and welfare reforms might taking place and

> *(2) examine whether there is scope for struggle, resistance and self-organisation among those on the receiving end of 'workfarist' welfare reform*

In research question form these two objectives translate as follows:

> *Main Research Question:* Why have social expenditure cuts and 'workfarist' welfare reforms (re)emerged in the UK?
>
> *Sub Question (1):* How is contemporary UK welfare reform experienced by those who deliver benefit administration/employment services and those who receive benefit administration/employment services?
>
> *Sub Question (2):* Is there scope for resistance, struggle and self-organisation among those who are unemployed and on the receiving end of UK workfarist welfare reforms to benefit administration/employment services?

In the aim of pursuing these objectives and answering these questions, I ended up conducting two distinctive forms of research. The first form of research was secondary and comprised information accumulated through a plethora of relevant data sets, policy documents, books etc. The second form of research was primary and comprised 26 qualitative interviews in effort to get as close as possible to worker-claimant encounters and the benefit administration/employment service offices where welfare reforms predominantly take place. More specifically, I conducted a policy analysis by drawing on 11 qualitative interviews with current/former benefit administration/employment service workers and managers—whom together possessed a cumulative total of around 200 years' experience of civil service—on daily policy implementation. The primary

component also comprised 15 young, unemployed men (18-25), some of whom I managed to interview longitudinally over a period of six to nine months. Finally, the primary component comprised one interview with an activist who has had a longstanding interest and participation in unemployed struggles.

Core Arguments and Primary Contributions to Knowledge

Before getting into the main body of the thesis, I'll briefly outline the core arguments and the main original contributions to knowledge. In response to the main research question—Why have social expenditure cuts and 'workfarist' welfare reforms (re)emerged in the UK? —my argument is briefly as follows:

Unlike the regulation approach, UK welfare reform is neither (just) a 'logical social policy compliment' to a 'Competition State' project seeking to create economic conditions more favourable to inward investment (Peck, 2001). Unlike the criminalisation approach, welfare reform is not so much one of half of a dual effort to contain the urban unrest and social dislocations of the impoverished, urban dwelling fractions of the class (Wacquant, 2009). Rather, the present thesis claims to make an original contribution to knowledge by arguing (and showing) that UK welfare reform is part of a wider response to an *accumulation of working class struggles.* It is part of an effort made by capitalists and the state to pacify these struggles and re-establish/preserve control over the working class.

In response to the second research question—How is contemporary UK welfare reform experienced by those who deliver benefit administration/employment services and those who receive benefit administration/employment services?—my argument is briefly as follows:

Unlike the regulation approach, the services tasked with delivering welfare reform are not so much experienced as a site of labour regulation through various modes of discipline and deterrence (Peck, 2001). Unlike the criminalisation approach, services tasked with delivering welfare reform are not so much experienced as sites of criminalisation and suffering (Wright, Fletcher and Stewart, 2020). Rather, the present thesis claims to make an original contribution to knowledge by arguing (and showing) here that the services tasked with delivering welfare reform are experienced as *sites of*

class struggle. This occurs as, on one side of the desk, frontline benefit administration-cum-employment service workers operate in pressured conditions to probe for claimant resistance, ensure claimant compliance and, in some instances, antagonise claimants in efforts to secure their resignation from benefit receipt. Whilst, on the other side of the desk, claimants use a range of methods to struggle against and subvert continual attempts to ensure their subordination and/or efforts to secure their resignation from benefit receipt.

In response to the third and final research question—Is there scope for resistance, struggle and self-organisation among those who are unemployed and on the receiving end of UK workfarist welfare reforms to benefit administration/employment services?—my argument is briefly as follows:

There is substantial scope for unemployed claimants to develop and deploy individualised methods of resisting workfarist welfare reforms in favour of prioritising their own needs and interests. However, the present study found very limited scope for claimants to self-organise and build more powerful collective movements against workfarist welfare reforms.

A Brief Summary of Each Chapter

Before getting into the main body of thesis, I'll conclude the introduction by providing a very basic summary of each chapter.

Chapter two (theoretical framework) and *three* (methodological approach) are devoted to providing the reader with the necessary tools to follow the analysis. Chapter two provides a detailed account of autonomist Marxism as a theoretical approach. Chapter three provides a detailed account of autonomist Marxism as a methodological approach to researching workfarist welfare reform; as well as detail about the practicalities (samples, ethics, data analysis) of the present research project.

After this, in *chapter four* I begin the analysis and start to answer the research questions by showing how working class struggles against capitalists and the state began to accumulate and intensify in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In this period, workers were enacting more damaging forms of wage struggle. Claimants were unionising in increasing number and mounting subversive challenges to the social security system.

The unemployed were remaining voluntarily unemployed for longer and there was an increase in detections of benefit fraud. The state was spending more generously as a result of a rapidly growing claimant count and mounting political pressure resulting from a new and semi-successful anti-poverty movement. By the mid-1970s, this ended up successfully obliterating both the rate at which capitalists made profits as well as its overall share; forcing through a crisis of profitability for the capitalist class. The crisis of profitability was soon after followed (and magnified) by a refusal to invest from the capitalist class. By the mid-1970s, capitalist class domination was in serious jeopardy.

In response to this accumulation of working class struggles, in *chapters five, six and seven* I show how both capitalists and the state launched a political, economic and technological counter-attack to restore and preserve both capitalist profitability and control over the working class from the 1980s onwards. The counter-attack took three broad (not exclusive) directions. First, capitalists and the state used divide and conquer tactics to dismantle strongholds of working class power. They did this by fragmenting the labour force in a more complex and diverse range of wage/status hierarchies; precarious employment conditions; vagarious attendance patterns and inversely competing ('balkanised') relationships to the economy. Second, the state restructured the social security system via a retrenchment-cum-privatisation manoeuvre to help restore profitability and protect capitalists' share of wealth from the fiscal threat of costly and non-profit producing services. Third, in *chapter six* and *seven*, I show how the state confronted voluntary unemployment and benefit fraud. Policymakers of successive governments did this by strengthening and/or introducing a range of mutually reinforcing 'workfarist' policies and practices seeking to identify, correct and thus prevent any non-compliant behaviours (i.e. resistance to work/fraud) present within the ranks of the claimant unemployed. They also did this by strengthening and/or introducing another range of complimentary 'workfarist' policies and practices seeking to ensure that the claimant unemployed are both exploitable and intricately synchronised to the demands of employers whom seek fragmented labour forces on precarious terms and conditions.

In *chapter eight*, the analysis shifts from focusing on how policy is delivered by workers to how policy is received and contested by unemployed claimants. It is shown how claimants struggle against and subvert policies and practices designed to ensure their

compliance and push them into precarious wage labour. They tend to do this as a form of self-help to secure very minor gains; resist modalities of discipline and punishment; eschew undesirable expenditures of their labour power; and, in some instances, negate efforts to secure their resignation from benefit receipt. Whilst there was evidently scope for unemployed claimants to develop and deploy individualised methods of resisting workfarist reforms, it is also shown in this chapter how the extent to which this could be transformed into more powerful forms of unemployed self-organisation is limited and highly unlikely. Nevertheless, there are certain spaces in which unemployed self-organisation could be possible and prove useful for those involved.

In the concluding *chapter nine,* I bring the analysis together to assess its strengths and weaknesses in relation to the research objectives/questions. Recognising dominant existing critical approaches to welfare reform (regulation and criminalisation), I tentatively make the case for a 'class struggle' approach to welfare reform.

2. From Classical Marxism to Autonomist Marxism

Chapter Overview

In the next two chapters I'm going to start fleshing out the theory and methods, which should provide the reader with the necessary tools to make sense of everything that follows. The specific aim of this chapter is to develop a framework of theory and concepts that can be used to examine the (re-)emergence, delivery and receipt of social expenditure cuts and workfarist welfare reforms in Britain. As the reader should hopefully recall from the previous chapter, the theory and concepts I want to use originated in a neo-Marxist tradition called autonomist Marxism. Marxist theory is quite vast and complex (and some of it I don't fully understand yet). So I thought the best way to articulate the autonomist tradition and its uses for the present analysis would be to show the reader how those responsible for autonomist Marxist theory created it. In short, autonomist Marxist theory emerged out of a discontent with classical Marxist theory as 'one-sided' (Lebowitz, 2003). Autonomist Marxists were critical of classical Marxist theory on the grounds that it is principally concerned with how capitalism works as a political and economic system of wealth production yet scarcely discusses or theorises working class struggles within or against this system. To address this, they started by turning classical Marxist theory on its head, inverting it and considering it from the perspective of the working class. To explain this, I'm first going to introduce classical Marxist theory before fleshing out some key autonomist inversions of classical Marxist theory.

A Rudimentary Introduction to Classical Marxism

Classical Marxism refers to the philosophical, economic and sociological theories on capitalism originally developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The sheer volume of Marx's (and Engels) corpus and complexity of his analysis make it difficult to provide a comprehensive account of classical Marxism. With this in mind, the objective over the following two subsections will be to provide a rudimentary, but by no means exhaustive, account of the central components to Marx's original analysis of capitalism.

Exploitation: Commodity Production, Surplus Value and Capital Accumulation

In his most important and theoretically sophisticated text, *Capital*, Marx (2013) begins his analysis by focusing on the commodity. This term refers to the goods that are made in workplaces and which are later put on the market to be sold. Marx subscribed to a 'labour theory of value' and was of the opinion that the value of a commodity was primarily determined by the amount of labour time that went into making it: 'all commodities are only definite masses of congealed labour time' (Marx, 2013; 20). It is of course important to recognise that there are a number of caveats to Marx's labour theory of value, which he proceeds to explain in further detail (see Marx, 2013; 20-21; see Appendix 2.1. for more detail). But generally speaking, Marx believed that commodities which require more labour time tend to be more valuable.

Marx's interrogation of the commodity and how it comes to acquire value was necessary for him to arrive at what is perhaps the central feature of his overall analysis. That is, how commodities are produced in a capitalist society. In the workplace, Marx (2013; 120-127) argues, commodities are made by an interaction between two key inputs. The first is human 'labour power' (a.k.a. workers). This can be understood as 'the aggregate of those capabilities existing in a human being' (Marx, 2013; 113), which are exercised when an individual produces something, anything, that may be deemed of use. The second input is the various facilities (such as factories), raw materials, tools and machinery needed to make commodities fit for sale on the market. Marx (2013; 122) understood these as the 'bone and muscles of production'. In a capitalist society, the aim of a capitalist is to purchase these two inputs and create labour processes which 'incorporate living labour [power]' with 'dead substance' in the hope of taking the end product to the market and selling it for a profit (Marx, 2013; 135). Should the desired amount of profit be made, a portion of it will then be reinvested back into this process of purchasing the necessary labour power and ‘bone and muscles’ of production in the hope of making more profit. Marx (2013; 104) presented this continuous process as a simple formula: M-C-M'. Money is invested in the necessary labour power and 'bone and muscle', or means, of production (M). These two inputs are compelled to interact with one another to make commodities fit for sale on the market (C). And, if successful, commodities are then sold on the market for a greater sum of money than originally invested (M').

After outlining this process, Marx proceeds to locate precisely where this profit comes from—do capitalists simply lay their 'own golden eggs?' (Harvey, 2010; 92). No. To make profit, capitalists must ensure that their workers expand more value in the commodities they produce than the value they outlaid in the form of wages to the workers (Marx, 2013; 163-164). This can be done in a number of ways. Perhaps most obviously, the capitalist can extend the amount of time workers spend producing value, or at least beyond the value that is necessary for the workers to materially reproduce themselves (with shelter, food etc.) (Marx, 2013; 160-164). Other ways involve various methods of reducing the costs of employing workers in relation to the amount of value they are producing (Harvey, 2010; 164). Irrespective of these methods, the key point to take here is that 'the difference between the value the worker produces and the value of their wage goes back' to the capitalist (Umney, 2018; 23). Marx famously called this a surplus value. And so long as these commodities can be sold on the market at a value greater than that which it cost to create them, 'then this surplus value is converted into hard profit' (Umney, 2018; 23)—Marxists tend to call this a 'realisation' of surplus value. Marx saw this surplus value making arrangement incontrovertibly as the exploitation of one over another: 'the rate of surplus value is therefore an exact expression for the degree of exploitation…of the labourer by the capitalist' (Marx, 2013; 151; cf. Cole, 2018). This is because surplus value acquisition depends almost entirely on the cumulative energies of one larger group of human beings (workers) creating on aggregate a larger portion of value than necessary to reproduce itself and solely in order to sustain the livelihoods and endeavours of a smaller group of human beings (capitalists).

I need to add a final point here before continuing. When this M-C-M' process is successfully carried out and surplus value is realised, Marxists tend to call this 'capital accumulation'. It is important to note that, for Marx (2013), capital accumulation is one of the principle laws of motion governing capitalist society and its development. Put simply, the logic of a capitalist is to accumulate more than the sum of their investment, but the prospect of accumulation is usually subject to an intense pressure from other capitalists who are also competing to try and sell their commodities on the market (Mandel, 1990). As such, capitalists constantly seek technological innovations that will in some way improve the production process. The purpose of this is to try and make original and/or more valuable commodities, or more cost-efficient and thus more

competitive commodities in relation to other capitalists (Mandel, 1990). For classical Marxists, this accumulation logic of capitalists combined with market competition pressure is the key force which drives innovation, technological development and thus society forward onto new terrains.

Domination: Capital, Labour and Class Interests

So if this arrangement of capital accumulation is inherently exploitative and unfair, how is it that the capitalist is allowed to monopolise surplus value? According to Marx, this is because 'the capitalist system presupposes the complete separation of the labourers from all property in the means by which they can realise their labour' (Marx, 2013; 502). Put differently, under law in a capitalist society, capitalists are granted private ownership over the various technologies and resources that are needed to make commodities, as well as the labour power they purchase for money wages (Swingewood, 1991; 173; Holloway, 2005; 30). Therefore, capitalists can monopolise the surplus because they hold 'effective possession' over the labour process up to and including the final product (Callinicos, 1996; 102-103). By contrast, workers are only legally entitled to a share of the value, usually taking the form of wages, which has been agreed in their employment contract with the capitalist. Furthermore, private ownership can make it very difficult for workers to negate capitalists and produce independently in a capitalist society. One reason for this is that independent workers can struggle to compete in markets with capitalists who, as a direct result of private ownership over many years, can possess superior investment power, superior labour power and superior means of production. All of which make it easier for capitalists to realise surplus value in the market and undercut the competition posed by smaller-scale producers. As such, this arrangement leaves many individuals with little choice but to relinquish their labour power to a capitalist in exchange for a wage.

The importance of private ownership for Marx's analysis of capitalism cannot be understated. This is because, according to Marx, ownership over production principally determines class relations in any given epoch or society: 'classes arise when the "direct producers" have been separated from the means of production, which have become the monopoly of a minority' (Callinicos, 1996; 101). Marx (1977; 66) argues that under capitalism societies 'fell apart' into 'two classes—property owners and property-less

workers'. In other words, Marx believed capitalist societies comprise two dominant, but by no means exclusive, classes which are for the most part defined by their relationship to commodity production. On the one hand there is Capital. Capital mainly refers to the smaller group of capitalists, mentioned above, who own the means of production and purchase labour power for the purposes of extracting surplus value in the vision of making profitable commodities. On the other hand there is Labour. Labour refers to the larger group of workers who don't own the means of production (hence 'property-less'), have little or no control over the labour process and sell their ability to work (a.k.a. their labour power) to capital.

Before continuing I need to add an important point about 'class' here so as to avoid any confusion. Ostensibly, the more recent orthodoxy among sociologists has been to place greater significance on the cultural manifestations of class, exploring the relationship between class and culture in order to deepen understandings of the 'connections between social class, lived experience and identity' (Flemmen, 2013; 326). Classical Marxism does not resemble such an analysis. As Umney (2018; 24) states, class from a Marxist perspective is less about 'something you are' and more about 'something you do'. In other words, class in Marxist terms is not so much an attempt to categorise human beings according to their complex and diverse range of experiences and subjectivities. Rather, class describes the role a human being performs in the production of value, commodities and thus wealth in a capitalist society—it captures their objective relationship to the economy. As such, given the amount of references made to 'capital' and 'labour [power]' throughout this thesis, I feel it's important for the reader to acknowledge the precise usage of these terms. In line with Umney (2018; 24) then, capital in this thesis does not 'denote a group of individuals with shared cultural and social characteristics, but an economic process which is enacted by…the sole owners of a company, shareholders, major investment organisations or whatever else, who are involved in investing money in order to extract surplus value'. The same goes for 'labour' or 'labour power'. These terms are not understood in classical Marxist theory, or in this thesis, as a group of individuals sharing identical tastes or lifestyles. Rather, they refer to individuals sharing an identical relationship to commodity production. That is, they possess little or no control/ownership over the labour process and, for the most part,

are dependent 'on their ability to sell their time and skills to capital… usually in exchange for a wage' (Umney, 2018; 24).

Returning to the point, For Marx (2013), capital can only continue to exist if it is able to continually exploit labour power by carrying out the M-C-M' process time and again and realising a surplus value. This is the 'directing motive'; 'the end and aim of capitalist production, is to extract the greatest possible amount of surplus value, and consequently to exploit labour power to the greatest possible extent' (Marx, 2013; 229). Yet, as the number of 'co-operating labourers increases', Marx (2013; 229-230) argues, their inclination is to 'resist' and reduce exploitation imposed upon them (see also Cleaver, 1979; 78). This is usually done by increasing their share of the value created (via wage increases for example) without a corresponding rise in productivity, or reducing the amount of time they spend being productive for capital. If the workers are successful at doing this, then capital's surplus value shrinks. And this poses a serious problem for capital, as failure to locate and realise surplus value means that no profits can be made and there will be no incentive to invest in the M-C-M' process. But more importantly, if larger numbers of capitalists fail to make a profit then the overall level of social wealth decreases and the economy begins to falter and contract. This in turn rouses serious anxieties among 'state managers'; that is, those individuals in government who are charged with maintaining a stable economy and material conditions satisfactory enough to sustain and pacify the bulk of the citizenry (Block, 1977; 15). Therefore, both capitalists and 'state managers' have a vested interest in preserving and/or increasing capital's share of profit. This customarily entails expanding capital's surplus by finding ways to enhance productivity and/or managing any threats posed to the surplus.

Labour's interests are, by stark contrast, diametrically opposed to capital's ‘directing motive’. This is because 'most workers would ideally like to reduce working time' or 'raise wages' (Umney, 2018; 25). Generally speaking, workers would ideally like to subordinate working hours to an amount of time that is necessary to only reproduce themselves; Or, alternatively, to increase their pay without having to work longer/harder and thereby increasing their share of the overall profits.

The key point to take from this then is that production—'the most fundamental human activity' required for the populace to survive and reproduce itself (Callinicos, 1996; 79-

82)—is 'built on a massive conflict of interest' between the two dominant classes (Umney, 2018; 25):

> ‘what are the common wages of labour, depends everywhere upon the contract usually made between those two parties, whose interests are by no means the same. The workmen desire to get as much, the masters to give as little as possible. The former are disposed to combine in order to raise, the latter, in order to lower the wages of labour’ (Smith, 1970 [1776]; 169).

Therefore, for labour power to comply and such an arrangement to continue, both commodity production and capitalist society more generally must 'transform themselves into means of domination over, and exploitation of, the producers' (Marx, 2013; 451). In other words, capital's power 'rests on a real domination over society in general' (Tronti, [1965] 1979; 7) and, for Marx, the state must play a crucial role in this.

In the knowledge that the 'propertyless are more inclined to become vagabonds and robbers and beggars than workers' under 'the conditions posited by capital' (Marx, 1973; 736), a central function of the state has been to act as 'a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie' (Marx and Engels, 2015; 5), by designing the rules and regulations of capitalist society in such a way so as to ensure that labour power is both economically useful and compliant to the demands of capital (cf. Smith, 1970 [1776]; 169). There are a number of areas where this is observable, such as education for example, but perhaps none are more pervasive (and relevant to this thesis) than state responses to unemployment and the prospect of 'worklessness' over the last few centuries. Initially, during the years of the primitive accumulation where masses of agricultural peasants were forcibly expropriated from the common land and enticed into the cities, the state response took form in violent methods as peasants were 'whipped, branded, tortured by laws grotesquely terrible, into the discipline necessary for the wage system' (Marx, 2013; 516; cf. Neocleous, 2000).

In more recent years, as capitalism developed, the state has played a more active role in shaping and disciplining the activities of what Marx (2013; 440) terms a 'disposable industrial reserve army' of labour (see Offe, 1984; 92-93). Marx (2013) used this term to describe those individuals who often existed 'in the most desperate poverty' on the peripheries the labour market, cycling in and out of employment and ready to sell their

labour power at the disposal of capital (Umney, 2018; 30). Over the last 400 years or so, the state has played an active role in reproducing the reserve army by providing it with access to a portion of the total wealth produced in the form of various social security benefits (see Spicker, 2019). For the majority of these 400 years, however, the state has made access to benefits conditional on some form of work related activity. These have ranged from incarceration in workhouses (Longmate, 1974) and contracted 'farming' (Townsend, 1813) so as to 'set the poore on worke' (Smith, 1972; 83), to the more recent labour camps (Fletcher, 2015) and 'work experience' placements (Burnett and Whyte, 2017). Generally, the idea has been to create and sustain a surplus labour force that exerts a disciplinary pressure on waged workers. In theory at least, this comes to fruition as the presence of surplus labour leaves active workers in regular fear of being replaced, thereby dissuading them from becoming complacent in the face of their employers and instead submitting 'to overwork and to subjugation under the dictates of capital' (Marx, 2013; 444).

Alongside the transformation of capitalist society into a 'means of domination' over labour power, according to Marx, the labour process too must follow suit. There is neither space nor need here for a detailed chronology of the innumerable mechanisms capital has utilised to dominate workers and ensure their subordination in the workplace. As Marx (2013; 300) muses, 'It would be possible to write quite a history of the inventions, made since 1830, for the sole purpose of supplying capital with weapons against the revolts of the working-class'. Nevertheless, suffice it to say that capital over the years has made use of inventions ranging invariably from machinery and technological developments designed to (dis)organise workers and govern the body (cf. Braverman, 1974; Dyer-Witheford, 1999); to novel organisational strategies and managerial techniques aimed at 'governing the soul of workers' by ensuring their 'personality and subjectivity [are] susceptible to organisation and command' (Lazzarato, 1996; 134; Rose, 1999).

This leads fittingly on to an aspect of classical Marxist theory that I want to conclude this subsection with. For Marx (2013; 451), this arrangement was not only unfair but it had deleterious effects on the mental and physical wellbeing of the working class; as all methods for raising and/or ensuring 'the social productiveness of labour [within the capitalist system] are brought about at the cost of the individual labourer'. Or put more

precisely, Marx argued that exploitation and the abovementioned means of domination deployed to preserve the exploitation of labour power:

> ‘mutilate the labourer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they distort the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut of capital.' (Marx, 2013; 451)

Marx (1973; 611; 1977; 66-81) was of the opinion that the act of 'self-creation' (Fromm, 2004; 31)—that is, an individual's power to engage in a self-directed labour process of transforming nature to meet their own needs—was intrinsic to human nature and, by extension, human happiness (Fromm, 1962; 62-63). In a capitalist society however, where many human beings are, to varying extents, exploited, and whose daily productive activities are subordinated to the demands of another, the act of labour is no longer an act of self-creation. Instead, 'labour and its products…loses its character of being an expression of man's powers' to transform nature according to his/her own 'will' and 'planning' (Fromm, 2004; 39). Such labour alienates the worker from their human essence and the world around them because the act of labour itself 'has ceased to be a part of the worker's nature' (Fromm, 1962; 39). Consequently, the worker under the rule of a capitalist 'does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind' (Marx, 1977; 71).

Marx's theory of alienation was a central plank of his overall analysis and there are a number of reasons for this. One such reason was that it was an important break from, and exposition of, the orthodoxies and contradictions held by some of the most important analysts of capitalism prior to Marx. Political economists such as Adam Smith ([1776] 1970; 133), for example, advocated for a system of production which further intensified and reduced the quality of labouring activity, yet simultaneously saw labour

as a necessary ‘toil and trouble’; a 'curse' of life which inherently violated a human's natural state of 'tranquillity' (Marx, 1973; 611). By contrast, Marx (1973; 611) believed that labour only became a 'curse' when performed under conditions which divorced it from an act of self-creation, and that 'the individual…also need[ed] a normal portion of work and…the suspension of tranquillity' to be truly content. But there is also another important reason why alienation was a central feature of Marx’s analysis, which leads conveniently onto a shortcoming of classical Marxism and a point I wish to open the following section with.

'Class Struggle' Marxism and Operaismo: An Inversion of Class Perspective in Classical Marxist Theory

Alienation, for Marx, is the empirical manifestation of exploitation and domination on the human body and mind in a class society (see Callinicos, 1996; 82-83). As such, alienation has not only been lived and burdened by large numbers of the population. But it has served as a catalyst for individual and collective movements aimed at subverting, resisting and even directly attacking the interests of the exploiting class and its mechanisms of domination (see Frayne, 2015). This is what Marxists generally come to understand as working 'class struggle' in a capitalist society—it is a movement against the interests of the opposing class. Curiously, in spite of Marx's lengthy analysis detailing how capital moves (or 'struggles') to impose its interests on the working class (see above), his corresponding analysis of working class struggle was comparatively sparse (Cleaver, 1992). Perhaps this is surprising given the serious attention he paid to exposing the injurious effects that capitalist society had on the working class, but then again Marx died long before he finished developing his ideas. Nevertheless, since Marx's death, neo-Marxists have problematised classical Marxism as a ‘one-sided’ portrayal of capitalist society and suffering a vacuum of working class perspective (Lebowitz, 2003; 120). According to Lebowitz (2003), this has almost left labour power sellers appearing mistakenly as passive objects of capitalist domination and exploitation.

In attempts to address this deficiency in classical Marxist theory a corresponding tradition has developed, focusing more explicitly on workers’ struggles in a capitalist society. Technically, this tradition dates back to select passages written by Marx himself, but significant advances were made by those associated with the Johnson-Forest

tendency in the U.S. and Socialisme ou Barbarie in France (Pizzolato, 2017; 454). However, it was in an industrially mature Italy between the 1950s and the late 1970s where this alternative tradition—sometimes referred to as ‘class struggle’ Marxism (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 62-63)—underwent momentous practical and theoretical development (Pizzolato, 2017; 453-456).

Now, before exploring the contours of this particular development of 'class struggle' Marxism, there are a number of important reasons why the wider political, economic and social conditions under which it arose should first be acknowledged. For one, those Italian Marxists who were involved in developing the class struggle tradition were observing and writing in a hostile and deeply class conscious social climate (Mentasti, 2021; cf. Principe delle Tenebre, 2018; cf. Red Notes, 1979; 167-181). This was not only reflected in a discernible shift in attitudes among Italian industrial workers who, or so it was reported, did not possess ‘any old soviet-like pride in their jobs’, to them, ‘a job [was] slavery’ (Potere Operaio, 1970). But it was also evident in the militant action industrial workers were routinely taking to repel forces which tried to subordinate them; ranging from wildcat strikes, mass sabotage and mass absenteeism, to factory occupations and violent confrontations with the police (Potere Operaio, 1973; 29; Mentasti, 2021). Alongside this, student movements had begun to occupy universities in solidarity with the workers, organising around issues such as 'against bourgeois culture', which resulted in more violent confrontations with the police (Red Notes, 1979; 183). Armed struggles were also in the ascendancy during this period. A left-wing terrorist organisation called the Red Brigades were mobilising armed insurrections against the state to incite revolution through violent force, culminating in the kidnap and murder of former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro (see Red Notes, 1979; 139-165).

Secondly, in direct relation to the first, this strand of Marxism arose in a period heavily influenced by Keynesian reformism and a politics of class compromise, which was ongoing across many capitalist territories (cf. Block and Somers, 2014; 22). Without going into detail, the Keynesian class compromise strategy aimed to 'tie wage increases to productivity increases and thus harness working-class struggle as a motor of capitalist development' (Cleaver, 1979; 55). This meant that labour movements and a strong trade union presence were regarded as necessary to enforce productivity deals and ensure cooperation between the two dominant classes (cf. Harvey, 2007; 10-11). Despite such

institutions claiming to represent the interests of the working class, Italian workers were rejecting Keynesian productivity deals and ridiculing the labour movement as complicit 'with a capitalist strategy to control and harness workers' power' (Cleaver, 1979; 56). In direct opposition to their employers, trade unions and the communist party, the Italian workers were 'demanding more wages and less work' (Cleaver, 1979; 56), and 'that wages should no longer be linked to productivity' (Ginsborg, 1990; 314).

Finally, in direct relation to the first and the second, those involved in developing this tradition of Marxism were active members of a political organisation called Operaismo ('workerism') (Wright, 2017; 1). In a sentence, Operaismo was a distinctive faction of the Italian revolutionary left that was principally concerned with 'stressing all the time the working class point of view' and developing strategies to meet the specific material self-interest of the working class (Red Notes, 1979; viii). Operaismo's focus on the material self-interest of the working class positioned it in conflict with the objectives of alternative anti-capitalist movements, which tended to advocate ‘socialist productivism’ and the subordination of workers to work in the ‘general social interest’ of the citizenry (Fleming, 1991; xi; see Weeks, 2011; 83-85). As such, the key thinkers of Operaismo (loosely referred to as the Operaisti; see Pizzolato, 2017) were 'diametrically opposed to the basic Communist Party framework of class alliances' (Red Notes, 1979; viii); they were ‘anathema to neoliberals, Eurocommunists, social democrats’ (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 64) and/or any notion of authoritarian class compromise which made work obligatory. Rather, the Operaisti were principally motivated by a desire to 'unravel the fundamental power relationships' of 20th century class society (Wright, 2017; 3), up to and including those institutions masquerading as working class representatives. The Operaisti weren't purely academic Marxists. Their political ambitions were more of an influence on their ideas than any philological desire to provide more precise interpretations of Marxist theory (Wright, 2017; 3). It is precisely these reasons that this strand of Italian Marxism came to be known as autonomist Marxism and was documented as an important development of the ‘class struggle’ tradition (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 62-63). This Marxism was autonomous because it first and foremost advocated for an independent anti-capitalist working class politics which provoked and supported, 'with violence if necessary' (Negri, [1977] 1979; 110), 'independent "direct

action" forms of struggle outside [and if necessary against] the mediations of parties and unions' (Red Notes, 1979; viii).

Following their political approach and the hostile socio-political climate that they were attempting to make sense of, the Operaisti's theoretical approach to Marxism was also distinctive in that it too placed heavy focus on both the material interests and the perspective of the working class. Thus, when the Operaisti set out to re-read Marx's original work in an effort to make sense of Italy's changing political, economic and social conditions, key figures such as Mario Tronti (1976; 129) and Raniero Panzieri (1976; 22) suggested that a rediscovery of Marx was necessary. The Operaisti believed Marx's original analysis to be 'lopsided', focusing excessively on the movements of capital whilst providing a comparatively sparse analysis of the counter-movements of labour (Cleaver, 1992; 110). The one-sidedness of classical Marxism was ill-equipped to make sense of the ongoing struggles in the factories, universities and Italian society more generally (cf. Lebowitz, 2003). As such, the Operaisti set out to turn this 'problem on its head, change orientation, and start again from first principles, which mean[t] focusing on the struggle of the working class' (Tronti, 2019; 65).

According to Moulier (1989; 19), the Operaisti's somewhat novel focus on 'the central role of working class struggle in the dynamics of capitalist production' resulted in a 'Copernican inversion of Marxism'. Whereas classical Marxism focused on the logic of capital accumulation—that is the capitalists' drive to continually make profit and re-invest in the process of locating surplus value—as the inexorable driving force which shapes the development of capitalist society; Autonomist Marxism turned this on its head, arguing that 'working class struggle is the motor of development' (Negri, 1977; 94). This notion of 'class struggle as the motor of development' is not only a central feature of autonomist theory but it is central to this thesis, so the reader should pay very close attention to the remainder of this chapter.

Far from being a passive object of capitalist domination and exploitation, Tronti (2019; 245) argued that there is 'no active life in capital without the living activity of labour power'. In other words, it is the worker and not the official owner/creator of the production process that is the active subject of production, and one upon which capital depends: 'the existence of a class of capitalists is based on the productive power of

labour' (Tronti, 2019; 243). In order to survive, therefore, capital must constantly find ways of subordinating workers to labour power by incorporating them as docile objects in its processes of commodity production and value expansion/extraction/realisation (Tronti, 2019). For various reasons already touched on above, however, labouring subjects tend to resist and struggle against their subordination as objects. This usually makes their role in commodity production problematic (for capitalists) and in many instances workers fail to perform exactly as desired by capital. As such, 'labour is for capital always a problematic other' that remains indispensable to capital's existence yet persistently 'circumvents or challenges' capital's necessary efforts to subdue and control workers (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 65).

But what does this have to do with 'working class struggle' being the 'motor of development'? Well, in a section of Capital—a crucially important section for autonomist interpretations of classical Marxism—Marx (2013; 294-301) observed that technological development partially arose in response to working class struggles:

> 'The extraordinary power of expansion of the factory system owing to accumulated practical experience, to the mechanical means at hand, and to constant technological progress, was proved to us by the giant strides of that system under the pressure of a shortened working-day' (2013; 298).

Basically the autonomists believed Marx (2013; 300) was suggesting here that workers' struggles had manifest in the 'pressure of a shortened working day' and technological progress was ultimately driven by a need to respond and pacify working class struggles 'against the autocracy of capital'. Building on this significantly, autonomist thinker Panzieri (1976; 1980) argued that because capital is locked in a constant battle with resistant and potentially insurgent labouring subjects, this means regular renovations and technological improvements are required so technology can be used as a weapon to 'forestall, coopt and defeat' labour—its 'problematic other' (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 66-67). These nascent thoughts were the seeds to a new and radical theory of historical development. Unlike the orthodox Marxist view which tends to see the historical development of capitalism as governed by the unfolding logic of capital accumulation; the autonomists began to argue that development is little more than the result of a binary struggle motion between the two classes. Whereby labouring subjects routinely

resist the imposition of work and, in some instances, seek 'a way beyond work, wage and profit' (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 63). Whilst capital, in a corresponding motion executed as part of its accumulation logic, develops and harnesses new technologies to control the working class and subordinate it as labour power for suitable commodity production (Tronti, 2019; 246). It is this notion of a constant, binary class struggle which is really at the heart of autonomist Marxism as a theoretical approach.

From Composition of Capital to Class Composition: The 'Cycles of Class Struggle' Theory

To better capture and articulate this binary struggle motion, the autonomist theoreticians use the concept of 'class composition', which is often said by contemporary custodians to be the autonomists' most important contribution to knowledge (Wright, 2017; 3; 2019; xii). Identical to their assertion that it was working class struggle, and not just the logic of capital accumulation, that served as the true driving force of historical development, 'class composition' too was a concept developed by inverting Marx's original analysis and considering it from the perspective of the working class. Or, more precisely, 'class composition' emerged directly from Marx's own insights on the 'composition of capital'. Without going into too much detail, it's worth deviating and briefly revisiting Marx's original analysis again here to make better sense of how the autonomists came to develop 'class composition'.

Marx's conception of the 'composition of capital' is among the more 'esoteric and perplexing' features of his original analysis (Harvey, 2010; 263), so a useful starting point is to first understand why Marx developed this theory. This is straightforward, Marx (2013; 438) initially wanted to explain why unemployment occurs, and later, in volume three of *Capital*, he wanted to explain why the rate of profit falls and economies tend to decline into periods of crisis (Marx, 1999; 153-164). Marx was of the view that unemployment and economic crisis emerged naturally as a result of the 'the internal dynamics of technological change' and thus the way capitalism develops over time (Harvey, 2010; 265). In other words, he was saying that capitalism was eventually doomed to fall into crisis of its own accord. The way he went about trying demonstrate this was by looking at the composition of capital and the 'way capital is transformed in the process of accumulation' (Choonara, 2017; 159).

Marx believed that economic crisis emerged naturally from the effect that capitalists' accumulation logic had on the aggregate composition of capital. In simpler terms, because capitalists put each other under pressure and constantly need to accumulate by investing in new production technologies to sustain/increase surplus value; Capital, in its totality, over time tends to accumulate more production technology and less human labour power. This alters the value composition of the two key inputs which make capital (means of production and labour power), meaning that 'the value of the equipment, plant and technology used will rise relative to the amount of labour employed' (Roberts, 2016; 13). Gradually, labour power—'the only commodity that has the capacity to create value' for Marx (Harvey, 2010; 102)—contributes less and less to creating value in the production process as it becomes increasingly displaced by production technology. As such, production technologies 'remove the active value producer from the labour process and so make it more difficult to produce surplus value' for capital (Harvey, 2010; 265). This, for Marx, is the beginning of an economic crisis; as the struggle to produce surplus value eventually results in a falling rate of profit which, 'at a certain point…causes a fall in total profit, engendering a slump in investment and the economy as a whole' (Roberts, 2016; 13). The knock on effect of this is that the slump eventually reduces the value of both the production technologies, through bankruptcies and 'write-offs' of equipment, and labour power, through unemployment etc. (Roberts, 2016; 13-14).

So to briefly summarise; Marx developed the concept 'composition of capital' to analyse how capital, spurred on by its own logic of accumulation, directs the production process and, by extension, the development of capitalist society through the accumulation of production technology—with a potentially fatal end result. In autonomist theory, however, the focus shifts entirely but the objective remains inversely the same. In other words, the focus shifts entirely from the composition of capital to the composition of the working class. While the objective of class composition theory remains inversely the same by analysing the capacity of labour to wrest control of the production process from capital and redirect societal development towards its self-emancipation from class society—with a potentially utopian (instead of fatal) end result. According to Cleaver (1992; 112-113), the way this inversion came about was through the autonomists' study

of technological change and capitalist development in Italian factories. It's worth taking a closer look at this.

Amid militant workers' struggles in the factories over the 1950s and 1960s, and corresponding attempts made by capitalists to impose new technologies which would alter the division of labour in the production process, Panzieri re-examined Marx's original analysis (Cleaver, 1992; 111-112) and came to a different conclusion. Panzieri (1980; 54) argued that it was not so much blind accumulation logic which drove capitalist development, as much as it was 'capitalist despotism, which takes the form of technological rationality'. Panzieri wasn't contesting that new production technology was, as Marx originally suggested, 'being used by capital to increase exploitation' and sustain/increase the rate of surplus value (Cleaver, 1992; 112). However, Panzieri (1980; 49) believed that production technology was first and foremost being used to provide capital 'with new possibilities for the consolidation of its power' and to re-establish its dominance in the wake of a threat, posed by militant workers, to its procurement of surplus value. Thus, technological changes in the workplace were seen primarily as a response of capital emerging from its fear of a 'breakdown in the structure of control built into the existing division of labour' (Cleaver, 1992; 113), and a corresponding attempt to introduce a new division of labour aimed at 'controlling the class from within' (Baldi 1972; 12).

These occurrences led the autonomists to believe that they were witnessing the unfolding of a binary class struggle, whereby workers struggles were being met by capitalists' introduction of new production technology. To explain this, the autonomists developed 'class composition'. As a concept, this was used to analyse the material arrangement (or composition) of labour power in the production process; as it is constituted by capital in the form of hierarchy via job title, task allocation, wage differentials and so forth (Gambino, 1976; Appendix 1b). Added to this, class composition also considered the various divisions, such as those that might be posed by ethnicity, gender or culture, which capital may depend upon to in order to maintain control (Gambino, 1976; Appendix 1b). The main purpose of doing this was to measure the extent to which the working class could overcome such divisions and act in a revolutionary manner as a unitary 'dynamic subject, an antagonistic force, tending towards its own independent identity' (Negri, 1988; 209).

Drawing on their observations in the Italian factories, the autonomists argued that capital is constantly seeking to create and sustain a suitable composition of the working class. In other words, capital looks to create 'a particular distribution of inter- and intra-class power' among the working class, 'which gives it sufficient control over the working class to guarantee accumulation' (Cleaver, 1992; 114). However, should workers' struggles become organised effectively enough, they can undermine their own composition and, in so doing, threaten capital's overall control as well its ability to locate surplus value. According to Cleaver (1992; 114), this can only occur to the 'degree that workers are able to recompose the structures and distribution of' intra-class power among themselves', so that they can collectively establish greater inter-class power against capital and better assert their collective interests over their class enemy (Cleaver, 1992; 114). The autonomists termed this occurrence as a 'political recomposition' of the working class which, in short, captures the movements working class individuals and collectives make to rupture their existing composition and recompose the class into a unitary and antagonistic subject against capital.

Building on this, the autonomists argued that if and when the working class recomposes itself as a collective and antagonistic subject, capital must at some point respond and make a counter-move to decompose the working class composition. In simple terms, the autonomists saw decomposition as the corresponding motion by which capital deploys new technologies to break down working class solidarity and recompose the class in such a way that once again reduces it to docile labour power—thereby making it difficult for the class to assert its collective interests (Cleaver, 1992; 114). In the main, capital goes about this in the way Panzieri (1980) observed in the Italian factories, via 'constant revolutionising of the means of production—by recurrent restructurings, involving organisation changes and technological innovations that divide, deskill, or eliminate dangerous groups of workers' (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 66). However, as Negri (1973; 33; 1974; 39) has stressed on multiple occasions, capital has also relied on the state to 'strike directly at the composition of the working class' and introduce policies that impose 'a social enforcement on productivity'.

Irrespective of whether it is capital, the state or a combination of both, the autonomists argued that any attempts to decompose working class power will only ever result in further conflicts between the two classes later down the line: 'because class antagonism

can only be managed, it cannot be done away with' (Cleaver, 1992; 114). As such, *inherent class antagonism drives society forward into periodic cycles of class struggle based on this 'composition/decomposition/recomposition' motion described above* (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 66). According to the autonomists, the cycle is first articulated in an 'upswing' involving a period of 'political recomposition', increasing solidarity and an aggregate growth in the ability of the working class to assert its interests against its class enemy (Cleaver, 1992; 114). This is then followed by a corresponding 'downswing' in the cycle; which involves 'a process of class decomposition through which capital re-establishes sufficient control to continue its overall management of society' (Cleaver, 1992; 114).

In effect, by inverting Marx's 'composition of capital' and developing the concept of 'class composition' to better articulate how cycles of class struggle push capitalist societies forward, the autonomists had demonstrated that working class struggle—and not just the blind logic of capital accumulation—was at the centre of capitalist development: 'it was both a theoretical and political enrichment of Marxist theory' (Cleaver, 1992; 114).

The Theory of the Refusal of Work

The autonomists' contribution to the class struggle tradition and revolutionary Marxism did not stop at ‘class composition’ and a pessimistic interpretation of a relentless and inexorable cycle of struggle between the two classes. Instead, they proposed an escape. A theory was developed which, if put into practice in the correct way and to the correct extent (cf. Potere Operaio, 1973), could permanently rupture the cycle of class struggle and place an end to capitalist class domination. This theory was termed the ‘refusal of work’. The autonomists believed that the practice of refusal (of work) activities could transform individuals from docile objects as capital's labour power, to autonomous subjects as a working 'class against capital' and thereby pose a genuine threat to capital's control (Tronti, 2019; 242).

The term 'refusal of work' is perhaps 'unfortunate' (Weeks, 2011; 100), or ‘odd’ (Thompson, 2018), because it 'does not immediately convey the constructive element that is so central to autonomist thought' (Weeks, 2011; 100). In other words, 'refusal of work' was not so much used to capture the flat-out rejection of exerting one's own

'mental and physical capabilities' (Marx, 2013; 113) or the exhibition of a 'clichéd hippy dropout culture' (Shukaitis, 2014; 193). Rather, the term was originally used to capture a movement 'from discontent to action' against the conditions posed by the class enemy and class society more generally (Shukaitis, 2014; 196). In 20th century Italy, this movement ‘from discontent to action’ was predominantly manifest in a 'hatred of work and hatred of exploitation' (Negri, 1977; 126). This hatred was followed by its corresponding expression in mass 'sabotage, strikes, direct action' against both capital and the mechanisms upon which it relied to bargain (trade unions) and repress (the police) workers into subordination (Negri, 1977; 124). As such, the refusal of work is perhaps better understood as capturing exhibitions of 'struggle over profitability and power', and is thus more accurately described as the 'the refusal of wage labour on capital's terms' (Thompson, 2018). Or, as Kathi Weeks succinctly explains:

> '[the refusal of work] is not a renunciation of labour tout court, but rather a refusal of the ideology of work as highest calling and moral duty, a refusal of work as the necessary centre of social life and means of access to the rights and claims of citizenship, and a refusal of the necessity of capitalist control of production.' (2011; 99)

The importance of refusal (of work) activity in autonomist thought should not be underestimated. Tronti (2019; 257) argued that 'capital cannot destroy the working class, but the working class can destroy capital' and it is through the refusal of work, as a 'fundamental tactical function in the destructuration of the enemy' (Negri, 1977; 125), that this could be achieved. Negri (2005; 270) argued that the refusal of work effectuates 'a direct productive action on the capitalist mode of production'. And the more that refusal activities become 'socialised and radicalised', the more their 'productive action intensifies aspects of destructuring of the capitalist mode of production' (Negri, 2005; 270). This occurs as the accumulation and intensification of refusal activities—whether that be in multiplicities and/or variations of strikes, sabotage, absenteeism, occupations and so forth—coupled with their subversive content of demands concerning 'more money and less work' (Potere Operaio, 1973; 23), eventually impinge on capital's ability to exploit labour power to such an extent that surplus value can no longer be procured. This in turn incurs a falling rate of profit, generates crises and dissuades capital from investing in the M-C-M’ process. As such, because 'the exploitation of labour is the basis

and foundation of the whole of capitalist society', the autonomists believed that the refusal of work has the potential to unravel the very fabric of existing class relations and capitalist class domination (Negri, 1977; 124).

But Negri (1977; 124) goes further; 'the refusal of work, is in fact, the most specific, materially given, foundation of the productive force re-appropriated to serve the process of working class self-valorisation'. Put another way, refusal of work not only served as the motor for revolution through its ability to reduce exploitation, stall profits and generate crises. Rather, refusal activity was simultaneously the foundation for the working class to develop and articulate new 'needs, demands and values' independent from the influence of capital and capitalist society more generally (Negri, 2005; xxxiv). It was refusal activity which would facilitate 'the drive to escape' (Shukaitis, 2014; 196). It would pave the way for a transition from capitalist valorisation, to a proletarian 'self-valorisation'. That is, towards a new society free from capital and 'that disgusting slavery, from which the bosses have always profited, and which the official Socialist movement has always imposed upon us like some sort of "title of nobility"' (Negri, 1977; 119).

From Capitalist Valorisation to Proletarian Self Valorisation

The concept 'self-valorisation' is another example of an inversion of classical Marxist theory and, again, is central to autonomist Marxism as a theoretical and practical approach. The term is derived from Marx's original usage of 'valorisation'. Valorisation encompasses all of the various steps involved in the M-C-M' process: starting with the initial investment in labour power and means of production; followed by the process of production where workers are required to work longer than necessary to reproduce their own material needs; onto the sale of the commodities they make at prices which permit the realisation of surplus value; and, perhaps most crucially, the reinvestment of surplus value so that people will be compelled to relinquish their labour power once again. Capital valorises itself through this process. It does this by using the M-C-M' process to ensure that its own need for surplus value and profit is prioritised (over the needs of workers) and met. But also, as a direct result of meeting this need, capital valorises itself by re-investing the surplus and repeating the M-C-M' process on an even larger scale; thereby imposing more work and enhancing its dominance over the

opposing class (Cleaver, 1992; 115-116). As such, Cleaver (1992; 116) interprets capitalist valorisation synonymously as a mechanism of preserving and increasing capital's hold on society more generally: 'the theory of valorisation is the theory of the way in which capital subordinates, transforms and utilises human productive activities for its own purpose: endless command over society'.

In the century that followed Marx's original analysis, Antonio Negri proposed an 'essential inversion' of the valorisation process (Harrison, 2011; 35). Negri described this contrariwise process as proletarian 'self-valorisation':

> 'when we say self-valorisation, we mean the alternative that the working class sets in motion on the terrain of production and reproduction, by appropriating power and wealth, in opposition to the capitalist mechanisms of accumulation and development' (Negri, 2005; 255).

In more simple terms, self-valorisation refers to the working class values, needs and activities that 'supplant the alien and coercive needs and values imposed upon workers by capitalist command, by the ideology of work and by the seductions of consumer society' (Negri, 2005; xxxiv-xxxv). Negri (1991; 162) argues that the progression of self-valorisation within the class can be measured in two ways that both correspond to the extent to which the working class 'subject is able to develop itself, to liberate itself from the relations of production in so far as it liberates and dominates them'. The first, according to Negri (1977; 126) is a negative measurement that gauges 'the progressive reduction of individual and overall labour-time, i.e. the quantity of proletarian life which is sold to capital'. In second place, 'the progress of the process of self-valorisation is measured positively, by the multiplication of socially useful work dedicated to the free reproduction of proletarian society' (Negri, 1977; 126)

As Negri (1977; 124-126) and Cleaver (1992; 130) note, the relationship between working class refusal of work and the process of self-valorisation is therefore an 'intimate one'. This is because refusal activities force crisis, closures and liberate spaces from capitalist ownership. While, if capitalist society is to remain overthrown, self-valorising activities must eventually supplant refusal and transform these spaces into 'alternative, autonomous projects' (Cleaver, 1992; 130). Examples of such activity were rife in Italy over the 1960s and 1970s in 'the creative use of times, spaces and resources

newly liberated from the control of Italian and multinational capital' (Cleaver, 1992; 129). According to Cleaver (1992; 129), this 'helped constitute what many came to call the counter-culture' to capitalism in Italy. Which was manifest in 'the proliferation of free radio stations' and 'the widespread development of women's spaces', 'along with many other self-managed projects' independent from capitalist control.

It is worth quickly adding, as Cleaver (1992; 130-131) concludes, self-valorisation 'has proved flexible enough to be useful for understanding and appreciating struggles which have often been considered outside of the working class'; up to and including the struggles of peasants and 'so called urban marginals' of capitalist societies. In more recent years, (post-)autonomists have even sought to 'productively misunderstand' and 'rework' self-valorisation (cf. Shukaitis, 2014; 194). Of particular note, Holloway (2010; 189; 261) revises 'self-valorisation' to capture the ways in which individuals living within capitalist society may locate 'cracks' in the surface of capitalism to carve out 'spaces or moments of otherness', such as dropping out of formal employment to prioritise leisure activities and free time (Frayne, 2015). Whilst these spaces or moments may fall some way short of the fully autonomous spaces and activities that Negri was originally referring to, Holloway (2010; 189) insists they can be understood as 'more or less the same processes of revolt' that 'push forward' in a similar 'direction' (Hastings and Cumbers, 2019; 1460).

From Commodity to Commodity-Form: The Social Factory and New Terrains of Class Struggle

Following on from this, I want to conclude this chapter by continuing in this new direction and providing a closer examination of autonomist theory in relation to the struggles of individuals that exist on the margins of capitalist societies. This is important as the focus of this thesis will later turn to the experiences of a handful of such individuals. Not deviating from their foundational logic of binary class struggle, the way autonomist theoreticians have approached this has been by demonstrating how class struggles arise in a number of arenas well beyond the workplace (cf. Bologna, 1977). This occurs, in short, as capital requires an entire network of social relations beyond production to ensure that labour power is both economically useful and subordinate to

its will within production. To demonstrate this, I will need to conclude with one final inversion of classical Marxist theory.

Much in the same way Antonio Negri proposed an inversion of capitalist valorisation, American autonomist theoretician Harry Cleaver (1979; 71-85) inverted Marx's concept of the 'commodity'. To be brief, in Marx's (2013) original analysis, the commodity is only really considered from the perspective of capital as a necessary means to realising surplus value and profits. As such, commodities for capital are objective compositions of quantifiable amounts of labour power, machinery, raw materials and so forth. Cleaver (1979), by contrast, considers the commodity from the perspective of the working class. From this perspective, the commodity is a 'form' that the working class must embody for capital's benefit. This occurs as 'the capitalist class imposes the commodity-form on the bulk of the population by forcing people to sell part of their lives as the commodity labour-power in order to survive and gain some access to social wealth' (Cleaver, 1979; 71-72).

Put simply, from the perspective of the working class, the commodity is not so much an objective composition of the different things used to procure surplus value. Rather, it is a subjective condition of selling a portion of one's life to capital as labour power of some description. Customarily, working class individuals embody the commodity-form directly in exchange for a wage in the labour market. In other words, they become a worker for capital; signing an employment contract with an employer and providing their agreed contribution to the M-C-M' process in exchange for some wages. However, and this part is crucially important, Cleaver (1979; 74) stresses that is 'important not to equate' the imposition of the commodity-form as just an 'imposition of the money wage'. Rather, in capitalist societies, there are a range of out-of-work groups performing a range of labouring activities that aren't in receipt of a money wage but are still of benefit to capital and are still sustained by a 'portion of the total social wealth they produce' (Cleaver, 1979; 74). Most importantly, there are groups who are expending their labour power in ways which 'serve to reproduce labour power for capital' (Cleaver, 1979; 74); thereby ensuring that it is continually ready for exploitation by a capitalist. This has been most succinctly articulated by Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James (1972), the feminist wing of the autonomist tradition, and their cogitations on the role of women and housework in the community. Dalla Costa and James (1972; 13) argued that 'a

woman's first job is to reproduce other people's labour power', particularly that of men, unpaid and in exchange for a portion of the wage income brought home by the exploited male breadwinner. More precisely, men's labour power:

> 'must be fed, clothed and trained; then when it works its bed must be made, its floors swept, its lunchbox prepared, it's sexuality not gratified but quietened, its dinner ready when it gets home, even if this is eight in the morning from the night shift. This is how labour power is produced and reproduced when it is daily consumed in the factory or the office. To describe its basic production and reproduction is to describe women's work' (Dalla Costa and James, 1972; 11).

It was observations such as these which led Mario Tronti (1973) to argue that the class struggle between capital and labour does not just exist inside the 'factory'. Rather, as posited by Dalla Costa and James, 'the reproduction of the working class' as docile labour power for capital 'involves not only work in the factory but also work in the home and in the community of homes' (Cleaver, 1979; 57). Therefore, for Tronti (1973; 105) 'the entire society functions…as a moment of production', as a 'social factory', ultimately geared towards the continuation of the M-C-M' process and capital's endless command over labour.

For the autonomists, the social factory does not just include women and workers; students and the unemployed both had a role in reproducing docile labour power for capital. Whether it be by studying to accumulate 'human capital' (skills) which could then be later exploited by a capitalist and receiving a student loan (an unwaged portion of the total social wealth) in exchange. Or receiving an unwaged portion via benefit entitlements, searching for work and thereby exerting a disciplinary pressure on active labour power sellers as part of the reserve army of labour (cf. Cleaver, 1979; 57). In each case, according to autonomist theory, such individuals are embodying the 'commodity-form' by reproducing the working class as labour power suitable for capitalist exploitation.

By arriving at the social factory, the autonomists had opened up revolutionary Marxism to new horizons both theoretically and practically. In realising the sheer extent of capital's control over capitalist society more generally and not just those who worked in

the sphere of commodity production, they did not find 'grounds for despair' (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 68). Rather, they saw that if capitalist production also relies on an entire network of social relations—that is, the labour power of domestic workers, students, the unemployed and so forth— 'these constitute so many more points where its operations can be ruptured' through collective organisation and refusal activities (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 68). The autonomists recognised that all of these different working-class subjects (workers, the unemployed, women, students) would likely have differing demands, different forms of organising and even varying methods of subverting, resisting against and refusal of capital (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 68). Nevertheless, the importance of autonomist theory and practice is to try and make sense of all of this, with the broader objective of forming a plethora of diverse anti-capitalist alliances and transcending the existing class relations of capitalist society. Exploring autonomist Marxism as a form of practice is where attention will now turn.

3. Methodological Approach: Trawling For Interconnections, Contradictions and Antagonisms

Chapter Overview

In the previous chapter, I provided a rudimentary account of classical Marxist theory and autonomist Marxist developments ('Copernican' inversions) of classical Marxist theory in order to create a framework of theory and concepts suitable to pursue the research objectives/questions outlined in chapter one. Following on from this, the present chapter outlines autonomist Marxism as a practical approach to social research—called the 'workers' inquiry'—before proceeding to outline its limitations in relation to the present research objectives/questions. In short, while autonomist Marxists accept that overthrowing capitalism may require a plethora of anti-capitalist alliances beyond workers, they have yet to design a method suitable for investigating the unemployed and their struggles against workfarist policy implementation in a capitalist society. To overcome this limitation I propose a somewhat unorthodox solution. I propose an amalgamation of autonomist Marxist practice with Lipsky's (2010) bottom-up approach to street-level policy implementation. I call this an 'unemployed workers' inquiry'. The modus operandi of an unemployed workers' inquiry, I contend, has three key dimensions: *(1)* founded on dialectical materialist principles (in line with Marxist theory and practice), the researcher is guided by a conscious effort to search for and make sense of the interconnections, contradictions, antagonisms, motion and development of the capitalist mode of production. *(2)* Taking inspiration from the workers' inquiry method of knowledge accumulation, an unemployed workers' inquiry places special focus on the way in which the working class 'works and moves' within and against the capitalist mode of production; placing emphasis on searching for weaknesses within the capitalist mode of production and probing for self-organisation opportunities. *(3)* Taking inspiration from Lipsky's bottom up approach, the unemployed workers' inquiry departs from narrow focus on workplaces and employer-worker relations. Instead, the unemployed workers' inquiry shifts the focus and acknowledges that important struggles, weaknesses and opportunities for self-organisation within the capitalist mode of production may be occurring in different spaces and within different relations than

those traditionally investigated by Marxist inquiries. Specifically, the present study will focus on the delivery and receipt of workfarist policy between frontline benefit administration-cum-employment service workers and unemployed claimants in UK benefit offices.

Methodology

Generally speaking, Marx and many of those who have progressed the Marxist tradition after him did not and still do not formulate theories about the world out of thin air. On the contrary, underlying and informing Marxist theory and practice are a series of *guiding principles* about the nature of human existence and social reality on the one hand and the origins of human knowledge (or how we come to know what we know) on the other. Bundled together in a unitary concept, these guiding principles quite famously came to be known as something called *dialectical materialism*. To gain a sufficient understanding of dialectical materialism and its guiding principles, it is perhaps best to first separate its two components—*dialectics* and *materialism*—and explain them individually before bringing them back together for a more detailed explanation.

Dialectical Materialism

Dialectics originated in ancient Greece as a method of thought and an art of debate (Engels, 1908; 22); whereby a continuous process of disclosing the contradiction in the argument of an opponent and overcoming these contradictions was seen as the best method of arriving at the truth and pushing understanding forward. Centuries later, philosophers and scientists began to disassociate this method from its narrow application to thought and debate (Engels, 2012). Instead, they began applying the underlying logic of dialectics—most simply put; a continual clash of opposites pushing something forward—to making sense of phenomena that comprises the natural, physical world. The result was to have serious implications for how some scientists and philosophers understood the phenomena of nature (Sewell, 2012).

Prior to dialectical understandings of nature, metaphysics took precedence in scholastic thought. Metaphysicians view nature as a fortuitous amass of different things that are isolated and independent from one another which, if they do shift or take different form (e.g. water to steam), only ever 'move in the eternal oneness of a perpetually recurring

circle' (Engels, 1908; 24). In other words, metaphysicians 'contend that a thing can only keep on repeating itself as the same kind of thing and cannot change into anything different' and are hence more or less immutable (Mao Zedong, 1937; 68). As such, metaphysical inquiries into the phenomena of nature hold that things must be investigated and independent from one another (Engels, 1908; 23). Dialectics turns this understanding of nature firmly on its head and holds *four* key counter-posing principles (Engels, 2012; 17; 63).

First, unlike metaphysics, dialectics is 'the science of inter-connections' between different and outwardly appearing unrelated phenomena and sees 'the whole of nature' as forming 'a system, an interconnected totality of bodies' (Engels, 2012; 63; 71). In other words, dialectics does not regard the natural world as an accidental accumulation of phenomena that are isolated/unconnected/independent from one another. Rather, different things are all connected with, dependent on and determined by one another, forming an integral whole. The task of the dialectician then, according to Engels (1908; 24), is to 'trace out the internal connection[s]' that comprise this 'integral whole' and to locate 'the inner law running through all its apparently accidental phenomena'.

This leads directly to the *second* counter-posing principle. According to dialectics, the natural, physical world is not a state of rest and immobility, stagnation and immutability. Rather, through its interdependence and interconnectedness, the whole world ('natural, historical, intellectual') is actually a process 'in constant motion, change, transformation, development' (Engels, 1908; 24). For dialecticians of nature, as Charles Darwin discovered before most, 'organic beings, plants, animals, and man himself, are the products of a process of evolution going on through millions of years' (Engels, 1908; 24). According to Mao Zedong (1937; 89; 91), this means the world is in a continuous 'process of the new superseding the old…the old being eliminated to make way for the new, and the new emerging out of the old'.

The *third* principle, again related to the *second* and *first*, holds that as things evolve and develop, they should not be understood as movement in a circle or as a basic repetition of what has already occurred as the metaphysicians suggest. On the contrary, things tend to develop 'step by step from a lower to a higher level' (Mao Zedong, 1937b; 53) as an onward and upward movement 'of progressive or retrogressive changes' (Engels,

1908; 24). Engels (2012) demonstrates how change is best characterised as the natural result of an accumulation of imperceptible and gradual quantitative changes which then, at some point, effectuate a rapid and abrupt fundamental qualitative change in the form of a leap from one state to another. Engels (2012; 66) draws upon Hegel's example of water to explain this more straightforwardly. At first, 'the temperature of water has no effect on its liquid state', but as the temperature of the water (quantitatively) rises or falls 'there comes a point where this [liquid] state of cohesion alters and the water is converted' into something qualitatively new (steam or ice) (Engels, 2012; 66).

The final principle of dialectics is that 'motion and development' ultimately 'arises from the contradictions inside a thing' (Mao Zedong, 1937; 69). Engels (2012; 17; 72; 73) terms this as 'development through contradiction or negation of the negation'; whereby 'the basic form of all motion' is 'determined by the mutual action of the two opposite poles on each other'—'*development is the struggle of opposites*' (Lenin, 1915; 222). Put another way, dialectics holds that motion and development takes place not as a harmonious unfolding of phenomena but as a disclosure of the contradictions inherent in phenomena; as the result of an interaction of opposed forces in nature and as a subsequent struggle of their opposite tendencies (Lenin, 1915). Dialecticians claim this—the internal contradictions of things as the motor of motion and development—is a universal law operating over the whole of the natural world:

> 'In mathematics + and -. Differential and integral
>
> In mechanics: action and reaction.
>
> In physics: positive and negative electricity
>
> In chemistry: the combination and dissociation of atoms
>
> *In social science: the class struggle'* (Lenin, 1915; 222)

Before bringing these four principles of dialectics together in direction of understanding *dialectical materialism*, let's quickly look at the other half of the concept—*materialism*. The core principle of materialism quite straightforwardly holds that the world is by its very nature material. Materialism holds that the world constitutes an array of different matter which not only exists independently of human consciousness but, as human beings necessarily engage with and transform matter to satisfy their primordial needs, becomes 'directly interwoven' in 'the production of ideas, of conceptions, of

consciousness' (Marx and Engels, 1998; 42). According to Marx and Engels (1998; 42), this stands 'in direct contrast to' other prominent philosophies, particularly German idealism, 'which descends from heaven to earth, *here it is a matter of ascending from earth to heaven*'. In other words, rather than asserting that the natural physical world only exists insofar as it is an embodiment of human consciousness, Marx and Engels (1998; 42) thought the opposite to be true, suggesting that 'it is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness' and that matter is actually primary to human consciousness as the source of sensations, ideas, consciousness. Thus, materialists hold that consciousness plays a secondary role to matter as a reflection of matter; a reflection of being.

This has important implications for how Marxists understand the formation of human societies and social structures. Unlike idealism, materialism suggests that human societies are not determined by men's minds or in the views and ideas of society (Marx and Engels, 1998). Rather, 'the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure' (Engels, 1908; 26-7). As such, unlike idealism, materialism assumes that the historical development of human societies is not just the simultaneous development of human consciousness. Instead, societal development is primarily grounded in the development of the method of procuring the means of life necessary for human existence: the (capitalist) mode of production.

Materialism also has important implications for how Marxists (generally speaking) assume human knowledge of the world to originate. According to Marx and Engels (1998; 42), human knowledge is both bound to and transformed by human intercourse with the material world: 'the phantoms formed in the brains of men are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises'. Mao Zedong (1937b; 58) developed this further, suggesting that 'all knowledge originates in perception of the objective external world through man's physical sense organs'. In contrast to idealists, who maintain that human knowledge need not be accrued through perceptions and can be acquired instead through logical reasoning; Mao Zedong (1937b; 57) claims that 'all genuine knowledge', even knowledge that is not accrued directly through one's own perceptions, 'originates in direct experience' of the material world. Thus, for materialists, '*knowledge begins*

with experience—this is the materialism of the theory of knowledge' (Mao Zedong, 1937b; 60).

Bringing this all together then, as a set of guiding principles underlying Marxist theory and practice *dialectical materialism* can be summarised two-fold. *First*, the dialectical materialist approach to studying and apprehending the phenomena of nature is *dialectical*. According to Mao Zedong (1937; 71), dialectics 'teaches us primarily how to observe and analyse the movement of opposites in different things'. Dialectics also teaches us that in order to 'understand the development of a thing we should study it…in its relations with other things' and if/how 'each thing in its movement is inter-related to and interacts on the things around it' (Mao Zedong, 1937; 69). In other words, dialectics informs us that things are interconnected; constantly in motion and development; and that the motion/development of things are ultimately driven by their opposite tendencies (their contradictions). In specific relation to social (as opposed to natural) science, this means that outwardly appearing unconnected social phenomena are often interdependent on one another and '*changes in society are due chiefly to the development of the internal contradictions in society*' (Mao Zedong, 1937; 70). For Marxist theory and practice, then, to understand how a society functions, dialectical materialism holds that one must primarily search for, investigate and understand its interconnections and its contradictions 'in a *concrete* way' (Mao Zedong, 1937; 71).

This leads directly to the *second* guiding principle of dialectical materialism; that the interpretation of the phenomena of nature is *materialistic* (Marx and Engels, 1998). In other words, investigating interconnections/contradictions in a 'concrete' way means that one cannot just rely on 'rational knowledge' acquired through abstraction or logical reasoning (Mao Zedong, 1937b). As Engels (1908; 27) explicitly states, 'the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, *not in men's brains, not in man's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange*'. Thus, as a set of guiding principles dialectical materialism fundamentally posits that one must not cover up the contradictions of the capitalist system, but disclose and unravel them. And to understand and/or evoke change or development of the capitalist system, dialectical materialism posits that one must acquire empirical knowledge of its interconnections and contradictions through perceptual experience of the world (Mao Zedong, 1937b).

The Workers' Inquiry: Research on the Workplace 'From Below'

Marx implicitly claimed that such principles were equally if not more true when it came to understanding the role of the working class in the capitalist mode of production. He believed that it was only those 'with full knowledge of the misfortunes from which they suffer' and thus with direct experience of the 'facts and crimes of capitalist exploitation' (Marx, 1880)—a.k.a. the working class—who could truly understand 'the concrete reality of capitalism' (Cant, 2020; 7). It was also only the working class, 'and not saviours sent by providence', who could 'energetically apply the healing remedies for the social ills which they are prey' (Marx, 1880). As such, Marx (1880) argued that revolutionists must ascertain an 'exact and positive knowledge of the conditions in which the working class—the class to whom the future belongs—works and moves'. With this in mind, Marx (1880) created and commissioned '*a Workers' Inquiry'*; which basically set out to 'amass as much factual material about workers as possible' via a 100-question postal survey advertised in a French newspaper (Haider and Mohandesi, 2013; 2). As Woodcock (2014, 496) notes, this was a 'novel step' in revolutionist research. Not only were workers 'a commonly neglected object of investigation at the time' (Haider and Mohandesi, 2013; 1), but, unlike other empirical studies, workers in Marx's inquiry were 'not considered simply as passive subjects to be researched' (Woodcock, 2017; 24). Instead, Marx was positioning them 'as the only people who [could] describe their conditions, and more importantly as the only ones who [could] transform them' (Woodcock, 2017; 24).

Ever since Marx's initial workers' inquiry, various 'currents' of Marxism have periodically rediscovered, modified and subsequently developed the method according to their own specific historical context, objectives and needs (Cant, 2020; 7). Arguably the most influential 'current' since Marx is one the reader should now be familiar with (see previous chapter)—Italian Operaismo (workerism). Building on Marx's original inquiry, the Italian workerists too conducted workers' inquiries as a way of examining 'workers' actual struggles: their content, how they have developed, and where they are headed' (Cleaver, 1979; 58). However, the Italian's developed the methods in a number of ways (see Haider and Mohandesi, 2013). The most important of which, or at least for the present thesis, was that the workerists began to use sociology to acquire knowledge of

the working class and turn 'the tools of the social sciences into weapons of class struggle' (Figiel et al., 2014; 307; Fasulo, 2014).

The majority of previous sociological research into work had been conducted 'from the point of view of the bosses' and 'with the goal of increasing profits' (Cant, 2020; 8). A number of the workerists, such as Raniero Panzieri (1994), wanted to turn this on its head and use sociology and its methods of knowledge production within their inquiries to 'pass on experiences of resistance and struggle' (Wright, 2017; 52); as an 'organising tool' to establish 'contact with workers' (Woodcock, 2014; 504); and, subsequently, (3) as a method of looking 'for points of attack where the working class could launch an offensive on capitalism' (Cant, 2020; 8). Or, in the specific vernacular of the Italian workerists, they wanted to use sociological methods to study 'concrete processes of composition' and cultivate concrete processes of 'political recomposition of the Italian working class' (Cleaver, 1979; 54). Due to its history of preserving and extending capitalist dominance, the use of sociological methods created some tensions and debates within the workerist movement and even among some factory workers (Panzieri, 1994; Fasulo, 2014; Wright, 2017; 49). Nevertheless, those workerists in favour of using sociological methods began to infiltrate and investigate spaces 'where struggles were actually taking place', mainly factories, to gain a deeper insight into the 'subjectivity of the workers' (Woodcock, 2014; 504; see Wright, 2017; 42-53).

Acknowledging all of the above, a more recent 21st century incarnation of the workers' inquiry method has been re-developed and implemented by Jamie Woodcock (2015). Woodcock (2014) collated a historical overview of past workers' inquiries and the various strategies used in order to locate a method more suited to present political-economic conditions in the UK. Woodcock (2014; 510; 2017; 31-2) suggests that a contemporary workers' inquiry should comprise two stages. The 'initial stage' should be an inquiry 'from above', or a 'pre-inquiry', where the aim is to first 'develop theoretical insights and access to a workplace' by 'research[ing] the workplace' via existing data (e.g. 'academic and news articles, information from trade unions') (Woodcock, 2014; 510; 2017; 31). After this, 'the aim is to move towards an inquiry from below' (Woodcock, 2014; 510). That is, a 'detailed investigation of the workplace itself, either through auto-ethnographic methods or with contact with workers' which moves towards a form of 'co-research that breaks down the separation between researcher

and subject' (Woodcock, 2014; 510). Inspired by the Italian Workerists, Woodcock (2014; 510) suggests that the core objective underlying a move towards any inquiry 'from below' is not just one of 'knowledge production', but one that simultaneously seeks positive action via workers' self-organisation: 'the workers' inquiry cannot simply be limited to an academic tool for refreshing theory'.

From Workplaces to Jobcentres: The 'Bottom Up' Approach to Street-Level Policy Implementation

So at this juncture, two related points should hopefully be clear. First, generally speaking, Marxist theory and practice is ultimately founded upon and guided by dialectical materialist principles. Second, those who have sought to advance Marxist theory and practice by *specific way of understanding the subjectivity and struggles of the working class* have tended to do so by re-designing and harnessing Marx's own 'workers' inquiry' method. They have tended to do this by operationalising dialectical materialist principles, drawing upon and re-adapting the inquiry 'from below' to search for interconnections, contradictions, antagonisms and scope for change within the space that the working class are most commonly known to occupy—namely, the workplace.

However, for my own purposes at least, there is a clear limitation with this method. As discussed in chapter one, the core objectives of the present research project were to (1) examine the (re-)emergence, delivery and receipt of expenditure cuts and workfarist welfare reforms. And (2) examine whether there is scope for struggle, resistance and self-organisation among those on the receiving end of workfarist welfare reform. Doing this entailed acquiring knowledge from those who have direct experiences of the spaces—benefit offices/employment services—where such reforms are primarily implemented on a daily basis. It was therefore necessary to acquire experiences of both the workers/managers who implement workfarist reforms and those (mostly) unemployed claimants who are on the receiving end of them. Yet, as far as I have read, benefit offices, employment services and, more importantly, *relationships between workers' and the claimant unemployed* are uncharted territory for the workers' inquiry. As revealed in its name, the workers' inquiry method possesses a bias towards the active, labour power selling component of the working class. It is quite clearly geared

towards investigating the struggles of workers and their antagonisms with managers/employers in the workplace (see Woodcock, 2014). Consequently, previous implementations and developments of the workers' inquiry have failed to acknowledge and thus fail to accommodate for the presence of class struggles ongoing within a plethora of different intra-working class groups and spaces beyond workers and workplaces.

Notwithstanding the *formal organisation* efforts made by trade unions and the more contemporary unemployed workers' centres over the decades (see Forrester and Ward, 1986); there is actually a dearth of Marxist inquiries examining the struggles of unemployed workers *from below* against the British state and within/outside its benefit offices/employment services, or better known now as Jobcentres. In other words, there is a dearth of inquiry seeking to investigate unemployed struggles in the specific direction of learning whether there are opportunities for *self-organisation*, as opposed to organisation mediated through a formally recognised institution. This in turn has meant there is a dearth of inquiry seeking to investigate unemployed struggles in the direction of learning whether there is scope to injure capital and/or locate weak points within the present capitalist mode of production but beyond narrows confines of the labour market. Further, and perhaps quite peculiarly, this dearth of Marxist inquiry has occurred in spite of a wealth of evidence suggesting that unemployed struggles have been persistently bitter and violent in both their individualised and collective manifestations for at least 100 years (see Croucher, 1987; Hannington, 1977; cf. Brown, 1975; Gould, 1972; Turnbull, 2017).

However, this doesn't necessarily mean that unemployed struggles have been entirely neglected. On the contrary, within the social policy academy there is a now sizeable tradition of (mostly) non-Marxist research that does to some extent, mostly indirectly or implicitly, investigate classed struggles in unemployed facing public services. Without going too far off the point, this tradition is often referred to as 'street-level' or 'policy implementation' studies (see Brodkin, 2013a; 2013b). It can be traced back to 1970s America, where Pressman and Wildavsky became increasingly concerned with an evident 'mismatch between policies-as-conceived and policies-as-executed (or not executed)' in the administration of various public services (Brodkin, 2015; 27; cited in Kaufman, 2018; 40-41). Subsequently, policymakers and scholars became increasingly

concerned with understanding 'the "gap" between policy-as-formulated and policy-as-practiced—the so-called "implementation gap"' (Kaufman, 2018; 40). Early approaches tended to take a top down approach to the implementation gap, assuming that whatever deficits associated with a policy were 'accrued on its journey away from elite centres of power and downward toward the front-lines of implementation and delivery' (Kaufman, 2018; 41).

This momentously changed in the 1980s, when Michael Lipsky (2010) set out to turn implementation studies 'on its head' by demystifying the policy implementation gap through a *bottom up* approach. Drawing upon a wealth of empirical material taken directly from frontline policy implementation in a range of different public services (including benefit offices), Lipsky (2010) instead stressed the distorting effects of the everyday conditions under which policy is delivered. In particular, Lipsky (2010) notes how individual discretion, organisational cultures and relationships between workers, managers and service-users can shape and transform policy. But more specifically, and perhaps most importantly for my own purposes, Lipsky (2010; xiii) suggests that policy is often distorted through 'policy conflicts' and '*struggles between individual workers and citizens who challenge or submit to client-processing*'.

So bringing this back in focus; compared to Marx's workers' inquiry and subsequent re-adaptations moving towards 'from below', there are evidently some aspects of Lipsky's 'bottom-up' approach which are more suited to a project seeking to understand struggles within and against the delivery of welfare reform. Most obviously, by turning attention to the state and the distorting effects of conflicts between public service workers and their clients in policy implementation—inadvertently or otherwise—Lipsky's bottom up approach clearly recognises spaces and relations within the capitalist mode of production that may feature struggles but aren't exclusively located within the employer-worker relations characteristic of the workplace.

Despite this positive, there are of course quite clear issues with Lipsky's 'bottom-up' approach for a Marxist inquiry. One quite glaring issue is that, whilst Lipsky (2010) himself stresses the importance of conflict and struggle between those delivering policy and those receiving it, worker-claimant (unemployed) conflict remains curiously absent in adaptations of his 'bottom-up' analyses towards benefit administration and

employment services (cf. Wright, 2002)—although this could now be changing slightly in different countries (see Casey, 2018; Finn, 2019). But more importantly, the modus operandi of policy implementation studies is far removed from, and perhaps even in tension with, core Marxist principles. As a tradition policy implementation studies is comparably apolitical in the sense that it is primarily concerned with understanding and remedying policy implementation 'gaps' so as to restore the efficient functioning and delivery of policy within an existing capitalist framework. In other words, policy implementation research (generally speaking) has sparse interest in challenging or, if necessary, learning ways of aggravating and exacerbating implementation gaps in line with working class interests. It is this lack of subversive content within applications of the bottom-up approach, I contend, that makes it fundamentally incompatible with a project seeking to examine scope for struggle and self-organisation within the unemployed fractions of the working class.

Marx Meets Lipsky: an Unemployed Workers' Inquiry

So bringing this all together, both the workers' inquiry and the bottom up approach to policy implementation possess a clear set of methodological strengths and weaknesses in relation to satisfying the present research objectives/questions. On the one side, the workers' inquiry 'from below' possesses strength in that it is specifically tailored towards examining scope for struggle and self-organisation among working class groups. However, it also possesses weakness in that it largely fails to accommodate for spaces and relations beyond workers and the workplace. On the other side, Lipsky's bottom up method to policy implementation possesses strength in that it acknowledges spaces and relations beyond employers, workers and workplaces where conflicts and struggles might exist. However, it also possesses weakness in that it only has an interest in such conflict and struggle insofar as it can resolve or placate them within an existing capitalist framework (rather than deepening or intensifying them).

To rectify the weaknesses of both approaches (or at least weak for my own research objectives/questions) I propose a straightforward approach which amalgamates the strengths of both methods. Where the workers' inquiry 'from below' is weak, I suggest proceeding with the strength of a 'bottom up' approach. This means shifting the focus of the workers' inquiry from narrow focus on workers and workplaces towards struggles

and conflicts within the daily implementation of policy in benefit offices/employment services and within worker-claimant relations. Where the 'bottom up' approach to policy implementation is weak, I suggest proceeding with the strength of a workers' inquiry 'from below' approach. This means shifting the focus from exposing and proposing solutions for policy implementation gaps in favour of searching for weaknesses within policy implementation and probing for self-organisation opportunities. This amalgamation of 'bottom up' and 'from below' methods might be thought of as the first tentative steps towards an *unemployed workers' inquiry*.

To be clear, as a methodological approach deployed in the present study, the unemployed workers' inquiry has a clear trifold modus operandi. *First*, as a Marxist inquiry faithful to core Marxist principles, the unemployed workers inquiry is founded on the underlying logic of dialectical materialism. This means that both the *primary*—i.e. accumulating perceptual knowledge through working class experience(s) of the capitalist mode of production—and *secondary*—i.e. knowledge acquired through data sets, policy documents, books etc.—components of the present inquiry are guided by a conscious effort from the researcher to search for and make sense of the interconnections, contradictions, antagonisms, motion and development of the capitalist mode of production (in Britain).

Second, the unemployed workers' inquiry follows autonomist Marxist developments of the workers' inquiry method of knowledge accumulation and research practice; particularly those developments provided by Jamie Woodcock (2014). This means that the unemployed workers' inquiry places special focus on the way in which the working class (say, as opposed to focusing on capital) 'works and moves' within and against the capitalist mode of production. Moreover, again taking inspiration from the workers' inquiry method, the unemployed workers' inquiry searches for weaknesses within the capitalist mode of production and probes for self-organisation opportunities (see 'scope for organisation'—chapter eight). This had important implications for how I conducted primary research and data analysis (see following 'Fieldwork' section).

Third, taking direct inspiration from Lipsky's bottom up approach, the unemployed workers' inquiry departs from narrow focus on workplaces and employer-worker relations. Instead, the unemployed workers' inquiry shifts the focus and acknowledges

that important struggles, weaknesses and opportunities for self-organisation within the capitalist mode of production may be occurring in public service interactions and worker-claimant relationships. This distinction is considered especially important as many of those who champion the workers' inquiry method stress the importance of anti-capitalist alliances and class struggles beyond those of workers in workplaces (see previous chapter; Tronti, 1973 'social factory'); but I have yet to see the operationalisation of inquiry methods in direction of understanding the struggles of marginal groups.

Before moving forward to outline the practical content of the present inquiry, there are two aspects to this approach that I want to make explicit. First, the extent to which these guiding principles of dialectical materialism inform the approach to research and theory in the present analysis cannot be understated. The reader should think of dialectical materialist principles as a blueprint for navigating the foundational structure and logic of the entire thesis. In other words, in both the primary and secondary elements to the present knowledge accumulation, my guiding principle when reading secondary data or gathering new data was to search for interconnections, contradictions, antagonisms ('struggle of opposites') within capitalism. Second, relatedly, I want to make explicit that the unemployed workers' inquiry isn't just a method of conducting primary research. Rather, in the present thesis the unemployed workers' inquiry is also deployed to interpret secondary research. Similar to how Woodcock's (2017) own inquiry begins 'from above' and moves towards an inquiry 'from below', my own inquiry comes into play precisely at the point the analysis begins. From chapter four onwards, the reader should take care to see that the analysis begins '*from above*' with an accumulation and interpretation of secondary research; before, in the later chapters, deepening the analysis with primary research and moving to a more specific inquiry '*from below*'.

Fieldwork

With a grasp on the underlying logic guiding the theory and practice of the present inquiry, the remainder of this chapter will provide detail on the practical content of the present inquiry and its limitations. In what follows, the sample(s); the recruitment strategy; the instrument of primary data collection and the ethics will be outlined.

Benefit Administration/Employment Service Workers and Managers

To pursue the research objectives/questions I had to get as close to benefit administration/employment services as I possibly could. The first and glaring limitation with the present inquiry was that, unlike a handful of street-level research projects (see Jordan, 2016), I was unable to ethnographically infiltrate and make direct observations in these spaces. I did make an initial effort to attempt this, but this was quickly shot down by the university's ethics committee. Further, personal correspondence with two street-level researchers revealed that UK benefit offices/employment services are near impregnable for external researchers these days (cf. Hammersley and Atkinson, 2010).

So my contingency plan was to acquire two samples for interviews, one comprising benefit administration/employment services workers and the other comprising unemployed benefit claimants. Focusing on the former for the moment, I originally set out to interview workers across both public and contractor employment services operating in Sheffield. I quickly discovered that this was also an immensely challenging task; many civil servants are unwilling to speak about their role in government for fear of breaching data protection regulations. It's worth noting that there was a demonstrable fear and reluctance among many workers to share their experiences. Out of those I made contact with, some workers outright declined; some agreed but then proceeded to ignore any attempts to arrange a date; one agreed to be interviewed but refused to provide their name and refused recording. It was made clear by one worker who I managed to establish a strong rapport with that the very nature of public employment service work is private and confidential. So whilst workers would converse with one another about the day-to-day on goings within the Jobcentre, external intrigue in their activities was met with suspicion and was ostensibly quite uncomfortable. In respect of how uncomfortable my intrusion appeared on these workers and on the advice of senior research colleagues regarding the sensitivity of the data they provided, I'm going to be very careful about how much I reveal about the workers I did speak to.

To try and overcome these recruitment difficulties then, I cast my net wide and started trying to recruit purposively-cum-opportunistically (Bryman, 2016). This was anyone who had current/former experience in benefit administration/employment service delivery by initially spreading the word through friends, colleagues and third sector

services that I had begun to establish contact with. I ended up falling quite lucky and I managed to recruit *11* public and contracted benefit administration/employment service staff throughout 2019. The core characteristics of the sample are as follows:

- 1 current benefit administration worker (Jobcentre Plus)
- 2 former frontline benefit administration workers (Jobcentre Plus)
- 1 former frontline staff manager/recruitment officer (Jobcentre Plus)
- 1 former frontline staff manager/worker in quasi-private employment service (welfare-to-work contractor service)
- 4 former frontline employment service workers quasi-private employment services (welfare-to-work contractor services)
- 1 former frontline employment service worker quasi-private employment service/recruitment officer public employment service (Jobcentre Plus/welfare-to-work contractor service)
- 1 former decision-maker (DWP)

Despite the overwhelming majority being former workers, all except one had direct experience of post-2012 welfare reforms (which will prove important later on). One novel strength to the sample was that cumulatively these workers had just shy of 200 years' experience working in the industry. This meant that, without revealing too much, a small number of the workers had a longitudinal experience of welfare reform dating back to the 1970s; a pivotal sea change in British politics (as will later be discussed). One possible limitation was that the sample was comprised of workers' in different offices all over the country. Although, what was strikingly remarkable was the ease at which a collective 'structure of feeling' could be discerned throughout their individual experiences (McIntosh and Wright, 2019; 461).

To collect these experiences, I used semi-structured interviews. Interviews were considered the most suitable method for gathering data in absence of an ethnographic approach. The semi-structured interview was considered the most appropriate method for gaining deeper qualitative insight (Bryman, 2016). Partial structure allows the researcher to steer data collection towards areas of pre-established interest, while retaining the ability to respond to participant narratives and reconfigure the interview as seen fit (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Interviews lasted anywhere between one and three hours, but I only managed to interview each participant once. These interviews

were not conducted under any false pretence that I was value-detached from the research. Rather, I allowed dialectical materialist principles to inform interview design and my approach to interviewing. This meant that, sort of like how policy implementation researchers search for gaps between policy as imagined and policy as delivered (cf. Brodkin, 2013b), in key aspects of the interviews I was looking for dialectical power relations within worker-manager and worker-claimant relations. As Hyman (1975; 26) makes explicit:

> 'In every workplace there exists an invisible frontier of control, reducing some of the formal powers of the employer: a frontier which is defined and redefined in a continuous process of pressure and counter-pressure, conflict and accommodation, overt and tacit struggle.'

In other words, in the back of my mind when I was speaking and listening to the participants, in key aspects (not all) of the interviews I was ultimately probing for classed antagonisms and struggles in their experiences. This meant I was searching for continuous processes 'of pressure and counter pressure' and exertions of/responses to power (see Raby, 2005) in public service interactions. As I have made explicit, this is a key aspect of Marxist inquiries on the working class (see Woodcock, 2017).

Young Male Benefit Claimants (18-25)

The second sample was generated purposively and this comprised a specific group of benefit claimants. These were young men that were deemed as fit-to-work ('jobseekers') by the state and thus subject to full welfare conditionality/activation. There were a number of reasons why I chose to narrow the criteria of the claimant sample. First, the small-scale nature of this study makes a diverse sample, one which crosscuts all claimant subgroups/social signifiers, largely impractical. Rather, it was thought that focusing on the young male sub group, who have perennially been a target group for the most powerful features of workfarist welfare reforms (Cooper, 2020; Watts et al., 2014; Crisp and Powell, 2017), could yield the most valuable data in accord with the research objectives. *Second*, as I was interested in probing for signs of resistance and struggle, I anticipated that I could encounter recollections and experiences that might evoke feelings of shame/embarrassment or mistrust/suspicion of external intrigue. So I thought that interviewing individuals who were in some ways

socially proximate to myself (e.g. young male with similar cultural interests) would help to build rapport/trust and dissipate any negative emotional responses to my intrusions. Again, due to the sensitivity of the data they revealed I'm going to be very careful about how much I reveal about the young men I spoke to.

After deciding on young men, I began recruitment in 2019 on the urban peripheral neighbourhoods of the Sheffield city region—a.k.a. Britain's 'low-pay' capital (Thomas et al., 2020). I initially made contact with approximately 50 different organisations and eventually recruited *15* young men over a period of several months. I ended up following a number of them longitudinally over a period of six-to-nine months. To try and diversify the sample within the narrow criteria I had set, over several months I attended various job clubs, boxing clubs, youth centres, Jobcentres and more. To my surprise, all these efforts were mostly to no avail. Barring one, all of the young men I ended up recruiting were through my voluntary capacity as an activities (and later citizenship engagement) coordinator at two housing associations in the Sheffield city region. The core characteristics of the sample are as follows:

- 10 had more than 2 years' experience of claiming unemployment benefit (previously JSA), out of which eight were claiming Universal Credit, one remained on JSA and one was in work (on last contact). Of this 10, 8 had reported working (and leaving benefit) at some point during their claim. The overwhelming majority reported this as work as temporary/agency and/or in low pay roles. 2 had never worked.
- 2 had between 6 months - 2 years experiences of claiming benefit unemployment benefit. 1 had very limited labour market experience (weekend job), while the other reported intermittent periods of claiming and working.
- 3 had under 6 months claiming unemployment benefit. 2 reported extensive labour market experience in stable and gainful employment as well as low-paid roles. 1 had never worked.
- 14 of 15 were claiming housing benefit at the first interview. 7 of 9 were claiming housing benefit at the second interview. 4 out of 6 were claiming housing benefit at the third interview.

There were a number of strengths and weaknesses to this. The key weakness, although I make no claim to representativeness with either sample in this study, is that this was a very specific cohort of unemployed people. It was apparent that most of these young men possessed weak social ties in the formal economy, so opportunities for *gainful* stable employment were few and far between if at all existent (see MacDonald and

Marsh, 2005; 108-119). For some of the young men it seemed apparent that they were even unattractive to those super-exploitative employers offering some of the worst terms and conditions in the lowest echelons of the labour market (cf. MacDonald, 1997b; 186-7; Wacquant, 2008; 266). However, opportunities for atypical employment (temporary/insecure/low-paying) were reported as accessible for the majority of the young men. Further, 'the experience of being homeless' and living in a supported accommodation 'brought a greater risk of these young people coming into contact with individuals who misuse drugs and alcohol, or being drawn into criminal subcultures' (Blackman, 1997; 114). It was also evident that high rent charges in supported accommodation and the availability of housing benefit acted as a disincentive to atypical employment, creating unemployment traps for some young men. Although, as I followed some of the young men longitudinally and in their transition to new accommodation over a period of 6-9 months, it became apparent that a minority of the young men were remaining voluntarily unemployed in spite of a more financially favourable housing situation. Nevertheless, I would argue that taken together these characteristics set many of these young men apart from many other claimant sub-groups (cf. Formby, 2017) and undoubtedly have a bearing on the type of data I gathered.

There were also a number of strengths to this sample. The main one being that, through my voluntary capacities in supported housing accommodations, I spent quite a bit of time becoming a familiar face and getting to know many of the participants outside of interviewing. Throughout 2019, I would volunteer (mostly) twice a week running activities ranging from FIFA, pool and table tennis to quizzes on a plethora of popular subject matter. The extra time spent with many of the young men appeared to cultivate some strong, trusting relationships which are perhaps quite uncharacteristic in research on welfare reform. This seemed to have a bearing on the interviews; some felt awkward and distant, but in the majority I found the discussion going in unanticipated directions and having a laugh together. I suspect this played some part in acquiring richer data and thicker descriptions (Tracy, 2010) of actions/behaviours that may leave a participant fearful of reproach or judgement.

Alongside voluntary work, my decision to follow these young men longitudinally over a period of six-nine months also appeared to contribute to 'the creation of stronger

research relationships' and aided 'the generation of rich qualitative data' (Patrick, 2014; 708). But this wasn't the only reason why I decided to follow these young men. As a number of contemporary social policy academics have argued, the longitudinal methods' inherent focus on the 'complex interplay of structure and individual agency' (Patrick, 2014; 708) as well as 'change, both on how people change and on how people respond to change [is] considered as very relevant in the current policy context', where 'behaviour change is seen as key to achieving desired policy goals' (Corden and Millar, 2007; 529). The only departure in present design was that I wanted to use longitudinal methods to more specifically observe if/how claimants' struggles evolved over a period of time and if/how their struggles were shaped by changing external conditions (e.g. moving address/changes in family structure/peer group). Longitudinal interviews were therefore seen as the most suitable method for better understanding and capturing the dynamic nature typical of classed struggles within and against the capitalist mode of production. As in the interviews with frontline workers, these interviews were also informed by a dialectical materialist approach to knowledge accumulation. This meant that I was ultimately probing for classed antagonisms and struggles within and against frontline workers in benefit offices/employment services and capitalism (e.g. wage labour/housing tenancy) more generally.

As regards the practicalities, I originally intended to conduct three waves of interviews with 15 young men. In efforts to minimise attrition in the subsequent waves, I took contact (phone/address) details where possible. But after 15 initial interviews, I only managed to interview 9 for a second wave and 6 for a third wave. There were a number of reasons as to why I lost contact; some moved away; some changed their details; some ended up in trouble with the police. For every interview completed the participant received a £10.00 gift voucher as a thank you.

Data Analysis

In accordance with my methodological approach, when it came to analysing the data, I proceeded abductively. For Timmermans and Tavory (2012; 167), an abductive approach initially 'arises from actors' social and intellectual positions' which form pre-conceived theories and ideas about the subject matter under analysis. From this position, the analyst pushes knowledge forward by proceeding via a 'dialectical

movement' between theory and data to develop 'new theories and hypotheses' on the basis of new empirical material (Kaufman, 2018; 102). Abductive analysis was seen as the most compatible with a Marxist inquiry.

To be clear, the present abductive analysis started with an intellectual position and a set of theories/ideas about the world (i.e. Marxism/dialectical materialism). This position and set of pre-conceived theories informed the research design and approach to primary data accumulation. I then accumulated new data and coded this in an iterative and recursive manner, allowing for correlations to be made between preconceived theory, concepts and the data (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). The coding procedure was divided into two phases, making use of both deductive and inductive coding in order to proceed abductively (Weiner, 2016). Initially, codes were developed through a phase of deduction, whereby codes were broadly taken from pre-established theory. Following this phase, with the aim of locating novel themes and nuancing existing patterns, data was revisited through an inductive procedure. This two-phase procedure facilitated an abductive analysis by allowing me to move dialectically and oscillate between theory and data a number of times. It is thought that this procedure established deeper connections between theory and data whilst allowing unanticipated themes and configurations to emerge (Saldana, 2009). It is thought that some novel theory and concepts—albeit within the boundaries of my pre-conceived intellectual position—have been developed and these have potential to offer a number of original contributions to knowledge.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this research project was received from Sheffield Hallam University, but there were two broad areas of ethical concern. The first area relates to issues of *privacy, confidentiality and informed consent*. For street-level workers in particular, the contractual conditions under which they were required to work appeared to generate a number of anxieties concerning privacy and confidentiality. As such, I ensured all data was stored on encrypted devices in locked places. For the workers, I also ensured that all details of name, place, gender, age, ethnicity and so forth were withheld or pseudonymised (Kings and Horrocks, 2010). Barring their age (18-25) and place (Sheffield) the same was been done for the young men. I have also made sure that all

participants provided written consent prior to each interview and were reminded of their right to withdrawal.

The *second* area of concern pertains to issues of *power imbalance and emotional harm*. In capitalist societies, wealth is commonly regarded as the ultimate measure of success, whilst the routine performance of exploitative wage labour is widely acknowledged as an ennobling requisite of citizenship (Wacquant, 2009). For young, unemployed men, claimant status can often be regarded as a source of shame and failure. Discussions centring on themes such as struggle against work could have therefore roused emotional harm(s) and could have served to undermine trust. To reconcile this, a friendship ethic both pre- and post-interview was deployed, where topics both related and unrelated to the topics of interest were discussed (Tillman-Healy, 2003). It was thought this went some way in establishing trust and helping dissipate perceptions of imbalance between researcher and participant.

4. Conflict and a Crisis of Profitability in Post-War Britain: An Upswing in the Cycle of Class Struggle

Chapter Overview

The previous two chapters were focused on providing the necessary theoretical and methodological tools to follow the analysis that spans the next five chapters. The present chapter begins with the *inquiry from above* by making use of the autonomist theory of class composition to analyse secondary research (books, data sets, policy documents etc.). The overarching purpose of this will be to examine the (re) emergence of social expenditure cuts and workfarist welfare reforms in the UK.

As the reader should recall, the class composition theory is ultimately a theory of historical development. In a sentence, this theory posits that a cycle of binary struggle between capital and labour—fuelled by labour's compulsion to resist the imposition of capitalist domination/exploitation—is the catalyst for political, economic, cultural, social (and so forth) change and thus drives societies forward onto new terrains. As such, the idea here will be to interpret social expenditure cuts and workfarist welfare reforms by first historiographically situating them within the development of capitalism in Britain. Doing this from an autonomist perspective basically equates to first understanding how this cycle of struggle between the two classes has unfolded in the UK context, before proceeding to situate contemporary welfare reform within this cycle.

It is worth quickly mentioning here that in the 'dearth of case studies' which apply class composition theory 'to the details' there seems to be considerable variations on how such an analysis is done and what constitutes a cycle of class struggle (Ovetz, 2018; 27). For example, Ovetz (2018; 1-29) identifies several cycles of struggle between different groups of American workers and employers in the period of 1877-1921 alone. By contrast, Negri's (1992; 75-78) analysis of historical development in the 20th century identifies just three major (but not exclusive) cycles of struggle (roughly: 1850s-1920s; 1920s-1970s; 1970s-present) between capital and labour in their totalities over a period spanning longer than a century. The point I'm making is that there is no agreed method of using class composition and those who have attempted such an analysis in the past

emphasise the need to make 'allowance for unevenness, overlap, regional and national variation' (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 72). Therefore, much like others who have applied class composition theory in the past, everything which follows from this point on is my own application and '[re]reading of the autonomists' work, just as theirs is an active, inventive reading of Marx' (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 64). This is important to acknowledge because the following analysis presents one crucially important departure from hitherto existing applications of class composition theory. Unlike previous work, I will not only chart the (re)composition, movements and impacts of the active army (of workers). But I also examine the (re)composition movements and impacts of the benefit claiming fractions of the 'reserve army' on the cycle of class struggle in Britain.

In spite of this departure, what follows over the next few chapters is an analysis which still *loosely* conforms to the three major cycles of class struggle identified by Negri. Like Dyer-Witheford (1999; 72), I do this by 'proceed[ing] through all three of the cycles, moving swiftly at first but then deepening the analysis as we approach the more recent periods' relevant to the subject matter of this thesis. To be clear, the analysis in this chapter kicks off at the high tide of the upswing in the first cycle in the early decades of the 20th century. After this, I demonstrate how the corresponding downswing (beginning of the second cycle) was to facilitate a new working class composition. Between the post-war years 1945-1974, this new working class composition ended up forcing through a 'crisis of profitability' (see Appendices 4.1. for more detail) and threatening the very foundations of capitalist class domination in Britain. The chapters beyond this then deal with the end of the second/beginning of the third cycle and the (counter-)measures that have been taken to 'decompose' this near fatal post-war class composition, which is where contemporary welfare reforms and the present state of affairs become directly relevant.

Towards the Era of So Called 'Class Compromise'

For Negri (1988; 12) and other key members of the Operaisti (Bologna, 1976; Tronti, 2019; 282), the genealogy of the class struggle cycle originates in a period of roughly 80 years 'from 1848' to 'the [1926] general strike in Britain—the event which seemed to mark the outer limit of the expanding revolutionary process of the post-war [WW1] period'.

The Great Unrest

In autonomist thought, this 80 year period is significant for a number of reasons. For one, there were large scale aggregate increases in both trade union membership and strike action taken across a plethora of industries (Hobsbawm, 1984; 157). But more importantly, according to Negri (1992; 76), it was between the mid-19th century and the early 20th century where the composition of the working class began to change; as 'the artisan is thrown into the factory and the workers' qualification, formerly independent, becomes here instead the prosthesis of machinery'. In simpler words, it was a time where more highly skilled workers, 'in possession of craft knowledge and technical competencies' (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 72), were being necessarily employed by capital. This is an important development for a couple of reasons. First, 'the worker [was] for the first time [being] treated within the command of machinery' and therefore the skills and expertise of workers were becoming increasingly indispensable to labour processes (Negri, 1992; 75; Bologna, 1976; 75-6). By extension, the skilled workers who occupied these positions wielded greater power over the labour process and, in turn, greater ability to inflict injury on the dominant class. Second, these highly skilled workers often possessed 'high professional values and [were] naturally inclined to stress their function as "producers" (Bologna, 1976; 70). In other words, they had a vested interest in preserving the 'dignity and value' of their privileged position in relation to other workers and therefore had an interest in enhancing their control over production so as to prevent any attempts made to deskill or devalue their work (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 72).

Alongside this change in the working class composition, the few years immediately preceding World War 1 (1910-14) saw a gradual but sharp change in the mentality and objectives of many highly skilled and lesser skilled workers in British industry. According to Pribićević (1959; 163), a combination of declining real wages and increasing state intervention in industrial disputes had 'aroused the workers suspicion of government action', who interpreted it as proof of the state's biased 'class character' (see also Sewell, 2003; 122). Equally, highly skilled craft workers (particularly in engineering) had become increasingly concerned about conscious (and successful) efforts made by both employers and the state to 'speed up' the development of cheaper semi-skilled labourers, thereby threatening the value and quality of their privileged position (Pribićević, 1959; 25-6). As a result of these concerns, a 'new idea' had 'sprang up, and

won wide acceptance, of using Trade Unionism not merely as a means of defending wages and conditions, but as an offensive weapon in a war upon capitalist society' (Cole, 1948; 321). The objective, as first comprehensively articulated by Tom Mann and the Syndicalist movement in 1910, was to 'break the power of employers and their puppet government', 'take control of industry' (Pribićević, 1959; 135) and, eventually, establish a 'new society in which not only the industries of the country but the whole social life would be controlled by the unions' (Pribićević, 1959; 2).

However, as soon as these new ideas and objectives began to gather support, 'it became manifest that the Trade Unions, with their existing structure, were quite unsuited for acting upon them' (Cole, 1948; 324). The reason for this was quite straightforward. In almost every industry 'the main body was split up among a number of sectional and often overlapping unions' which not only held competing interests but, particularly in the case of skilled and unskilled workers' unions, 'were often on bad terms with each other' (Cole, 1948; 324). This was to change with the rise of the Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement in the 1910s which, despite being initially set up to 'protect the interests of the skilled workers' (Pribićević, 1959; 164), was successful in creating 'a spirit of unity in the industry which overcame the deep-seated craft prejudices and sectional exclusiveness' (Pribićević, 1959; 109). The Movement did this by organising workers at the point of production on the shop-floor, on their mutual contempt for the state and on a shared threat to their economic interests as a class of workers more generally. The Movement claimed that the only way to protect their interests and eliminate the threats posed by employers and state interference was to overcome their differences and organise collectively, as a class, to establish an independent workers' control over British industry (Tronti, 2019; 282).

By eroding the divisions between different groups of workers, the Shop Stewards Movement's was acting as something like a working 'class vanguard' (Baldi, 1972; 7). That is, 'a political and organisational pivot' through which 'class cleavages are progressively overcome and mass levels of struggles are reached' (Baldi, 1972; 7). Certainly, or at least according to Pribićević (1959; 162), the efforts of the Movement were to spearhead an 'upsurge of industrial unrest' over the years 1910-22. This was a period in which 'almost every industry was affected' and strikes, 'fought with greater

bitterness than ever before', 'threatened to paralyse the whole industrial system' (Pribićević, 1959; 162; cf. Sewell, 2003; 123-130):

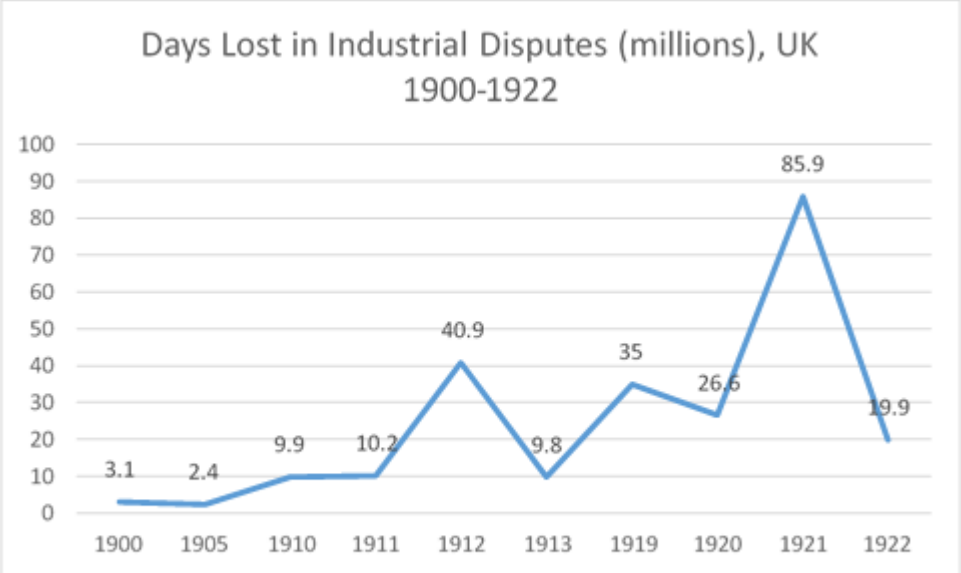


Figure 4.1. (Office for National Statistics, 2018)

Statistically, the years 1910-13 saw over eighteen million annual working days lost to strikes and lockouts on average, compared to an average of approximately just three million per annum in the previous decade (Pribićević, 1959; 162). The strike wave was then cut short by the outbreak of the war, but quickly resumed as '36, 28, 82 and 19 million working days [were] lost in industrial conflicts…in the years 1919, 1920, 1921 and 1922' (Pribićević, 1959; 162).

Decomposition: The Introduction of Scientific Management

The period of great unrest was problematic for capital on a number of counts. Generally speaking, the intensification of strike and lockout action taken by increasing numbers of workers tends to pose a greater threat to capital's need for surplus value and its ability to generate profits. But more specific to this period, conflicts were regularly fronted and orchestrated by a (Shop Stewards') Movement of largely highly-skilled workers who, owed to both their skill and the level of technological development at that time, were often requisite to industrial labour processes yet fewer in number and thus more difficult to replace (cf. Bologna, 1976). Furthermore, and of equal importance, these same highly skilled workers had found 'adequate translation' of their economic concerns within a project of 'socialist emancipation of the masses' (Negri, 1992; 76). In other

words, through plans to ameliorate their concerns via action targeting the eradication of capital altogether, workers' (both domestically and internationally) were taking their 'first leap' towards revolution (Negri, 1988; 10). It was a working class that was for the first time somewhat 'autonomous and politically consistent' (Negri, 1988; 10). It was autonomous in the sense that demands were not founded on shared or state control, but a workers' independent control of industry (Baldi, 1972; 10). And it was politically consistent in the sense that, owed in large part to the efforts of the Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committees Movements, sections of workers previously hostile to one another had begun to transcend their divisions and better realise themselves as a working class against capital (Pribićević, 1959).

It wasn't to last. To 'save itself' and ensure its continuity as the dominant class (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 73), the 'general response of capital' in the 1920s was to quickly turn 'to the technological path of repression' in efforts to decompose the 'rigidity of the existing class composition' and 'defeat the working class vanguards' of highly skilled workers and their shop floor movements (Negri, 1988; 10-11). In other words, workplaces began to undergo 'drastic organisational and technological restructuring' (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 73). Capitalists quickly rolled out the assembly line, 'chronometer and the clipboard of Taylorist scientific management' to rationalise the labour process and break it down piecemeal (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 73). On the one hand, this allowed capital to sever its dependency on highly-skilled labour and radically alter the working class composition. Sub-dividing and fragmenting jobs on the assembly line meant that employers could utilise increasing amounts of unskilled labour, thereby 'undermin[ing] the material basis' of the highly-skilled workers' power by 'expel[ling] them from their hegemonic producer role' (Negri, 1988; 11). On the other hand, the introduction of scientific management increased the speed and overall output of commodity production which in turn 'accelerated the injection of new proletarian forces into production' (Negri, 1988; 11). Again, by altering the fundamental composition of the labour force, this served to undermine the power held by the highly skilled workers and their subversive movements; breaking their strike power, 'neutralising their potential and preventing their regroupment' (Negri, 1988; 11).

A New Capitalist Science: The Birth of the Keynesian Planner State

By the end of the 1920s, however, 'all the tools of the technological attack on the working class [had] turn[ed] against capital' (Baldi, 1972; 12). Increasing the productivity of labour via increases in the speed and overall output of production had pushed the supply of commodities tremendously upward, while demand lagged 'hopelessly behind' (Baldi, 1972; 12). Capital was paying the price for its blind faith in Say's law; 'a century old ideology' and a 'deeply rooted mental attitude' which stubbornly held that 'supply creates its own demand' (Negri, 1988; 20). On aggregate, capital was unable to realise surplus value in the market at levels satisfactory enough to recoup its initial investments in production. By the end of the 1920s, the inability to balance supply and demand had brought about a Great Depression. Economic crisis reverberated across the major capitalist territories of the world and particularly Britain, which, by the 1930s, was averaging an unemployment rate at 14.2% (Beveridge, 1944; 5).

According to Negri (1988; 9-36), John Maynard Keynes was to recognise the true origins of the crisis, leading him to propose a radical solution which was to profoundly alter the trajectory of capitalist development both in Britain and abroad. Keynes rejected the capitalist science of laissez-faire, believing that 'Say's law was no longer valid because the variables of political and economic equilibrium had altered' over the last handful of decades (Negri, 1988; 20). In other words, he believed that the relationship between supply and demand was no longer self-regulating or spontaneous (see Tronti, 2019; 247). Rather, for the first time in its history, the working class had become 'strong enough to interfere with the forces of supply and demand' (Keynes, 1925; in Negri, 1988; 20). By forcing capital to introduce new technology to recompose the labour force and increase its productivity, it was working class struggles which had ultimately disturbed the supply/demand equilibrium and fuelled an unsustainable excess of commodities.

Keynes' solution, then, was to propose a new model that was to stabilise the economy by further manipulating the supply/demand equilibrium and matching any fluctuations in supply by using a number of interventions to regulate demand. In short, this was to be achieved via two key political-economic changes. First, the state was to be transformed into a 'marshalling centre for all economic activity' (Negri, 1988; 26). The state was to use appropriate monetary and fiscal policies to better regulate the

supply/demand equilibrium by artificially stimulating aggregate demand via deficit financing capital in recession periods (thus reducing investment risks), whilst analogously curbing demand in growth periods by raising taxes and/or reducing state expenditure (Schott, 2006). Second, working class struggles were to be transformed 'from an unpredictable element of risk and instability into a dynamic factor of development' (Baldi, 1972; 14). In other words, trade unionism was to be incorporated into the formal governance of industry so that, through *contained* and non-revolutionary struggles, wages could 'rise harmoniously with profits' and working class people could better afford to consume the commodities they produced (Baldi, 1972; 14). Thus, 'with Keynes', according to Negri (1988; 28), 'capitalist science [took] a remarkable leap forward: it recognise[d] the working class as an autonomous moment…[through its] possibility of insurrection and subversion of the system…within capital'. New weapons had to be 'forged' to 'contain and absorb this threat' and 'prevent the class acting outside capital' (Negri, 1988; 28-29).

In Britain, Keynes' ideas were most famously replicated in William Beveridge's post-war (World War II) agenda to eradicate high levels of unemployment brought on by the Great Depression. Like Keynes, Beveridge (1944) thought that economic crisis and corresponding levels of high unemployment were principally issues of demand. It was the 'extreme instability' around investment—particularly in periods of recession and poor business confidence—emerging from fluctuations in aggregate demand for commodities which had led to declines in overall spending on labour power and means of production (Beveridge, 1944; 7). Remedying this, for Beveridge (1944), meant that 'the state must extend its intervention to take up the role of planner' (Negri, 1988; 25) and 'socialise demand'. In other words, Beveridge thought that the state should be responsible for making sure the British economy generated steady demand for the goods and services produced by capital, so that capital would continue investing in the necessary labour power and means of production to produce goods and services (Ogus, 1982; 191). Therefore, Beveridge (1944) implemented a number of policy instruments—such as additional public spending to facilitate private investment and a programme of income redistribution to place more purchasing power in the hands of poorer consumers—in efforts to stimulate both investment and consumption spending as part of a broader strategy to better regulate the demand for labour and reduce

unemployment. Beveridge described these instruments as 'full employment' policies. Over the next few decades following the war, the effects of full employment policies were not only reflected in remarkably low unemployment levels at under two percent (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 48); but in the general availability of work, which meant the newly unemployed were often able to find work 'within about two or three weeks' (Darlington and Lyddon, 2001; 5).

It is worth quickly adding that low unemployment in the post-war period was also buffered by decisions to nationalise a number of basic industries, which eventually brought 'up to 20 percent of industry under public ownership' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 36). This was particularly important for workers in railways and mining industries, as nationalisation meant that long periods of unprofitability could be endured and for a time ended 'the threat to jobs and wage levels' which had existed prior to the Second World War (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 36).

The new policy direction towards full employment also afforded the working class gains in workplace organisation and greater scope to translate grievances into collective action. The new 'planner' state sought consensus rather than confrontation with the trade union movement and formally incorporated union leadership into the political economic structure (Barnes and Reid, 1980). This approach stood in direct opposition to the inter-war years, which were characterised by a series of confrontations between the state and the trade union movement, as well as significant reductions in union membership (Barnes and Reid, 1980; 4-8). In the immediate years after the Second World War, membership began to increase again, doubling to 'to 9.1 million by the end of 1948' and rising steadily up until 1969—encompassing 44 percent of the workforce (Darlington and Lyddon, 2001; 5). It is salient to note that consensus between unions and the state did not immediately serve to progress working class interests, and was initially characterised by agreements to wage restraints and limiting rights to strike action in the first five years following the war (Barnes and Reid, 1980; 15-17). However, taken in the wider context of the next few decades following the war, work was to become on aggregate more financially rewarding. The working class in Britain were making substantial gains in their overall standard of living (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 36; 105-108; 189). The new economic strategy had begun to transform the post-war labour

market into ‘a [labour power] seller's rather than a buyer's market' (Beveridge, 1944; 10-11).

From Workfare to Welfare: The Birth of 'Cradle-to-Grave' Social Insurance

The new full employment approach did not stop at fiscal policies and industrial relations reforms. As part of his programme of income redistribution, Beveridge also proposed a series of welfare reforms in efforts to ensure that the British citizenry were free from want and protected from all major social risks (Ogus, 1982; 194-195). Beveridge's proposals were realised in the immediate years following the Second World War, when the Attlee administration introduced a new National Health Service and implemented a wide range of social security and education reforms (Digby, 1989). Their unifying objective was to provide 'cradle-to-grave' social insurance and protect the citizenry from spells of poor health, unemployment and old age (Lowe, 2005). Beveridge described 'cradle-to-grave' social insurance as a 'British Revolution' (Digby, 1989; 57) and, almost certainly in the case of reforms to unemployment policy, the new post-war unemployment protection scheme was a radical departure from almost anything that had preceded it (cf. Ogus, 1982; 150-264). This departure is quite important for the present analysis, so I'm going to chronologically backtrack in this subsection and briefly describe the development of unemployment protection in accordance with the cycle of class struggle hitherto described.

From the inception of poor relief (old 'poor law') in the mid-16th century up until the birth of social insurance, unemployment protection policies had almost exclusively been conceived by state managers as workfare-type mechanisms. In other words, unemployment protection was mostly comprised of policies which (re)directed the unemployed into wage labour; deterred anti-work behaviour/values; and/or ensured that cash benefit exchanges were conditional upon the completion of some kind of work-related activity (Slack, 1990). The stated purpose of the earliest unemployment protection schemes, for example, was to provide relief in the form of money, food and raw materials so as to 'set the poore on worke' (Smith, 1972; 83). Over the following centuries, poverty and unemployment was predominantly managed through practices of 'farming' and the erection of workhouses (Fox-Piven and Cloward, 1972; 12-24; Higginbotham, 2018). Farming referred to arrangements where private contractors

were paid by regional officials to house the poor and put them to work on the land (Townsend, 1813). By 1834 and the introduction of new poor law the severely destitute were to be incarcerated in workhouses under strict regimes focused on behavioural discipline (Longmate, 1972) and the 'casually destitute' were to be 'relieved in the workhouse, where they could be employed in suitable labour' (Nicholls, 1853; 372).

In contrast to centuries of unemployment policies founded predominantly on workfarist principles, the early 20th century—particularly between '1906 to 1914' and a period of amplified class struggle—witnessed 'a major series of welfare reforms' which appeared to signal a new direction more 'inspired by redistributionary aims' (Ogus, 1982; 183). In 1909, Beveridge introduced a new Public Employment Service, which took shape in a nationwide network of labour exchanges. The central objective of the exchanges was to reduce the harmful effects of casual/short-term work by providing more information about jobs available in the local area and, where possible, offer service-users opportunities to re-train and re-educate themselves (Showler, 1976). Around two years later, in 1911, policymakers introduced a new compulsory health insurance scheme for all employed manual workers and an unemployment insurance scheme under which flat rate cash benefits 'were payable for a maximum period of 15 weeks of unemployment in one year' (Ogus, 1982; 154). Under the latter, claimants would not be disqualified or penalised 'for refusing a vacancy at less than the usual or recognised wages' (Price, 2000; 24). They would also continue to be eligible for unemployment benefit provided that they successfully demonstrated their 'availability' for work, which would be done by signing an 'unemployed register' at a local labour exchange. Other than this, there was no work-related compulsion attached to the benefit.

By the 1920s, however, policymakers' attitudes towards unemployment appeared to oscillate once again. As Fletcher (2015; 334) argues, workfarist reforms tend to flourish 'in times of economic crisis' and the 1920s had seen working class struggles successfully fuel a crippling international depression (Negri, 1988; see previous subsection). As such, unprecedented levels of unemployment and poor economic conditions more generally meant that it was impractical to have an unemployment insurance scheme which permitted individuals to refuse work on the grounds that it was paid at less than the rate to which they were accustomed. In 1927, 'a qualification was introduced which enabled the authorities to regard as 'suitable' employment of a lower grade or on less favourable

terms than that which had been habitual for the claimant' (Ogus, 1982; 203). Alongside this, policymakers made it so that claimants could no longer just be 'available' for work. Rather, to be eligible a claimant must prove that they were 'genuinely seeking' employment and show that they 'had been looking around for work actively even where none was available' (Ogus, 1982; 203). Workfarist measures intensified as the crisis deepened and, by 1928, labour camps were introduced to target those who had become 'soft' and 'temporarily demoralised' through periods of 'prolonged unemployment' (Fletcher, 2015; 332). Labour camp attendance was eventually made compulsory in 1934. Although they were never fully implemented, between '1929 and 1938 almost 190,000 men were admitted to the camps', undergoing a 'twelve week course comprising tough, menial manual labour' (Fletcher, 2015; 333).

By the end of the 1930s and into the 1940s, Keynesian theory had become the new orthodoxy and Beveridge's full employment approach was seen as the best solution to resolve the crisis. Within this approach, the objective of unemployment insurance was to change yet again. No longer were unemployment benefits to be *principally* founded on workfarist logic of deterring anti-work behaviour/values and enforcing compliance via work-related activity. Rather, workfarist logic was to be the subsidiary of a new objective prioritising 'cradle-to-grave' welfare. This objective would ensure that a 'minimum income' (Deacon, 1995; 75) was available to all members of the citizenry irrespective of their working status and generous enough to ensure that all citizens had sufficient consumption power to eliminate the material risks typically associated with poverty. Of course, as many commentators are keen to remind, Beveridge was anxious to make sure that his unemployment protection scheme did not 'stifle incentive [to work]; opportunity; responsibility' (Beveridge, 1942 in Ogus, 1982; 194), and policies seeking to reinforce work were still present over the course of the post-war period (see Novak, 1988; 164). Nevertheless, Beveridge's prioritisation of welfare over workfare for the unemployed, or at least when compared to the vast majority of UK unemployment policy preceding his own, was firm. Beveridge went as far as suggesting policies which were to later ensure that 'scope for assistance' should even stretch to those 'disqualified for unconditional unemployment benefit through refusal of suitable employment' as well as those 'leaving work without just cause, through dismissal for misconduct, and

those who are disqualified for conditional unemployment benefit by failure to attend a work or training centre' (Beveridge, 1942; para 371[b]).

By the cessation of the Second World War and the decades that followed, Beveridge's new design for unemployment protection seemed to be heading in the opposite direction of workfare. Through the implementation of legislation such as the Family Allowances Act (1945), the National Insurance Act (1946) and the National Assistance Act (1948), there was a general satisfaction (in the first handful of years or so at least) that 'poverty had been virtually eliminated' (Lowe, 2005; 154). It was part of a new orthodoxy among bourgeois intellectuals and state managers who recognised that previous methods of controlling the working class through command and coercive social policy had failed to prevent the class from acting outside capital and forcing through an economic crisis (Negri, 1988). Instead they 'envisioned' a 'planned' economy and a relationship of 'compromise' between the two classes (Block and Somers, 2014; 22); whereby, so long as the working class would subordinate itself as labour power and accordingly submit itself to the exploitation of its enemy, it would be offered in exchange both a greater protection from risk and an overall better standard of living than it had been hitherto accustomed.

A Resurgence of Class Conflict: Increasing Levels of Refusal Activity among the Active Army

Yet, if an era of ‘class compromise’ truly existed in Britain then it was only ever in the abstract, 'envisioned' form illustrated in this chapter so far. In reality, the post-war years (1945-74) and, in particular, the years 1968-74, were not defined by compromise. Rather, the post-war years were marked by a series of hostile (sometimes violent) and, as the years progressed, increasingly frequent and damaging confrontations between workers and capital as well as workers and the state.

The main reason for this, according to the Operaisti, was that the political-economic conditions of the class compromise period—that is, a mass of de-skilled workers in mass production industries; a high-density of organised workers; a formal incorporation of the trade union leadership into the governance structure of industry; and 'cradle-to-grave' protection from risk—had created a new working class composition both

domestically (in Britain) and internationally (in many other capitalist territories). And this specific composition posed a threat to capital for a number of reasons. One reason was that deskilling and the onset of mass production had made large sections of the labour force 'materially homogenous'; sharing a set of common interests as part of the assembly line and thus 'an identical relationship to capitalist technology' (Battaggia, 1981). Importantly, the mass deskilling of labour power from the 1920s onwards had destroyed workers' 'pride in his or her skills' (Baldi, 1972; 20), reducing them to a 'cog in the machine, with no say in the running of production, and no part in the creative organisation of work' (Cliff and Barker, 1966). Another important reason was that, through industrial relations reforms and the (re)ascendancy of the trade union movement, workers were given more leeway to assert their interests as a working class and, in so doing, were better able to mount a legitimate challenge to the 'capitalist conditions of life and work' (Gambino, 1976).

The way workers' tend to mount their challenge is through what autonomists tend to call refusal (of work) activity (see chapter two). To quickly recap, refusal activity constitutes both those minor, individual acts one might take to resist capitalist class domination and exploitation and make the average working day more bearable, as well as more significant, collective forms of 'strike, sabotage [and] direct action' taken to advance the political and/or material interests of those involved (Negri, 2005; 270). In post-war Britain, particularly between the years 1968-74, not only were there dramatic aggregate increases in refusal activity among the active army members of the working class, but there were also growing concerns among state managers and capitalists that such activity posed an acute threat to capital accumulation. In particular, there was concern that strikes, the activity that has always been the cornerstone of collective forms of refusal, were becoming uncontrollable and were increasingly impinging on capital's ability to dominate and exploit labour power (Birchall, 1974; 9-55).

Strike Activity: Official Strikes and Unofficial Shop-floor Militancy

Having said that, in the immediate years following the war, strike action among workers was not immediately visible. According to Durcan et al. (1983; 26), 1946-52 was 'marked not only by a historically low level of strike activity but also by a downward trend' compared to previous years. This was in part attributable to the trade union movement's

supportive stance on the Labour government's (1945-51) struggle to reconstruct the British economy and their agreement to maintain wartime arrangements which, since 1940, had virtually illegalised all forms of strike activity. As such, strikes in this period were often unofficial and short in duration.

In 1951, the legal prohibition on strike activity was abolished. Although this didn't necessarily signal a watershed for trade unionism and militancy, from 1953, the downward trend in strikes which had characterised the initial post-war years was in reverse, with the overall trend reflecting steady increases year on year. By 1959 the net total of stoppages revealed 'an increase of 79 per cent over the 1953 level' and was accompanied by aggregate increases in the number of workers involved and the number of working days lost (Durcan et al., 1983; 58). From 1953 onwards, there was also a re-emergence of the 'set piece strike', where stoppages were occurring nationally and on an industry wide scale with the approval of those trade unions concerned (Wrigley, 2002). Such coordination had not been seen since 1933, and was initially enacted through a one day stoppage carried out by over a million workers in the engineering industry. In later years, similar action was taken by railway workers, dockers, busmen and printers (Wrigley, 2002; 41). However, in spite of a notable increase in strike activity, as Durcan et al (1983; 58) argue, these increases were still relatively low and did not necessarily have a 'dramatic impact on the economy as a whole'.

In the following 'wave' of militancy acknowledged as the period 1968-74 (Wrigley, 2002), the broader economic impact of strike activity had become of increasing concern. This was distinctly evident in a number of anxieties visible in Lord Donovan's inquiry into UK labour law (the 'Donovan Report', 1968), as well as some politicians and political economists attributing weak economic performance to 'the British Disease' of 'poor' industrial relations (Allen, 1976; 61-67; Gamble, 1994; xv-xvi; Wrigley, 2002; 49-53). There was unquestionable merit in these concerns. Compared with the annual averages of strike activity in 1960-8, 1969-73 saw the number of stoppages rise 'by 87 per cent, workers involved by 22 per cent and days lost by 244 per cent' (Durcan et al., 1983; 132). The scale of this increase is perhaps better reflected in the table below:

Official and Unofficial Strike Activity, 1963- 1974 Days lost in strikes (000s)			
	Official	*Unofficial*	*Total*
1963-1967*	678	1750	2428
1969	1613	5233	6846
1970	3320	7660	10980
1971	10050	3501	13551
1972	18,228	5681	23909
1973	2,009	5188	7197
1974	7040	7700	14740
Workers Involved in Strikes (000s)			
	Official	*Unofficial*	*Total*
1963-1967*	84	634	718
1969	283	2371	2654
1970	296	1497	1793
1971	376	1395	1771
1972	635	1087	1722
1973	396	1117	1513
1974	467	1134	1601
*1963-1967 are annual averages. Figures for 1962 and 1968 are not comparable with other years because of the distorting effects of three one day official national engineering strikes.			

Table 4.1. (Darlington and Lyddon, 2001; 25)

This table not only makes for useful comparison of the years 1969-74 to 1963-67, but it documents aggregate increases of both official and unofficial strike activity, which reached crescendo in 1972 with 'twenty-three million days' lost (Birchall, 1974; 9). As regards official strike activity, aggregate increases were in large part a result of a returning trend towards industry-wide stoppages (Durcan et al., 1983; 132), which had become more prevalent among sections of the labour force that had remained largely dormant until the late 1960s and early 1970s (Crouch, 1978). This was particularly the case of the national coal miners' strikes facilitated by the National Union of Mineworkers in 1972 and 1974; an industry which had shown declining levels of militancy in 1960-1968 (Durcan et al., 1983; 111) and had not taken action on such a scale since 1926 (Darlington and Lyddon, 2001). Industry wide official stoppages also played a major role in a number of other sectors. Among the most notable was a national engineering strike, which accounted for 1.5 million days lost in 1968 (Hyman, 1974). Two national docks disputes and a postal workers' stoppage accounted for '96 percent of time lost' in the transport and communication sector in the early 70s (Durcan et al., 1983; 150). Meanwhile, official strike action taken 'by building workers in 1972 accounted for three quarters of all time lost in construction over five years' (Durcan et al., 1983; 150).

As regards increases in unofficial strike activity, this was in large part due to a gradual change in the structure of the wage bargaining system. Within many unions, authority was increasingly shifting from full-time officers to shop stewards; 'by 1966 there was an estimated 175,000 shop stewards in Britain, compared to perhaps 3,000 full-time union officials' (Darlington and Lyddon, 2001; 6). The presence of shop stewards allowed more scope for bargaining at the firm level which, in principle, meant that workers held greater autonomy when seeking to negate the 'tortuous' and often drawn out process of official bargaining procedures (Cliff and Barker, 1966). Workers under this bargaining structure were able to respond more quickly and effectively, often via unofficial forms of militancy, to any changes in pay/conditions proposed by employers and their managers (Cliff and Barker, 1966). Though the increasing presence of shop stewards was not a development exclusive to 1968-74, the movement had grown 'again and spread in the years after the Second World War' (Birchall, 1974; 19). Their resistance to the demands of both capital and the state was a persistent feature throughout the entire post-war period; rousing numerous conflicts on both the shop-floor and within the trade union movement (Big Flame, 1974; 119-139).

Advanced Forms of Struggle: Exhibitions of More Intensive and More Diverse Refusal Activity

Alongside increasing levels of official and unofficial strike action, more intensive and diverse forms of refusal activity had also become more prevalent in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Crouch, 1978). As a number of militant workers had discovered in previous years, a dispute could not simply be won by refusing to work and staying at home; 'the commodity or service withheld has to be exceptionally irreplaceable and indispensable for its absence to be sufficient in itself to win a strike' (Allen, 1981; 182). Knowledge of this was evident in the strategy deployed by those organising the national coal miners' strike in 1972; as mass and flying pickets, as well as appeals for widespread solidarity action, were established in order to prevent both the use of existing coal reserves and the further production of coal. Flying pickets were used to obtain intelligence and mobilise large numbers of miners to disrupt any attempts made to redistribute coal supplies across the country which, on occasion, could be a violent affair (Allen, 1981; 191-194). Meanwhile, the mass pickets operationalised by the miners 'distinguished it from all other strikes in recent trade union history' (Allen, 1981; 189); with

approximately 200,000 miners involved and an estimated 500 establishments picketed on a '24 hour basis by an average of 40,000 miners each day' (Allen, 1981; 200). Alongside picketing, the miners' also made successful appeals for workers from other industries to take solidarity action. The effect of solidarity action was most visible in the 'Battle of Saltley Gate', where thousands of engineering and car factory workers emerged in support of the miners' struggle and forced the closure of a major coal distribution depot (Darlington and Lyddon, 2001; 56-62). This was not only a pivotal victory for the miners' struggle but it demonstrated that, through solidarity, the working class had power to impose itself against the state and force through its interests as a class. It served as a catalyst, building confidence among other sections of the labour force and prefiguring further struggles over the following years (Phillips, 2006).

Advanced forms of struggle, however, did not only emerge in picketing strategies and solidarity across trade unions and industries. In the early 1970s, workers were taking action to seize the means of production and evict employers from their property (Solidarity, 1972; see Sherry, 2010). The 'occupation tactic' was initially popularised in 1971 by approximately 8,500 workers of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in response to proposed redundancy and was 'followed by over 200 occupations of factories, workshops, shipyards, and offices during the following 18 months' (Cliff, 1985).

Political Confrontations with the State: Reaction to Anti-Union Legislation

Another important development of the early 1970s was 'the increase in political strikes' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 197). Unlike 'industrial' strikes, a term generally used to capture action taken to defend or advance the material interests of those concerned; political strikes are understood as action taken to alter the structures that govern societies. These kinds of strikes had become 'commonplace' in the early 1970s (Birchall, 1974; 9), as trade unions and workers took action against the industrial relations policies of the Conservative government.

The antecedents to post-war political strikes can be traced back to 1968, when the Labour government claimed that mounting unofficial industrial unrest and persisting economic difficulties (largely resultant of mounting industrial unrest) necessitated stronger state intervention (Crouch, 1978; 245). Concurring with this, in 1970, the newly elected Conservative government quickly set out to address these issues with proposals

of a new Industrial Relations Act. Taking inspiration from policy documents which advocated measures to illegalise unofficial militancy and encourage 'responsible trade unionism' (see Darlington and Lyddon, 2001; 15-17), the Act was passed in August 1971. The overall purpose of the Act was 'to change the balance of bargaining power to meet the views of those who considered collective bargaining and wage-push inflation a serious threat to the economy' (Barnes and Reid, 1980; 141). It set out to do this by mandating that the unions conform to a legal responsibility 'to assist employers in maintaining industrial discipline' (Crouch, 1978; 246) and restore 'some of the power [to employers] which had gone to the [stewards on the] shop floor' (Barnes and Reid, 1980; 141).

However, the Act also proposed reforms which, if implemented successfully, meant the unions would have also had to accept significant limitations on their own bargaining power (Crouch, 1978; 246). As such, the unions were quick to oppose both the proposal and the implementation of the Industrial Relations Act, initially setting out on a public campaign to rally support for a united trade union movement. After its implementation, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) responded by launching a boycott and calling for the unions to refrain from registering under the new Act; those that did were subsequently expelled from the TUC. In conjunction with this, workers from a number of industries turned out against the Conservative government. A one-day unofficial strike involved 'somewhere between 350,000 and 600,000 workers in the biggest political strike since 1926' (Darlington and Lyddon, 2001; 18). Some months later, a march against the Bill attracted 130,000 people, with other unions giving official support for a further one day strike and day of demonstrations. In total, between 1.5 and 2 million workers had stopped work (Crouch, 1978; 232).

Although the government made use of the Act on a few occasions with limited success, overall, the political strikes had proven successful. The vast majority of employers simply ignored the new legislation. The unions for the most part eschewed requirements to enforce industrial discipline, unofficial strikes continued and power often remained firmly among factions of workers on the shop floor (Crouch, 1978; 247). By 1974, the Industrial Relations Act was abolished. The Conservative government had conceded to re-examining the Act and rethinking a new strategy for managing increasing levels of refusal activity among the workers.

Industrial Confrontations with the State: Incomes Policies and New Militancy among Low Paid Public-Sector Workers

Alongside attempts to impose industrial relations reforms better suited to employers, both Labour and Conservative governments periodically sought to introduce incomes policies in efforts to negate the damaging effects of cumulative refusal activities and create an environment more favourable for capital to profitably invest. In a sentence, incomes policies are designed to place restrictions on the wages of workers and the prices of commodities, so as to better regulate wage costs for employers and living costs for workers. Over the fifties and sixties, higher trade union density and levels of refusal activity alongside increasing competition from abroad had left politicians increasingly concerned about the threat posed by wage inflation to private investment (Wrigley, 2002; 55). By 1966 rising inflation had encouraged the Labour government to introduce statutory freezes on prices and incomes (Wrigley, 2002; 59). This was not only opposed by sections of the trade union leadership—who ultimately saw statutory incomes policies as a violation of their belief in free collective bargaining—but it also roused unrest within sections of the labour force that had, until that point, remained diffident compared to other workers.

According to Crouch (1978), the statutory incomes policies implemented by the Labour government inspired the emergence of industrial forms of militancy among low paid public sector workers. Unlike many other groups of workers, low paid public sector workers were often more vulnerable and less able to evade incomes policies. This was in part because public sector pay more generally was less subject to shop-floor bargaining and traditions of unofficial forms of militancy. In addition, lower paid groups were more severely affected by rising levels of taxation in the late 1960s. As a result of this, and despite the fact that this was a section of the labour force with little history of official or unofficial militancy, the late sixties saw increasing numbers of public sector workers engage 'in protracted strikes against the government' so as to protect their real wages (Crouch, 1978; 222). Among the first examples was a major strike organised by local authority manual workers in 1969. This was followed in later years by the postal workers in 1971; hospital ancillary staff, gas workers and teachers in 1973 (Hyman, 1974); and nurses, for the first time in the professions history, in 1974. All of which were

responses to a number of attempts made by the Conservative government to restrain wages in the early 1970s (cf. Durcan et al., 1983; 378).

In spite of the militant trend amongst new sections of the labour force, as Crouch (1978; 225) argues, care should be taken not to reduce the industrially motivated struggles of new sections of the labour force as straightforward evidence of a 'class-wide loyalty' against capital and/or the state. Antagonisms between groups of workers were still present, particularly over pay differentials between job roles, and this even featured as an important rationale behind some of the industrial strike action that was enacted in this period. Nevertheless, what can be quite clearly seen from all of the above is that, particularly between the period 1968-74, there were aggregate increases in refusal (of work) activity among a growing number and increasingly diverse fractions of the active army. Refusal activity which, in large part at the very least, was owed to a specific composition of the working class created by the political-economic conditions of the class compromise vision.

A Malfunctioning Reserve Army Mechanism

Whilst increases in refusal activity had begun to seriously undermine the post-war economy from the late 1960s, they weren't the only concern for capital and those (state managers) tasked with preserving a capitalist economy. By 1968-74, it was becoming increasingly clear that Beveridge's 'cradle-to-grave' social insurance model and, within this, the implementation (and subsequent reforms) of a comprehensive unemployment protection scheme, was also beginning to radically alter the working class composition.

The Rediscovery of Poverty and its Effects on the Class Composition

Perhaps the most important effect of Beveridgean welfare reforms on the class composition was that, over the entirety of the post-war period, more people (on aggregate) became economically inactive and more began to claim out-of-work benefits and income subsidies (Deacon, 1995; Deacon and Bradshaw, 1983; 98-100). As the table below reflects, the percentage of the total population claiming means-tested national assistance and, later, supplementary benefit, more than doubled between the years 1948-74:

Claimants receiving national assistance/supplementary benefit, 1948-74 (000s)						
	National Assistance				Supplementary Benefit	
	1948	1951	1961	1965	1970	1974
Retirement pensioners and national insurance widows 60 years and over	495	767	1075	1239	1745	1712
Others over pension age	143	202	220	196	156	96
Unemployed with national insurance benefit	19	33	45	34	73	73
Unemployed without national insurance benefit	34	33	86	78	166	228
Sick and Disabled with national insurance benefit	80	121	134	149	164	95
Sick and Disabled without National Insurance Benefit	64	98	133	138	159	165
Women under 60 with dependent children	32	41	76	108	191	245
National insurance widows under 60	81	86	58	55	63	42
Others	63	81	17	15	20	24
Total persons receiving supplementary benefit (National assistance pre-1966)	1,011	1462	1844	2012	2738	2680
Total number of claimants and dependants	1,465	2048	2608	2840	4167	4092
Claimants and dependants as a percentage of the total population	3.0	4.2	5.1	5.4	7.7	7.5
Table 4.2. (Lister 1975; in Lowe, 2005; 157)						

There are of course a number of factors, such as a growing/ageing population or spells of poor economic performance, which can and to some extent do explain some of the increases in claimant count seen over the post-war period (Deacon and Bradshaw, 1983; 99-100). But one of the most influential factors, according to Webb (1975; 454), was the 'intellectual energy' and subsequent 'pressure group activity' that followed what is popularly known as 'the rediscovery of poverty'.

Prior to 1965, the orthodoxy among state managers of successive governments and many intellectuals was that Beveridgean welfare reforms had virtually banished poverty. This was to change in the mid-1960s, as Richard Titmuss, Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend declared that, despite 'poverty of the working class population' declining

from '31…to 3 per cent' between 1936-1950 (Ogus, 1982; 195), poverty had once again increased during the 50s and 60s (Gazeley, 2003; 178-9). On the basis of their analysis, Abel-Smith and Townsend concluded that the number of people living in poverty had 'increased from a minimum of 600,000 in 1953-4 to 2 million in 1964' (Lowe, 2005; 148).

However, Abel-Smith and Townsend's analysis comprised two radical departures. First, in contrast to the 'absolute' or 'subsistence level' definitions of poverty embodied in Beveridgean welfare policy and based on minimum expenditure required to maintain 'physical efficiency' (Lowe, 2005; 148), Abel-Smith and Townsend defined poverty as 'relative'. In simple words, their definition held that 'individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong' (Townsend, 1979; 31). Therefore, because their definition was ultimately based on average national living standards and amenities rather than a subsistence level of minimum needs, they had established 'a new and higher poverty line' which classified a larger proportion of the population as poor (Banting, 1970; 70). Second, in direct relation to the first, underlying this new 'relative' definition of poverty was also 'a changed understanding of its causes' (Lowe, 2005; 149). In their view, 'poverty was caused by environmental (structural), rather than biological (individual) factors' or the result of personal failings (Lowe, 2005; 149); it 'reflected problems with wage levels and the operation of the social security system which acted to restrict the level of social assistance' (Grover, 2016; 84). As such, 'the policy consensus was that government, rather than blaming the poor for their plight should re-consider the causes of inequality—or social exclusion—in society' (Lowe, 2005; 149).

As Banting (1979; 70) argues, 'their research was explicitly political'. And this was not only reflected in both Titmuss et al.'s new definition of poverty and understanding of its causes, but in their attempts to force the issue into political debate and subsequently lobby for redistributionary reforms which delivered major income transfer increases to those under their new poverty line (Banting, 1979; 88). Initially, they utilised their 'links with the labour party' to 'reshape policy-makers' interpretations of their environment' and 'shift the prevailing images of society' which, until that point, still broadly illustrated the view that poverty was something of the past (Banting, 1979; 70-71). Despite this,

their initial attempts to influence policy were limited and, realising that 'more dramatic effort was required', they were instrumental in the launch of a new Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) (Banting, 1979; 72). By 1965, CPAG launched a widely endorsed and highly publicised media campaign based on Abel-Smith and Townsend's research and policy recommendations. In terms of raising awareness, the campaign was widely successful. Within weeks poverty 'attained an almost immediate salience' across the major parties; the campaign had made 'an impact throughout the political world' (Banting, 1979; 74). By utilising their status, networks and successfully forming a political pressure group focused on advancing the material interests of the poor, Titmuss et al. were beginning to serve as intellectual prize-fighters for the poorer fractions of the working class.

Despite their successes in shifting perceptions and raising awareness of relative poverty among key state managers, their impact on the 'final policy response' was 'much less' (Banting, 1979; 106). Policymakers for the most part rejected Abel-Smith and Townsend's new poverty line, which was quantitatively 'defined as 140 per cent of the then current National Assistance scale plus rent' (Gazeley, 2003; 179). As such, policymakers also rejected their solutions to eliminating (relative) poverty, vetoing their proposals for a 'major increase in family allowances…paid automatically to every member of designated categories irrespective of income' and a 'negative income tax to allocate benefits automatically to those with low incomes' (Banting, 1979; 88).

Nevertheless, Titmuss et al.'s efforts were far from redundant. Poverty had been rediscovered and state managers were under 'external and internal…political pressure' to doing something about it (Grover, 2016; 85-6). Policymakers were particularly receptive to emerging evidence revealing that increasing (absolute) poverty rates were being fuelled by a 'substantial non-take up' of national assistance by eligible citizens, particularly pensioners, who disliked the stigma associated with claiming a means-tested benefit (Deacon and Bradshaw, 1983; 103). As such, the 1966 Social Security Act introduced a benefit with a 'new name, a new image and publicity' called 'supplementary benefit' (SB), which was to replace the old national assistance (Deacon and Bradshaw, 1983; 103). While it was still means-tested, there was a new status attached to the SB. In efforts to abolish the associated stigma, SB was now marketed as a legal 'right' for eligible applicants' (Webb, 1975; 457). But this was not the only important development. The 'Act also increased the scale rates' of SB which meant that

more people were eligible for benefit (Deacon and Bradshaw, 1983; 107) and the real value of the benefit (in relation to prices) had increased:

The Real Value of Social Security Benefits: 1948-1975 (£ April 1981 prices)				
	July 1948	April 1961	September 1971	November 1975
Supplementary benefit (previously National Assistance) (a)	17.93	25.31	33.39	35.10
(a)Scale rate for a couple (housing costs are provided for separately)				
Table 4.3. (Hemming, 1984; 29)				

As Deacon and Bradshaw (1983; 107) note, 'the 1966 Act appeared to have a marked effect on take-up'. The numbers 'receiving benefit had risen by 365,000' by the end of 1966, and by 1975, the number had increased by 12 percentage points (Deacon and Bradshaw, 1983; 107). However, what was more important than the overall figure was a discernible shift in the composition of the SB claimant group. In particular, the number of retirement pensioner claimants was in decline while the number of SB claimants who were of working age and unemployed 'rose from 172,000 in 1966 to over half a million—20 per cent of the total—in 1975' (Deacon and Bradshaw, 1983; 107).

The key point to take from all this, then, is that post-war welfare reforms—resulting (in part at least) from the pressures exerted by Titmuss et al and the rediscovery of poverty—were altering the composition of the working class. Ostensibly, by removing some of the stigma, widening eligibility and increasing the real value of the new national assistance benefit ('SB'), increasing levels of labour power (on aggregate) were becoming inactive and more people were claiming income subsidies.

The Perverse Effects of Welfare Reforms on the Reserve Army Mechanism

So why was the supplementary benefit having this effect? Within a few years of its introduction, the growing feeling within government was that the latest series of welfare reforms were reducing the fiscal gap between benefits and wage levels in the lower sections of the labour market, thus undermining the incentive to enter low-paid work (Grover, 2016; 95). In 1968, one minister (of State for Social Services) wrote:

> ‘As you know, our predecessors made substantial increases in the supplementary benefit scales, which now stand in real value more than 20% above the level of the assistance scales in 1964. The result is ... that many wage-earners today would be better off on supplementary benefit than they are on their present wages. ... From various quarters ... I am getting evidence of fellows working themselves out of jobs in order to be able to draw supplementary benefit’ (Grover, 2016; 231)

Similar views were echoed more vehemently a couple of years later. Recording his ‘experiences both as a visiting officer [visiting claimants’ residences] and latterly as a special investigator’ for the Supplementary Benefits Commission, Robin Page (1971; 8; 11) declared that abuse of SB had been 'steadily increasing' for several years. According to Page (1971; 51; 65), 'marauding hordes of malingerers and wasters…who show[ed] little or no interest in work' were making a weekly 'mass migration to the Supplementary Benefits office to plead destitution, poverty and starvation'. Page also argued that SB was being used by workers to enhance their working conditions and/or their position against their employer.

Emerging quantitative research appeared to support some of Page’s accusations. Gujarati (1972; 195) found that ‘unemployment was rising relative to what one would expect on the basis of vacancies’. More precisely, Gujarati (1972) argued that the introduction of SB alongside the introduction of the Redundancy Payment Act ‘had changed job-search behaviour in such a way that the level of notified vacancies for any given level of registered unemployment would be higher’ (Showler, 1981; 42). This was given additional weight by studies ‘regressing male unemployment or unemployment duration on the benefit:income ratio’ (Showler, 1981; 42-3). Maki and Spindler (1975; 450; 442) found that ‘changes in the benefit-income ratio’ due to the introduction of SB ‘were largely responsible for the changes in the unemployment experience’ and altering the ‘labour-leisure decision’ in such a way that culminated in an increase of approximately one third in male unemployment between 1967 and 1972.

Between the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was becoming increasingly apparent that refusal (of work) activity wasn’t just prevalent among those actively selling their labour power to capital. And this wasn’t just reflected in abovementioned statistics revealing

increasing levels of voluntary unemployment. Claimants were beginning to unionise along ideas ranging from unemployment benefit as an unconditional human right up to and including 'the right not to work at an unspeakable job' (Rose, 1974; 187). From the administration of the first Claimant Union in 1968, their number quickly spread nationwide and had grown to somewhere between '70 and 90' by 1973 (Rose, 1974; 194). Some were 'organising several hundreds of claimants' while others were 'organising a mere handful' (Rose, 1974; 194); but their intentions were frequently subversive. Members were known to 'adopt an aggressive attitude towards civil servants', while sit ins (in labour exchanges) and threats of personal violence were not unknown (Brown, 1975; 92). Influenced by Libertarian-Marxist values (Rose, 1974; 186), the union leadership was publicly hostile to the state (see Cmnd, 1973; 5) and would teach and take action to facilitate and promote abuse of the benefits system:

> 'Where we were, we tried to do our best by telling members how to dodge the Unemployment Assistance Board laws. Say, for instance, Tommy Oliver's on the dole and he's got two son's working: his dole is stopped, their income's enough – this is what the Means Test meant. Say he's got a son called Jim and he's got another called Ernest and they've got two cousins living next door called Joe and George – right? Well, I'd say, "Jim and Ernest, you go and sleep in Joe and George's bed next door, and Joe and George come and sleep in your bed – you've changed your address and your dad gets his dole back". And this is the way we fought the system. We had everybody sleeping in different people's houses, things like that…' (Kenyon, 1972; 173).

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, concerns that levels of benefit abuse were on the rise had been 'revived' (Spicker, 2011; 241). State managers were not only concerned with gossip detailing instances such as those described above, but departmental figures strongly suggested that significant numbers of claimants were making illegitimate claims on the state. Of particular interest to state managers was evidence revealing that large numbers of claimants were ceasing to claim benefits after they had been selected for a 'special interview' to discuss and go through the various aspects of their eligibility:

Claimants called for 'special interview' and percentage rate of the outcome								
	1968	1969	1 Jan - 30 June 1970	1 July - 31 December 1970	1 Jan - 22 June 1971	23 June 14 December 1971	15 December 1971 - 12 December 1972	13 December 1972 - 31 December 1973
Number of Claimants Called for a special Interview	40,683	40,973	27,003	38,944	30,060	26,260	113,000	150,000
Number of Claimants Subsequently Ceasing to Draw an Allowance after being called for a special interview	21,090	25,557	11,881	15,967	11,422	9,978	59,000	88,000
Percentage of Claimants Subsequently Ceasing to Draw an Allowance after being called for a special interview (%)	52	62	44	41	38	38	52	58
Table 4.4. Adapted from DHSS (1972; 122; 1973; 82) and Cmnd 5228 (1973; 144; 121)								

Alongside this, from 1964 onwards, the state gradually introduced more and more 'Special Investigation Officers' whose remit was specifically to deal with enquiries of fraud and abuse (Cmnd, 5228, 1973; 18). Again, their findings reported that the total number of people committing some form of benefit fraud was steadily increasing. Although, it must be recognised that this was likely due to significant increases in the amount of fraud investigations that were taking place:

Inquiries by Special Investigators (1968-71)								
Type of Offence	1968		1969		1970		1971	
	Investigated	Allowances withdrawn or reduced	Investigated	Allowances Withdrawn or Reduced	Investigated	Allowances withdrawn or reduced	Investigated	Allowances withdrawn or reduced
Undisclosed Income-earnings as employee	4343	1852	4478	1867	6334	2594	7060	2585
Earnings from self-employment	2242	987	2487	1110	3339	1429	4032	1483
Other income or capital assets	327	116	403	146	377	135	294	91
Fictitious desertion	1233	682	1516	776	2021	982	2095	925
Undisclosed cohabitation	4940	2512	5981	2775	7335	3406	8426	3787
Other Cases	181	46	214	54	282	83	243	82
Total	13,266	6195 (46%)	15079	6728(44%)	19,688	8629 (44%)	22150	8953 (40%)
Table 4.5. Cmnd 5228, 1973; 52								

Nevertheless, bringing together the evidence discussed in this subsection (and the previous one), the key point should now be clear. By the late 1960s and the early 1970s, it was becoming apparent that welfare reforms (particularly to national assistance) had led to aggregate increases in refusal (of work) activity—that is, activity taken to resist capitalist class domination/exploitation and/or activity which seeks to advance the political and/or material interests of those involved—among the benefit claiming fractions of the working class. As Green (1991; 126) alludes to, this was to have a deleterious effect on a mechanism that has been pivotal in the preservation of Britain's capitalist economy–what Marxists tend to call the ‘reserve army mechanism’. I’ll conclude this subsection by explaining this point further.

To be clear, Marx (2013; 440) understood the reserve army mechanism as embodied in a 'relative surplus population' of '"floating" (workers made redundant due to economic downturn or greater efficiency), "latent" (migrants from agricultural areas) and "stagnant" (paupers and vagabonds)' (Greer, 2016; 165). This surplus population, according to Marx (2013; 438-447), is both generated by and essential to the capitalist mode of production and the historical development of capitalism more generally. This is because capital often replenishes the reserve army by making workers redundant in

times of economic crisis or technological development (Green, 1991; 124), yet simultaneously relies on this surplus population to increase the labour supply by competing for jobs and forcing 'workers to accept jobs with lower pay' (Green, 1991; 124). In so doing, this 'reserve army' serves as a mechanism to regulate 'conditions at work' (Green, 1991; 124) and 'keep down the cost of labour in new and expanding industries, even at times of overall growth and increasing employer demand' (Greer, 2016; 165). But of course, this outcome is by no means a foregone conclusion. Marx (1973; 736) himself noted how in the years of the primitive accumulation the expropriated peasantry were more likely to steal and drift than work under the conditions posed by their class enemy. As such, for the majority of capitalism's lifespan, capital has relied on the general distress of poverty and unemployment, punitive penal and coercive social policies, or a combination of them all, in order to stimulate competition for jobs (Marx, 2013; 514-519).

By the post-war period and, almost certainly, by the late 1960s/early 70s, this had changed. As Green (1991; 126) alludes to, the introduction of 'cradle-to-grave' social insurance and, within this, a revised and relatively permissive unemployment protection and income subsidy scheme which ultimately prioritised welfare over workfare, 'helped to modify the function of the reserve army'. A minimum standard of living, comprising both a minimum income and a range of complimentary services, was now widely available to vast sections of the out-of-work surplus population (see Lowe, 2005). Over the course of the post-war period, poverty in absolute or subsistence level terms was at a historic low (Lowe, 2005; 162). While, by the late 1960s, the gap between benefit levels and wages in low pay sectors of the economy had narrowed (Maki and Spindler, 1975). Thus, by alleviating some of 'the "distress" of unemployment that might otherwise have led to lower wages' (Greer, 2016; 165), according to Green (1991; 126), social insurance had begun to 'remove some of the incentive to work hard'. By the early 1970s, the reserve army was growing and the reserve army mechanism was in crisis.

Capital under Threat: A Crisis of Profitability

Yet, in the grand scheme of things, disrupting the disciplinary power of the reserve army mechanism was likely a comparatively minor effect of cumulative post-war welfare reforms. Far more problematic (for capital and the state) was the rising costs associated

with both the rapid expansion of inactive (and/or subsidised) labour power and real value increases of out-of-work benefits and income subsidies.

Rising Social Security Expenditure: Too Few Surplus Value Producers

One of the defining features of the post-war period was, as already alluded to, the striking increases seen in overall state expenditure (Gamble, 1994; 103). From capital's perspective this isn't always a bad thing. Over the course of the post-war period, for example, the Keynesian Planner state was devoting an increasing amount of the total wealth in aid of private industry during periods of decline and poor business confidence, as well as using expenditure to provide capital with lucrative opportunities to invest in more stable periods (Gough, 1975; 61). Such occurrences can be profitable for capital, as expenditure is ultimately being used to facilitate the production of surplus value and profit.

Nevertheless, the Planner state wasn't just spending money on private industry. As Gough (1975; 61) notes, 'the most striking feature' of overall spending in the post war period was 'the extent to which education, health and social security were responsible for the rising share of government expenditure'. In particular, the cost of social security as a whole ‘dominated post-war welfare expenditure’ (Lowe, 2005; 136). But what was of greater alarm (for capital) was that overall state spending was rising and yet, within this, social security spending was commanding an ever greater share of the total expenditure bill; rising ‘from 12.1 per cent in 1951 to 17.8 per cent in 1971’ (Lowe, 2005; 136).The table below, for example, highlights different features of social security expenditure (such as contribution-based unemployment benefit claims) and documents both their rising cost (£m) and increasing portion (%) of total state spending:

Social Security: Government expenditure, 1951 - 1977

	1951-2		1956-7		1961-2		1966-7		1971-2		1976-7	
	£m	%	£m	%	£m	%	£m	%	£m	%	£m	%
National Insurance Benefit *	16	2.3	2.4	2.3	41m	2.4	85	3.2	250	5.5	578	5.0
Supplementary Benefit (formerly National Assistance) *	6	0.9	9	0.8	22	1.3	32	1.2	155	3.4	601	5.2
Administration (of social security)	45	6.4	56	5.3	78	4.6	116	4.4	230	5.0	845	7.3
Total public expenditure on social security benefit	703	100	1066	100	1675	100	2642	100	4578	100	11527	100

*these figures are only for claims made on the basis of unemployment.

Table 4.6 (Lowe, 2005; 138)

Now it is worth quickly adding here that that the vast bulk of social security spending (always over 50%) was actually being paid out in retirement pensions between 1951 and 1977 (Lowe, 2005; 138). But irrespective of whether increasing levels of spending are on pensions, unemployment benefits for the fit-to-work unemployed (as shown above), or the administrative costs associated with both, spending on such groups can pose a serious threat to economic stability.

The reason for this, or at least according to Bacon and Eltis (1978), is that increasing levels of social security expenditure can reduce both the overall number of individuals selling their labour power and the time spent producing surplus value for capital. Bacon and Eltis (1978) concluded that more and more of the British population were spending time being outright unproductive and/or working in non-market related production/non-surplus value producing sectors of the economy following the Second World War. Or put differently, growing quantities of labour power were either outright inactive, or not involved in the production of profitable commodities for capital (cf. Gough, 1979; 107). Bacon and Eltis (1978) specifically argued that 'large welfare bureaucracies' and 'large scale public projects of a non-commodity producing kind' were undermining private investment and placing increasing strain on the British economy (Coates, 1994; 59). Evidence for this could not only be found in statistics revealing increasing levels of output being redirected towards inactive labour power (see table 4.6.). But also in evidence revealing that the size of the civil service—that is, a non-surplus value producing sector of the economy ordinarily tasked with the administration

of public services—'had exploded between 1966 and 1976 from 2.1 million to 3.3 million, or from 8.3 per cent to 13.2 per cent of the workforce' (Lowe, 2005; 318-19; see table 4.6).

Increasing Frequency and Severity of Wage Struggles

According to Negri (1994; 181), while rising social expenditure certainly placed strain on the economy, this strain was subsidiary to, and to some extent a corollary of, the economic effects of 'proletarian pressure and workers' struggle'. As the Operaisti had observed in many capitalist territories over the post-war period, *wage struggle*—that is, the demand for significant wage increases and, in some instances, that wage increases should not correspond with rising productivity—was the most prolific threat to capital and its need to locate/realise surplus value in the 1960s and 1970s (Potere Operaio, 1973). Certainly, in the UK at least, not only was there an expansion of refusal (of work) activity among the active army of workers (see previous section); but underpinning this activity were more ambitious and damaging demands for better wages and better working conditions.

As Glyn and Sutcliffe (1972; 189) reveal, by the late 1960s and early 1970s workers were making significant advances in working conditions. From 1963 to 1970, the number of workers getting more than two weeks' holiday a year rose from 6 to 60 per cent, 'and the proportion getting three weeks rose from 2 per cent to 54 per cent'. Moreover, 'between 1950 and 1969 average hours worked fell slightly from 47.3 hours a week to 46.5; but the standard week fell from 43.8 hours to 40.4, so a higher proportion of work was done at overtime rates' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 189). Alongside gains in holidays and hours, wage disputes had become the dominant reason for strike action:

Wage Disputes and Strikes			
Year	No. of Stoppages	Wage Disputes as % total No. of stoppages	Wage increase disputes as % of total stoppages
1960	2849	48.9	16.6
1965	2365	50.1	27.5
1968	2390	51.7	38.9
1969	3146	57.2	49.5
1970	3943	63.1	55.4
1971	2223	52.0	39.9
Table 4.7. Source adapted from: Glyn and Sutcliffe (1972; 199)			

According to Glyn and Sutcliffe (1972; 196), 'the number of wage disputes as a proportion of total work stoppages rose from 48 per cent (52 per cent of working days lost) in 1964 to over 63 per cent (85 per cent of working days lost) in 1970'. The share of disputes about wage *increases* rather than other wage questions, such as wage differentials or rates for particular jobs, also grew significantly; in '1960 only 16.6 per cent of disputes were about wage increases…by 1964 it was still only 21.4 per cent…by 1970 it had risen to 55.4 per cent' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 196).

In a lot of cases, struggles for wage increases were defensive. In other words, some groups of workers were not so much concerned with advancing their material interests, but were taking action to protect their existing living standards in the face of rising living costs and higher taxation (Wilkinson and Turner, 1972; 100-101). By 1971, various groups of workers were lodging defensive but nonetheless substantial wage claims against their employers—'building workers (50 per cent and a 35 hour working week), council workers (22 per cent), farmworkers (40 per cent) London dockers (30 per cent) and railwaymen (22 per cent and better holidays)' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 194).

For others groups of workers, however, their objectives often weren't defensive, and instead reflected a desire to enhance their working conditions and/or claim a larger share of the profits. In 1971, the engineers' leaders 'made a wage claim of 35-40 percent together with a demand for equal pay for women, a reduction in hours to 35 and an increase in holidays to four weeks, all without loss of pay' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 194). In the motor industry, Henry Ford's assembly line workers were refusing to 'accept that

wages rises should be linked to increased productivity' (Gambino, 1976; 30). This was manifest in wage demands likened to 'commercial suicide' by Henry Ford's representatives (Mathews, 1972; 70). It was also manifest in a series of bitterly contested strikes between 1969 and 1971 which, after forcing through sizeable wage increases and stoppages of production lines across not only Britain but Ford's supply chains in the US, culminated in Henry Ford ''threatening to remove all his British investments' (Mathews, 1972; 8).

The Cumulative and Corresponding Effects of Wage Struggles and Rising Social Expenditure on Capital: Falling Share and Rate of Profit

Irrespective of whether wage struggles are offensive or defensive, however, as Glyn and Sutcliffe note (1972; 194), the effect is that they can subject 'capital to a pressure which actually threatens its survival'. The reason for this is quite straightforward. If capitalists are unable to pass off wage increases with a corresponding rise in productivity or an increase in the price of the commodities they produce, then the wage increases begin to eat away into capital's share of the profits.

According to Glyn and Sutcliffe (1972), this is precisely what had happened over the post-war period. Between 1964-70 capital's share of profits—that is, the ratio to which the total wealth produced is distributed as wages (for workers) or profits (for capitalists)—'was almost halved' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 58):

Profits and Wages in Company Output		
Year	Profits (%)	Wages (%)
1954	25.2	74.9
1964	21	79
1970	12.1	87.9
Table 4.8 (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 59-60)		

While Glyn and Sutcliffe's evidence suggests that workers' wage struggles had been increasingly successful at acquiring significant money wage increases, there was also another reason why capital's share of profits was rapidly diminishing in the latter years of the post-war period. In years prior to the late 60s, according to Glyn and Sutcliffe (1972), international competition to UK was relatively weak. In simple terms, UK firms

in earlier decades were often able to produce and sell commodities at far more competitive costs in relation to firms in other countries. Therefore, UK capital had more room to offset higher production costs (such as wage increases) by performing an inflationary manoeuvre and increasing prices when attempting to sell their commodities and realise surplus value in the market. Inflationary manoeuvres, however, had become increasingly difficult to perform for British capital by the late 1960s, as firms in other countries were able to produce and sell the same goods/services at cheaper rates (see Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 53). According to Glyn and Sutcliffe (1972; 71), this was because 'other countries either had a slower growth of wage costs or had fatter profit margins in the first place and so were more willing to cut them in order to increase in their share of the market'. Thus, between 1954 and 1970 the UK, Britain's 'share of world exports was cut in half' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 70). Declines in exporting were notably pronounced among sections of industry where levels of refusal (of work) activity were high—i.e. in manufacturing industries such as electrical machinery and transport equipment (cars, aeroplanes etc.).

But international competition and workers' struggles weren't the only threat to capital's ability to make profit. Glyn and Harrison (1980) also note how capital's rate of profit—that is, the return that capital gains in relation to the amount of capital (means of production, labour power etc.) invested—was also rapidly plummeting by the late 1960s and early 1970s. After taxation, the rate of profit fell from 8.9 per cent in 1960 to 4.9 per cent in 1970 (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 52) while, in some industries, profits 'had totally evaporated' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 69). This was particularly the case in many strike-prone areas of the manufacturing industry, particularly ships, planes and cars. In other manufacturing industries, 'the stated profit had fallen by at least a third between 1964 and 1970, and outside manufacturing profitability fell a lot in wholesale distribution and transport' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 69). Glyn and Sutcliffe (1972; 68) concluded that the rate of profit in the UK had pretty much 'collapsed' by the early 1970s. As can be seen in the table below, by 1974, capital's post-tax profit rate was in a deficit:

Profitability 1960-74			
	Company profits as percentage of company output	Rate of profit for industrial and commercial companies	
		Before tax (%)	After tax (%)
1960	23.0	14.2	8.9
1965	19.8	11.8	6.4
1970	14.8	8.7	4.9
1973	-	7.2	3.4
1974	-	4.0	-0.3
Table 4.9 (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 52; 102-103)			

One of the main reasons for this deficit, according to Bacon and Eltis (1978), was that capital had to shoulder a rapidly mounting share of increasing taxation levels needed to finance the rapid expansion of both the reserve army and more generous income subsidies/out-of-work benefits (associated with the re-discovery of poverty). Of course, numerous 'attempts were made to finance extra non-market spending' in ways which sought to ensure 'workers bore the entire cost' (Bacon and Eltis, 1978; 110). Incomes policies and industrial relations reforms (see previous section), for example, were just a few attempts made by the Planner state to finance a skyrocketing social expenditure bill (Crouch, 1978). However, and this is a really important point, 'workers [for the most part] did not acquiesce' to attacks made on their wages (Bacon and Eltis, 1978; 110; cf. Gough, 1979; 125). In a number of industries, they were making advances. So when state managers confronted workers with proposals of wage restraint or higher taxation, they frequently responded with strike action in order to, at the very minimum, preserve their real wage levels (cf. Crouch, 1978; Gough, 1979; 125). As such, 'wage inflation accelerated' and, 'through the extra inflation they caused, workers managed to pass the bulk of extra taxation on to companies, so these ending up having to pay for the larger non-market sector' (Bacon and Eltis, 1978; 110). Consequently, the expansion of spending on non-productive labour power in a climate of hostile class conflict and frequent wage struggles was acting as yet another brake on the rate of profit (cf. Gough, 1979; 108).

Bringing this all together, then, British capital had found itself in a stranglehold by (1) cumulative refusal (of work) activity perpetrated by, to a lesser extent, the claiming

fractions of the reserve army and, to a greater extent, active workers; who increasingly sought to protect and/or advance their living standards against rising taxation, wage restraints and living costs. (2) Increasing levels of state expenditure in aid of facilitating non-surplus value producing labour power and, due to workers' cumulative power (of refusal), an inability to finance this out of workers' share of the profits (wages). And (3), international capitalists who were better equipped to keep their prices lower than British capital, thus preventing any offloading of rising taxation/production costs in the market (see Appendices 4.1. for more detail).

From the Refusal of Work to the Refusal of Investment

With nowhere to turn capital began to succumb and 'responded by investing less' (Bacon and Eltis, 1978; 110). The capitalist economy was shrinking and crisis was in full swing. As Coates (1994; 57) describes, the falling share and rate of profit had begun to seriously undermine wealth creation. This occurred as higher levels of redistribution (in benefits and wages) resulting from the expansion and intensification of refusal (of work) activity encroached on the amount of surplus value that capital could feasibly realise and obtain. This in turn increased the level of risk associated with entrepreneurial initiative and investment; thereby undermining the incentive for investors to become capital and initiate the process so central to the sustainability and growth of a capitalist economy (M-C-M').

By the early 1970s, it was becoming apparent that workers' 'refusal to work', was being increasingly met by capitalists' refusal to invest. Between the end of 1970 and the second quarter of 1971, investment in manufacturing had fallen in real terms by 20 per cent (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 121). While, for those continuing to invest, there was a growing tendency to finance business ventures with short-term loans. Banks 'provided about 8 per cent of total finance in 1960-64', whereas this had 'rose to nearly 30 per cent in 1968-70' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 124). Increasingly unable to finance investment from its own share of the profit, British capital was going deeper into debt; advancing its rate of borrowing from 'around £200 million a quarter in the summer of 1973 to about £1400 million in the summer of 1974' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 103).

Of greater concern however, or at least from the perspective of capital, was the growing rate at which firms were declaring bankruptcy. Between 1950 and 1964, the average

number of firms which went into liquidation per year was 4225; whereas 'from 1964 to 1969 the average had risen to 8,723' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 127). But it was not only the rising number of bankruptcies which pointed to a crisis of profitability, '1971 saw a marked change in the pattern of liquidations compared with the rest of the post-war period' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 128). By this year, large and widely known companies were no longer making any profit. Rolls Royce, for example, had fallen victim to competition from American aero-engine producers. Similarly, the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS), a firm in which the government owned almost half the shares, faced strong competition from Japan during the late 1960s and was ill equipped to match market demands.

Rolls Royce and the UCS were no exceptions. By the early seventies, many big businesses were crumbling under the pressure incurred by cumulative working class struggles and their imposition on capital's share and rate of profit. The decimation of profitability had 'produced alarm in capitalist circles' (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 128). It was flagrantly apparent that, for British capitalism to remain, British capital could no longer continue making concessions to the working class. Survival required rapid and radical political economic change.

5. From Compromise to Command: Restructuration and Decomposition in the Downswing of the Class Struggle Cycle

Chapter Overview

To briefly recap and summarise thus far then, the last chapter should have made clear that the crisis of profitability facing British capital had reached fever pitch by 1974. By retracing the cycle of class struggle and the development of capitalism in Britain over the 20th century, it should also have been made clear that the crisis of profitability was primarily the result of a distinctive post-war class composition. The working class was once again composed in such a way—both politically (via Keynesian planning) and economically (via Fordist mass production)—that facilitated an expansion and intensification of refusal (of work) activity among both the active and (to a lesser extent) reserve fractions of the class. These refusal activities massified to such an extent that, by 1974, the working class had effectively obliterated both the rate at which capital made profits as well as its overall share. Or, in the autonomists' vernacular, the working class had reduced capital's ability to exploit labour power to such an extent that, on aggregate, 'surplus labour' had been subordinated to 'necessary labour' (Negri, 2005; 21-4; cf. Marx, 1973; 707). The refusal of work had been met by the refusal to invest and capitalist class domination was in serious jeopardy.

In times such as this, where 'capital enters relations of crisis', it 'has only one weapon with which to respond: *restructuration*' (Negri, 1988; 212). For Negri (1988; 212), restructuration 'is a political, economic and technological mechanism' aimed at 'attack[ing] and transform[ing] class composition'. More precisely, restructuration is designed to break working class power (of refusal) and preserve the continuity of capital accumulation by ensuring the resumption of exploitation rates necessary to attract profitable investment. And restructuration does this by targeting the class composition and re-arranging it in such a way that once again reduces the working class from 'a dynamic subject, an antagonistic force, tending towards its own independent identity', to the subordinate commodity, labour power, suitable for capitalist exploitation (Negri, 1988; 209). For Negri (2005; xxxii), a key feature of restructuration resides in the

cessation of ‘class compromise’ politics and the (re)assertion of ‘direct state *command*’. Since the late 1970s, not only has capital increasingly relied on state-sanctioned forms of repression and coercion to strip the working class of its (refusal) ability to undermine profitability. But, correspondingly, capital has also relied on ‘direct state *command*’ to (re-)establish capitalist domination and exploitation by forcibly imposing the commodity-forms of wage and reproductive labour.

The objective of this chapter is therefore a straightforward one. I am going to demonstrate how a project to both rearrange the working class composition and fasten it in a permanent condition of subservience has taken place in response to the crisis of profitability. I show how this has been done through a restructuration of both the state and the labour market primarily aimed at decomposing the (active and reserve) insubordinate fractions of the class via ‘direct state *command*’ and re-arranging the class in a way that ensures 'capital re-establishes sufficient control to continue its overall management of society' (Cleaver, 1992; 114). I start by picking back up at the immediate point from where the last chapter concluded.

State Restructuration

Despite enduring a profitability crisis, rising levels of bankruptcy and falling rates of investment in the early part of the 1970s, the immediate political situation was actually to get considerably worse for British capital. The strength of the active army and its repeated exhibitions of industrial militancy in the late 60's and early 70's had not only decimated capital's profit making potential but, in 1974, became influential in the election of a Labour government proposing a major leftward political economic shift (Coates, 1989; 69; Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 93). Wilson's new Labour government's election manifesto pledged commitment to ‘a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families’ (Cohen, 2006; 31). This was reflected in two key strands of Wilson's manifesto. First, 'there was to be a major redistribution of income, wealth and social service provision in favour of the working class and the relatively worse off' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 94). Second, there was to be a transfer of 'economic wealth and power from a small economic oligarchy to the people' via an extension of 'public ownership into the centre of British manufacturing capital' (Coates, 1980; 87).

The shift of power and wealth towards the working class had already begun to take shape in the early months of 1974 under Labour's new regime. A new National Enterprise Board (NEB) was formed in an effort to bring firms under partial public ownership so that union leaders could enjoy 'executive powers in a tripartite relationship with private employers and government appointees' (Coates, 1989; 70). Measures were taken to increase pensions and housing subsidies; 'gift and wealth taxes were introduced' and 'corporation tax was raised'; while 'income tax was raised disproportionately for the recipients of high salaries and unearned income' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 98). Alongside this, wage rises grew exponentially as the Labour government moved quickly to quell longstanding industrial feuds. The miners' struggles in 1974 were settled with 'increases ranging from 22-32 percent' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 98) while, more generally, wage increases were 'up from an annual rate of 12.5 per cent at the end of 1973 to 25.4 per cent at the end of 1974' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 101). In the early months of 1974, it had appeared as though working class struggles had forced Britain's political economy onto somewhat uncharted terrain. Not only was capital investment rapidly vanishing but, under the new regime, the state was also poised to make serious inroads into (what remained of) capital's control of industry.

The Demise of the Keynesian Planner State

However, by the latter months of 1974, there was another stark change in direction. In a major turn of events, the Labour government dramatically reneged on the redistribution and public ownership agenda which had featured in its initial election manifesto. One reason for this was owed to growing pressure from the capitalist class and its representatives. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) confronted the government directly, arguing that Labour's original election manifesto 'could bring the country down within a year' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 104). Some capitalists responded even more aggressively, suspending investment programmes until conditions for profit-making were improved—'a blatant threat of a 'strike of capital'' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 104). The predominant reason for Labour's immediate change in policy direction, however, was that its leader (Harold Wilson and later James Callaghan) and many of its membership were never truly interested in moving beyond capitalism and erasing the class antagonism altogether (cf. Holmes, 1985; 1). By the latter part of 1974, Wilson's Labour government had become acutely aware of the dire situation facing British capital

and quickly set out to preserve British capitalism by reversing the reforms it had initially supported and progressed.

To keep it brief (see Appendices 5.1 for more detail), in maintaining its commitment to private profit-making and capital accumulation and given the enduring profitability crisis, Labour was subsequently drawn into an agenda of 'systematic attacks on jobs and living standards in an attempt to restore profitability and competitiveness' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 116). First, the original proposals to democratise industry and further reduce capital's control over economic activity were buried through new laws which placed severe restraints on how much business the new National Enterprise Board could feasibly purchase and thus usurp control over (see Coates, 1989; 69-70; Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 114). Second, the Labour government managed to tackle wage inflation by securing trade union leadership support for income restraints on workers, who subsequently took measures to contain backlashes from the rank-and-file (Coates, 1989; 88). Third, the Labour government was adamant 'that the release of funds to private investment had to take priority' over spending on social provisions (Coates, 1980; 37). As such, albeit to varying degrees of success (see Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 121-123), significant reductions were planned and administered in areas including education, housing, health and social security; 'as the Government sought to insulate public spending on investment in both publicly and privately owned industry from any retrenchment in public spending in general' (Coates, 1980; 37).

Yet, in spite of all of the above as well as a 'whole battery of tax allowances and subsidies introduced for capital', by 1978, Labour had only managed to restore profitability marginally above the devastatingly low levels of 1974 (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 130). By simultaneously imposing cuts and constraints on living standards as well as failing to restore profitability, Labour had failed to adequately meet the needs of capital or labour (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 133-4). According to Hall (1983; 24), Labour's failures were to have 'profound effects in disorganising and fragmenting working class responses to the crisis itself' and, by the latter years of the 1970s, popular support for class compromise politics was beginning to unravel. Both the 'ruling class and the labour movement [began] to look elsewhere for radical policies to restore conditions for sustained economic growth' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 134).

Authoritarian Populism: An Ideological Offensive on the State

According to Hall and Jacques (1983), both classes ended up finding adequate translation of their discontents in a new ideological offensive—dubbed 'authoritarian populism'—peddled by the new leader of the Conservative party, Margaret Thatcher, and a 'New Right' wave of Von-Hayekian 'free market' fundamentalists (see Gamble, 1988; 27-60). Thatcher did not believe in class compromise with socialist politics, not 'even in mild social democratic forms' seen in the post war period (MTF, 2019). As such, she was less concerned with simply shifting 'the balance between capital and labour within the crumbling framework of the post-war [compromise] and instead mobilised popular support against the [compromise] and all its works' (Jessop et al., 1988; 61). The primary objective of 'authoritarian populism' was to achieve precisely this. It was the early phase of a new project which not only sought the restoration of profitability, but the 'restoration of class power' back to capital (Harvey, 2007; 31).

The novelty of authoritarian populism lay in its diagnosis of, and somewhat contradictory solution for, the ongoing crisis of profitability. Thatcher's diagnosis had two key components. The first component held that the profitability crisis was foremost the problem of excessive spending and meddling of the Keynesian Planner state. The ingenuity here, however, was to present an attack on the state not as in the interests of the ruling class, but as a necessary intervention on behalf of hard-working 'British people, directed against the social-democratic establishment and the state apparatuses under its control' (Gallas, 2015; 13). Thatcher's ideological offensive centred on the juxtaposition of 'state control' and 'freedom' (Gallas, 2015; 13), with the former being the root of Britain's poor economic health and thus an infringement on working class interests:

> 'It is 'the State' which has overborrowed and overspent; fuelled inflation; fooled the people into thinking that there would always be more where the last handout came from; tried to assume the regulation of things like wages and prices which are best left to the hidden hand of market forces; above all, interfered, meddled, intervened, instructed, directed - against the essence, the Genius, of the British people' (Hall, 1983; 34).

The second component held that there was not only a crisis of profitability but, underlying and feeding this, were a crisis of morals too. Thatcher played on and actively stimulated 'a sequence of moral panics' (Hall, 1985), ridiculing class compromise politics as the politics of 'scroungers, living off the hard work of others, and the thugs, holding the country to ransom' (Blakeley, 2019; 56). She also maintained that class compromise politics had brought Britain 'on the brink of social anarchy due to threats to the social order like immigration and the rise of the radical left after 1968' (Gallas, 2015; 13).

Thatcher's proposed solutions, therefore, were sort of contradictory to one another. On the one hand, there was need for a strong state that took authoritarian measures against the crisis of morals and the purported threat of anarchistic/deviant groups. On the other hand, there was also need for a minimal state that took libertarian measures against the crisis of profitability and freed both classes from a state that impeded on, and insulted, their economic independence and entrepreneurial essence. Yet, in spite of these contradictions, the ideological offensive was overall a success (Hall, 1983). Ostensibly disgruntled with bearing the brunt of the Labour governments' inability to resolve the profitability crisis while fearful at the thought of emerging deviant groups and the prospect of social anarchy, the citizenry voted Thatcher's Conservative government (decisively but not overwhelmingly) into power in 1979.

The Birth of the Crisis State

Somewhat true to her word, Thatcher wasted little time confronting the alleged source of (economic and moral) crises and quickly set out to restructure the Keynesian Planner state along these contradictory authoritarian populist lines. Restructuration meant that the state was 'to be simultaneously rolled back and rolled forward' (Gamble, 1988; 28) in such a specific way that it would not only solve the crises, but it would create an entirely new system of capital accumulation that would be near enough 'irreversible' (Blakeley, 2019; 58). It was to provide both capital and all those who championed existence (and exacerbation) of the antagonistic class relation a 'lasting power' that the period of class compromise 'had denied them' (Blakeley, 2019; 58).

On the one hand, when facing capital, the state was to be 'rolled back' ('non-interventionist and decentralised') (Gamble, 1988; 28). Nationalised industries were to be relinquished from state control and put up for sale ('privatisation') so that capital had

more opportunities to invest (Veljanovski, 1987; Glyn, 2006; 39-41). Measures preventing international capital flight were to be abolished so that companies and investors could have more freedom to expand investments abroad and, if necessary, eschew domestically unattractive profitmaking conditions (Toporowski, 1989; 245-6). Correspondingly, measures were to be taken which strengthened competitiveness by removing some of the protections afforded to domestic capital from the pressures of world markets and international competition (Thompson, 1986; 109-138). But most importantly, or at least for the restoration of a 'lasting power', capital controls on financial markets were to be removed and for the first time 'finance-led' (rather than industry-led) accumulation was to dictate the British economy (Davis and Walsh, 2016). In so doing, capital was to be provided with a plethora of lucrative opportunities to avoid direct exploitation of, and continuous struggles with, costly, recalcitrant labour power. Instead, profits were to be extracted elsewhere via expansions of 'fictitious capital' and indirect thefts of wealth through the creation of various money manipulation schemes which discreetly transferred wealth from the share owned by labour, to the share owned by capital (see importantly Appendices 5.2 for more detail; see also Marx, 1999; 334-336; Lapavitsas, 2013; Harvey, 2006; 95; Blakeley, 2019; cf. Cleaver, 2017; 24; 167-69).

On the other hand, when facing labour, the state was to be ‘rolled forward’ (‘interventionist and centralised’) (Gamble, 1988; 28) and the relationship of compromise between the state and the working class was to quickly revert back to the one of violent ‘*command’* seen in earlier centuries (Negri, 1988; 214-15; 2005; xxxii; 57-73; see Neocleous, 2000; 17-21; Marx, 2013; 514-519). 'Planned action' was to be taken by the state 'to strike directly at the composition of the working class' (Negri, [1973] 1979; 33) as organisations seeking to protect and/or advance working class interests were to be 'disciplined if not destroyed' (Harvey, 2007; 75). Full employment policies were to be abandoned, while 'policies against poverty were [to be] transformed into policies for a social enforcement of productivity' (Negri, [1973] 1979; 39). Alongside this, carceral and penal apparatus were to be expanded in efforts to contain social insurrection(s) and, where necessary, warehouse the disruptive/superfluous/un-exploitable fractions of the working class (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 102; Negri, 1988; 214; cf. Wacquant, 2009; 307).

The result of all this rolling back and rolling forward, according to Negri (1988) was to force through an entirely new phase in the cycle of class struggle favourable to capital. And, within this, an entirely new state apparatus; whereby the state no longer plans the economy but it is *'the state which plans the crisis'* (Negri, 1992; 87). The state did this in two distinct ways. By rolling back, and providing capital with greater opportunity to obtain profits (and restore profitability) via thievery of existing wealth (via various financial instruments), the incentive for capital to invest in the production of new wealth diminished, productivity declined, capital expanded fictitiously and the economy, while superficially appearing healthy, has tumbled into slow disarray (see Appendices 5.2). It was and is the 'Crisis State', in its efforts to restore profitability by liberating capital from the stranglehold of recalcitrant labour power, which divorced capital from the only commodity known to ensure its survival. By rolling back in this manner, it is the Crisis state that unwittingly continues to dig capital's grave (Blakeley, 2019; 60-87; see Appendices 5.2).

In a corresponding motion, by rolling forward, the state simultaneously imposes crises on the working class through 'a regime of control by trauma' (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 76) and a 'radical annihilation, by means of *command*, of the potentially insubordinate unity of the workers' needs' (Negri, 2005; 146). By rolling forward, the Crisis state forms 'along the following lines: divide up the overall thrust of the working class; control it within the mechanisms of its own accumulation; and forestall it by attacking it in its class composition' (Negri, 2005; 243). The remainder of this chapter will focus on how capital and the Crisis state have imposed crises on the working class and attacked it in its class composition.

Labour Market Restructuration

The first exhibitions of state imposed crisis came almost immediately after Thatcher won power. Wasting no time, the new Conservatives rolled forward to confront the active army of labour; dismantling its key strongholds of power and containing levels of refusal activity which were still (many years beyond the climax of 1974) proving to be a huge block to capital accumulation (cf. Conservative Party Manifesto, 1979).

The Thatcher Offensive: Confronting the Active Army

To keep it brief (see Appendices 5.3. for more detail), they confronted the active army and dismantled its strongholds of power via two related approaches. The first approach was to pursue a series of industrial relations reforms 'piecemeal, drip by drip' (Coates, 1989; 121) which slowly set out to 'exclude organised labour entirely from all important decision making' and strip the trade unions of their legal power to disrupt industry (strike) effectively (Crouch, 1986; 140). Between 1980 and 1984, the Thatcher government weakened closed shop agreements; curtailed rights to protection against unfair dismissal; limited the maternity leave entitlements of women workers; demolished industry/nation-wide wage bargaining mechanisms; repudiated fair wages legislation; banned industrial action against non-union companies; outlawed clauses in contracts which mandated the use of unionised workers; effectively outlawed solidarity strikes and politically motivated strike action; mandated secret ballots before strikes; and marginalised union representation in formal government and general affairs (see Appendices 5.3.; Coates, 1989; Crouch, 1986; Longstreth, 1988; Taylor, 1987; Marsh, 1992).

The second approach was to directly confront and repress 'the most militant and best-organised fraction of the labour movement' (Gallas, 2015; 164)—the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). The Crisis state waited until strike disabling legislation and conditions suitable to withstand a lengthy strike arose before strategically closing down colliery operations and forcing the NUM into action (see Appendices 5.3.; Gallas, 2015; Mitchell, 1987; Beynon and McMylor, 1985; Beynon, 1985). By March 1985, the Conservatives approaches had proven successful. The miners were sent back to work without any concessions. It was a major victory not only for Thatcher but, more importantly, for capital. One of the strongest and most subversive elements of the class composition had been brought to heel and, within a handful of years, the Crisis state quickly phased out most of the coal industry. The victory was a landmark sign of a turning tide. Not only had the miners been defeated, but the steady upward growth of union membership in the 1970s was now in reverse. Over 2.5 million members were lost by 1985, down from a peak of 13.3 million in 1979 (Coates, 1989; 134). Through direct confrontation and a series of reforms which undermined the influence of trade

unionism, the Crisis state had begun to break the organised depth of the post-war class composition and reinstate capital's dominance over industry.

De-Industrialisation: Downscaling Manufacturing and Decomposing Unruly Workers

The Crisis state didn't stop at confrontation with the trade unions and industrial relations reforms. It was common knowledge that capital had been hit hardest by refusal activity in manufacturing industries more than any other area of the economy over the 60s and 70s (see Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 70; 121). As such, the state mobilised to constrain and eradicate militancy by rapidly scaling down its previous (Keynesian) planning function and curtailing state expenditures on sustaining capital investment in manufacturing (MacInnes, 1987; 69). The purpose of this was to ratchet up pressure on loss-making capitalists to either survive independently (without state subsidy) by increasing productivity and thus shedding unproductive/unruly labour power, or cease investment altogether. In the 1980s, state managers were barely discreet about their rationale for such a tactic. They maintained that tougher 'supply side' policies would make the economy more efficient in the long term (MacInnes, 1987; 68). Or, in other words, by refusing to subsidise capital investment, this would help to extradite unruly/unproductive labour power from the shopfloor and weaken strongholds of working class power in the manufacturing industries. As can be seen in the table below, the effects of this on UK manufacturing were profound (see Wells, 1989; 25-31), fuelling a sharp and long-lasting decline in manufacturing employment:

Workers Employed in Manufacturing, UK 1971-2014 (percentage of total workforce)						
	1971	1981	1984	1991	2004	2014
Workers employed in manufacturing	36	29	26	15.7	10.4	7.9
Table 5.1. (MacInnes, 1987; 76; Rhodes, 2020; 8)						

Rescinding investment subsidies, however, wasn't the only state measure affecting manufacturing employment. In 1979, the new Conservatives abolished foreign exchange controls, making it easier and more lucrative for capital to invest abroad. According to MacInnes (1987; 80) the effects of this were significant, with a 'survey of the 40 largest

manufacturers show[ing] that between 1979 and 1986 these firms reduced employment in Britain by 415,000 while increasing employment abroad by 125,000'. By the end of the 1980s, there had been a mass exodus of industrial capital. Large manufacturing corporations had begun 'to establish their activities firmly across the globe, in every corner of the planet' (Hardt and Negri, 2000; 246), as employers began to transfer operations and 'production jobs to lower-wage domestic or foreign locations' (Sassen, 2001; 25).

Prior to actions taken by the Crisis state, however, British based capital had already begun to respond to the persistent struggles of manufacturing workers from the late sixties and early seventies. As Negri (1988; 214) states, it was at this time where capital initiated a 'quantitative response, of scale and size', as manufacturers downscaled their operations to smaller and medium sized factories and relocated 'towards the peripheries of metropolitan areas'. This was certainly the case in Britain's industrial hubs, as capital that remained firm and continued to invest domestically began to move 'from older heavier industries to newer lighter ones, often in geographical areas away from urban centres', and producing on a considerably smaller scale (MacInnes, 1987; 73-75; see also Nichols, 1986; 193-5). This can be seen in the table below:

Large and small firms in manufacturing					
	1958	1963	1970	1979	1983
Firms with less than 100 employees					
Percentage of all firms	87	88	91	94	95
Percentage of all employment	18	14	16	18	22
Firms with more than 20,000 employees:					
Absolute number of firms	32	38	38	34	23
Percentage of employment	17	22	24	24	19
Mean number of establishments per firm	44	55	58	59	67
100 Largest firms:					
Share of net output	27	37	41	42	40
All firms:					
Mean size of establishment	87	92	86	61	32
Table 5.2. (MacInnes, 1987; 77)					

According to Murray (1983; 96), the reason why there was an 'expulsion and dispersion of labour from large factories, sites and industrial towns' was because expulsion and dispersion are a 'particularly effective means for attacking organised labour's power and autonomy'. Battaggia (1981) suggests that 'the margins of flexibility in the management of small enterprises are indeed greater than those of large factories'. This is largely because, as MacInnes (1987; 73-74) argues, workers have traditionally found it more difficult to organise in smaller organisations and are thus less able to pose a serious challenge to their employer. Therefore, by turning to small and medium sized units of production, this allowed some manufacturing capitalists greater control over labour processes and, in turn, greater ability to resume levels of exploitation necessary to create surplus value and restore profits (Murray, 1983).

Technological Development, Occupational Restructuring and their Cumulative Effects on Wages and Employment Relationships

In an almost contrariwise motion with declining investment in manufacturing, major advancements in various information communication technologies provided capital with opportunities to invest in a plethora of new (and/or rapidly expanding) service and tertiary sector industries. Over the 1970s and 1980s, major advancements were made in the development of 'micro-electronics, computing (machines and software), telecommunications/broadcasting, and opto-electronics' (Castells, 2000; 29). According to Castells (2000; 13), these developments were 'instrumental in allowing the implementation of a fundamental process of restructuring of the capitalist system from the 1980s onwards'.

Certainly, as Goos and Manning's (2007) findings reflect, technological development helped to restructure British capitalism in a number of crucially important ways (for capital). *First*, technological development allowed employers to replace large swathes of workers who were active in lower skilled, routinised manufacturing and extractive occupations (Goos and Manning, 2007). In some instances, according to Dyer-Witheford (1999; 78-9), certain information technologies were even used to challenge and disperse unruly workers (see also Castells, 2000; 265). As such, technological developments contributed to already declining employment levels in manufacturing (see previous

subsection), particularly in the more routinised occupations that were generally easier to replace with advanced machinery (see Castells, 2000; 258):

Bottom Ten Occupations by Job Growth (UK) (1979-1999)				
Occupation	Median Wage in 1979	Employment in 1979	Employment in 1999	Percentage Change in Employment
All UK employment	3.052	24,333,613	27,343,467	12.373
Boring and Drilling Machine setters and setter operators	3.584	29,276	1,731	-94.086
Coal mine labourers	3.696	29,782	1,818	-93,892
Face trained coal mining workers, shotfirers, and deputies	5.237	76,301	5,095	-93.322
Grinding machine setters and operators	3.557	56,426	8,164	-85.531
Labourers in foundries	3.219	14,801	2,505	-83.070
Labourers in engineering and allied trades	3.025	58,243	12,758	-78.095
Electrical, energy, boiler, and related plant operatives and attendants	3.684	36,352	8,0009	-77.968
Spinners, doublers, and twisters (in textiles and tannery process operatives)	2.802	16,941	4.173	-75.363
Originators, compositors and print preparers (and print related trades)	3.404	48,878	12,162	-75.116
Rail Signal Operatives and Crossing Keepers	3.010	13,761	3,571	-74.045
Table 5.3. (Goos and Manning, 2007; 125)				

Second, Goos and Manning (2007; 124-5) found that technological development stimulated mass job creation in non-routine (and thus harder to replace) 'specialised occupations mainly in finance and business service industries' (see also Castells, 2000; 224-231), as well as lower skilled non-routine occupations, such as 'care, education, and hospital assistants'. This occurred, on the one hand, as the rise of these new service industries required greater quantities of labour power able to perform 'non-routine tasks which are complementary to technology' (typically 'skilled professional and managerial jobs') (Goos and Manning, 2007; 118). While, on the other hand, the growth of these industries also required greater quantities of labour power able to perform 'non-routine manual tasks' which technology cannot easily replace (such as cleaners) (Goos and Manning, 2007; 118). Similarly, Nolan (2007; 46-8) notes how information technologies have facilitated rapid investment in and expansion of software and computer related work activity, particularly call centre work. Technological development more generally has also had a bearing on 'large increases in the number of hotel porters, merchandisers, window dressers, and travel and flight attendants' (Goos and Manning, 2007; 125). This is all reflected in the table below:

Top Ten Occupations by Job Growth (UK) (1979-1999)				
Occupation	Median Wage in 1979	Employment in 1979	Employment in 1999	Percentage Change in Employment
All	3.052	24,332,613	27,343,467	12.373
Care assistants and attendants	2.345	103,837	539,407	419,474
Software engineers	5.008	34,009	171,769	405,065
Management consultants and business analysts	4.745	18,811	81, 803	334,868
Computer systems and data processing managers	5.065	43,239	178,701	313,286
Computer analysts and programmers	4.842	76,083	302,617	297,745
Educational assistants	2.272	45,040	173,763	285,793
Hospital ward assistants	2.572	7,460	26,896	261, 705
Actors, entertainers, stage managers, and producers	4.719	22,549	73,030	223,870
Treasurers and company financial managers	5.105	37,794	119,812	217,015
Financial Institutions and office managers	4.511	107,138	322,608	201,114
Table 5.4. (Goos and Manning, 2007; 124)				

Third, technological developments were not only having a significant effect on the occupational structure (i.e. transition from manufacturing to services) but, as a corollary of this effect, they were also serving as a catalyst for a growing wage polarisation between different fractions of the active army. More precisely, according to Goos and Manning (2007; 118), occupational restructuring resulted in a 'very big increase in the number of high-paid jobs', a massive decline in middle-income (typically manufacturing) jobs and, correspondingly, 'an increase in the number of low-paid service jobs'. Mason et al.'s (2008; 26-7) research supports this, finding that differentials in gross hourly wages grew fastest between the highest and lowest paid percentiles of workers over the latter decades of the 20th century:

Percentile Differentials of Gross Hourly Wages, 1976 to 2004						
	90/10	90/50	50/10	75/25	75/50	50/25
1976	2.92	1.77	1.65	1.69	1.31	1.29
1986	3.30	1.95	1.69	1.88	1.39	1.35
1996	3.89	2.15	1.81	2.08	1.48	1.41
2004	4.01	2.23	1.80	2.19	1.53	1.43
Table 5.5. Mason et al., 2008; 27						

Adams et al.'s (1988; cited in Stark, 1989; 185) conclusions support this further, finding that '(a) earnings have risen fastest in the higher-paid occupations, and (b) that the number of employees in the top and bottom wage occupations have increased, while those in the middle groups have declined'. McKnight (2002; 102) reveals that, between 1975 and 1999, the real 'hourly wage of the lowest-paid employees relative to the median and the highest-paid employees deteriorated'. Wages among workers in the

tenth percentile (the lowest paid) increased by 24 percent (McKnight, 2002; 104). While, over the same period, the median workers' wage increased by 36 percent, with the highest paid tenth percentile seeing their 'real hourly wage increase by…68%' (McKnight, 2002; 104). Accordingly, as Goos and Manning (2007; 119) argue, growing wage polarisation has brought about a significant rise in low paid workers (defined as employees paid 'below two thirds of the median hourly wage for all employees'—Mason et al. 2008; 15), which can be seen in the table below:

Proportion of Employees in 'low-pay' work (Earning Less than Two-Thirds of Median Hourly Wages) 1976 to 2001			
Year	Part-time (%)	Full-Time (%)	Total (%)
1976	34	12	14
1981	46	12	16
1986	52	13	18
1991	50	14	19
1996	51	15	21
2001	50	15	21
Table 5.6 (Mason et al. 2008; 50)			

Fourth (and finally), technological development has also encouraged employers to hire workers on more flexible, 'atypical' terms and conditions. In other words, employers in more recent decades have been less inclined to provide workers with 'standard' employment—generally defined as 'stable, socially protected, dependent, full-time jobs…the basic conditions of which (working time, pay, social transfers) are regulated by collective agreement or by labour and/or social security law' (Bosch, 2004; 618-9)—which was stock-in-trade over the post-war period (Standing, 2011). Instead, workers have been increasingly offered employment on atypical terms and conditions. Atypical terms and conditions are generally defined as less than full time, irregular hours, impermanent tenure, lower remuneration and minimally protected by labour securities/laws (Grimshaw et al., 2016).

The primary reason for this is that technological developments—in combination with the Crisis state's progressive destruction of trade union power (Rubery, 1989; 155) and historically weak employment protection law (see Streeck, 2009; 9)—opened up new possibilities for employers to alter labour processes in ways that enabled them to negate standard employment relationships (Rubery and Wilkinson, 1981; 120-2; Castells, 2010; 266-7). Rapid advances in/diffusion of information communication technologies propelled a 'fissuring of the vertically integrated employing organisation and [a] trend

towards outsourcing, offshoring, use of external agencies and partnerships' (Rubery, 2015; 634; Castells 2010; 176-188). This shifted 'the employment relationship from a dyadic employee/single employer relationship to a more complex multifaceted relationship' (Rubery, 2015; 634; Castells 2000; 176-188). Information technologies also provided employers with better product market information, thereby affording them new abilities to be increasingly sensitive to vicissitudes in market demand for their goods and services (Castells, 2000; 167). As a result of all of the above and weak labour market regulations, many employers have been more able, and more inclined, to subcontract labour power and employ workers in a variety of different (multi-national) locations as well as on a more flexible, temporary basis (Castells, 2000; 281-296). Employers often do this in order to shave labour costs to the minimum and finely calibrate their labour supply with fluctuations in consumer demand (see appendix 5.4. for more detail; Castells, 2000; 166-7; 180-4; Atkinson, 1984; Callaghan, 1997; 3-4).

Taking all this into account then, as Castells (2000; 281-296) suggests, the extent to which technological development (in tandem with the destruction of trade union power and historically weak employment legislation of course) has stimulated increases in atypical employment should not be taken lightly. This is perhaps better captured in the table below:

Full time, part-time, non-permanent and self-employed workers as % of total workforce (UK)							
	1979	1984	1990	1997	2005	2015	2019
Full-time employees	76.7	69.7	67.1	65.2	64.7	62.5	62.8
part-time employees	16.1	18.8	19.4	22.2	21.9	26.9	21.4
Non-Permanent Employed	4.6	4.5	6.5	7.6	5.9	6.4	5.5
Full-time self-employed	6.5	9.4	11.3	9.9	9.7	10.2	10.6
Part-time self employed	0.7	1.9	2.1	2.6	2.8	4.2	4.3
Table 5.7. (Deakin and Reed, 2000; 139; Office for National Statistics, 2020)							

Other research has found that atypical employment has grown even faster than suggested above. According to Edwards (2006; 3), 'surveys of establishments find widespread use of non-standard work. In 2004, 83 per cent of workplaces had at least some part-time employees [and] one third had employees on temporary or fixed term contracts'. While, as Deakin and Reed (2000; 141) argue, more recent years have seen

a sharp rise in 'zero-hours contracts'; which have more than quadrupled from around 225,000 to 974,000 workers between 2000-2019:

Figure 5.1. (Office for National Statistics, 2020)

It's also worth adding that technological development and the diffusion of information technologies has undoubtedly played a role in the progression of other forms of atypical employment; particularly temporary agency work. In short, temporary work agencies (TWAs) sell labour power to other capitalists on a temporary basis by collecting/distributing information on labour supply/demand and, where possible, orchestrating direct matches of labour supply to capitalist demand (Strauss and Fudge, 2014). As Neugart and Storrie (2005; 139) suggest, information technologies (e.g. the internet) dramatically improved both the amount and depth of labour market information available to TWA's, which in turn improved their ability to match labour supply and meet capitalist demand. Moreover, purchasing labour power through TWA's can often be a lucrative prospect for some employers. This is because weak labour market regulations enable some employers to eschew labour securities ordinarily afforded workers in standard employment by hiring them on a temporary basis through a TWA (see Forde and Slater, 2016; see Appendices 5.5. for more detail). As such, the improved matching service on offer by TWAs alongside the allure of purchasing labour power on more lucrative terms and conditions has led some employers 'to use temporary workers on a long-term basis rather than permanent staff' (ILO, 2009; 2), resulting in a massive expansion of the industry:

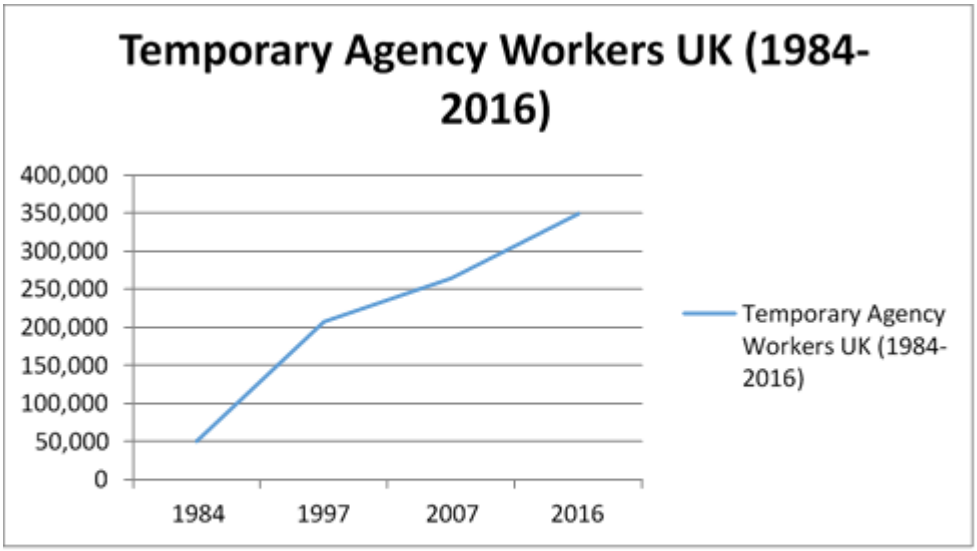


Figure 5.2. (Casey, 1987; 66; Forde, 2008; 338; Judge and Tomlinson; 2016; 13; Office for National Statistics, 2020)

Divided and Conquered: The Cumulative Effects of Restructuration on the Working-Class Composition

So bringing all this detail together then, what seemed to have emerged as a result of this 'political, economic and technological' restructuration (Negri, 1988; 212)—i.e. state imposed trade union destruction; confrontation with militant workers; manufacturing downscaling and dispersal; technological development/diffusion; occupational restructuring; wage polarisation and aggregate increases in atypical forms of employment (see all of the above)—is some kind of *fragmented labour market* comprised of dualised and/or segmented groups of workers (cf. Coates, 1989; 144; Yoon and Chung, 2015; Castells, 2010; 281-82; cf. Gordon et al., 1982; cf. Ryan, 1981; 4).

According to Atkinson (1984), restructuration provided employers with more leeway to impose a 'break-up of the labour force into increasingly peripheral, and therefore numerically flexible groups of workers, clustered about a numerically stable core group'. In other words, employers since the 1980s have been increasingly re-organising, or 'dualising', the labour power they employ. They tend to do this by, on the one hand, retaining a 'core' workforce on relatively high wages, good working conditions, opportunities for internal progression and, above all, employment security and stability (Yoon and Chung, 2015). While, on the other hand, supplementing this core workforce with a peripheral workforce whose contractual status and working time patterns are 'more directly determined by the market…with security of employment dependent on

how busy the firm is' (MacInnes, 1987; 113; see also Rubery and Wilkinson, 1981). Atkinson (1984) provides a very rudimentary diagram showing workers' (re)organisation in contemporary labour processes:

Figure 5.3 (Atkinson, 1984)

It is worth quickly adding that many academics have contended the dual core/periphery model. Most notably, Ackroyd and Procter's (1998) analysis of Britain's remaining manufacturing firms found that workers are not so much organised along these dual core and peripheral distinctions. Rather, from the 1980s onwards, labour processes have been increasingly '(re)organised into a number of semi-autonomous segments' or cells of machines and workers (Ackroyd and Procter, 1998; 171). In other words, 'production is organised through the arrangement of machines and workers as…dispensable separate segments' who are then 'periodically and individually assessed in terms of [their] costs and benefits' to the employer (Ackroyd and Procter, 1998; 171).

But irrespective of whether workforces have been 'dualised' in some industries or more intricately 'segmented' in others, as Dyer-Witheford (1999; 79) suggests, their cumulative effects on the working class composition have been 'devastating'. Not only have dual and segmented re-organisations of labour power dramatically improved employers' abilities to directly attack the class composition and curtail refusal activities (cf. Coates, 1989; 145; cf. Wood, 2017; 2020). But, more importantly, they have re-organised labour power in such a way that makes it extremely difficult—in some areas of the economy near impossible—for the active army to re-group, re-organise and initiate/build/expand collective forms of refusal activity (Atkinson and Gregory, 1986;

16; Angry Workers, 2020; Woodcock, 2017; Cant, 2020; see https://notesfrombelow.org/). As can be seen below, the cumulative effects of restructuration have decimated strike action in the UK:

Figure 5.4. (Office for National Statistics , 2018)

On the one hand, in some areas of the labour market, this has occurred as 'threat of reclassification into, or more probably replacement by, the growing army of' peripheral workers has forced 'workers in the core' to tolerate 'a diminution in their degree of job control, an intensification of their work routines, and the erosion of established working practices' (Coates, 1989; 145). While, on the other hand, the same 'dual' (re)organisation has also secured the subordination of peripheral workers; often quite simply through the type of employment relationship offered to them. As Wood (2017; 1068) found in the retail sector, atypical employment relationships can and have provided employers with greater freedom to 'punish [peripheral] workers if they [are] not flexible, productive or obedient enough'. Because these workers are often employed on malleable and/or insecure contracts (e.g 'zero-hours', 'fixed-term'), managers often have greater leeway 'to cause distress to specific workers simply by altering their schedule' and cutting 'the number of hours a worker received, thus reducing their income' or increasing 'working time instability and unpredictability'. As such, peripheral workers often have little scope for defying management through individual refusal, let alone working towards any collective activity (see Woodcock, 2017). More often they are pre-occupied with 'constantly striv[ing] to maintain the favour of managers' (Wood, 2017; 1070). The same goes for other types of peripheral workers. Self-employed

workers, for example, can and have been imposed fines for failing to perform as instructed by their employers (cf. Garland, 2019). Workers hired through temporary work agencies (TWAs) are often subject to on-the-spot firing (see Bloodworth, 2018). Whilst some TWAs 'implement a rigorous strike system with punishments meted out' for offences including 'spending too long in the toilet, chatting' or wearing banned items of clothing (Ball et al., 2017; 6).

Furthermore, in other areas of the labour market where workers appear more segmented, as Ackroyd and Procter (1998) allude to, segmentation, much like dualisation, still works to prohibit individual and collective refusal. This is particularly the case as segmented workers are required to 'compete with subcontracted labour and alternative suppliers' as well as with one another to remain profitable and retain their employment (Ackroyd and Procter, 1998; 171). Without going too far off the point, Moore's (1981) analysis of segmentation in the building industry serves as an ideal example of how this works. In the early 1970s, in spite of declining union membership among building workers, the building industry was hit by a wave of official strike action. At its peak, this culminated in 'the largest single pay rise ever won in the industry' (Darlington and Lyddon, 2001; 202) and (coupled with a range of other industry-specific pressures) began to fuel uncertainty about profitability among employers in the industry (Moore, 1981; 154-5; cf. Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972; 194). In response to this uncertainty, firms over the 1970s began to 'reduce to a minimum their direct, manual labour force' and substituting it with casual labour (Moore, 1981; 155; see Austrin, 1980 for more detail). More precisely, employers increasingly began to purchase labour power at a higher price in segments or 'gangs' on an ad-hoc basis, subcontracting the different pieces of building work requiring completion (Austrin, 1980). This was important because, as subcontractors, gangs were no longer recognised by labour law as direct employees but as 'self-employed', meaning that employers could 'forego even minimal provisions of employment protection and social security' that were ordinarily required under unionised employment relationships (Moore, 1981; 159). As such, with minimal legal obligations to workers, not only could employers begin to minimise costs and respond to any uncertainties in profitability (e.g. hire/fire in accordance with fluctuations in market demand). But the subcontractor relationship also encouraged competition for (sub)contracts between different gangs of workers, meaning that

unproductive/non-compliant gangs could be easily chopped and changed, thereby allowing employers to establish greater 'control over the utilisation and performance of labour' (Moore, 1981; 155).

Thus, for Negri (1988; 214), labour process re-organisation along dual and segmented lines has cultivated a '*balkanisation of the labour market*'. In other words, whereas the bulk of the post-war period saw vast quantities of labour power spatially clustered in mass production industries often sharing identical pay, conditions and 'an identical relationship to capitalist technology' (Battaggia, 1981); from the 1980s onwards, 'political, economic and technological' restructuration provided employers with more scope to re-organise their labour processes in ways that enhanced divisions between workers, scattering them 'territorially, socially and culturally, in different conditions of work and often invisible from one another' (Murray, 1983; 95). Labour processes *en masse* have been re-organised so that increasing quantities of labour power are *fragmented*. That is, placed in smaller workplaces, more diverse working conditions and, most importantly as discussed in this subsection, in a range of divergent and often inversely competing relationships to both capitalist technology and the capitalist class more generally (Negri, 1988; 214; Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 79; 2005; 137-138; Angry Workers, 2020; 174). As such, sections of the active army that were once heavily organised against capital are instead increasingly 'balkanised' and brought into internal conflicts (of interest) with one another.

When examined in relation to both the class composition and the balance of class power in Britain; both restructuration and the types of (dual/segmented) labour process (re)organisation which restructuration had facilitated are understood here as classic 'divide and conquer' tactics (cf. Reich et al., 1973; see also Rubery, 1978). Capital has 'learned that workforces broken into smaller units are more manageable' and that re-organising labour processes 'with a host of attendance patterns, contractual arrangements and, above all, competing groups of workers', makes fertile ground for (re)organising/(re)subordinating the class composition in line with capitalist command. Capital has also learned that this 'makes finding and exploiting common interests and welding them into collective solidarity' an exceedingly difficult prospect for those political components of the new composition that seek counterattack (Atkinson and Gregory, 1986; 16; cf. Angry Workers, 2020; 160).

Social Security Restructuration

So, in direct response to the crisis of profitability, it should now be clear that 'political, economic and technological' restructuration has in effect annihilated the militant fractions of the post-war active army. It has done this by re-organising the post-war class composition in a way once again suitable for profitable exploitation and capitalist class domination. However, as the reader should recall from the previous chapter, the organisation and movements of the active army were not the only threat (to capitalist profitability) requiring attention. In its efforts to secure a class compromise, the previous Keynesian Planner state had made the near fatal error of expanding the social security system and redistributing increasing portions of the total wealth (and capital's share of the profits) into non-surplus value producing sectors of the economy and the hands of inactive surplus populations (see previous chapter). In the remainder of the chapter, I'm going to shift the focus of analysis from the active to the reserve army by examining how the Crisis state has set out to tackle high levels of social security expenditure.

Abandoning Planner-State Logic: Concerns within the Crisis State about Social Security Expenditure

Now as Lowe (2005; 142) identifies, social security, and, in particular, state spending on out-of-work cash benefits, has more or less always been 'attacked as excessively expensive'. Nevertheless, these concerns once again began to gather momentum among state managers at crisis point in the mid-1970s and have more or less persisted ever since (Bacon and Eltis, 1978; 32; Lavery 2019; 153-176). As Price (2000; 197) notes, Thatcher's inaugural manifesto chiefly emphasised 'the reduction of waste, bureaucracy and over-government…in the social security system'. Thatcher was adamant that excessive state spending on non-profit making sectors of the economy was a serious impediment to wealth creation:

> 'Let us never forget this fundamental truth: the State has no source of money other than money which people earn themselves. If the State wishes to spend more it can do so only by borrowing your savings or by taxing you more. It is no good thinking that someone else will pay—that "someone else" is you. There is no such thing as public money; there is only taxpayers'

> money… prosperity will not come by inventing more and more lavish public expenditure programmes' (Margaret Thatcher, 1983)

Similar sentiments have been echoed in successive governments of the Crisis state ever since and particularly in 2010, as David Cameron's (2010; 27) Conservative Coalition embarked on a series of expenditure cuts to 'create strong financial discipline at all levels of government'. Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, stated that:

> 'the more we could save on welfare costs, the more we could continue other, more productive areas of Government spending…we have made the tough choices. We have protected health and schools and investment in growth, and we have reformed welfare and cut waste' (George Osborne, 2010)

Despite being almost 30 years apart, the synergies between these excerpts reflect almost perfectly the logic of the Crisis state—a logic now spanning over 40 years. Unlike key architects of the Keynesian planner state; who believed that comprehensive social security spending would both protect citizens in recession periods and make it less risky for capital to make steady profit by placing greater spending power in the hands of poorer consumers (see Beveridge, 1944). Crisis state managers have remained loyal to the view that state expenditure on social security (such as spending on large benefit administration/employment service bureaucracies) or large expenditure on non-surplus value producing citizens (such as the unemployed or the retired) dis-incentivises investment and undermines wealth creation in the longer term (Coates, 1994; 55-60). The reason for this, quite straightforwardly, is that increasing levels of social security expenditure tend to reduce both the overall number of individuals and time spent producing surplus value for capital (cf. Bacon and Eltis, 1978). This in turn can also mean that the finances sustaining the social security system increasingly have to come from capitalist profits rather than workers' wages in the longer term: 'a rising dole queue means a bigger welfare bill and less tax coming in…the starting point must be jobs, jobs, jobs' (Osborne, 2010).

With this logic in mind, in years preceding and the early years of the Crisis state, key politicians and policymakers were of the view that strong commitment to comprehensive (and rising) social security spending was an important factor underlying

the crisis of profitability in the post-war period (Coates, 1994; 55-60). This view has more or less persisted ever since, as state managers have maintained that social security spending still remains a serious burden to accumulation and profitability today (see Osborne, 2010). Thus, over the last 40 years, the Crisis state has made a plethora of reforms in (some unsuccessful) efforts to continually curtail the fiscal threat posed by a high (and rising) social security bill (see Pierson, 1994). They have done this by either reducing it altogether or re-directing spending into channels which incentivise investment and profitability (cf. Finn, 2009; 2-3).

Accumulation by Dispossessing the Social Security System

From the early 1980s, Thatcher quickly set out to transform the day-to-day running of Britain's public services via the introduction of a 'new public management' system (see Clarke et al., 2000; 6-10; Talbot, 2001; 292; Clarke and Newman, 1996). For those services tasked with providing social security, 'new public management' signalled a departure from a post-war arrangement emphasising objectives of universalism, fair treatment and a more equitable standard of living (Chambers, 1949; Lowe, 2005; 136; Butcher, 1995; 6-7); towards a more recent arrangement prioritising 'economy, efficiency, value for money, effectiveness and performance' (Henkel, 1991; 12). As the following graph shows, these changes have played a pivotal part in reducing the total portion of wealth spent on unemployment benefits, which has more than halved between 1985-2011:

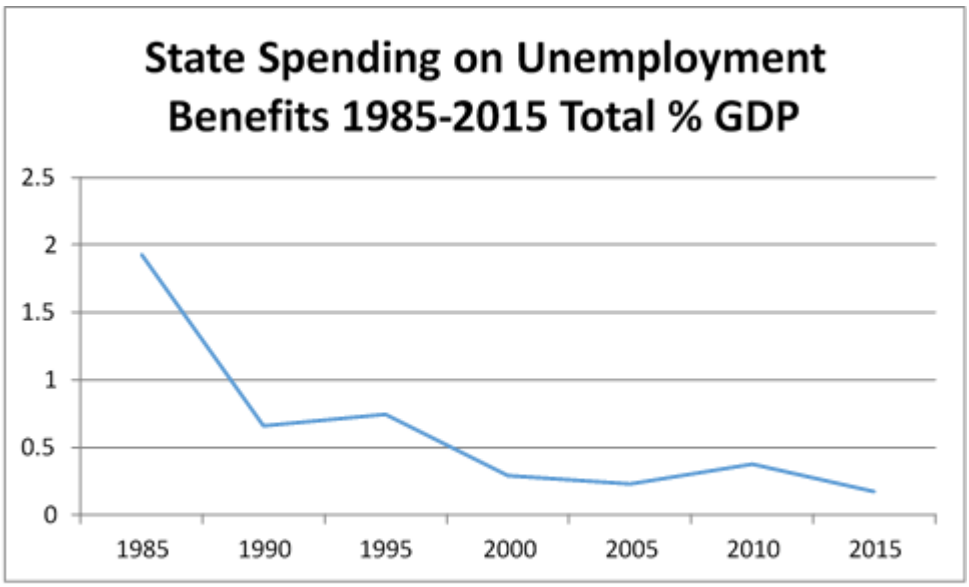


Figure 5.5. (OECD stat, 2019)

Of course, spending on unemployment benefits as % of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) can fluctuate for a whole host of different reasons; particularly the level of unemployment at any given time or increases in productivity in relation to social expenditure. Nevertheless, one key trend that can be observed from the 1980s onwards are repeated attempts to cut the amount of spending on unemployment benefits. As Atkinson and Micklewright (1989) demonstrate, between 1979-87, at least seventeen incremental changes to unemployment benefit were made which individually 'had a fairly modest impact' (Pierson, 1994; 107). When placed together, however, the authors estimated that the government had made savings of around £1 billion and the value of unemployment benefit in relation to average earnings 'had fallen by a fifth' in approximately nine years (Atkinson and Micklewright, 1989; 23). Much like unemployment benefits, the portion of total wealth afforded to employment services (including: public administration, training and hiring subsidies) has also more than halved between 1985 and 2011:

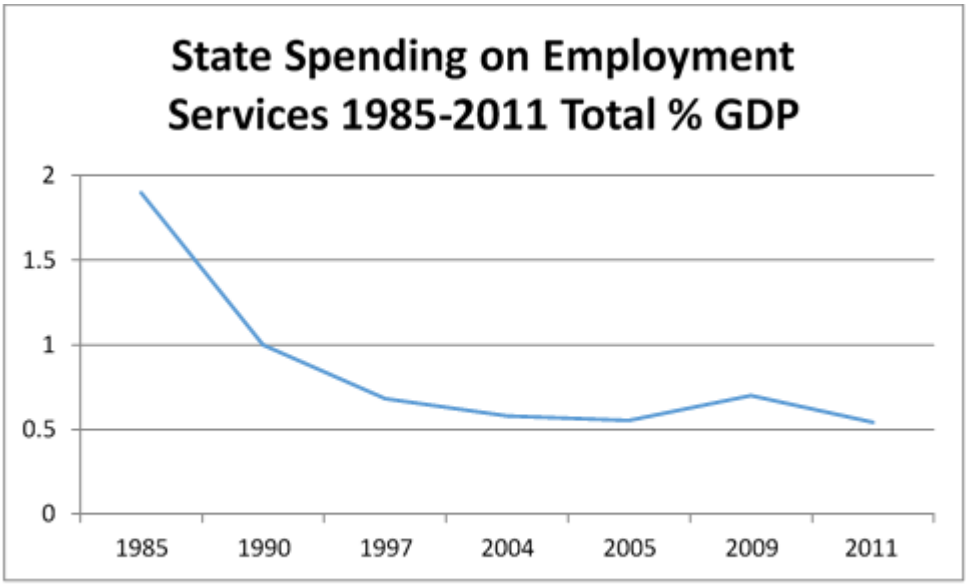


Figure 5.6. (OECD stat, 2019)

For Britain's network of benefit administration/employment services offices (now Jobcentres) alone, this has entailed heavy cuts to staffing and fixed assets. The number of Jobcentres fell from approximately 1000 in 1981 (Price, 2000; 231) to around 600 in 2018 (Finn, 2018b). These figures don't include the number of unemployment benefit offices (which were located separately to Jobcentres prior to 1987) that have also been closed. As Finn (2016; 76) notes, in 2002 there was a network of approximately 1,500

Jobcentres and unemployment benefit offices with around 90,000 personnel delivering services. By 2006, the Jobcentres and unemployment benefit offices had been fully integrated under the new 'Jobcentre Plus'. The merger left approximately 800 Jobcentre Plus offices remaining with around 69,000 full time staff (Finn, 2016; 76). From 2010 onwards, Jobcentres experienced further 'major reductions in staff and service budgets' (Finn, 2016; 76; Fletcher 2019; 411). Of particular note; the number of frontline employment service staff fell approximately 35% from 17,750 in 2011/12 to 11,453 in 2015-16 (HoC, 2016).

Yet, heavy cuts to public administration haven't been the only important departure since the 1980s. As Fletcher (1997; 176) notes, 'government has not only sought to control public expenditure', but increasing levels of wealth were also being redirected towards the private sector via the relocation and 'contracting out' of some public employment service functions (Finn, 2009; 5). In 1987/88, 'the delivery of training programmes for the unemployed was transferred to private sector led Training and Enterprise Councils' (Finn, 2002; 10). By 1996, the employment service had withdrawn from most training and job placement programmes, instead opting to contract out schemes via a competitive tendering process (Finn, 2002; 11). By 2004/05, the Crisis state was spending 'equivalent to about a third of the cost' of public employment services (approx. £1 billion per year) on 'employment services from an estimated network of 2,000 for profit and non-profit organisations'. This figure has since declined in the last decade or so with around £2.2 billion being paid to private employment services between 2010-2015 (HoC, 2016; 26). Nevertheless, taken in wider context, there has still been a huge shift since the 1980s; whereby spending on public employment services has been curtailed and spending on private employment services has been expanded (see Finn, 2009; Stewart, 2007; 31-33).

The objective of this shift (from public to private service) is quite straightforward and state managers have been quite transparent about this over the years (see Freud, 2007). The idea is to provide a similar service—that is, a job placement/training service for claimants—but reduce the levels of overall wealth being redistributed to non-profit producing services and provide opportunities for capital to accrue this wealth instead. The way the Crisis state has done this in recent years has been through something called a 'payment-by-results' funding model (Finn, 2016; 81-82). Under this model, capitalists

wishing to provide employment services are required to take an up-front risk and place an initial investment in a new labour process (e.g. hiring employment service workers and buying office space/computers etc.). If these services meet state requirements, they are then given a share of the claimant unemployed market, that is, a quantity of unemployed labour power (see Adkins, 2015). From this point, employment service capitalists are then paid 'in arrears after they have secured job outcome', with up-scaled payments received for keeping claimants in work for longer periods of time (Finn, 2016; 82).

This has two effects. The first is that, as Freud (2007) argued, the job outcome/sustained job outcome profit motive encourages a more intensive job placement service, thus ensuring the goals of the Crisis state and employment service capitalists are mutually aligned. But second, and this is a key point, the profit that these firms make is actually derived from the future savings generated from getting claimants off unemployment benefit, as well as the savings made on administrative costs associated with delivering employment services to a higher claimant count (Finn, 2016; 82). In other words, capitalists investing in these private employment services aren't establishing labour processes that are generative of new wealth. They are simply in business to accumulate wealth (social security expenditure) that already exists and would have previously been redirected towards inactive labour power (the unemployed) and non-profit making public administration (Jobcentre Plus) (cf. Grover, 2009).

This type of accumulation is actually quite well understood in Marxist theory. According to Harvey (2007b; 34), one of the predominant ways in which the state has sought to restore profitability since the 1980s has been through efforts to redistribute existing wealth rather than generate new wealth. In other words, efforts have been made to 'transfer assets and channel wealth and income…from the mass of the population toward the upper classes' (Harvey, 2007b; 34). He terms this as an 'accumulation by dispossession', a process where wealth is transferred from the share owned by labour to the share owned by capital in efforts to restore profitability. This, it seems, is precisely what has occurred in the shift from public to private employment service provision over the last 40 years (see Grover, 2013; 12). As Negri (1988; 215; 1994) argues, the Crisis state has opted to restore profitability and ameliorate the subversive fiscal threat posed by high levels public expenditure on non-productive services and inactive labour power

by ‘articulat[ing] [capitalist] *command* via budgetary manoeuvrings’. These budgetary manoeuvrings have not only taken shape in sizeable expenditure cuts to the social security system. But they have evidently seen the Crisis state convert large portions of remaining social security expenditure into dispossessed (or dispossess-able) wealth—making it readily attainable for capital to accumulate.

6. The Role of Workfare in the Cycle of Class Struggle: Repairing the Reserve Army Mechanism

Chapter Overview

The last chapter detailed how, in efforts to restore and preserve capitalist class profitability and domination, both capital and the Crisis state co-opted to launch a counter-attack on the post-war working class composition by restructuring Britain's political economy along 'political, economic and technological' lines. As part of this counterattack, the chapter concluded by showing how the Crisis state set out to ameliorate the fiscal threat posed by high levels of social security expenditure on a growing reserve army of labour (and non-profit producing social security administration) (cf. Bacon and Eltis, 1978). To curb this threat, the Crisis state (re-)articulated capitalist command via budgetary manoueuvrings (Negri, 1988; 215); restructuring the social security system via a retrenchment-cum-privatisation manoeuvre. This not only (more than) halved the portion of total wealth redistributed towards both the fit-to-work unemployed and non-surplus value producing social security administration (OECD stat, 2019). But, by putting many social security services out to tender on the market, the Crisis state converted large portions of the remaining social security expenditure into dispossessed wealth; thereby further pacifying any fiscal threat by providing capital with continual opportunities to invest and accumulate social security expenditure as profit.

However, high and rising social security expenditure was not the only threat posed by the reserve army of labour. As the reader might recall, in the chapter before last it was shown how the activities and behaviour of the claiming fractions of the reserve army were undermining what some Marxists term 'the reserve army mechanism' (cf. Green, 1991). Benefit claimants were unionising and mounting subversive challenges to the social security system (Kenyon, 1972; Rose, 1974). There was also a good deal of evidence suggesting that a relatively generous and permissive supplementary benefit was increasingly altering the behaviour of the unemployed, leading to aggregate increases in refusal (of work) activities such as voluntary unemployment (Maki and Spindler, 1975) and benefit fraud (Cmnd 5228, 1973). In light of this, state managers

were becoming increasingly concerned about the wider effects of such behaviour on the economy.

Thus, in the present chapter, I'm going to pick up from precisely the point at which the last chapter concluded. I show that whilst the retrenchment-cum-privatisation manoeuvre has undoubtedly been important for ameliorating the fiscal threat posed by the reserve army, this has not been the only way in which capital has relied on 'direct state *command*' to restore capitalist profitability and domination. Rather, *command* has also taken shape in Crisis state managers' repeated efforts to *repair* and *recalibrate* the reserve army mechanism and forcibly (re-)impose the commodity-form via social security restructuration. More precisely, in what follows over the next *two chapters*, I will show how the Crisis state has also set out to restructure the social security system by strengthening and/or introducing a range of mutually reinforcing policies and practices which seek to (1) *decompose* any subversive activity/behaviour present within the ranks of the reserve army. And, where necessary, (2) *regulate* unemployed labour power in accordance with capitalist demand (for labour power).

In order to do this, the present chapter begins to shift the analysis *from above* towards an analysis *from below* by incorporating data gathered from the practical (qualitative interviewing) component of this inquiry. Doing this enables a deeper analysis which goes beyond looking at social security restructuration as a set of policies imagined by policymakers. Rather, the present analysis will also look at how social security restructuration manifests on the ground, in everyday social interplay between those administering policy on the frontline and those surplus populations who receive it. Given the qualitative depth I will go into explaining how the Crisis state has restructured the social security system to repair and recalibrate the reserve army mechanism, I have separated the present analysis into two corresponding chapters. This chapter will focus solely on what I will argue as the *decomposition* aspect of social security restructuration. That is, a series of policies and practices which have been developed to identify, correct and thus prevent any refusal activities/anti-work behaviours present within the claiming fractions of the reserve army.

Decomposing the Reserve Army: Preventing Refusal (of Work) Activities and Anti-Work Behaviours

The last chapter concluded by showing how concerns about high and rising social security expenditure intensified among political elites in the mid-1970s and have more or less persisted ever since; encouraging successive governments to (with mixed success) slash social security spending and put many of its key services out to tender (Bacon and Eltis, 1978; 32; Lavery 2019; 153-176).

Re-emerging Concerns about the Behaviour and Values of the Reserve Army of Labour

But this wasn't the only concern surrounding the social security system. From the early 1970s, state managers were becoming increasingly aware of the broader effect that cumulative refusal activity was having on the reserve army mechanism and the economy more generally. In turn, they were becoming increasingly concerned about the behaviour and values of those claiming social security benefits (see Appendices 6.1. for more detail).

Despite mounting concerns voiced by some state managers and intellectuals in the early 1970s, they were ostensibly minor in the grand scheme of what was to come in the 1980s and beyond. Without going into detail (see Appendices 6.1. for more detail), two developments were of note in the 1980s. First, an investigation commissioned by the respective Department for Employment and Department for Health and Social Security (DE/DHSS 1981; 62) found that '16 per cent of claimants were not looking for work' and 'roughly 8 per cent or more of unemployed people might be unlawfully working and claiming benefits' (Price, 2000, 208). Second, in relation to the first, the diagnoses of American 'bourgeois social theorists'[1] (see Cleaver, 1992; 124) Murray (1990) and Mead (1986) were gaining popularity within the Crisis state (see Price, 2000; 236; 239-40; 268; Moore, 1987; 107; Digby, 1989; 109). They argued that generous and/or permissive social security provision seen in the period of class compromise was cultivating a growing 'underclass' of individuals defined (in part at least) by 'deplorable behaviour',

[1] This term captures theorists who interpret anti-work behaviours as 'deviant, delinquent, deficient, uneducated, primitive, backward, underdeveloped, criminal, subversive, schizophrenic, infantile, paranoid, sick, and so on' (Cleaver, 1992; 124), with the broader objective of maintaining capitalist society and enhancing the relational power of capital to the working class.

an entitlement mentality and a hostility towards taking available jobs (Murray, 1990; 68; 71; 20). Identical concerns about the behaviour and values of claiming surplus populations have remained persistent ever since (see Appendices 6.1. for more detail).

Thus, to combat and rectify these issues, Crisis state managers have repeatedly (for the last 40 years or so) turned to the ideas of self-anointed 'Darth Vader' of welfare reform—Lawrence Mead (1986; 1991; 1992; 1997; 2018). At the crux of Mead's (1986; 69-90) ideas was his belief that, over the course of the 20th century, both active and reserve members of the working class were showing signs of a declining work ethic. As specifically regarding the declining work ethic of the reserve army, he thought this was mainly because permissive social security benefits undermined the necessity to work, but he also thought that this was partially because the new fragmented labour market design (see previous chapter) made work less attractive in some expanding areas of the economy: 'work, at least in low-wage jobs, no longer serves the individual's interest as clearly as it does society's' (Mead, 1986; 82). With this in mind, Mead (1986; 84) thought that unattractive work 'must be mandated' by the state 'just as a draft has sometimes been necessary to staff the military'.

To achieve this, Mead proposed a contemporary rehashing of workfare; policies which hadn't really been seen in Britain since the 1930s (Fletcher, 2015). He believed that a 'need for authority' was required in state encounters with the reserve army of labour, so as to (re)condition its (labour market) behaviour in accordance with the fragmented labour market design (Mead, 1986; 82). This would entail imposing reforms which 'discipline[d] the poor' (Mead, 1986; 9) by reducing the monetary value of social security benefits and redesigning the delivery of benefit administration/employment services to 'threaten punishment (in this case loss of benefits)' for any failures to prepare for, seek and take available work (Mead, 1986; 87-88). In effect, Mead was proposing a workfarist social security system which once again prioritised work-related compliance and preventing refusal activities over the welfare of the claiming surplus populations.

Surveillance

Broadly following Mead's ideas, one of the central ways in which state managers have set out to prevent refusal activities and ensure compliance has been through imposing a radical shift in the frontline delivery of benefit administration/employment services.

As this chapter (and the next) will show, reforms on the frontline have taken a number of different yet complimentary directions over the years. But among the most prevalent of those pursued by state managers can be seen in the numerous efforts they have made to intensify the *surveillance* role that frontline staff perform day-to-day in employment services and benefits offices. Now it is worth quickly mentioning that even prior to the formation of the Crisis state, frontline staff have always been to some extent expected to monitor claimant behaviour and police claims made on the state. Even during the post-war period, for example, the Keynesian Planner state was commissioning a number of 'Unemployment Review Officers' from as early as 1961, whose job would sometimes entail visiting claimant residences and/or 'find[ing] out what the claimant had done and was doing to try to get a job' (Price, 2000; 250; see also Hill, 1969).

Nevertheless, as the Crisis State became increasingly concerned about the behaviour of the reserve army throughout the 1970s, state managers also began to place increasing importance on surveillance and monitoring claimant activities. Not only was the state hiring more staff ('special investigators') to specifically investigate suspicious claims (Cmnd 5228, 1973; 18; DE/DHSS, 1981; 64). But, from the mid-1980s onwards, policymakers pursued a number of reforms to ensure that surveillance of claims has also been increasingly mediated through frontline benefit administration/employment service staff. In 1987, benefit administration and employment services were amalgamated and placed in the same office (Finn, 2005; 2). One of the main reasons for this was so that frontline staff could perform a more thorough and systematic check on both a claimant's entitlement to social security benefit(s) and their availability for work (Price, 2000; 263). Alongside this, 'Unemployment Review Officers' were retitled 'Claimant Advisers' (now 'Work Coaches') and, where possible, assigned a caseload of claimants (Price, 2000; 290). This signalled the birth of the 'case management' approach which, by 1996 (and the introduction of Jobseekers Allowance), required that frontline staff provide a more 'individualised service' (Finn, 2000; 45). This entailed fortnightly face-to-face reviews with claimants regarding the activities they were taking to get back into work and corresponding action plans 'devised with different measures linked to the characteristics, motivation and needs of the person' (Finn, 2000; 45; Finn, 2018).

To compliment and enforce this case management, or 'individualised', approach to the delivery of social security benefits, policymakers also introduced the Jobseekers

Agreement (now Claimant Commitment) in 1996 and, later in 2012, the Universal Jobmatch System. As Fletcher and Wright (2018; 330) identify, the Claimant Commitment 'facilitates large scale surveillance' by mandating claimants sign a contract detailing precisely the various work-related activities they will agree to undertake. Customarily, work-related activities usually equate to completing job searches and/or participation on 'work experience' or training placements for a total of 35 hours per week. The Commitment also mandates that claimants record and provide evidence for any activity completed. In effect, all of the above allows frontline staff to monitor claimant behaviour in relation to an established and agreed set of criteria, with any failure to meet the rubric of the Claimant Commitment being liable for punishment (something I will return to shortly).

Coupled with the Claimant Commitment, since 2012, claimants have been increasingly required to use the online Universal Jobmatch system to look for work and document any job applications they have completed (Fletcher and Wright, 2018; 337). Worker 4 provided some insights as to how Universal Jobmatch worked in practice:

> ‘The claimant's logged into it, the employers logged into it. And I could go by a code that you have when you come in, access what you've done and see whether you've applied … If I want to look at your record and say what's Jamie been up to? I could go on to that and see your pattern of job application or whatever… it was linked everywhere. Instead of us ringing up and saying, "Mr. Brown, did Jamie come for his interview today?" I could say that, "Mr. Brown said non-attendance", so tick the box.’ (Worker 4; Work Coach)

Reflecting Fletcher and Wright’s (2018; 330) cogitations, Worker 4 showed how Universal Jobmatch can facilitate an 'intrusive' form of surveillance by allowing Work Coaches to monitor and record claimants work-related activity more closely. But there is also something distinctly more revealing about this excerpt, particularly if closer attention is paid to the last sentence. It is here where Worker 4 demonstrated how the Work Coach can actually draw upon observations made by employers in order to monitor work-related activity and find out whether claimants have attended job interviews. Put another way, Worker 4 was indirectly suggesting here that surveillance of work-related activity wasn't exclusively practiced by Work Coaches. Rather, there appeared to be multiple actors—a *network of surveillance* perhaps—that were

monitoring and recording work-related behaviour/activities, communicating with one another about these behaviours/activities, and building profiles of claimants based on what they had observed.

Now at first glance talk of a 'network of surveillance', particularly involving relationships between employers and Work Coaches, might read as a bit of imaginative leap. But actually, evidence of this was littered throughout the testimonies of the employment service workers I spoke to. And this network was by no means confined to observations and communication mediated through the Universal Jobmatch system. On the contrary, employment service workers in different providers (as well as employers) communicated with one another seemingly in some detail to cross examine and verify claimants' work-related activity and/or the alibis they were providing to explain why they were unable to comply with their Claimant Commitment. This was evident in Worker 7's recollection of their time as a 'Welfare-to-Work advisor' on a contracted employment service called the Work and Health programme (see Powell, 2018):

> ‘[I had] a lot of dialogue with the work coaches. I always stress the importance of keeping, maintaining communication. Dialogue and relationships with the work coaches because we wanted to- we knew that they [claimants] were playing us off against each other’ (Worker 7; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

It’s worth noting of course that Welfare-to-Work advisors occupy considerably different roles to Work Coaches within the social security system (see Appendices 1.1 for more detail). Nevertheless, they are still required to monitor claimant behaviour and, as can be seen in the excerpt above, would frequently talk with Work Coaches about issues of claimant compliance. Similar to Worker 7, Worker 1 also demonstrated how Work Coaches and Welfare-to-Work advisors communicated to fact-check claimants' adherence to their obligations and determine whether any lip service was being paid:

> ‘there was dialogue [with the work coach] where they might ring you and say, or email you and say, you know, “has this person attended?” “What are you doing with this person as well?”…so whatever that customer is telling you, you'd have a central thing where you could ring and say, “what's happening?”
>
> Interviewer: So you could like validate what they've said?

> Yeah yeah…So you might get- again you had to be the detective thing. “Aw I can't come in because of this”. Then you might ring that number and say, “you know this person's telling me this, is this right?” “We have no record of it, put the paperwork in." (Worker 1; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

What stood out about Worker 1's testimony was their tendency to describe their frontline role as being like a ‘detective’. This term seemed to almost perfectly encapsulate a role that many of the Work Coaches and Welfare-to-Work advisors I spoke to had routinely performed. And being a "detective" took many different forms:

> ‘I used to have to 'track' disengaged clients this included using social media fake profiles to find out if they were working if we could not get in touch with the customer.’ (Worker 11; Welfare-to-Work advisor).

> ‘you know they’d [the manager] say “go on Facebook and have a look”…“People are posting on there that they’ve been doing a bit of cash in hand or you know they’re selling this on EBay or whatever and advertising it on Facebook”' (Worker 1; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

There's two aspects of these excerpts that stand out. First, it was clear that some employment service staff were expected to monitor and report on claimant activities/behaviours using methods that were underhand and weren't coded in policy and formal procedure (cf. DPAC, 2016). Second, it seemed that frontline workers sometimes carried out surveillance in effort to look for activities/behaviours which weren't directly relevant to the customary work-related obligations set out in the Claimant Commitment. This can be seen above as Worker 1 described using Facebook to search for more belligerent refusal activity (i.e. fraud).

Being a "detective" was also visible in employment service workers' recollections of the work they did with their caseload in street-level encounters at the office. Sometimes, workers adopted a direct approach, conspicuously probing for evidence of anti-work behaviour/activity:

> ‘I always wanted to get to the bottom of why don't you want to work? What is it? What's your reason behind it? You know and if you have got another income stream, then stop committing fraud and let's spend the money on people who need it. I'd try and just be very direct in that way and find out.’ (Worker 2; Welfare to Work advisor)

In other instances, frontline staff were less conspicuous, instead paying close attention to the appearances of their caseloads and what this might reveal about their financial position:

> ‘There's one person I think of, a guy whose always wearing different clothes, smart clothes, not necessarily expensive, but he's obviously buying new clothes or getting new clothes, which he couldn't afford on his benefit.’ (Worker 3; Work Coach)

And it was not only their appearance that was under observation in direct encounters, but employment service workers seemed to build a profile of claimants based on both their appearance and how they behaved in the office:

> ‘you'd think aw bloody hell, you know when they come for the induction and you just know, from the outset, what type of person. I know, that sounds awful and pre-judging.
>
> Interviewer: How would you come to that sort of reasoning?
>
> Just their demeanour, I don't want to be here kind of thing, what am I doing here? Yeah, just that kind of mentality’ (Worker 6; Welfare-to-Work Advisor)

There is nothing new about this phenomenon. An abundance of literature has demonstrated how employment service workers are 'open to the influences of prejudice, stereotype, and ignorance as a basis for [their] determinations' on claimants (Lipsky, 2010; 69; Wright, 2002; 225-250; Dubois, 2010; 75). Nevertheless, what can be seen above is how workers' observations (and judgements) largely revolved around whether their caseloads appear and behaved in a compliant and law-abiding fashion. Or, put in other words, whether their caseloads appeared and behaved in ways that were customarily conducive to, and necessary for, domination and exploitation in the labour market.

Given that policies surrounding the delivery of unemployment benefits have been increasingly geared towards surveillance since the mid-1980s (Fletcher and Wright, 2018), it is perhaps unsurprising that ‘detective’ work was a common feature of policy implementation and street-level practice. What was somewhat surprising, however, was how some employment service workers seemed to carry out the ‘detective’ role beyond the ordinary confines of the office. Two Welfare-to-Work advisors detailed how they were expected to carry out ‘home visits’ and inspect claimants' residences in order

to find out the situation of those who were not attending their appointments. The main reason for this was to find out if non-attending claimants had found work (ostensibly without employment support), so the contracted employment service could claim the 'job outcome' as their own:

> 'So once a week maybe they'd ask for people to volunteer to go and- whether its your customer or not- you had to, you know, go with someone or drive to people's houses and knock on the door [knocks on the table] and say "where are ya?"…you had to get signatures and things like that if people had been in work or get them to sign something to claim the outcomes of money. Erm again you had to knock on doors to say, "sign this, you've been in work". Or, if they'd gone in work and you couldn't get hold of them, you had to knock on doors to get the information of where they were working and who was in charge and how many hours they were doing.' (Worker 1; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

As far as I learned, this kind of 'outdoor' surveillance activity (for want of a better term) was not as prevalent among those who (had) worked in Jobcentre Plus. Manager 1, who used to go out visiting claimants in the 1970s and 1980s, explained that visiting claimants was a bigger feature of the role in previous decades because 'there was no computer systems to marry them up and look at it all, where there is now'. In other words, advancements in technology had reduced the need for frontline staff to personally go and check that claimants' financial situations correspond with any descriptions they provided to the benefits office. Rather, this was increasingly the role of a separate fraud team, an area which Manager 1 had never worked and professed to know little about. Nevertheless, 'outdoor' surveillance activity was sometimes conducted by Jobcentre Plus staff via less organised methods. This can be seen as Manager 1 took it upon themselves to detect and police benefit claims beyond their working hours:

> 'I had to tell someone in my [anonymised area] once. I found out they were working and claiming benefit because she told me. So I had to say to her, "If you don't stop claiming or declare it. I can no longer speak to you. I can't be friends with you. Because I am condoning what you are doing, therefore, I am as guilty as you are"' (Manager 1; JCP Frontline Manager)

There is an old adage that some 'street-level bureaucrats' (Lipsky, 2010), particularly Police officers, are never truly off duty. Some frontline workers' recollections appeared to substantiate this. If they had heard rumours of fraud about people they knew to be

claiming; had seen something suspicious in passing; or, even less specifically, held more general concerns that a claimant possessed circumstances/characteristics which may have impeded on their future subordination as active labour power, then some workers would take note and bring it to the wider attention of other workers and their superiors:

> 'So then not only did I meet with other managers I also met with my regional manager and then I would have Jobcentre Plus meetings, as well. Where we would then go through caseloads and talk about specific individuals… so like [with] the Work Coaches and just saying, "Yeah, I've got a bit of an issue with this guy. What's your take on it?" So we had some really good relationships through the Jobcentre Plus.' (Manager 2; Welfare-to-Work Manager)

By coming together to exchange and compile intelligence on their caseloads, meetings focused on claimant behaviour appeared to be yet another way in which networks of benefit administration/employment service workers conducted surveillance. But there was also another purpose for these meetings. For some workers, they appeared to be a way of *acting* on the intelligence they had gathered and coming together to develop ways of correcting any non-compliant behaviours found in their own caseload. This will be given closer attention in the next subsection.

Discipline and Punishment

Alongside the introduction of policies and practices intensifying surveillance over the claiming surplus populations, Crisis state managers have also pursued social security reforms in another, complimentary direction. Since the mid-1980s (Adler, 2018; 22), policymakers have also armed the frontline with the necessary weaponry to compliment surveillance by tackling and, where necessary, correcting refusal activities head on. They have done this by endowing employment service workers with a number of discretionary powers to punish non-compliance and exert greater discipline over the behaviour and activities of their caseload. Technically, of course, a system of punishment and criminal prosecution for refusal activities pertaining to benefit fraud has been in place for considerably longer than the last 40 years (McKeever, 1991; 261). Nevertheless, what has been distinctly observable since the birth of the Crisis state is a 'shift from carrots to sticks' (Wacquant, 2009; 60); whereby a wider range of non-compliant activities/behaviours have been increasingly liable for punishment through

'means of fines, reductions of benefits, and termination of recipiency irrespective of need' (Wacquant, 2009; 60).

This has predominantly taken shape in the incremental expansion of Britain's benefit sanctioning regime. Benefit sanctions provide employment service workers with the (discretionary) power to suspend/terminate a claimant's benefit income for a range of 'work-related offences' (Adler, 2018; 27). Frontline staff usually initiate this process by, at first, monitoring and documenting any evidence of refusal activity and then setting the wheels in motion by referring collected evidence to an independent decision maker, who can then decide whether there's sufficient grounds to impose a benefit sanction (Couling, 2013).

Of course, benefit sanctions are nothing new. They date back to the introduction of unemployment benefits in 1911, where 'claimants could be disqualified for periods of up to six weeks' for failure to 'actively seek work' (Adler, 2018; 22). What's crucial to note, however, is that from their introduction the design and implementation of benefit sanctions seem to have broadly oscillated in accordance with the cycle of class struggle. In 1946, the Keynesian Planner state introduced the National Insurance Act, under which the scope of reasons for which a sanction could be legitimately administered had been significantly minimised; or at least compared to the scope for disqualification seen in the crisis-ridden inter-war years (see chapter four). The Planner state saw that an unemployed claimant no longer had to be 'actively seeking work'. Rather, they only had to be 'available for work', which they could demonstrate by appearing in person at the benefits office and 'signing on' (Adler, 2018; 36; see also Blackmore, 2001; 148).

Conversely, from the 1980s the Crisis state expanded the disciplinary power of the sanction to ensure claimants were not only available for work but once again actively seeking work (e.g. job-searching). In addition, the Crisis state increased 'the maximum period of disqualification' from the initial six weeks 'to 13 weeks in 1986 and then to 26 weeks in 1988' (Adler, 2018; 22). By 2012 and the introduction of an 'enhanced sanctioning regime' (cf. Oakley, 2014), the Crisis state had expanded the timescale of benefit loss to three years (Webster, 2014)—although high profile scrutiny of sanctions (see Alston et al., 2019) has recently encouraged state managers to fall back to the 26 week maximum penalty. Nevertheless, latest incarnation of the sanctioning regime also

has a built in 'tiered system of sanctions' with longer disqualification periods for more serious refusal activities (Adler, 2018; 37). It also differentiates 'between first violations, second violations and third violations' to upscale punishment for recidivists (Adler, 2018; 37). The contours of the enhanced regime are outlined more explicitly in the table below:

Summary of Universal Credit sanctions (and sanctions under Contribution based JSA and contributory ESA, when UC is introduced)			
Level of Sanction	Length of Sanction		
	First failure	Second failure within a year	Third failure within a year
High level sanctions (UC and JSA only) • Failing to undertake Mandatory Work Activity • Failing to apply for or to accept paid work • Ceasing paid work or losing pay for specified reasons	91 days	182 days	1,095 days
Medium level sanctions (UC and JSA only) • Failing to be available for paid work or to take all reasonable action to get paid work	28 days	91 days	91 days
Low level sanctions (UC, JSA and ESA) • Failing to meet a work-focused interview requirement • Failing to comply with a requirement connected to a work-related requirement • Failing to meet a work preparation requirement • Failing to take a particular action to get paid work (UC and JSA only)	Until claimant complies plus 7 days	Until claimant complies, plus 14 days	Until claimant complies, plus 28 days
Lowest level sanctions (UC and ESA only) • Failing to meet a work-focused interview	Until claimant complies	Until claimant complies	Until claimant complies
Table 6.1. (Kennedy and Keen, 2016; 15-16)			

Alongside their expanding scope and severity, the period of downswing has also seen an aggregate surge in their implementation:

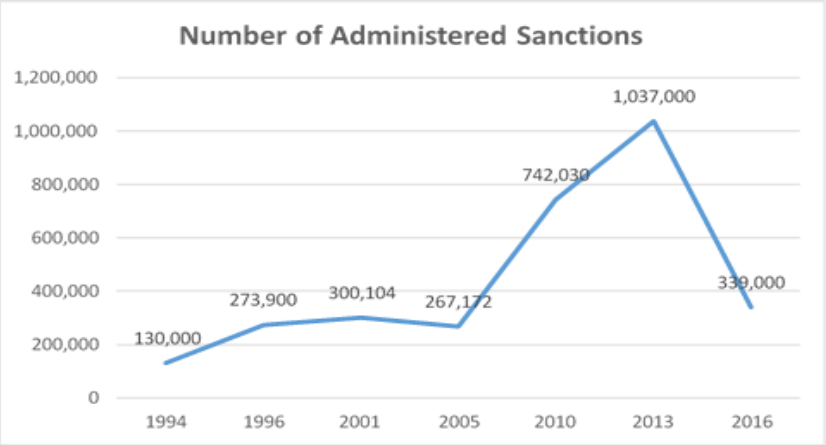


Figure 6.1 (Price, 2000; 296; Adler, 2018; 48)

Since 2013 to present, sanctioning rates have fallen back to their 2001 level; averaging around 200-300,000 per annum. But taken in wider context of the class struggle cycle, since the late 1980s, there has still been around a 100% increase in the average number of sanctions administered every year.

Considering aggregate increases in sanctioning rates is a useful way of quantitatively observing a 'shift from carrots to sticks' in the delivery of social security benefits. But this shift can not only be observed quantitatively. One of the advantages to the present study was that I was able to speak to a handful of workers who have had (30-40 years each) experience of working on the frontline for the Crisis state. Among these workers, the 'shift from carrots to sticks' also appeared to be qualitatively felt. The general consensus was that, in the 1970s and the formative years of the Crisis state, benefit administration/employment services were 'more overall about the well-being of a person; because it was still influenced by how it was set up in the first place' (Manager 1). This was visible in Worker 4's recollections, who felt that when s/he first began in the 1970s, the primary objective was to 'try and nurture and help' claimants into the line of work they wanted. S/he went on to describe how this had changed quite dramatically by the 90s and into the turn of the century, because it was no longer about:

> 'what [the claimants] wanted to do, it was what [the claimants] were able to do. Because the type of interview changed from it being like an ad hoc calling in. They would have to come in because they were there to sign or they were there to do. There was a disciplined attendance rather than an ad hoc attendance.' (Worker 4; Work Coach)

Worker 4 went on to recall how the nature of their work in daily encounters with the unemployed had changed from helping claimants explore new abilities and expanding local labour market knowledge, to sifting out refusal activities/anti-work behaviours and enforcing behavioural compliance. Like the majority of other frontline staff in this study, s/he would often enforce compliance by brandishing the stick:

> 'I would say that out at the beginning of the interview "If you don't comply with this, if you don't have pen to paper (and later obviously on the I.T.) for me to see it, you can't expect me to let it go. So you're putting me in no-win position because I can't let that go"' (Worker 4; Work Coach)

Conveying their powers in both an explicit and overtly brusque fashion was sometimes seen as an effective way of rectifying non-compliance without actually resorting to a sanction:

> 'I've definitely told people who've completely refused or completely failed to demonstrate any activity that they can get sanctioned if they don't'
>
> Interviewer: How would those conversations go?
>
> 'It would be me saying, "It's ridiculous. You're coming in here, you've got no evidence that you're doing anything to find work" … they can pick up when you're pissed off with them, and they will generally respond by trying a bit harder' (Worker 3; Work Coach)

In more recent decades, according to Friedli and Stearn (2015), psychological coercion has been increasingly deployed in both the design and delivery of social security benefits so as to better discipline the unemployed and establish greater control over their conduct. As can be seen in the excerpts above, this was routinely reflected in how frontline staff made use of their power to sanction (cf. Senghaas et al., 2018; 619). Benefit sanctions were articulated as both a 'tacit and explicit threat' in direct encounters with claimants, which allowed frontline staff to establish 'psychological authority' over their caseloads and cultivate more intensive engagement with any work-related obligations featured in their Claimant Commitments (Friedli and Stearn, 2015; 45; 43).

Benefit sanctions also afforded frontline staff some discretionary power to directly instruct claimants on how they should go about fulfilling their obligations. In official terms, this discretionary power is a called a 'Jobseekers Direction' (Finn 2001; 3; Adler

2013; 231; Novak, 1997). According to the Department for Work and Pensions (2013; 1) the Jobseekers Direction is used to target 'those claimants who are not effectively looking for work', or those 'who are persistently not taking a particular action, or ignoring an obvious route' into employment. Should a frontline worker become aware of such a claimant, they can then use the Jobseekers Direction to require that they 'undertake a specific course of action' deemed necessary to move them closer to work (DWP, 2013; 1). In frontline practice, Jobseeker's Directions were used in conjunction with sanctions and appeared to be mobilised in the event of a suspicion and/or an unearthing of refusal activity. This was done to rectify non-compliance and (re)establish discipline over work-resistant claimants:

> 'this guy had turned up [for a job interview], but he just sat with his arms folded the entire time and just stared. He said, "I didn't want to come to this job centre made me." That was the classic.
>
> Interviewer: So that went to the employer and that got relayed back to you and that was-?
>
> 'Yes. and that would have affected his sanct-, yes.'
>
> Interviewer: He got sanctioned for that?
>
> 'He would've done, yes.'
>
> Interviewer: Right, okay. Was that common, or was there any a step forward after that?
>
> 'Obviously the person then would be brought in. For really intense activity with that person then…we wouldn't just leave it. Yeah, he wouldn't be sanctioned and left. It would be get your body in here and you come in every day at nine o'clock. You can come in every single day and you can tell us what you're going to do. Oh, definitely, yes.' (Worker 4; Work Coach)

According to Worker 4, the strategy s/he described above had its own name in their office: 'More Frequent Attendance they called it. MFA. More Frequent Attendance'. Where necessary, s/he would deploy 'More Frequent Attendance' as a way intensifying work-related related activities and encouraging compliance. Recollections such as this, where frontline staff recounted responding to a suspicion or actual discovery of refusal activity was commonplace in this study; although the course of action they took tended to vary somewhat. This could be observed in experiences garnered from the other side of the desk. Baz, a young claimant, revealed how he had been subjected to both a

sanction and an expansion of his work-related obligations as a result of turning down an opportunity to work via an agency:

> ‘They were wanting agency work there and that’s where it all come across. Cause she tried signing me up to that and I told her I weren't doing it. And then I explained my whole situation. Then they sanctioned me.’
>
> Interviewer: Because you refused?
>
> ‘yeah’
>
> Interviewer: So what did you say then? Was that in that encounter?
>
> ‘Yeah. I just said ‘I'm not going to it. it don’t matter if you book me on to it, I'm not going to it.’ And so she sanctioned me saying I were refusing to follow. And then it got took to a case manager and I explained my case to them, saying I'm not gonna do agency work. And then it got brought back down to my worker saying well, if he's not gonna do agency work we've gotta get him a full time job. So now I've got another commitment saying I've gotta do 35 hours a week and if not I get sanctioned’
>
> Interviewer: Right ok and what was in your commitment before that then?
>
> ‘20 hours a week.’ (Baz, W1)

As discussed in the previous subsection, the Claimant Commitment facilitates surveillance by providing employment service workers with legitimate means to monitor claimant behaviour against an established and agreed set of criteria (Fletcher and Wright, 2018). However, it can also be seen how the Claimant Commitment is to some extent a discretionary policy tool that can be readily utilised by workers to discipline and enhance control over their caseloads. This occurred in the instance above as Baz’s Work Coach was reported to expand his mandatory work-related duties by re-drafting his Commitment. Perhaps this was not only to increase his likelihood of finding work, but in light of his apparent refusal to work, to impose more stringent testing on his willingness to comply.

Intensifications of work-related activity were not only used by frontline staff to combat direct refusals of work or failures to search for work ‘effectively’ (DWP, 2013; 1). But Jobseeker’s Directions were also deployed to combat more belligerent refusal activities. In the instance below, it was described how ‘More Frequent Attendance’ was used to smoke out and ‘disrupt’ claimants who were either suspected or found to be

illegitimately attempting to advance their own material interests and pursuing an alternative income stream:

> ‘If somebody on the frontline say, said, "I've seen him coming in, he's got his paint overalls on, and he's a painter and decorator, but he says he hasn't got any work." We would call him in it at say, 11 o'clock every day because that would disrupt their working day…Not to be spiteful, but just to be fair, because you know, the benefit system isn't for somebody who is moonlighting” (Worker 4; Work Coach)

Strategies to identify and “disrupt” occurrences of benefit fraud weren’t confined to those who were suspected to be working and claiming illegitimately. One young claimant revealed a situation where, acting upon suspicions that he was selling drugs, his Work Coach tried to disrupt his working day by placing him on more training placements and mandating ‘More Frequent Attendance’:

> ‘When they noticed it they tried to get me on a lot of like work clubs. So they'd bring me for like everyday half an hour’ (Craig, W1)

In the instances described above, it can be seen how ‘disruption’ via ‘More Frequent Attendance” appeared as more a strategy to deter fraud and (re)establish discipline. However, this was not the only end to which this strategy was used. In other instances, frontline staff reported using ‘More Frequent Attendance’ as a way of trying to offload non-compliant claimants and deter their claims altogether. Or at least this appeared to be the case in some contractor employment service firms. Because these firms are ultimately profit-oriented and profits depended on their ability to force through sales of (unemployed) labour power (see Wiggan, 2015), it made little financial sense to devote resources to claimants who were understood as, in one way or another, reluctant to sell their labour power:

> ‘You'd book em on courses, or get them coming in to do in house courses or you'd book em on courses so they had to attend to disrupt what they were doing.’
>
> Interviewer: So sort of hassling them?
>
> ‘Almost piss em off, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Almost piss em off that you're booking em on this and that so there would be a point where they'd think sod this I'm signing off, I can't cope with this.’ (Worker 1; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

This drew parallels with Fletcher and Flint's (2018; 779) observations, who note how 'alienation from frontline staff' and a service which fails to accommodate individual circumstances and class-cultural dispositions can leave some claimants feeling angry and frustrated, leading them to disengage with the social security system altogether. The development here, however, is that Worker 1 shows how frontline staff (sometimes) *intentionally* seek to arouse alienation, anger and frustration among their caseload—as a form of 'negative emotional coercion' (Redman, 2020; 85)—to shift claimants off the register.

Surely though, given that contractor employment services are paid to get claimants into work and not off the register, this would be counter-intuitive? On the contrary, sometimes shifting non-compliant labour power off unemployment benefit could later prove to be a lucrative outcome for the contractor. Worker 1 proceeded to describe how, once claimants had disengaged, Welfare-to-Work advisors would continue surveillance and monitor their activity in efforts to find out whether 'pissi[ng] them off' had enticed them into work. If this was the case, then a job outcome could be claimed:

> 'You'd make it as difficult as possible…and then you'd have to find out if they're working. If they've signed off so they must be working … So then you'd have to chase them up again, "so where are you working?" Give me the details so we can claim that. You know so we can get some money' (Worker 1; Welfare-to-Work Advisor)

Thus far, it can be seen in much of the evidence provided above how frontline staff tend to conduct surveillance by monitoring and documenting claimant activity/behaviour, before proceeding to act on any untoward findings through various combinations of discipline (i.e. intensification/disruption) and punishment (suspension/termination of recipiency). In some instances, however, this appeared to be practiced in reverse; whereby workers would actually impose discipline and punishment by using the mechanisms of surveillance that were available to them. In the previous subsection, it was demonstrated how networks (of surveillance) between employment service workers in different offices and employers were often useful for identifying the presence of refusal activity. In the instance below, it can also be seen how networks of surveillance could also be used to discipline and punish non-compliance. Manager 1 described how their relationship with a local employer was useful in setting a suspected non-compliant claimant up for punishment:

> ‘There's an employer in [anonymised place] who is very eccentric. Who owns an absolutely beautiful hotel…But one day, this particular man, I knew he didn't want a job. So I sent them to see this employer’
>
> Interviewer: This eccentric employer?
>
> ‘Yes, who owns a million-pound hotel in [anonymised place]. And this guy turned up in flip flops and Bermuda shorts. So what do you think that employer did?’
>
> Interviewer: S/he sent him out the door and s/he rang you up?
>
> ‘Well s/he rang me up while s/he were there. Said "oh he's turned up in flip flops and Bermuda shorts". "You're joking". "No, do you wanna come?"’
>
> Interviewer: So what happened then?
>
> ‘I presume he got his benefit disallowed because he wasn't making himself available for work.’
>
> Interviewer: He got referred back to the work coach?
>
> ‘yes, then it would go to a decision-maker.’ (Manager 1; JCP Frontline Manager)

Whilst Manager 1’s approach to discipline and punishment here was creative, the evidence in this study suggested that s/he was no rogue. Put another way, Manager 1 did not appear to interpret or make use of their power more creatively, or with a greater degree of autonomy, than the vast majority of their counterparts. The general consensual feeling was that the actions/decisions they took in practice were not so much discretionary or autonomous. Rather, choices made on the frontline were ultimately determined by pressures from above. There was, according to the workers, a number of ‘hidden managerial methods’ in operation behind the scenes (Fletcher and Wright, 2018; 334). Methods which were working on the minds of frontline workers to make sure that they were not only hawkish in their search for anti-work behaviour/activity, but bounteous with their power to sanction. These methods are where attention will now turn.

Disciplining Frontline Workers: Off-Benefit Flow and Dehumanisation

Managerial methods ‘hidden’ (which I’ll get to shortly) or otherwise have almost always been a feature of modern-day organisations and public service delivery more generally.

Nevertheless, what can be observed from the 1980s onwards and the birth of the Crisis state, is a significant departure from the managerial objectives and methods that were used to deliver social security benefits in the post-war decades (cf. Butcher, 1995; 2-14). Increasingly, managerial objectives and methods have been re-engineered in tandem with (abovementioned) reforms to the delivery of social security benefits (see Considine, 2001). This has been done so that the active army of benefit administration/employment service workers are effectively monitored and, where necessary, marshalled, into effectively monitoring and, where necessary, marshalling, the claiming fractions of the reserve army.

Over the 1980s and early 1990s, a number of new performance targets were introduced for frontline benefit administration/employment service staff (Price, 2000; 236-258; 296). On the one side there were 'enabling' targets; that is, 'targets for the number of clients to be placed into work' (Considine, 2001; 44). On the other side there were 'policing' targets (Fletcher, 1997; 175); requiring 'that the employment service turn away a percentage of inquiries as inappropriate' and 'submit a fixed number to adjudication' (Considine, 2001; 45) 'where there is an arguable case with supporting evidence to show that claimant is not available for, actively seeking or willing to accept work' (Price, 2000; 296). In other words, Britain's network of benefit administration/employment service offices had an annual numerical target to refer claimants for sanctions. Again, one advantage to the present study was that these changes to the managerial structure/objectives were empirically felt by the more experienced participants:

> 'it's not the same service it was in the 70s. I think it's evolved. It's much tighter, it must have been target driven then but I can't remember it being as target driven then as it is now … People weren't sanctioned … I don't think there were sanctions in the way that there are now. Because today it's governed by a much stricter, uncompromising system- there's no room for manoeuvre … now [its] driven by results, sanctions, thirty five hours a week job search, about outcomes.' (Manager 1; JCP Frontline Manager)

As a direct corollary of this increasingly 'target driven' pursuit for 'sanctions' and 'outcomes' in benefit administration and employment services at the organisational-level; frontline workers too have been increasingly 'target driven' and in pursuit of

‘sanctions’ and ‘outcomes’ at the ‘street-level’. Commenting on their time as a manager of frontline staff, Manager 1 stated that there was an explicit mandate to sanction:

> “you're driven by outcomes. So did you get enough sanctions, did you get enough people into work?" (Manager 1; JCP Frontline Manager)

Sanctioning targets were actively encouraging workers to monitor claimant behaviour/activity more closely and, where possible, look for opportunities to make referrals to decision makers: ‘you'd come up with your ideas. You would try and work towards the goal’ (Worker 4; Work Coach). By escalating the pressure on workers to sanction, this seemed be an effective way of ensuring workers’ continuously monitored their caseload for refusal activity and, where necessary, disciplined and punished recalcitrant claimants. However, performance targets also seemed to have an effect on the workers which had very little to do with ensuring that they monitored and disciplined their caseloads.

As Finn (2018; 226) notes, in efforts to further encourage workers to monitor and discipline claimants, since 2011, the success of performance target regimes in employment services have been measured on something called 'off-benefit flows'. This simply means that, for a frontline worker, 'success' with a claimant is achieved at the point at which that same claimant 'has ended their benefit claim' (Finn, 2018; 226). In other words, off-benefit flow 'does not necessarily mean that a claimant has found work', it just means off the register (Finn, 2018; 226). In 2016, the National Audit Office (2016) argued that focus on off-benefit flow targets could lead workers to 'falsely inflate their outcomes', although they 'found no evidence that pressure to meet targets led to falsified reporting' (Finn, 2018; 227). Similarly, Couling (2013; 9) ‘found no evidence of a secret national regime of targets or widespread secret imposition of local regimes to that effect’ and also ‘found no evidence people [were] being wrongly sanctioned as a consequence’. The present study found otherwise. In this study, workers were either employing or reported other workers employing a range of strategies, while managers were employing a range of 'hidden managerial methods', to increase sanctioning rates and improve off-benefit flows. Worker 4 recalled how their manager would sanction non-English speakers as a way of making the targets look better.

> ‘I had this stupid [manager] who just thought s/he could get anybody sanctioned because they weren't complying. It didn't matter that they

> couldn't speak English. S/he misinterpreted the role to the point that s/he felt that the team would only be successful if they had an average amount of sanctions.' (Worker 4; Work Coach)

Worker 4 proceeded to detail how foreign speaking claimants were often unable to evidence work searches in English but, as long as they had agreed to provide evidence in English, then they were liable for a sanction under the rubric of their Commitment:

> 's/he would still insist that if they hadn't written in their Claimant Commitments themselves in English, that they should be sanctioned.…So they couldn't be applying for jobs. They couldn't understand that.'

It was therefore expected that worker seven should draw up Claimant Commitments with non-English speaking claimants on the stipulation that they would provide evidence of work search in English. Whilst this caused conflict on numerous occasions, Worker 4's manager proceeded to knowingly sign Commitments with claimants that s/he already knew would be highly unlikely, or outright unable to comply:

> 'I said, "how can you stand there and tell me that if I'm speaking a different language to the person in front of me, I can penalize them because I can be sure that they've understood what I've said?" S/he said s/he would do that. That, that was right. S/he would do this Claimant Commitment and get them to sign it. So I said, "Well, I'm not going to sign it." S/he said, "Well, I'll sign it." So I said. "You're signing to say they've understood that?" "Well, they've signed it, so they must understand."'

In another Jobcentre, it was made clear by Worker 3 that management had set up a team specifically to achieve benefit "offloads" (their terminology) within 0-13 weeks. According to Worker 3, because frontline staff were measured ultimately on 'offloads' and not on job outcomes, finding ways to sanction claimants and/or dissuade claims had become the more rational option. When asked how the 0-13 week team would achieve 'offloads', s/he proceeded to explain how workers would use psychological harm as technique—which was reported as common practice in this study:

> 'A lot of the time claimants are not treated with respect, and if you make a tactic of it then you are going to lose people, because some people they may not quite explain why it's so intolerable but they will find it intolerable and would rather go begging than continue to come in.'
>
> Interviewer: And is disrespect a tactic for some people?
>
> 'Yes, it is. Disrespect is a tactic I think.'

Interviewer: Why do you think that?

'Well it was in that team where they were looking for offloads.'

Interviewer: What leads you to that though, what leads you to that perspective, is there something that you've seen or you thought of?

'I've seen it, yes. And It's down to subtleties like the tone of voice, the way they summon people over, and yeah the way in which they talk to them…they were pushing them until they either just cleared off because they couldn't take the pressure or they got sanctioned.' (Worker 3; Work Coach)

At this point, it should be quite transparent that sanctioning and off-benefit flow targets were not only encouraging more intensive surveillance, discipline and punishment. But the targets were also quite clearly incentivising workers and managers to find underhand ways of getting claimants off the books. It was difficult to understand how the workers had continued in these jobs for so long. This was not only because a comprehensive body of academic research and mainstream media coverage has documented how increased sanctioning rates/off-benefit flows have led to higher levels of hunger (Batty et al. 2015) and foodbank usage (Butler, 2016); survival crime (Dwyer, 2018); mental and physical health problems (Williams, 2019; Jamieson, 2020); and suicides (Mills, 2018). But because many of the workers either acknowledged or confessed to witnessing first-hand the virulent and potentially fatal effects of poverty, destitution and the role that sanctions can and have played in this. Yet they continued to work to targets.

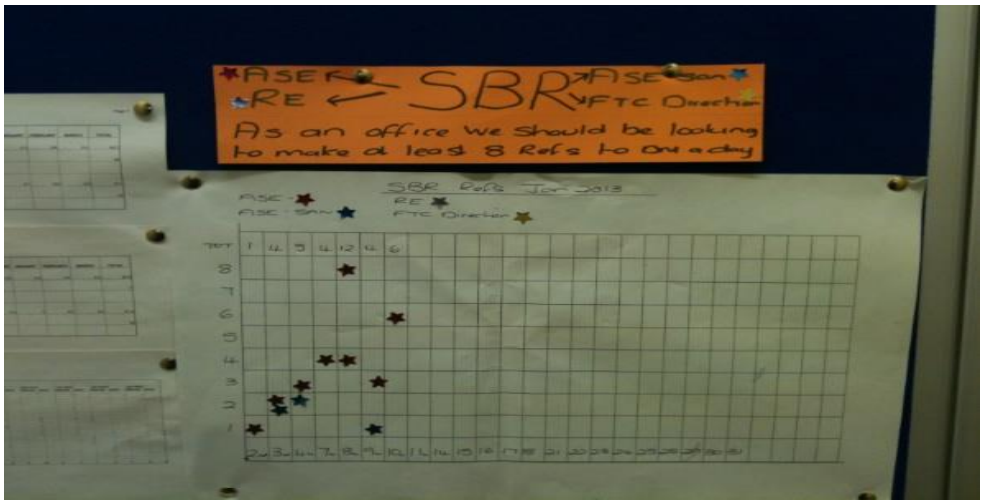
Without going too far off the point, Zygmunt Bauman confronted a similar enigma when he set out to unearth the reasons behind the Holocaust. In particular, he questioned how Nazi Germany had managed to operationalise a mass slaughter of approximately six million Jewish people in such a relatively short space of time (around four years). His conclusion was that the Holocaust would not have been possible without the presence of many features that are now commonplace in the government structures of modern societies. In particular, Bauman thought that the archetypal characteristics of the modern bureaucracy—that is, the division of labour into smaller, functional tasks; obedience to rules as a source of moral fibre and, more generally, procedural rationality as the nexus of decision-making—had played a large part in enabling great numbers of (mostly) civilised human beings to commit daily atrocities. This is because, or at least

according to Bauman (1989; 24), bureaucracies can produce a kind of 'moral invisibility' over those who work within their logic; whereby perpetrators of violence are in many ways 'physic[ally] and/or psychic[ally]' distanced from their actions and are thus shielded from the 'moral inhibitions' that such actions would ordinarily evoke (Bauman, 1989; 24).

One of the ways in which bureaucracy produces this 'moral invisibility', and this is where Bauman's analysis becomes directly relevant to the present study, is by reducing human beings to numbers and statistics as 'objects of bureaucratic task-performance' (Bauman, 1989; 102-3). In practice, managers would do this by establishing office targets and drawing up tables:

> "We had weekly team meetings. And s/he used to produce a table which showed how many people you've sanctioned or how many people you'd referred to a decision-maker for a sanction." (Worker 3; Work Coach)

The image below provides a rough visual of how a sanctions table might look (reproduced with permission). This table was used to measure the number of referrals made in an office in January 2013 (see Appendices 6.2 for more detail):



Bauman (1989; 102) makes it explicit that 'dehumanisation starts at the point when, thanks to distantiation, the objects at which the bureaucratic operation is aimed can, and are, reduced to a set of quantitative measures'. Sanctioning tables, and targets more generally, appeared to have precisely this effect on both workers and managers. As someone with multiple decades worth of experience in delivering social security benefits and visiting claimants residences, Manager 1 was more than well acquainted with the realities of poverty and destitution—'They burn the wood on the stairs to keep

them warm'. Yet recollections of this kind didn't prevent Manager 1 from pursuing sanctioning targets. On the contrary:

> 'you know, it was very exci-, it sounds sad doesn't it, but when the figures were coming out of what the unemployed were prior to universal credit, it was like exciting. Oh God What have we got today? 'How many have we got on the books? Has it gone down by hundreds?' (Manager 1; JCP Frontline Manager)

It seemed as though the targets seemed to act as something like a 'moral sleeping pill' (Bauman, 1989; 26), sedating (some) workers from the possible outcomes that their actions may have incurred. This effect was not exclusive to sanctioning targets. Some frontline workers also appeared to be sedated under the power of managerial pressure mediated through job outcome targets. In a couple of instances, workers reported pushing claimants into work who were quite clearly mentally or physically infirm. This was reported by Worker 11 as resulting in near fatal outcomes:

> 'I would even have to mandate Employment and Support Allowance claimants to attend appointments; several of which I knew had agoraphobia/mental health issues, one was severe learning difficulties and used to be brought in by his mum and carer and he would sit rocking and holding his teddy. I had another client who was terminally ill and could hardly walk. Another had attempted suicide several times and a lovely guy who I really felt for who had mental health issues and the day after I had to reluctantly mandate him to something—he attempted suicide. I also had another lady who we pushed into work and it made her that ill she had a fit in her new job and was admitted to hospital.' (Worker 11; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

When talking about what underlying mechanisms governed their actions, once again performance targets were described as 'paramount and the pressure was immense'. Bauman (1989; 102) goes further, arguing that once the human objects of bureaucratic task-performance are sufficiently dehumanised in the minds of workers, 'their moral concerns can concentrate fully on the good performance of the job at hand'. Certainly, the targets seemed to breed a competitive organisational culture among managers and workers—'you always wanted your team to be the best team' (Manager 1). Worker 2 went on to describe how—in spite of 'hav[ing] days where [s/he] would be in tears' due to 'forcing' people into employment who 'couldn't even function you know on like a normal level'—a combination of job outcome targets and managerial pressure:

> ‘made you feel competitive I think…It kind of made you really want to achieve, probably because you had a meeting every Wednesday with the whole team kind of reflecting on how you've done since the previous week. It was very transparent on, you know, it would be highlighted the really good people. Every week, if people are getting flagged up for being great and then you don't. Like oh, you're going to know, I'm shit.’ (Worker 2; Welfare-to-Work advisor).

In offices where sanctioning targets were present, they were reported to encourage greater focus on sanctioning above all other aspects of the role. Commenting on their time as a manager of frontline staff, Manager 1's focus appeared to be almost entirely on outcomes—‘If you've got pride in your work, you're interested in the outcomes, aren't you? So you're driven by outcomes’—going above and beyond to develop strategies aimed at hitting the targets and performing according to numerical command:

> ‘I used to send my staff to the decision-makers. We were particularly good at getting people off the books. It was usually because they were working anyway’ (Manager 1; JCP Frontline Manager)

Training frontline staff to look for sanction-able offences was but one of a number of 'hidden managerial methods' deployed by superiors in the benefit administration/employment service bureaucracy. Managers would also frequently monitor their workers and not just through formal mechanisms such as team meetings and routine performance reviews (cf. Fletcher, 2011; 448). On occasion, workers' performance was scrutinised directly on the frontline:

> ‘S/he'd watch. S/he'd be looking over and then she'd march around, come behind and say, “This person needs sanctioning’ over your shoulder."’ (Worker 4; Work Coach)

It was evident that some managers were also harnessing an age-old form of ‘stigma power’ (Tyler, 2020; 16-8) to enhance control over their workers in order to pursue sanctioning/off-benefit flow targets more efficiently (see also Tyler, 2013). According to Worker 3, the narrative coming from managers (and some of their colleagues) was that ‘claimants are lazy, dishonest, not trying to get work and the stick was important’. Managers sometimes intentionally manufactured these stigmatising narratives to establish distance from and antipathy towards claimants as part of a broader effort to discipline their workers:

> ‘there was a point at which she said, 'It's your money! It's your taxes that they're living off! You know, you should be sanctioning them!’ (Worker 3; Work Coach)

Such narratives evidently had a bearing on the workers. Worker 3 went on to elaborate on how managerial methods such as those described above seemed to cultivate a more hostile anti-claimant organisational culture:

> ‘[it was] just Work Coaches sitting in the canteen at lunchtime. Saying how awful claimants were and how they were scroungers and liars and all the rest of it is.’

For the most part, the workers in this study appeared to acquiesce to the expectations and/or demands of their managers. However, there were a few notable exceptions. Worker 3 was quite openly hostile to the UK’s sanctioning regime, which no doubt influenced their decision to subvert and ‘mediate employment service rules by deploying a range of alternative strategies instead of sanctions’ (Casey, 2019; 1026):

> “If I don't think their job search is good enough, I might just ignore it”

However, workers often had to justify their actions and could be subjected to further managerial pressure to conform. This sometimes led to feelings of intimidation or fear which could make it more difficult to resist managerial demands: ‘I allowed myself to feel intimidated by this manager who criticised my lack of sanction’ (Worker 3). Moreover, this could encourage staff to deliver the service in a more disrespectful and psychologically harmful way:

> ‘There I am. I've got my manager sitting there and they don’t come up with a good story about their job search…So I give them a bollocking…They [claimant] were exposing me as a softy…They were putting me at risk. So I was particularly angry about that.’(Worker 3; Work Coach)

In very brief summary then, this chapter has demonstrated how the Crisis state has progressively restructured the social security system by introducing a range of mutually reinforcing policies and practices which seek to identify, correct and thus prevent any refusal activities present within the reserve army of labour. One thing I didn’t anticipate, however, was how these policies and practices have quite clearly encouraged a range of perverse behaviours on the frontline. Job outcome, off-flow and sanctioning targets not only encouraged more intensive surveillance, discipline and punishment in frontline

practice. But, they have also quite clearly encouraged workers and managers to find underhand ways of getting claimants off the books; with potentially fatal effects (cf. Grover, 2019). I will reflect on this more in the following chapter and its implications for how the role of social security restructuration in the class struggle cycle can be understood. But before doing this, I will turn to another complimentary range of workfarist policies and practices that have hitherto been neglected in the present analysis.

7. The Role of Workfare in the Cycle of Class Struggle: Recalibrating the Reserve Army Mechanism

Chapter Overview

The previous chapter demonstrated how the Crisis state has sought to repair the reserve army mechanism and *decompose* the reserve army of labour by introducing a range of mutually reinforcing policies and practices which seek to identify, correct and thus prevent any refusal activities. However, this has not been the only way in which the Crisis state restructured the social security system. In tandem with policies and practices seeking to prevent refusal activities, state managers since the 1980s have also set out to recalibrate the reserve army mechanism by introducing and/or strengthening another range of complimentary policies and practices which seek to actively place the unemployed into work and, where necessary, *regulate* the unemployed labour supply with capitalist (labour) demand.

The present chapter shows how policies and practices seeking to *regulate* the unemployed labour supply have not only emerged out of concerns about the behaviour and values of the reserve army. Rather, they have also emerged out of concerns that labour market restructuring (see Chapter 5) has led to a significant increase in atypical 'jobs that nobody wants' (Peck, 2001; 6). It is shown here how the Crisis state also began to redesign benefit administration/employment services so that matching unemployed labour supply with capitalist demand became less about protecting the interests of those individuals seeking work and more about meeting the interests of those seeking labour power. More precisely, it is shown how policymakers have introduced and/or strengthened another range of complimentary policies and practices which seek to ensure that the reserve army is both exploitable and intricately synchronised to the vicissitudes of atypical labour demand.

Preserving the Fragmented Labour Market: Meeting Atypical Labour Demand

It has thus far been shown how Crisis state managers have taken a range of measures (e.g. retrenchment-cum-privatisation and decomposition) to reconcile their persistent concerns about the size, cost, behaviour and values of the claiming surplus populations. However, as Peck (2001) identifies, it's apparent that from the 1980s onwards there have been a range of other issues which have also influenced social security restructuring. In particular, 'demand side factors, such as the state of the labour market, are playing an important if often unstated role' (Peck, 2001; 35). This is because state managers have needed to respond to 'emerging regulatory dilemmas of flexibilised, after-Fordist labour markets in which polarising wages, rising inequality, and contingent employment have become systemic conditions' (Peck, 2001; 35).

Command Issues Emerging from the Fragmented Labour Market and the New Class Composition

In other words, as discussed in chapter five (see 'Divided and Conquered'), it was from the late 1970s where both capital and the state took a number of measures to fragment the labour market by re-organising and strengthening divisions among the working class composition (Negri, 1988). As a corollary of these measures, from the 1980s onwards, both the monetary rate and conditions upon which labour power was sold got aggregately worse for a growing fraction of the active army (Shildrick et al., 2012). This is because UK workers have been confronted with a proliferation of atypical (more insecure, flexible and lower paid) wage-based offers from capital (Deakin and Reed, 2000; Machin, 2011; ONS, 2020).

From the perspective of capital, these measures have been necessary to restore profitability and re-establish command over the post-war class composition (cf. Atkinson and Gregory, 1986; Ackroyd and Procter, 1998; Chun, 2001; Gottfried, 1992; Capelli et al. 1997). However, as Wiggan (2015) alludes to, the new class composition in turn posed new command issues for capital and the state. Straightforwardly, aggregate degradations of pay and conditions in 'peripheral' or 'contingent' areas of the labour market undermined much of the incentive to sell labour power and have therefore, once

again, been met by a general reluctance among the working class to undertake such work (see also Wiggan, 2015; 376-77; see Appendices 7.1 for more detail).

In the knowledge that working habits among a significant fraction of the working class must now 'reflect the flexible working pattern that modern employers and individuals need' (DWP, 2010a; 8) and that the inherent class antagonism evidently requires continuous supervision; the Crisis state has introduced a series of complimentary policies and practices in efforts to regulate the unemployed labour supply in accordance with atypical labour demand. They have set out to ensure 'people are encouraged to take'—and, where possible, are actively placed into—'jobs of only a few hours a week if this is all that is possible for them in the short-term' (DWP, 2010b; 15).

Retrenchment and Deprivation: 'Making Work Pay'

Of course, one of the ways in which the Crisis state has regulated the unemployed labour supply in accordance with atypical labour demand has been through the development of policies and practices already mentioned in the previous chapter (six). There is evidence, for example, which shows how benefit sanctions can in some instances facilitate faster transitions into the labour market (cf. Boockmann et al., 2014) and/or 'force unemployed individuals to accept atypical working conditions facilitated through temporary work agencies' (Redman, 2020; 94). However, to focus exclusively on such policies and practices would be to neglect the development of a whole host of reforms which appear slightly less concerned with ensuring compliance and far more concerned with creating a labour supply suitable for the fragmented labour market.

For example, one of the (many) ways state managers have sought to foster more intensive engagement with low paying and precarious work has been by 'making [low pay] work pay' (cf. CIPD, 2014) and curtailing the monetary value of various social security benefits. This was originally an idea pursued over the course of the Thatcher administrations (Price, 2000; 197). In their study of welfare reforms between 1979 and 1988, Atkinson and Micklewright (1989) demonstrate how approximately 17 expenditure cuts reduced the value of unemployment benefit in relation to average earnings 'by a fifth' in approximately nine years (Atkinson and Micklewright, 1989; 23). Dean and Taylor-Gooby (1992; 57) also note how the real value of unemployment benefit, and not just its value in relation to earnings, fell over the same time period. They

concluded that the aim of this 'was to cut benefit levels in relation to wages, to increase the incentive to find work' (Dean and Taylor-Gooby, 1992; 56).

Beyond the Thatcher administrations, there is strong evidence suggesting that this aim has persisted (albeit to varying extents over the decades) to the present day and is perhaps most visibly exemplified in routine benefit freezes and a more recent benefit cap (Fletcher and Wright, 2018; 337). Since its implementation in 2013, for example, the benefit cap has been estimated to have saved over £100 million by placing a limit on the maximum amount of benefits any one household can receive (Beatty and Fothergill, 2018). Importantly, researchers found that capped households were 'more likely to move into employment than similar uncapped households' (DWP, 2014; 4). But even more generally, evidence has shown that the income replacement ratio (ratio of unemployment benefits to wages) of unemployment benefit has been in consistent decline since the 1980s. OECD figures suggest that the income replacement ratio for a single Jobseeker fell 'from 43 percent in 1972 to 28 per cent in 1980, to just 16 percent in 1990' and stabilising at around 13 percent from the turn of the century (Berry et al., 1995 cited in Peck, 2001; 284; OECD, 2019). As Kenway (2009; 12-3) identifies, one of the central reasons for this is down to a significant change in the way the Crisis state has uprated unemployment benefits in line with growth and inflation since the 1980s. More specifically, benefits are now 'up-rated in line with prices rather earnings' whereas prior to the eighties policymakers kept unemployment benefits in line with 'whichever of prices and earnings had gone up faster in the previous year' (Kenway, 2009; 12).

According to Kenway (2009), this form of cost-saving on unemployment benefit has, from the 1980s onwards, led to vast disparities in consumption habits between the average worker and the benefit claimant. In 2009, unemployment benefit (£64.30 in 2009) represented only '21 percent of what the average working adult household spends in total each week' and '£16 a week less than the average spend on food, clothing, fuel, power and other housing costs' (Kenway, 2009; 10). This presents a stark contrast with the post-war period where, until the end of the 1970s, the monetary value of unemployment benefit matched average household consumption per head (Kenway, 2009; 12).

According to Fletcher and Wright (2018; 337), this growing disparity has been intentionally manufactured to strengthen the incentive to work by 'depriving unemployed people of necessary income'. It is worth showing how this works on the ground (in everyday life). Below is an excerpt from Bobby who, at the point when I first met him, had lived predominantly on unemployment benefit for around two years:

> 'I just want clothes I just need clothes…you don't wanna be wearing the same clothes everyday when you're socialising. Cause then people just start to look at you and stare and shit.' (Bobby, W1)

Living on approximately sixty pounds a week meant that he was unable to participate in the activities that are customary for young men. Bobby also made it clear that it was not only going without, but being seen by others (particularly his friends) to be going without that made him 'feel shit in [him]self'. By our second meeting (approx. 3 months later), Bobby suggested that his mental health was deteriorating because of his inability to participate in leisure activities:

> 'I do fuck all. Just sit in house, smoke myself to death. That's all you can do.' (Bobby, W2)

There was an air of desperation to escape his current situation:

> 'at this moment in time, like my situation to get me off benefits, I would literally do anything part time and work. I'd work for 400 quid a month'

Bobby's words chime with a wide scholarship examining the material and emotional impacts of living in poverty on unemployment benefits. Walker (2014) and others have shown quite clearly how physical and psychological harms (particularly stigma and shame) emerge when people are deprived of an income sufficient to engage in the consumptive practices necessary to live a comfortable and respectable life in relation to other members of the class (Sayer, 2005; 120; Patrick, 2017; 65-68). What this scholarship so often fails to show, however, is how the harms of deprivation can curtail refusal activities, increase the incentive to find work and force through sales of labour power. This has been referred to previously as a form of 'negative emotional coercion' (Redman, 2020; 85) and, by following Bobby over a period of several months, it was possible to observe precisely how this played out. When I caught up with him for a third (and final) time (approx. 4 months later), he had found a job and was particularly elated at the number of 'privileges' a job afforded him:

> ‘it might not be the same for everyone but for me [having a job] its helped my depression. That were the main reason why I were depressed…It feels good, I feel like I'm worth something now…Not having to rely on taxpayers money’ (Bobby, W3)

Bobby's story is particularly revealing for a number of reasons. For one, he made it no secret that he ‘probably wouldn’t work’ if it wasn't for the money he was now receiving. This again showed how the ‘systematic erosion’ of the value of unemployment benefits can end up forcing through sales of labour power by producing a ‘deterrent effect’ (via deprivation) and increasing levels of disengagement with social security provision (cf. Peck, 2001; 184). But there was something else quite revealing about Bobby’s story, particularly concerning the direction he had taken as a response to deprivation. Bobby reported entering employment on an apprenticeship contract as a commis chef; working between 40/45 hours a week and performing identical tasks to colleagues of similar stature but at well below the minimum wage (£7.00ph). Now this is perfectly legal as employers are only mandated to pay £3.90ph for apprentice labour, and Bobby even considered himself ‘lucky’ that management decided to pay him £3.10ph more than the rate they were obliged. But taking into account the wider context, it seemed apparent that the physical and psychological impacts of deprivation—a direct result of fiscal retrenchment polices impacting unemployment benefits for a number of decades—had lured him into a highly exploitative wage relationship.

‘Bargain Basement’ Reproduction: Psychologically and Aesthetically (Re)Conditioning the Reserve Army

Alongside reforms seeking to expand and regulate the labour supply by reducing the value of various social security benefits, there have been a vast array of reforms seeking to achieve the same objective by radically altering how benefits are delivered. For example, one of the ways in which the Crisis state has set out to meet atypical labour demand and preserve the fragmented labour market design has been through a process described by some Marxists as labour power 'reproduction'. This term is not one usually found in theory/debate on welfare reform. Without going too far off the point, it originates from Marx's (2013; 115-6) belief that in order for a labour power seller to be continually exploited, that same labour power seller must have the 'means of subsistence…such as food, clothing, fuel and housing…sufficient to maintain him in his

normal state as a labouring individual'. This has since been exposed by Autonomist-Feminists as a 'slippage' in Marxist theory (De'Ath, 2018; 399). Dalla Costa and James (1972; 11) argued that labour power is not only reproduced via material subsistence, but is socially reproduced via work done to ensure that the labouring individual is able to perform to the capacity demanded by his employer. In particular, they emphasised the role of domestic work ordinarily undertaken by women in the reproduction of male labour power: 'Marx never considers the work of childbearing and child-rearing, washing, cooking, cleaning, sex and emotional care, among many other things, has typically fallen to…the category "women"' (De'Ath, 2018; 399). Cleaver (1979) developed this further, arguing that all activity which serves 'to reproduce labour power for capital…in exchange for a portion of the total social wealth' can be seen as reproductive work in the sense that it serves (inadvertently or otherwise) to better (re)condition labour power for profitable exploitation (Cleaver, 1979; 74). This is irrespective of whether its domestic work in exchange for a portion of the breadwinners wage or, in a more directly relevant example, mandatory training/work experience in exchange for an unemployment benefit.

Bringing this back to the current discussion, then, though rarely acknowledged, labour power reproduction has always been an underlying feature of social security provision in Britain. In the traditionally material sense of the term, for example, the establishment of poor law for the unemployed in the 16th century was in part designed to 'cater for measurable economic need' and ensure that unemployed labour power was provided with at least enough so that it could be 'set on work' (Slack, 1990; 1). By the early part of the 20th century, with the establishment of the public employment service (see Appendices 1.1 for more detail), the state began to reproduce unemployed labour power in other ways. In 1917, the first state provided vocational scheme was set up to provide 'skilled training for the war disabled', which was later expanded into national Government Training Centres (Showler, 1976; 81). By the end of the post-war period, in 1972, opportunities for training were once again expanded under a new Training Opportunities Scheme (TOPS) (Price, 2000; 157). The objective of TOPS was not only to provide unemployed labour power with a wider range of skills, such as those associated with 'secretarial, technical and managerial occupations, as well as semi-skilled manual training' (Showler, 1976; 85). But individuals were also able to use the employment

service to re-train and pursue new avenues into the labour market. Right up until 1988, (re)training and education appeared to be a growing function of the public employment service (King, 1995; 132). Not only were greater numbers in state funded training, but an increasing level of expenditure was being directed towards the TOPS (Showler, 1976; 82; 85; King, 1995; 132).

This all changed in the latter years of the 1980s. Since then, as can be seen below, the Crisis state has quite rapidly withdrawn the bulk of funding for publically funded training opportunities:

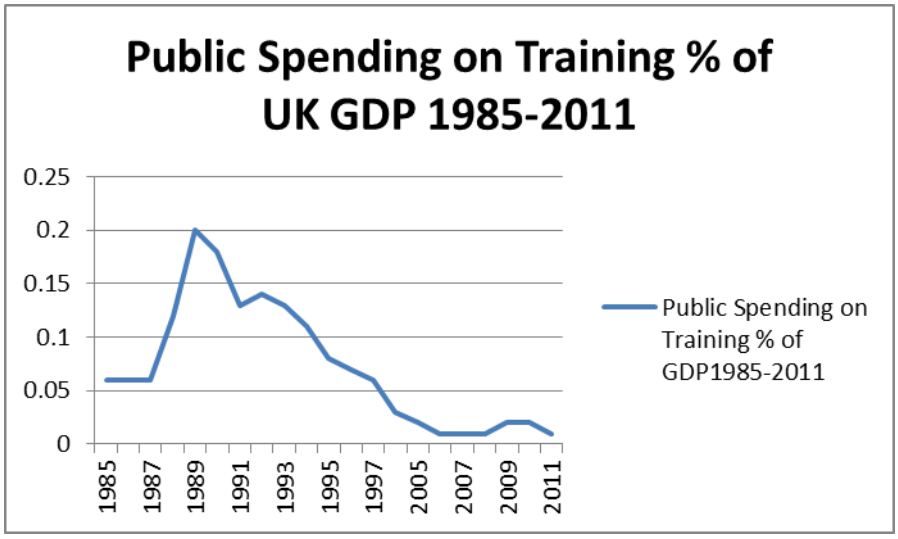


Figure 7.1. OECD stat (2019)

Yet, in spite of decisions to downscale funding, state managers have still sought to design policy and practice in ways that ensure unemployed labour power is appropriately reproduced and thus suitably conditioned for atypical labour demand. As Fletcher (1997; 178; 176) identifies, the late 1980s saw a shift of focus from the provision of training towards a 'comparatively cheap, easy to administer' set of 'measures for immediate job preparation underpinned by a range of short re-motivation programmes'. Over the years this has taken shape in a number of cost-effective schemes. Ranging from mandatory attendance at periodically commissioned 'Job Clubs' (in Jobcentre offices) to build CV's and 'motivate' claimants (cf. DWP, 2016); to requiring that claimants perform reproductive work via mandatory work experience with an employer. The latter was pushed quite heavily in the early 2000s, for example, with a series of New Deal community based placements (Peck, 2001; 304). Recalling their time

as a manager on the New Deal, Manager 2 explained how these placements would work (cf. Furlong and Cartmel, 2004; 12-14):

> ‘there would be projects that people would go on they'd go out and they'd do grass cutting and mend fences and things like that. So free labour for people. So we'd have a direct member of staff who would drive them out in a mini-bus and then they'd work there all day’ (Manager 2; Welfare-to-Work Manager)

Beyond the New Deal placements, work experience in the last decade over the last decade or has been predominantly facilitated via discretionary mandatory work activity. This is a policy tool which allows Work Coaches to order that a claimant 'undertake a work placement of 30 hours a week lasting for a month in the not-for-profit sector' (Fletcher and Wright, 2018; 337). In the present study, Bobby recalled an encounter when discretionary mandatory work activity was imposed upon him. Intriguingly, however, this work experience placement was reported as a six-week, ‘9am-3pm’ competitive interview process in a nearby warehouse. So the extent to which this took place in the ‘not-for-profit’ sector was questionable:

> ‘it was for six weeks with this warehouse… it’s on a six weeks so you need to do it everyday for 6 weeks. Everyday for six weeks unpaid…and it’s not a hundred percent job interview at the end. Cause you're in a group of sixteen people.’ (Bobby, W1)

Alongside mandatory work activity, perhaps the most common and cost-effective method of reproducing unemployed labour power seen in recent years has actually been the 'do-it-yourself job search' (Fletcher and Wright, 2018; 338). Since the late 1990s, under Jobseekers Allowance and now Universal Credit, claimants are required to both search for and provide evidence of job search activity for up to 35 hours a week. Former Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions Iain Duncan Smith (2014) understands this as ensuring claimants are 'in work to find work', transforming the claiming process into a 'job of seeking' (Boland and Griffin, 2015; 150). Thus, as roughly described by Duncan-Smith, the objective of 35-hour job search enforcement is not only to get claimants to probe for opportunities to sell their labour power, but it also evidently has a reproductive quality. By enforcing a 35 hour working week, job search activity can be seen as an attempt to emulate the routine and regularity of the standard employment relationship so as to better condition unemployed labour power for labour

market (re)entry. It does this by ensuring claimants follow instruction, performing repetitive and 'arduous' tasks (Wright, Fletcher and Stewart, 2020; 287) which, according to some prominent academics, are likely the only competences individuals require to participate in many segments of the fragmented labour market (see Graeber, 2018).

On the frontline, in practice, however, enforcing and providing feedback on job search activity was but one of a number of ways in which employment staff would take measures to support the reproduction of unemployed labour power. In some instances, workers' were devoting their time to reconciling a range of issues in claimants' private lives:

> '[I was] helping with housing and anything with what they had an issue with really. It may be that they were meant to be on the (work) programme for two years; but it may not be six months until you start actually action planning in terms of employment and employability, because you're dealing with those other issues or other barriers that they have.' (Worker 6; Welfare-to-Work Advisor)

As Jordan (2018; 594) found, it can be seen here how customer facing employment service staff sometimes acted 'as unqualified social work "key workers", or, on a lesser level, as someone to talk to who resolved participants' personal problems'. However, in the present study, this kind of work was always reported as being conducted within a wider objective of reproducing labour power. Worker 6 made clear that the end goal was always to try and eliminate personal barriers/problems with a view to moving claimants forward. 'Moving forward' was, of course, always understood synonymously as a move closer to selling labour power.

Alongside resolving an assortment of tangible barriers-to-work, workers often reported instances where they would aim to 'change mindsets' of claimants who were, for one reason or another, reluctant to selling their labour power. Of course, as already discussed in the previous chapter, the (threat of) sanction could be useful to achieve this in some instances. But actually, some workers were aware that sticks could (and did) damage relationships with claimants, which could later affect their chances of getting them off the books and/or into work. So the alternative was to try and dangle carrots. This was a strategy deployed by Worker 6, who would initially try and locate their

caseloads' interests before attempting to upsell the consumptive benefits that paid-work could provide. S/he would be:

> 'tapping into their interests. So you know "what is it that you like?" "Oh, I like gaming." "Well, wouldn't you like the latest console?"…yeah it was, its tapping into their interests and their own personal motivations rather than just work. It's like well, "you want a holiday or if you've got children, don't you want to be able to provide a good Christmas for them?"' (Worker 6; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

Commenting on the rise of service work in the new fragmented labour market design (cf. Nixon, 2009), a number of autonomist theoreticians have argued that contemporary labour processes are now decreasingly 'undertaken in view of the physical transformations of matter'. Rather, labouring activity is increasingly about 'communication' with other human beings and, within this, 'the creation of mental states, of feelings, and imagination' (Berardi, 2009; 84). Hardt and Negri (2004; 108) conceptualise this kind of activity as 'affective labour'. That is, a 'labour that produces or manipulates affects such as a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion' which could then lead to a productive outcome (from the perspective of capital) on the body and mind of the subject (Hardt and Negri, 2004; 108). As can be seen above, employment service staff would frequently imbue doses of affective labour into claimant psychologies; emphasising the benefits of work in efforts to produce positive mindsets more conducive to subordination and thus exploitation in the labour market (cf. Kaufman, 2018; 187).

Yet, affective labour in frontline employment service work was not always synonymous with eliciting positive emotions and an aspiring mind-set. On the contrary, workers in this study were fully aware of Britain's increasingly unequal labour market composition and even more aware of the types of jobs usually accessible via their service. When asked what sort of jobs were available through employment services, the general consensus was that:

> 'low, menial type warehouse, customer service, retail, cleaning… generally nine times out of 10, it's your warehouse and security, retail and cleaning and care'(Worker 6; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

As such, whilst workers needed claimants to aspire to the extent that they wanted to work in the vaguest possible sense of the term; claimants aspiring beyond the realms of

what was immediately available through their service, or immediately possible in terms of their own labour market profile and attractiveness to capital, were a threat to job outcome and off-benefit flow targets. Therefore, workers would not only use affective labour to encourage aspirations but, almost in a contrariwise motion, they would recalibrate 'unrealistic' aspirations so that they would better suit—often atypical—labour demand. Workers would frequently relay accounts of dealing with impractical employment aspirations:

> 'You'd say: "all those jobs are learning from the floor up. You have to be prepared to start a little bit lower down"' (Worker 4: Work Coach)
>
> …
>
> 'Well, let's be realistic about your job goals, you know. If you wanted to be an astronaut, what have you done in terms of getting into that sector? For me, it was like, well, if you really want to be an astronaut, then you know, we have to look at getting you a job in that kind of area, but not as an astronaut. It may be that you might start off as a cleaner. So it's about being realistic with them.' (Worker 6; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

As Kaufman (2020; 215) explains in his own auto-ethnographic research on frontline employment service delivery, 'in practice, having "realistic expectations" meant being willing to accept the widest possible range of jobs with the fewest conditions of one's own (in terms of hours, working pattern, and pay)'. What Kaufman doesn't proceed to explain, however, is how methods of inculcating 'realistic expectations' in claimants can equally be conceived as a way of affectively reproducing unemployed labour power. Such methods could be seen, as Peck (2001; 6) alludes to, as a way of 'creating workers for jobs that nobody wants' and recalibrating claimants' subjectivities in accordance with atypical labour demand.

And this was not the only way that workers would spend time trying to create 'workers for jobs that nobody wants'. As a growing body of research has found (see Boyle and DeKeere, 2019), with the rise of service industries in the downswing of the class struggle cycle, realisation of surplus value in the contemporary labour market is increasingly 'generated through successful customer-server interactions' (Williams and Connell, 2010; 351). Because of this, employers have sought to extend control over the service encounter and, within this, over workers' behaviour, their emotions 'and, increasingly, over their appearance' (Williams and Connell, 2010; 351). As such, employers require

that 'service workers "look good and sound right" for the job' and often make hiring decisions depending on whether 'appearance matches the brand' (Williams and Connell, 2010; 371; 366). The employment service workers in this study were fully aware of this, so they often made attempts to rectify any identifiable issues with claimants' appearances. Sometimes this would just entail having an honest conversation:

> ‘You know if someone insists on having, I don't know, bright pink hair with purple streaks in and they think an employer's going to take them in a front facing job where it wouldn’t meet the company's image.
>
> Interviewer: You'd have to tell them?
>
> Yeah well I would…You might need to tone down how you present yourself. It doesn’t mean you've got to change your hair, you've just maybe got to present yourself in a different way.’ (Manager 1; JCP Frontline Manager)

Other times, however, workers' would end up undertaking similar reproductive work to the housewives described by Marxist-Feminists (cf. Dalla Costa and James, 1972). It is well known that visible signifiers of poverty, such as poor dress sense or poor hygiene, can deter capital from exploiting labour power (see Van den Berg and Arts, 2018). Again, the workers in this study were cognisant of this, so they would devote time and resources to sanitising visibly poor labour power in efforts to present it as an attractive proposition to future employers:

> ‘There was one lady in [anonymous place] who is best described as a bag lady, I think. She wasn't on the streets but she was a bag lady and you could smell her the minute she came through the door. So she was more often than not given clothing or washed up and told to go get cleaned up’ (Manager 1; JCP Frontline Manager)

The idea, or so it was conveyed, was to ensure that claimants had just enough to get them into work. Workers would provide claimants with ‘travel passes, everything else, so there's no excuse, you've got transport there’ (Worker 1), whilst making "sure they've got the clothing…to go for interviews" (Manager 1). Bringing this all together then, it can be seen how labour power reproduction has more or less remained as an important objective of benefit administration/employment service delivery since its inception. However, in the context service budget cuts since the late 1980s, the way the Crisis state has carried out this objective has changed quite considerably over the last 40 years or so. State managers have pursued a range of alternative ‘bargain basement’ (Fletcher

and Wright, 2018; 338) reproduction methods; by developing a range of cost-effective policies and practices that psychologically and aesthetically reproduce unemployed labour power in accordance with atypical labour demand.

Conveyor-Belt Commodification

Alongside continual attempts to psychologically and aesthetically prepare claimants for wage labour, state managers have also set out to progress policy and practice in ways which seek to actively furnish the needs of capital by directly facilitating sales of unemployed labour power. Taken in the wider context of the class struggle cycle, these are policies and practices which can be best understood as transforming benefit administration/employment service delivery from something which, during the period of class compromise and many of the decades before, sought to protect the working class from the vagaries of an untrammelled labour market (see Showler, 1976; 19-20; Price, 2000); to something which now actively seeks to support the vicissitudes of atypical labour demand in the current fragmented labour market design (Grover and Stewart, 2002; Wiggan, 2015; DWP, 2010a; 2010b).

It's worth noting that, historically speaking, a core principle of benefit administration/employment service delivery has always been to place claimants into work (see King, 1995). However, the ways in which state managers have gone about achieving this began to change radically in the 1980s. It was at this time when the Crisis state began to redesign legislation so that placing claimants into work became less about meeting the interests of those individuals seeking work and increasingly about meeting the interests of those seeking labour power. This was most evident in the 1989 Social Security Act; a piece of legislation that legally removed the 'the right of unemployed claimants to refuse jobs on the ground that they were not "suitable"' which, until that point, 'had been defined broadly as not paying the rate for the job' (Price, 2000; 270). Following this change, at the start of a new claim a claimant could 'decide the length of a 'permitted period' up to a maximum of 13 weeks, during which [they] could refuse work outside their normal occupation and pay' (Price, 2000; 270; see also, Novak, 1997; 105). Thereafter, 'claimants were expected to widen their job search, and if they refused a vacancy offered to them by an employment service official, their benefit could be suspended and their case referred to adjudication' (Price, 2000; 270). Alongside this, less

than a decade later, the introduction of Jobseekers' Allowance saw an expansion of job search requirements and claimants were now mandated to look for and take work with a daily commuting time of up to 90 minutes each way (Adler, 2018; 36). These reforms proved to be important architecture for the fragmented labour market design and meeting atypical labour demand; particularly as research has found that the claimant unemployed are far more likely to (re-)enter the labour market on a 'temporary, part-time, self-employed' basis, 'or at a substantially lower skill level than previously' held (White and Forth, 1998; 1).

Despite these reforms being relatively successful at exposing growing numbers of the working class to aggregately declining pay and conditions, state managers in more recent years have set out to fine-tune this process (DWP, 2010a; 2010b). In particular, policymakers have been increasingly concerned that 'interactions between benefits and tax credits' (DWP, 2010b; 7) make 'working fewer than 16 hours a week' (DWP, 2010b; 10) both risky and financially unattractive; as 'the rate at which benefits and tax credits are withdrawn means that some people see no more than a few pence for every extra £1 earned' (DWP, 2010b, 7). Moreover, under the rubric of Jobseeker's Allowance prior to 2010, leaving benefits for paid work of 16+ weekly hours would result in a disqualification from entitlement and subsequent closure of any claim previously made (Turn2us, 2018). Given the impermanent nature of many jobs in the fragmented labour market, state managers recognised that this was a significant disincentive for claimants to take atypical job opportunities, as the period between redundancy and receiving income from a new claim could result in lengthy spells of deep poverty (DWP, 2010b; 12).

As such, state managers in more recent years have set out to 'ensure that people can see the clear rewards from taking all types of work outweigh the risks' (DWP, 2010b; 18). They have done this by Introducing a new (Universal Credit) benefit payment system which ensures that claims are not terminated at the point paid work begins. Instead, the claim follows the claimant into work and remains open for three months, gradually deducting 63 pence off every £1 earned in efforts to ensure that claimants are neither worse off nor taking a financial risk when entering work (DWP, 2010a; 15-7). The idea behind this is straightforward (see Dean, 2012; 356-7). The payment system seeks to foster more intensive and efficient engagement with the fragmented labour market by

‘remov[ing] barriers to temporary, flexible and part-time work’, thereby encouraging unemployed labour power to cycle in and out of work in better accord with atypical labour demand (DWP, 2017; 3). It does this by removing much of the rigmarole of signing on (and off) benefits, making sure that claimants don’t need to 'worry about making a brand new claim or any gaps in between paydays as [they] move in and out of work' (GOV, 2018). For Kris, who had several years’ experience of both Jobseeker’s Allowance and Universal Credit, this was reported as somewhat effective, making it easier to take a wider range of atypical jobs:

> ‘I’d say it makes it a lot more easier, a lot less stressful you know what I mean. Takes a load off your mind don’t it really’ (Kris, W3)

Alongside attempts to remove any obstacles and disincentives to engaging with the fragmented labour market, the Crisis state has also attempted to better furnish atypical labour demand by incrementally crafting a *new complimentary network of public, quasi-private and private employment services*. This has been achieved via two distinctive developments. *First*, Crisis state managers have, since the 1980s, actively sought to create a formal partnership agreement between the network of public and contractor employment services and temporary work agencies in the UK (Finn, 2016). It is worth quickly adding that prior to the formation of the Crisis state, during the period of ‘class compromise’, private employment services and, in particular, temporary work agencies, were met with suspicion and hostility by the Keynesian Planner state (see Forde, 2008; Appendices 5.5 for more detail). This has changed in the decades since. According to Finn (2016; 88), the current aim of this national level partnership is to drive engagement between temporary work agencies and (quasi-) public employment services and, among a host of other objectives, 'ensure claimants are aware of the benefits of working with recruitment agencies' (see also Gray, 2002; 657).

Second, as already alluded to in previous chapters, the Crisis state has also increasingly invested in private employment services and dangled fiscal incentives in exchange for job outcomes (see Wiggan, 2015). Most recently, this has taken shape in the formation of the Work (and Health) programme, which comprise a number of competing services whose income and profit margins are ultimately determined by their ability to facilitate sales of unemployed labour power (see Appendices 1.1 for more detail).

These two developments have actively encouraged a range of employment services to meet their own job outcome targets by communicating with one another and working together. They do this by combining their knowledge of the local labour demand and supply landscape to facilitate sales of labour power. Manager 2 provided detail on how this plays out in practice:

> 'We would give the perso- sounds like the White Slave trade don't it? We would give the person to a recruitment company. They would then put them into the factory. So through that loop- so the recruitment company got what they wanted which was bums on seats. We got what we wanted which was a job outcome. They would then deal with the client, we would then go back to the recruitment company and say, "Are they still in employment?" And that way we could track it easier as well… So they'd get paid- bizarre really, isn't it? So we got paid for them here. We gave them to the recruitment company there. They gave them to the company here. Who then paid them, so they [the recruitment agency] got free labour' (Manager 2; Welfare-to-Work Manager)

The way this works is that public and contracted employment service offices usually have one or a number of employer facing (or 'employer liaison') officers whose task is to build relationships with local capital and have their finger on the pulse of any changing/arising demand for labour. These workers would essentially act as middle-(wo)men between capital and (unemployed) labour. Similar to how I described a 'network of surveillance' earlier chapter six, this same set of actors simultaneously appeared to function as some kind of complimentary *labour regulation network*. More precisely, employer liaison staff would work and frequently communicate with frontline employment service staff, recruitment agencies and local employers to compile information on both the characteristics of current employer demands and the characteristics of the unemployed labour supply:

> 'The boss (employer) would ring me up and say, "I've got a vacancy. This is what I'm looking for. This is exactly what I want. What have you got? and I'll interview them? Send me a range and I'll interview them." And that's what a lot of employers did. So I would have copies of CVs. I'd talk to work coaches.' (Manager 1; JCP Frontline Manager)

The effect of these complimentary networks was to not only allow employment service workers to hit job outcome targets more easily but, more broadly, it allowed employment services to respond quicker and more efficiently to changing demand,

thereby providing a more intricate synthesis of local labour supplies with any fluctuations in local labour demands:

> ‘sometimes they [employer liaison officer] had vacancies coming in where they were wanting half a dozen people so you’d have to stop what you were doing and quickly put them forward for that’ (Worker 1; Welfare-to-Work advisor).

As Briken and Taylor (2018) highlight in their dissection of Amazon’s hiring practices, the complimentary arrangement described above was beneficial to some employers in a number of ways. Not only did this arrangement further balkanise workers and strengthen the disciplinary and divisive effects characteristic of a fragmented labour market design. But the availability of labour power through these networks allowed some firms to 'finely calibrat[e] its human capital in anticipation of, or in response to, variable customer demand' by enabling them to turn away workers more or less on the spot in periods when they were no longer required (Briken and Taylor, 2018; 451). Correspondingly, employment services would mirror this by adopting a kind of ‘conveyor belt’ function—‘it was just like a conveyor belt you know of people. One after the other. Bang bang bang bang bang. So there was no, you know, yeah, no feeling in it. It was just a case of get ‘em in’ (Worker 1). In other words, employment service workers would regularly recycle unemployed labour power and redirect it to wherever it was required (cf. Fox Piven and Cloward, 1972; 26). Worker 2 outlined this explicitly by recalling the experiences of a young jobseeker s/he frequently worked with:

> ‘He’d get there and the factory would say, “We haven't got work for you today”; it would just be an endless cycle of, it'd be happening all the time. Then you would have to ring the other factories like, "Have you got any work?"…ringing like plastics, recycling, like anywhere low skill that you could just get him in tomorrow or something.’ (Worker 2; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

Some of the workers provided further detail, describing how targets and incentives were explicitly designed to facilitate this ‘conveyor belt’ type system. It is widely known that employment services receive staggered job outcome payments after a claimant has been in work for 4 weeks, 13 weeks and 26 weeks respectively (see Finn, 2016). What is less known, however, is that the same claimant doesn’t have to work consecutively, or in the same job over this 4, 13, 26 week period for the employment service to hit these

job outcome targets (cf. Wiggan, 2015; 382). As such, workers would hit these targets by recycling claimants, placing them in whatever odd-jobs were available and piecing together different strands of labour market activity:

> ‘what they could do is piece it together. So If somebody worked for two weeks, fell out of work, back into work four, fell out of work, went back in to work. So you'd have to add the weeks together to then get the claim 26 weeks’ (Worker 2; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

Undeniably, the key driver of this ‘conveyor-belt’ type system was not only job outcome targets, but how rigidly they seemed to be enforced by management:

> ‘He'd [the manager] say, “We've got to get these outcomes. We've got to get these jobs. We've got to get people into work or otherwise it's your jobs”’ (Worker 7; Welfare-to-Work Advisor).

It was described how contractor employment service managers would frequently try and “squeeze the fruit” by ramping up the pressure on workers and, where necessary, disciplining underperformers in efforts to increase job outcome numbers. In some instances, managers would do this via strategies seeking to increase the rate of exploitation over their workers:

> ‘You have to get four people into work every month, but if you didn't get four people into work, they'd roll on to the next month, so the next month, you'd get eight, then 12’ (Worker 6; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

The pressure of job outcome targets would, as might be expected, cascade onto the frontline and intensify efforts made by workers to commodify unemployed labour power. For example, workers frequently spoke of how the pressure to hit target would encourage others to personally escort claimants to interviews:

> ‘the recruitment manager would literally take people right to the door and wait for them.’ (Worker 7; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

The pressure of specific 4, 13 and 26 week *sustained* job outcome targets would not only encourage workers to continually plug gaps in the labour market and place claimants in work. But, in some instances, workers would continue to work on the labour power they had already successfully sold; performing affectively and attempting to convince claimants who were already in-work but in some way discontent to stay put and remain active:

> ‘We do obviously have pep talks to somebody who's buckling a little bit…I had that myself. I helped somebody get into a retail position and they were doing 16 hours. Erm and I think the second week they'd been there, they came into the office and said, “I'm not enjoying it”. It was the management at this place they were finding it a bit of a challenge, so I was desperate to try, not necessarily just keep them there, but I just said, “Look”. We had the conversation about, “I know you might be struggling with this right now, but let's try and find you something else while you're there”’ (Worker 7; Welfare-to-Work Advisor)

This is perhaps an important point to conclude (this subsection) on. Without going too far off the point, in recent years benefit administration/employment services have been marketed as a ‘customer service’ designed to serve the needs and interests of the claiming surplus population, by helping them to ‘focus and get on’ with making positive and rewarding choices in the labour market (see Talbot et al., 2005; Duncan-Smith, 2014; 2016). Yet, the testimonies of the workers in this study (particularly those with +30/40 years’ experience) suggested that benefit administration/employment services had actually come to be quite the antithesis:

> ‘what I was sold is completely different from what the actual work was.’
>
> Interviewer: What were you sold and what was different?
>
> ‘The business manager actually sold me a job where I thought I was actually going to be helping more holistically with people, moving them on, but the job itself was very, very target driven … the real goal was outcomes. Job outcomes.’ (Worker 7; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

Employment services appeared more accurately as a customer service for employers. One manager even made this quite explicit in their differential treatment of employers and claimants:

> ‘I would sift through CVs, I would take CVs to employers. I had a great relationship with employers because I treated them as I would want to be treated and I'd say- if I've got some CVS that I thought "Well, hmm maybe not the right people for that job," I would say, I would add, "You might not want to employ that person, but I want some feedback on what they're like on interviews”’
>
> …

> ‘I know people now who are- my son's partner’s friends, if they're in the house I can't stay cause they know where I worked. And they aren't sick they are just people who don't want to work.’
>
> Interviewer: Why can't you stay?
>
> ‘Because I can't stand them...I would fall out with them’ (Manager 1; JCP Frontline Manager).

Repairing and Recalibrating the Reserve Army Mechanism: A Successful Project?

Over the last two chapters I have attempted to show how the Crisis state has set out to repair and recalibrate the functioning of the reserve army mechanism via restructuration of the social security system. I have argued that the state has done this by, on the one hand (1), strengthening and/or introducing a range of mutually reinforcing policies and practices which seek to identify, correct and thus prevent any refusal activities/anti-work behaviours present within the claiming fractions of the reserve army. Whilst, on the other hand (2), strengthening and/or introducing another range of complimentary policies and practices which seek to ensure that the reserve army is both exploitable and intricately synchronised to the vicissitudes of atypical labour demand in the current fragmented labour market design. I will conclude this chapter by briefly assessing the extent to which this has been a successful project for the Crisis state.

This is a complex and difficult question to answer decisively. Perhaps the most accurate way of determining success or failure would be to look at the effect of social security restructuration on the rate of unemployment, the rate of long-term unemployment and the labour market outcomes of the claiming surplus population. This is difficult because all three can be and are affected by a plethora of factors which have nothing to do with reform. Take the rate of unemployment and long term unemployment for example; both have on aggregate fallen drastically since the Crisis state came into full operation (see below):

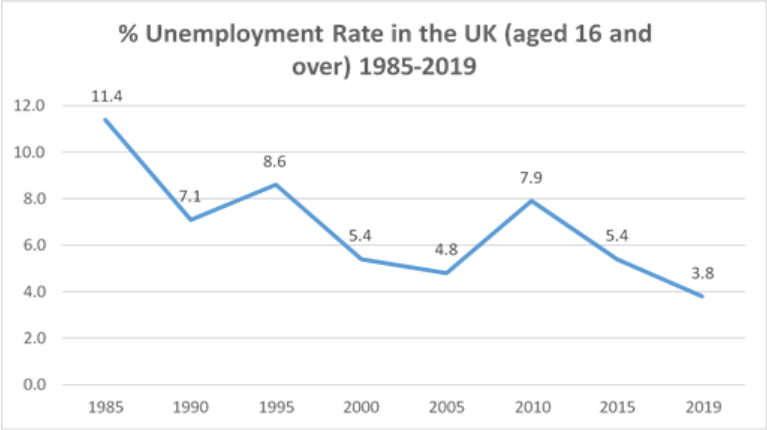


Figure 7.2. Office for National Statistics, 2020d

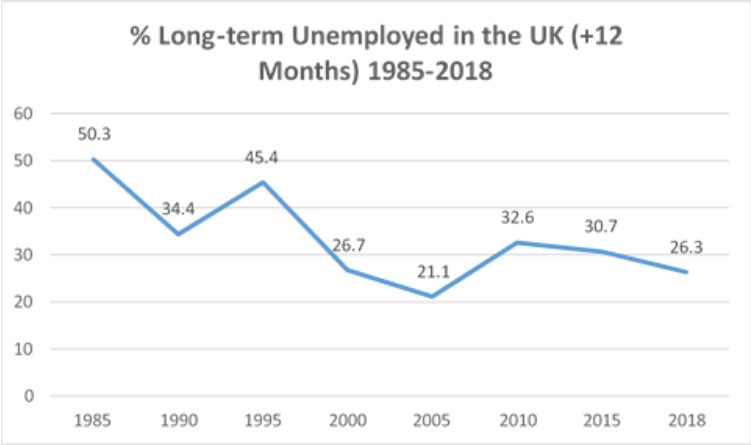


Figure 7.3. OECD stat 2020

Whilst social security reforms have certainly played an important role in contributing to these figures at certain points (see Price, 2000; 241-252), they are both undoubtedly the product of a range of other unrelated factors. To take a few rudimentary examples; the 1980s and beyond not only saw expanding service-oriented industries absorb large quantities of labour power (Goos and Manning, 2007), but unemployment rates in 1985 were also abnormally high compared to previous decades and were largely manufactured by the Crisis state's attack on unruly workers and unproductive manufacturing industry (MacInnes, 1987). As such, while looking at aggregate (long-term) unemployment rates provides some important and necessary context (hence why it is included above), determining the extent to which social security restructuration has affected the labour market activity of the reserve army requires consideration of research which has *specifically* examined the extent of their relationship.

This is precisely what Abigail McKnight and colleagues (2000; 1) did between 1995 and 1998; conducting 'survey interviews with two nationally representative samples of 5000

unemployed people' with one sample 'drawn before the implementation of Jobseeker's Allowance, the other afterwards'. As the reader should be aware, it was during these years and the introduction of Jobseeker's Allowance where the Crisis state successfully imposed a range of social security reforms and significantly intensified its efforts to decompose and regulate the reserve army of labour (cf. Peck, 2001; see above and previous chapter). So the ingenuity and importance of this particular study was to compare the labour market activity of surplus populations before and after these reforms.

Among their key findings, McKnight et al. (2000; 117) found that the introduction of Jobseeker's Allowance 'increase[d] the chances of longer term recipients moving off benefit'. This is particularly important, as the long-term unemployed are a sub-group persistently viewed by state managers as most likely to comprise the most subversive and resistant (to exploitation) members of the reserve army (see Cameron, 2011; Price, 2000, 240). Moreover, McKnight et al. (2000; 79) also found that 'approximately one-half' of all those leaving benefits for work were entering atypical forms of employment. And, of equal if not more importance, 'that Jobseeker's Allowance recipients were much more likely than their counterparts under the previous benefit regime to leave for full-time work' (McKnight et al., 2000; 97); particularly as Jobseeker's Allowance 'interacts with the local labour market so that people living in areas with more buoyant local economies move off benefit more quickly' (McKnight et al., 2000; 117). The table below demonstrates significant percentage increases in the number of jobseekers entering work after the stricter Jobseeker's Allowance benefit regime was implemented:

Economic Activity Immediately after Leaving Benefit by Length of Time (weeks) Unemployed								
	Pre-Jobseeker's Allowance Benefit Regime				Post-Jobseeker's Allowance Benefit Regime			
Time Period (Months)	<6	6<11	11<21	21+	<6	6<11	11<21	21+
Entered Paid Work	67	61	67	56	83	80	80	72

Table 7.1: Source adapted from McKnight et al. (2000; 97)

Another important finding was the effect that the introduction of Jobseeker's Allowance appeared to have on the 'flexibility' of the claiming surplus populations. According to McKnight et al (2000; 56-7), 'eighty per cent of the post-Jobseeker's Allowance cohort were prepared to take shift work, six percentage points more than the pre-Jobseeker's Allowance cohort'. Additionally, '82 per cent of respondents following the introduction of Jobseeker's Allowance were prepared to accept a temporary job compared with 70 per cent of the pre-Jobseeker's Allowance cohort' (McKnight et al., 2000; 57). Such evidence suggests that social security reforms were somewhat successful at disciplining the reserve army and re-conditioning its subjectivities in accordance with atypical labour power demands.

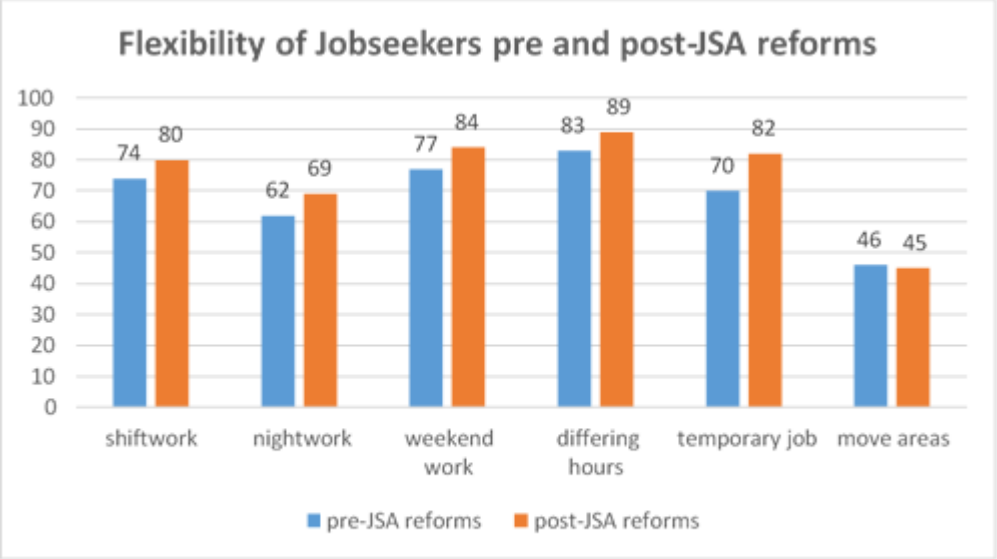


Figure 7.4. McKnight et al. (2000; 57)

A similar research study to McKnight et al.'s was conducted around fifteen years later, reporting some similar findings. Out of a sample of 9,000 Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support claimants who had ceased claiming benefits in 2011, 60 percent (5400) entered paid employment and, of this 60 percent, 50 percent reported entering atypical employment (Adams, et al., 2012; 56-59). More recent qualitative research draws some productive parallels with these figures. Of particular note, a team of researchers interviewed 339 benefit claimants 'two or three times' over a two-year period (between 2013-2018), finding that the present social security system was largely ineffective in moving claimants into *sustained* employment (Welfare Conditionality Project, 2018; 18-19). Rather, 241 out of 339 (71%) exhibited 'recurrent movements between one short-term, low-paid, insecure job and

another; interspersed with periods when people returned to unemployment or incapacity benefits, as contracts ended or illness/impairment intervened' (Welfare Conditionality Project, 2018; 18-19).

Given that 'evidence on [the effects of] workfare is limited' (Crisp and Fletcher, 2008; 2), it is worth quickly looking at identical research conducted in similar economies. According to Mead (2004; 198), in the American state of Wisconsin 'officials marvelled at how quickly recipients abandoned welfare for jobs, even people who might have seemed unemployable', once stricter work requirements had come into operation. As Crisp and Fletcher (2008; 10) note, a series of experimental workfare programmes and the soon after the introduction of Wisconsin Works (W-2) in 1997 aided an '80 per cent fall in welfare caseloads in the decade to 2000'; around 'one-half and two-thirds of leavers found unsubsidised work at some point in each of the three years after welfare' (Crisp and Fletcher, 2008; 10). Moreover, 'less than half' of those who had found work 'were continuously employed in this [three year] period' (Crisp and Fletcher, 2008; 10), which again could indicate significant levels of atypical work activity.

Taking the available evidence into consideration then, on aggregate, it seems as though social security restructuring has been somewhat successful in (1) preventing refusal activities and (2) forcing through sales of labour power on atypical terms and conditions. However, as a small but growing body of research has been arguing over the last decade or so, this has come at some cost to both classes. I'll conclude by going off on a tangent and putting across a few points on this.

On the one hand, as Fletcher (2019; 418) has repeatedly stressed, the off-flow effects of social security restructuration do not always result in exploitation later down the line. Claimants leaving benefits sometimes turn to informal support (Redman, 2020; 93) and/or the informal economy (Devany, 2017; Fletcher, 2019). Whilst others move into (survival) crime (Welfare Conditionality Project, 2018; 18), up to and including direct theft of commodities (a.k.a. potential surplus value) owned by capital (see Fletcher and Flint, 2018; 785-87; Wright, Fletcher and Stewart, 2020; 291). In these respects, therefore, social security restructuration can displace and (re)incur costs in other places for capital (in its totality across the nation). As such, whilst the Crisis state has attempted to drastically reduce social security expenditure (as part of its efforts to restore capitalist

class profitability/domination: see Chapter five 'Social Security Restructuring'), some of its efforts to decompose and regulate (insubordinate) surplus populations will likely produce effects that are counterintuitive to retrenchment and instead increase costs in other non-productive areas of the economy. I'm not aware of any research which has calculated these costs but it might be worth pointing to one very brief, related example. According to the National Audit Office (2016; 43), in 2015 the DWP estimated that it spent over £240m a year administering 'conditions and sanctions', yet the total sum of 'benefits not paid due to sanctions' is estimated to have only amounted to £132 million.

On the other hand, as Grover (2019) argues, efforts to decompose and regulate unemployed labour power have also incurred a human cost for the working class (see also Cooper and Whyte, 2017). Between 2012 and 2014, the DWP carried out internal 'peer reviews' of the deaths of 49 benefit claimants, finding 'that in ten cases the claimant had had their benefits sanctioned' (Pring, 2017; 54; see also Grover, 2019). The introduction of a new Work Capability Assessment process 'was associated with an additional 590 suicides' between 2010 and 2013 (Barr et al., 2015 cited in Mills, 2018; 316). Whilst the DWP's own 'mortality statistics show that 2,380 people died between 2011 and February 2014 after being found 'fit-to-work', and a further 7,200 people died after having their Employment and Support Allowance made conditional on their participation in groups that would prepare them for employment' (Mills, 2018; 303; see also Ryan, 2015)–although the Crisis state has stressed that 'any causal effect between benefits and mortality cannot be assumed from these statistics' (DWP, 2015; 2). Grover (2019) argues that these effects are 'contradictory' to the objectives of social security restructuration and the logic of capital accumulation more generally. As, in efforts to decompose and regulate the unemployed, restructuration has actually ended up 'social murdering' potentially exploitable labour power.

But there is another interpretation of this evidence to consider. As Redman (2020; 96) alludes to, those whom are more likely to receive sanctions and/or leave their claim and/or die as a result of social security restructuration are 'more often those unable to demonstrate the necessary behaviours' and/or 'competences commonly required to participate in the labour market'. Not only is this evidenced in statistics presented above, which suggest that those most vulnerable to death are those with complex mental and/or physical health problems (cf. Grover, 2019; 345-7). But this is also

evidenced in research which has found that those more likely to receive sanctions and/or close their claim are synonymously those experiencing drug, health, and/or competency problems (Batty et al., 2015).

As such, whilst social security restructuration undoubtedly produces some contradictory effects insofar as it (likely) increases spending in other non-productive areas of the economy, evidence of 'social murder' could also be read as perfectly consistent with the objectives of social security restructuration and the general logic of capital accumulation. This is because social security restructuration has proven to be somewhat useful in 'alleviating fiscal claims' of those who are 'in some way unlikely to be of immediate value to capital'; by shifting off benefits and/or culling members of the working class 'possessing behaviours and/or circumstances which were not readily exploitable under a wage relation' (Redman, 2020; 96). This would suggest that social security restructuring has not only been somewhat successful at 'decomposing' and 'regulating' unemployed labour power. But it has also had some success in deterring those least likely to make (direct, economic) contributions to the total wealth from making legitimate fiscal claims upon the total wealth.

8. From Command to Resistance: Refusal and (Dis)Valorisation on the Peripheries of the Labour Market

Chapter Overview

The last chapter concluded by arguing that social security restructuration has been, on aggregate, successful at decomposing refusal activity and regulating unemployed labour power in accordance with atypical labour demand. However, as I plan to demonstrate in this chapter, there is an emerging body of evidence (including the present study) which suggests that this is by no means a foregone conclusion on the ground. On the contrary, in practice, surplus populations are still finding new ways to navigate, negate and ultimately refuse command channelled through social security restructuration.

It's worth quickly adding before proceeding, as a number of academics have noted over the years, 'there is a strong taboo on researching the actual behaviour of people living in poverty' (see Groves, 2002; 56). Researchers have been reluctant to focus on agency and, in particular, refusal activity evident among the reserve army—although this might now be changing slightly in other countries (see Casey, 2018; Finn, 2019). This is not only true of social policy/poverty researchers. But it is perhaps equally if not more true of researchers and activists who—guided by the logic of class composition and the same (cycle of class struggle) theory of capitalist development presented hitherto—have actively sought to use sociological methods for positive change and fight back against capitalist restructuration in Britain (see https://notesfrombelow.org/ Cant and Woodcock, 2020; Kearsey, 2020).

For the present study, as well as for autonomist Marxism and revolutionary strategy more generally in fact, such reluctance to explore refusal activity among the reserve army remains problematic on a number of grounds. Not only has it appeared to pave the way for bourgeois social theorists (cf. Murray, 1990; Mead, 1991) and their views on dependency, fraud, criminality (etc.) 'to fill a social scientific vacuum, and exert a disproportionate and distorting influence on policy' (Jordan, 1998; 204 cited in Groves, 2002; 56). But perhaps more importantly, the lack of such research makes it difficult to

gauge the extent to which refusal activity can be converted in more powerful forms of unemployed self-organisation against capitalist restructuration.

As such, in what follows I hope to make *some very small and tentative steps* towards bridging this gap. I will do this by shifting the focus of the inquiry from illustrating the cycle of class struggle in Britain and the restoration/preservation of capitalist profitability/command through (social security) restructuration (as seen in the last four chapters). Instead, the present chapter will *deepen the inquiry and move further below* by exploring the ways in which members of the reserve army are (re)acting to/actively resisting social security restructuration and performing a range of refusal activities in the current phase of the class struggle cycle. Following this, I will explore the context underlying these refusal activities. In other words, I will attempt to offer a determination of the possible constraints facing the young men I spoke to, the intentions which lay beneath their (re)actions and the meaning claimants gave to the choices they made. Finally, I will draw up some tentative conclusions assessing the extent to which such activity could serve as fertile ground for projects seeking positive social change via (self-) organised class struggles 'from below'. As the reader should recall, the purpose of all this is to fulfil the second research objective and (2) examine whether there is scope for struggle, resistance and self-organisation among those on the receiving end of workfarist welfare reform.

'Chatting Shit' in the Jobcentre: Refusing Command at the Street-Level

The last two chapters revealed how Crisis state managers have strengthened and/or introduced a range of complimentary policies and practices to *decompose* refusal activities/anti-work behaviours present within the reserve army and *regulate* unemployed labour power in accordance with atypical labour demand. In spite of a limited evidence base, it appears as though quantitatively this has been a successful project from the perspective of capital and the Crisis state. In other words, the evidence suggests that social security restructuration has reduced scope for refusal activity and pushed increasing numbers of the reserve army into atypical forms of employment, while disproportionately deterring the least exploitable labour power from claiming out-of-work benefits altogether.

However, despite its quantitative success, there was also a wealth of evidence in this study—which is supported by evidence emerging in other countries (Casey, 2018; Finn, 2019)—suggesting that, qualitatively, this is actually by no means a foregone conclusion. Much akin to how autonomists have mused about working class subjectivity in the past; the claiming surplus populations are 'far from being passive object[s] of capitalist designs' (Dyer-Witheford, 1999; 65). Rather, in the face of attempts made by the Crisis state to decompose and regulate unemployed labour power, surplus populations are still constantly finding new ways to navigate, negate and ultimately refuse command channelled through social security restructuration.

In this study, the dominant ways in which members of the reserve army were negating decomposition and regulation were through activities which would perhaps be best described by James C. Scott (1985; xvi) as 'everyday forms of peasant resistance'. Despite being almost forty years apart and in two radically different political, economic, social and cultural (but nonetheless capitalist) territories, there are a lot of synergies between Scott's findings and those found in the present study, so I'm going to briefly side-track before continuing and explain his work.

Scott lived and conducted ethnographic researched over a two year period (1978-80) in a rural Malaysian rice-farming village at a time of major technological development and subsequent politico-economic uncertainty for the rice-farming peasantry. To keep it brief, the farm owning class were beginning to incorporate combine harvesters into their labour processes. This not only dramatically increased profits yielded, but meant that farm owners 'had little need to hire poor villagers' (Scott, 1985; 77). As such, growing numbers of the peasantry were becoming displaced from their means of reproduction, while those who remained in employment experienced 'a loss of nearly half the wages' previously received for their labour power (Scott, 1985; 76).

The central focus of Scott's work was to examine how the peasantry responded to these changes. Curiously, despite rising unemployment and rapidly expanding income inequality between the classes, Scott demonstrated how the Malaysian peasantry remained outwardly docile. In other words, there was never any overt political response. The peasantry rarely responded through acts of 'open insubordination' (Scott, 1985; 33) to authority and never did they rally to organise and perform collective acts of refusal against the landowning class. However, owing in large part to the peasantry's class

composition as a 'diverse class of "low classness", scattered across the countryside, often lacking the discipline and leadership that would encourage opposition of a more organised sort' (Scott, 1985; 35), what Scott found in abundance were covert forms of refusal activity against growing inequality and displacement from wealth. More precisely, Scott (1985; 29) unearthed an array of 'everyday weapons of relatively powerless groups', which took shape in varieties of 'foot-dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth' (Scott, 1985; 29).

Whilst, according to Scott (1985; 32-3), these forms of struggle may appear on the surface as very different to grandiose refusal activities (strike action etc.) depicted in popular illustrations of binary class conflict, 'what everyday forms of resistance share with the more dramatic public confrontations is of course that they are intended to mitigate or deny claims made by superordinate classes or to advance claims vis-à-vis those superordinate classes'. In other words, 'such claims have ordinarily to do with the material nexus of class struggle–the appropriation of land, labour, taxes, rents, and so forth' (Scott, 1985; 33). Yet, these 'everyday weapons' possess a number of key departures from overt forms of refusal activity which make them significantly more attractive propositions for relatively powerless, atomised and marginalised individuals. For those harnessing these weapons, and this is a really crucial point to take note, their utility lay in the fact that they 'require little or no coordination or planning; they often represent a form of individual self-help; and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms' (Scott, 1985; 29). Put another way, these forms of refusal aren't so much trying to 'overthrow or transform a system of domination' and exploitation (Scott, 1986; 30). The intention underlying such activity is 'rather to survive—today, this week, this season—within it' (Scott, 1986; 30).

Refusing Decomposition

Now, whilst it would of course strain credulity to suggest that the conditions which confronted the Malaysian peasantry are entirely identical to those presently confronting the claiming surplus populations in Britain; what they do share in common, I would argue, is a marginal or precarious relationship to the economy and an antagonistic relationship to both the superordinate class (capital) and the mechanisms upon which it

relies (the Crisis state) to forcefully articulate its interests. In the present study, perhaps among the most (in)visible manifestations of this antagonistic relationship was found in the covert counter-actions taken by benefit claimants to resist the many efforts taken by the Crisis state in recent decades to decompose refusal activities present among the reserve army of labour.

In particular, as the reader might recall from the previous chapters, since the mid-1980s, one of the main ways in which Crisis state managers have set out decompose unemployed labour power has been through ratcheting up efforts to monitor claimants and probe for signs of refusal activity on the frontline (see Chapter six: 'Surveillance'). In knowledge of this, some claimants would be careful about on what platform and with whom (including me) they would share information about illicit activity with, and/or actively conceal activities which may be perceived by authority as insubordinate and/or felonious. It has already been shown how frontline staff would sometimes use social media sites to probe for evidence of benefit fraud. Curtis, who was one of a number dabbling in and out of cash-in-hand work and selling drugs, was fully aware of this:

> 'You know what you've gotta be careful what you put on Facebook as well. Because my friend were on jobcentre and he put that he were doing some work for someone on Facebook. And they actually found out and sanctioned him' (Curtis, W1)

Avoiding detection wouldn't be a straightforward matter of regulating the information he published on social media sites. When I met him, like many (not all) of the other young men in this study, he was living in supported accommodation with key workers on site from early in the morning until late evening. While I got to know many of these workers and most seemed to turn a blind eye to minor illicit activity (e.g. drug consumption), they were quite stringent when it came to monitoring residents' income and, if deemed necessary, were obligated to report instances of benefit fraud. Curtis was fully of aware of this, so he would again take further measures to avoid detection:

> 'I used to walk out here but I used to go in clothes like this [casual; tracksuit] and wear my work clothes underneath when I were doing cash in hand…then when I come back from work I'll put these clothes back on and I'll wash my hands and face before I come back' (Curtis, W1)

Fraud wasn't the only form of activity that required some form of concealment. Sometimes, as Watkins (2006; 30) found, 'concealment' takes shape directly in benefit

offices as ‘the calculated presentation of information regarding one's case to a welfare caseworker and the purposeful omission or altering of pertinent details'. This was precisely what Kris did when having to report a change in circumstances to the Jobcentre. It is well known that if a claimant loses a job of their own accord, either be it through resigning voluntarily or getting the sack, then this is understood as a refusal of work and can render a claim for unemployment benefit ineligible. Having been sanctioned for this in the past, Kris adapted and camouflaged the circumstances surrounding his loss of work accordingly:

> ‘recently I lied when I've been sacked and that. If you get sacked you've lost your job of your own accord…so you're not getting benefits…so with it being agency I've just been saying that works ended’ (Kris, W1)

Alongside concealment, another commonly practiced method of navigating surveillance was to find novel ways of speeding up street-level encounters and work-focused interviews in the Jobcentre. Often, although the extent to which they actually did this varied considerably from claimant to claimant in this study, claimants are required to attend to bi-weekly face-to-face reviews with frontline employment service workers (see previous chapter). These are meant to last around thirty minutes, although more often they were reported as taking far less time and occasionally far longer. The main purpose of work-focused interviews are to allow frontline staff to probe for refusal activity by examining claimants’ proof of work search activity and/or proof of any other obligations set out in personalised Claimant Commitments. For some claimants, often depending on their Work Coach, this was quite a nervy affair and particularly if they had not fulfilled their work-related obligations over the previous fortnight. As such, some developed strategies of speeding the encounter up:

> ‘I'll stop talking and be like “what time is it?’ “they’ll tell ya and I'll be like “ahhh shit. I've got doctors now.” And they'll be like “oh I'll make it quick then”’ (Baz, W1)

Curtis would take this further, presenting himself deceptively as active labour power:

> ‘Like for the past few week I've been going in and saying I've got unpaid work every day. So I've got fifteen minutes to be out, so you need to sign me on and get me out of here. And its been working. But I can’t keep that lie up forever. So I'm gonna have to think of a new'un.’ (Curtis, W1)

Sometimes this was to try and avoid any excessive scrutiny of job-search evidence. But in other instances—'You're just feeling more shit as the longer you're sat in there you feel more shit about yourself being in there. So the quicker you're in, the quicker you wanna get out' (Bobby, W1)—speed up was a response to the customary shame/embarrassment that tended to hang over trips to the Jobcentre (cf. Patrick, 2017).

Another way in which participants would navigate surveillance of their job-search evidence and any subsequent threat of discipline/punishment was to, where possible, directly manipulate their Claimant Commitment. Peter was one of a small handful who reported more frequent visits (sometimes weekly) to the Jobcentre and, in the past, had experienced very meticulous monitoring of his job-search activity. Consequently, he tried 'to keep [his] Claimant Commitment vague, the vaguer it is the more you can get away with; (Peter, W1).

Despite the use of such strategies, in line with sanctioning statistics (see Adler, 2018; 55), claimants frequently reported getting caught out for minor infractions such as being late for an appointment or failing to do enough job search. Yet, getting caught out didn't always lead directly to punishment. In some instances, 'effective "performances" of vulnerability' (Brown, 2014; 382) were used to escape sanctions for non-compliance:

> 'I didn't do my jobsearch. But obviously I chatted shit and I was just like "aw like love I've got no money I'm gonna be on my arse for another month and that like what am I gonna do?, what dya want me to do? scrape bins out flippin town and that I'm not a tramp I went, I went can't you just, can you just sort me out this one time cause obviously I do, do my job search this is the first time I've not done it". And she was like "ah I'll see what I can do." She come back and she's like "you're not gonna be sanctioned cause I've messaged the decision makers. Erm but anything happens like this again you will definitely be sanctioned." I was like "alright then." But I were happy with that. Couldn't believe that.' (James, W1)

There is now a wealth of research demonstrating how, particularly in the latest phase of the class struggle cycle and the expanding service economy (Hardt and Negri, 2004; 108), increasing numbers of the active army are expected to 'induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others' (Hochschild, 1983; 7). There is far less research, however, demonstrating how members of the reserve army are also inducing feeling to negate punishment and retain

benefit receipt. As can be seen above, James performed vulnerability (Brown, 2014; 382) and 'peddle[d] [his] own misfortune to increase [his] chances of…avoid[ing] sanction' (Mitchell, 2019; 9). At the same time, James attempted to shore up his usually compliant manner in the mind of his Work Coach ('I do, do my jobsearch this is the first time I've not done it')—all of which was reported as contrived effort to 'produce the proper state of mind'.

In a number of other instances, however, participants were not so much trying to induce feeling in their Work Coach as much as they were trying 'to mask or diffuse [their own] socially unacceptable feelings of anger' (Peterie et al., 2019; 804) through 'containment[s] of hostility' and 'suppression[s] of resentment' (Southwood, 2011; 55). Without going too far off the point, in chapter six (see Off-flow and Dehumanisation), it was shown how frontline staff weren't just monitoring, disciplining and, where necessary, punishing claiming surplus populations for non-compliance. But alongside this, the introduction of sanctioning targets and more recent changes to the performance metrics governing frontline staff—called benefit 'off-flows'—encouraged both workers and managers to develop techniques of falsely inflating sanctioning targets, dissuading claims and shifting claimants off the books. In particular, it was revealed how a combination of off-flow targets and 'hidden managerial methods' seemed to 'dehumanise' claimants in the eyes of frontline staff, encouraging them to find ways of disrespecting and antagonising their caseloads. Some claimants were fully aware of the efforts some frontline staff made to antagonise them and subsequently managed their own emotions ostensibly as a way of resisting disrespect and preserving their claim:

> 'she'll purposely do stuff to try and like, try and get a raise out of me. You know what I'm saying? Trying to get a reaction and that out of me … she'll say 'aw you smell today'. She said "aw you got bad hygiene today" you know what I'm saying, saying that publically. She'll say to me "imagine you had a job and you went to the interview like that"' …
>
> Interviewer: What did you say?
>
> 'I lowed it [slang for let it pass without reaction] man. I said "alright man". You know what I'm saying cause I knew! If I said- cause I know I'm being monitored. So I just put my pride aside init … I feel like she's just took the piss out of my life … obviously me I could easily react to it yeah, but I don't want to react you know what I'm saying?' (Abshir, W1)

Despite efforts to suppress his emotions, Abshir still managed to receive a sanction later down the line for missing an appointment to attend his mother's funeral. The sanction ostensibly achieved its desired intention, leaving him destitute and encouraging him to take a job as a warehouse operative approximately 15 miles away.

In other instances, however, disrespect and sanctions were not so effective at shifting claimants off the books. Sometimes, claimants would go further than remaining docile and suppressing feeling. Peter recalled a time where his Work Coach:

> 'was trying to imply that erm based on my appearance I had an odour. Which wasn't true because I'm a labourer. I have like well worn clothes…I ended up taking my support worker down. And she witnessed it herself. Erm, while Leanne [pseudonym] sat down with me. She was on her best behaviour. Not Leanne -
>
> Interviewer: the Work Coach?
>
> Yeah. Erm I was actually shocked I felt quite happy, I felt like she was being quite nice.' (Peter, W1)

In their research on benefit advocacy organisation in New Zealand, Baker and Davis (2018; 535) found that 'beneficiary advocates help to actively resist the operational logic of dissuasion that defines contemporary workfare'. Not only do they 'advise beneficiaries about the benefits for which they are eligible, and assist them in demonstrating their eligibility', but they also 'provide advice and assistance for beneficiaries to avoid sanctions' (Baker and Davis, 2018; 543). It can be seen in the excerpt above how Peter utilised his support worker to similar effect. In the face of fortnightly disrespect as well as constant scrutiny over job-search and regular threat of sanction, Peter appears to use his support worker to 'obstruct and push back against the significant institutional and administrative pressures placed on beneficiaries to "roll over" and submit to the discipline' mediated through social security restructuration (Baker and Davis, 2018; 544).

Refusing Regulation

As it can be seen, then, efforts made by frontline staff to monitor, discipline, punish and (in some instances) deter claimants from formal support were often countered and dealt with (to varying degrees of success) using a plethora of covert 'everyday weapons' (Scott, 1985; 29). However, as demonstrated in chapter *seven*, Crisis state managers

haven't only set out to re-design policy and practice in favour of *decomposing* refusal activity. But, since the 1980s, they have also set out to strengthen and/or introduce another range of complimentary policies and practices which seek to *regulate* the unemployed labour supply with capitalist demand for labour on atypical terms and conditions. As Wacquant (2009; 69) alludes to, state managers have systematically reduced the real value of out-of-work benefits (cf. Kenway, 2009) so that benefit offices 'distribute ever meagre welfare benefits…as a means of reasserting the civic imperative of work' and 'making [low pay] work pay'. This has been achieved by 'depriving unemployed people of necessary income' (Fletcher and Wright, 2018; 337) in efforts to make life without direct exploitation as onerous/materially difficult as possible and make sure that the claiming surplus populations know there is 'a fate worse, and a status lower, than hard and unrewarding work' (Wacquant, 2009; 59). For some claimants, however, deprivation and going without wasn't just passively accepted. Vaguely similar to how the Malaysian peasantry sporadically stole sacks of food from landowners (Scott, 1985; 265-68), some, such as Kris, attempted (and successfully developed) inventive ways of 'see[ing] what can be gotten away with at the margin' (Scott, 1985; 255). In the instance below, Kris detailed how he managed to acquire a re-issued payment by falsely reporting his benefit as lost or stolen to the police and re-claiming with an incident number:

> 'You could absolutely blag the life out of it like and get your payment re-issued. So you'd ring coppers yeah and be like right I've been in town, you'd go to local police station. We'd go there and we'd be like, been on bus, been in town, say, I've lost my money in town blahdy-blahdy-blah. They give you an incident number. Get the incident number, ring Jobcentre. Lost my money today, need another payment, got an incident number off the police. Swoo-swoo-swoo-swoo-swoo [whistles; giddy]. Another payment thank you very much. There's only so many times you can do that though like' (Kris, W2)

In more recent decades, Crisis state managers have not only set out to 'make work pay' via deprivation, but they have also set out to regulate the unemployed labour supply with atypical labour demand through a through a range of 'bargain basement' reproduction methods (Fletcher and Wright, 2018; 338). In short, these methods encompass a range of cheap, cost-effective policies and practices that seek to psychologically and aesthetically prepare claimants for work in the peripheral/contingent sections of the fragmented labour market. Among these

methods, or so I have argued (in Chapter seven: 'Bargain Basement Reproduction'), is the 35 hour week 'do-it-yourself job search' (Fletcher and Wright, 2018; 338). This is a policy tool which seeks to ensure that claimants are 'in work to find work' (Duncan-Smith, 2014), by ensuring the unemployed emulate the standard working week and follow instruction to perform repetitive/'arduous' tasks searching for and documenting work activity for 35 hours (cf. Wright, Fletcher and Stewart, 2020; 287). In practice, none of the participants reported completing 35 weekly hours. Rather, claimants frequently 'subverted the compulsory job-search activity through the provision of inauthentic…evidence' (Finn, 2019; 221; Rich, 2018; 208-9):

> 'name one person that doesn't lie on their job search mate. Mcdonalds! KFC! Sports Direct! [acts out applying; laughs] not applied for any of em!' (Kris, W1)

Notwithstanding whether the participants were actually looking for work or not, the way they would go about doing job-search seemed to be largely determined by the leniency of their Work Coach. If, as was often described in Peter's experiences, Work Coaches heavily scrutinised evidence presented, then there was still a good deal of time spent fabricating job searches: '35 hours, I had to condense that into a day. So I did a lot of copy and pasting' (Peter, W1). If, on the other hand, Work Coaches were less interested in scrutinising evidence (cf. Dolson, 2015; 124), then participants appeared to spend even less time documenting job-search:

> 'My Work Coach yeah, does not even flick through my book to check if I've done nothing. Which for the record I hadn't done shit and I'd not writ in it for like six week.' (Bryan, W1)

Another way in which employment services have historically sought to reproduce labour power has been through various (re)training courses and work experience placements (see Showler, 1976). Many of the participants were highly critical of courses and placements mediated through Jobcentre Plus. Some saw them as counter-intuitive to the type of work they wanted. Others saw them as inconveniently located and difficult to complete on an income below what was necessary to reproduce themselves. A small handful reported experiences of direct exploitation. Callum reported working on an unpaid placement 9am-3pm 'taking posters apart…and cleaning up the outside' in a nearby for-profit warehouse (cf. Burnett and Whyte, 2017). A handful were particularly hostile towards unpaid placements with a so-called 'guaranteed interview' at the end.

As such, many of the participants deployed a number of techniques to try and eschew courses and unpaid placements. Curtis recalled an instance where he was instructed to attend a six week course approximately 20 miles away from where he was living:

> 'She was like "well if you don't do this course there is potential that you're gonna get sanctioned". So I just agreed with them, telling em I were going on it…I were like "alright then" like, looking right excited to her like I wanted to do it and all that. Then it came to the day and they actually did ring me. And I just put the phone down, like muted it so it weren't ringing loud. Then after that I even changed my sim card…I changed my sim card, then I went to Jobcentre when I next signed on and went "oh well I've got a new number and I've had this number for ages"…I went "it should be on your system. But my old number were on." And she were like "oh well that must be a fault on our side"' (Curtis, W1)

According to Boland (2016; 348), in light of enhanced surveillance and greater scope for punishment as a result of social security restructuration, claimants are now increasingly required to undertake 'quasi-theatrical performances' as willing to avail themselves of almost any opportunity to subordinate themselves as labour power. As such, in some instances, particularly when claimants don't wish to acquiesce to the instruction of their Work Coach, performance often takes shape in a 'phoney display' (Frayne, 2015; 104) of 'empty gestures' and 'feigned enthusiasm' (Southwood, 2011; 55) for atypical job roles and unpaid work experience/training opportunities. Similarly, Finn's (2019; 220) Ireland based study found that claimants perform variations of 'tactical mimicry' and 'guileful ruse[s]' (De Certeau, 1984; 37); whereby, in order to ensure the continuity of their claim when confronted with unattractive job/training opportunities, claimants 'perform dramaturgical trickery in ostensibly carrying out the role of the good jobseeker'. As can be seen in the excerpt above, identical data was found in this study. Claimants would make empty gestures and feign enthusiasm for undesirable job and training roles to avoid punishment and maintain 'the proper state of mind' in their Work Coach (Hochschild, 1983; 7).

In other instances, however, claimants did not project false displays of enthusiasm. On the contrary in fact:

> '"oh yeah do this it's a two week course and you're guaranteed an interview at end." I said "what do you think it is?" … I'm not doing it, I'm not doing it its slave labour mate I'm not doing it. Voluntary work or owt like that mate I will not do it because that's a- I tell ya now I said to em bang straight up- I

> said straight up I said “best thing you can do yeah is stop my money now [bangs table]. Stop it now. Rather than you booking me onto any course yeah you can stop my money right now. Cause its not gonna happen.” And that's exactly what I tell em.’
>
> Interviewer: What do they say to that?
>
> ‘“uh-uh-uh-uh [feigns stuttering]“. They don't know what to say. Because they probably have everybody else like “aw alright, alright” [feigns soft obedient voice] bowing down to em d’ya know what I mean? And like, I'm not really fighting the system but I'm not gonna do something that I find degrading. You know what I mean. And I think it’s degrading mate using people for free labour and not paying em dya know what I mean its fuckin disgusting man. Give em some little dream and an interview in two weeks. What the fucks an interview in two week? [angry; exasperated]’ (Kris, W1)

In rare instances, claimants would move from the ‘cover of darkness’ of covert refusal activities (Scott, 1985; 242) and react in openly hostile fashion at the suggestion of unpaid work placements. As Wright, Fletcher and Stewart (2020; 290) found, this appeared as a ‘high-risk strategy’ of projecting ‘a tough veneer to keep others at bay and minimise victimisation’, which ‘could backfire depending on Work Coach reactions’. As far as I learned, the extent to which training and unpaid work experience placements are made mandatory is something that is largely at the discretion of the Work Coach (see Fletcher and Wright, 2018; 338). As such, on a few occasions, claimants reported success at openly refusing unpaid work placements. In this instance above for example, notwithstanding his lengthy history of working via agencies in low-paying warehouses, I suspected that a combination of Kris’s quite clear intelligence and ability to articulate his views, his substantial knowledge of the social security system, as well as his outwardly intimidating presence and prudent displays of passionate anger could quite easily dissuade frontline staff from imposing their will upon him. However, other claimants weren’t as fortunate –‘so I said to ‘em I'm not doing it and they're like we'll sanction ya and I was like alright then, do it … they sanctioned me’ (Craig, W1).

Alongside instructions to engage with training courses and work experience placements, frontline workers in this study would frequently attempt to transform claimant psychologies using a range of sticks and (less so) carrots in efforts to cajole claimants into selling labour power on atypical terms and conditions in contingent areas of the labour market (cf. Kaufman, 2018; 187). Correspondingly, the participants in this study reported a range of ways in which they managed to eschew undesirable job

opportunities. In some instances, it would be a case of, once again, performing vulnerability (Brown, 2014) and stressing how the precariousness typically accompanying atypical working conditions (Shildrick et al., 2012) would have a detrimental effect on mental and/or physical health:

> 'I'd literally just come out with the same line like I don't want to make this seem like I don't want to work. It's just I don't want something non-permanent because it's not stable. And the absolute paramount in my life back then, even though I haven't really got it ever, is stability.' (Kian, W2)

Sometimes, as already touched on earlier, 'guileful ruse[s]' (De Certeau, 1984; 37) and 'tactical mimicry' (Finn, 2019; 220) were once again deployed:

> 'they'll turn the computer towards ya like they always do. Then they'll have like jobsearches up, with like jobs that you don't wanna do. Like working in a care home for example. Like just jobs like that what you don't wanna do. Er ringing people tryna sell things or I don't know shit like that. So they'll just ask you what you think about it and you'll just say yeah, like you'll just agree with them like yeah its actually does sound good that. You're like aw yeah it actually sounds good [feigns enthusiasm] can you get me a number for that and write it me down? And I'll ring em when I get home…And they'll write you the number down, then be like oh let us know what they said next time you come in. The next time you go in you just say oh they ain't got any jobs going. Or my skill level didn't match what they're looking for' (Curtis, W1)

Curtis' testimony here drew parallels with a number of recollections garnered from the other side of the desk. In this study, employment service staff would frequently relay stories of claimants who, ostensibly not realising the extent to which they were under surveillance, intentionally tried to fail interviews:

> 'I had one lad who, for marketing. I got him the interview attire, did loads of interview prep and then had a call back. He'd gone into reception and said, "I'm here for the interview but I don't want the job" and didn't even wear his interview attire' (Worker 2; Welfare-to-Work advisor)

An even more intriguing tactic was revealed by Craig, who seemed to make use of the benefits stigma ordinarily associated with unemployed labour power as a way of avoiding agency work:

> 'basically with agencies if you email em and say it's for your jobcentre most of em ain't interested. They won't email back. But you've still done it so there's proof of an email, that you've sent an email out. But there's no proof of a reply. Because there ain't a reply. There's ways around it.'

Interviewer: So why don't you think they replied?

'Because you're unemployed' (Craig, W1)

In contemporary literature on benefits stigma, the more recent orthodoxy has been to view it as 'a form of governmentality' (Tyler and Slater, 2018; 729). That is, as something that ordinarily emerges from above, inducing feelings of shame as a way of motivating the unemployed into becoming economically active (Tyler, 2020; 16-8). In the excerpt above, it can be seen how Craig almost turns benefits stigma on its head. He harnesses the disparaging connotations (lazy, insubordinate, feckless etc.) associated with his claimant status as a subtle 'everyday weapon' to avoid undesirable exploitation while outwardly appearing compliant.

Bringing all this together, then, what seemed to be present throughout many (not all) of the claimants' testimonies was a regular (not always constant), binary form of struggle between themselves and the Work Coaches they encountered on a bi-weekly (on average) basis. On one side of the desk, workers were operating in pressured conditions to probe for refusal activity, ensure compliance and, in some instances, antagonise claimants in efforts to get them off the books. Whilst, on the other side of the desk, claimants would utilise a plethora of 'everyday weapons' to navigate, negate and ultimately refuse continual attempts to ensure their subordination and/or efforts to antagonise them. From the perspective of the claimants, or at least in times where they were confronted by unattractive demands on their time and/or resources, it seemed as Scott (1985; 241) observed in his own research, that the subsequent 'fight [was] less a pitched battle' and was more a 'low-grade, hit and run, guerrilla [re]action' aimed at securing or preserving very minor gains.

Proletarian (Dis)Valorisation: Bounded Autonomy on the Dole

While covert struggles such as those described so far were both commonplace and could be interpreted—via the lens of class struggle Marxist theory of course—quite straightforwardly as (re)actions within and against the instruction of frontline workers and the social security system more generally; understanding the consciousness underlying such struggles or, put more simply, the 'meaning' claimants gave 'to their acts', was far more complex, diverse and difficult (if not impossible) to fully determine (Scott, 1985; 38). Scott (1985) confronted a similar issue in his own research. Scott

understood that whilst it is important to understand how struggles are enacted, of equal if not more importance, are the 'intentions and values and purposefulness that condition' actions and 'the symbols, the norms, the ideological forms' that constitute an 'indispensable background' to the behaviour of marginal individuals (Scott, 1985; 38). As such, like Scott (1985; 38) then, I sought to not only map out the ways in which claimant struggles were enacted, 'but to ground that description in an analysis of the conflicts of meaning and value in which these patterns arise and to which they contribute'. This, I suspect, is a crucial component to any research project seeking positive social change 'from below'.

Self-Valorisation: 'I'm mentally unable to work due to a realisation about work'

As I got to know some of the participants better over a number of months, it became clear that a few of the young men were engaging in a range of subversive activities which went quite far beyond minor 'guerrilla' style reactions described hitherto. Without going too far off the point, in her class analysis of peasant struggles in rural Mexico, Ann Lucas De Rouffignac (1985; 111) found that the class struggles of marginal individuals were not only manifest in resistance against capital and the mechanisms upon which it relies (e.g. the state) to forcefully articulate its interests. But she also found that marginal individuals were engaging in forms of 'self-valorisation'. That is, deeper forms of struggle which reflect a path towards 'a life separate from capital' through re-appropriation of 'the world of use-values' and 'escape' from 'subsumption' as labour power to capitalist accumulation (De Rouffignac, 1985; 31; 111). In the present study, a few of the young men could be seen to be 'self-valorising' in somewhat similar ways. In other words, they were carving out 'spaces or moments of otherness' (Holloway, 2010; 261) by pursuing lifestyles and/or engaging in activities which, 'whilst stopping short of fully autonomous acts and behaviours, nevertheless push[ed] forward' in a direction (Hastings and Cumbers, 2019; 1460) that either significantly reduced or outright liberated them from subordination to the commodity-form of capitalist command.

In the latter waves of interviews, it became increasingly clear that unemployment and housing benefits were a means by which a very small number were 'appropriating' modicums of 'power and wealth, in opposition to the capitalist mechanisms of accumulation and development' (Negri, 2005; 255). Put more simply, for this minority,

benefits were a method of acquiring small pockets of wealth in order to remain voluntarily unemployed and avoid selling labour power to capital on terms and conditions perceived as in some way unattractive:

> ‘why the fuck would I want to go out to bust my balls for 40 hours a week for some cunt I don’t like? And he definitely don’t like me. Why would I do that? What sort of person should?’
>
> Interviewer: would you rather stay on benefits?
>
> ‘Ah hm [agreement]. Yeah I’d much rather stay on benefits, I don’t give a fuck if it makes me sound like one of these scroungers. Like I said earlier this is 2019, I don’t not give a shit. I do not care’
>
> Interviewer: Is that a worry of being perceived or understood as a scrounger for admitting that?
>
> ‘In some people’s opinions yeah, but in mine I just laugh. If I get called a scrounger by someone that works I’ll just go, you might call me a scrounger, I think you’re a moron. So what’s the difference? Like what do you do on a Tuesday dinner time? They go, oh I do this, this and this. What do I do on a Tuesday dinner time? Lay in bed with my Xbox at bottom of the TV with my headset on mate sat playing Fortnite with a fag hanging out my mouth, a bag of crisps and a drink here. Like you’re sat there with a laptop, a bunch of paperwork and a box of fucking paperclips. I’d much rather do what I’m doing, and it costs less, they’ve got to pay to get to work. Pay for their dinner. Pay to get back from work. I haven’t. My foods in my cupboard, My Xbox is in front of me, and my baccies [tobacco] at the side of me. So why the fuck would I want to do what you’re doing? Because I could probably have more money left at the end of the week than from what they’ve got from working because they think that the money they’ve not spent in the week, they’ve got to go out and spend that at weekends. Whereas I don’t. I’ll just chill. I don’t go out no more. Whereas they’ve got to go out to relieve the stress from work. I haven’t. I can just go out on a Wednesday afternoon’ (Bryan, W3)

Bryan’s perspective here drew parallels with some of Frayne’s (2015) cogitations on living within capitalist society but in a life outside of capital. Frayne (2015; 118) ‘spent time with a range of people who were taking significant measures to prevent work from colonising their lives’; with some of them reducing their hours and others giving up work altogether. Frayne (2015; 165) found that a number of participants were ‘not prepared to sacrifice their time for working, simply so that they [could] buy more commodities’. Instead, their experiences, particularly of work, ‘prompted them to make lifestyle changes that increase[d] their free time at the expense of income’ (Frayne, 2015; 163).

In so doing, some of Frayne's participants traded the (relative) material comfort that employment often provides in exchange for 'significant financial hardships' and 'a lower level of consumption', so as to avoid the 'personal sacrifices' that selling labour power to capital tends to entail (Frayne, 2015; 187-8). As can be seen in the excerpt above, this shares some synergies with Bryan's approach. Ultimately, the way Bryan avoided selling labour power was by claiming unemployment benefits and consuming less, accepting to live a more materially modest life playing video games and spending time with his partner.

Bryan's perspective also drew some parallels with Giatzizoglu's (2014) ethnographic research on young working class men. Giatzizoglu (2014; 343) found that some unemployed men 'genuinely appear to desire to avoid working', expressing a psychology 'grounded in an inherent questioning of "the point of working"'. There was a key departure in Bryan's case, however. Whereas the men in Giatzizoglu's (2014) study cited sparse financial reward (comparable benefit and wage levels) as the main reason underlying voluntary unemployment, Bryan's antipathy towards formal employment was more owed to the nature of work in the fragmented labour market and its subsequent impacts on his mental health. Like many young, unemployed people in Britain, Bryan had churned in and out of a range of different jobs for a number of years after leaving school—'I've done all sorts. Er waiter. Worked in a call centre. Butcher and fishmonger. Worked in factories, warehouses. Shops. Business admin' (Bryan, W1). He went on to repeatedly describe how these experiences of work—and particularly the pressured, arduous and ultimately alienating working conditions that many, not just Bryan, are confronted with when selling labour power—had contributed to poor mental health and in effect turned him against many (not all) forms of paid employment:

> 'I don't wanna work in a fucking warehouse for next five/six years. I don't wanna be 28 earning like seven pound thirty an hour to work in a warehouse and sweat my bean off all day. No. I wanna be sat nice and cushty. Chilling or either like wiring up a footballer's house or sommat as an electrician and then going home and chilling. Just relax.' (W1)
>
> …
>
> Interviewer: there's this general thing that work is good for you. Work is good for your mental health-
>
> 'Is it?'

Interviewer: Well this is what I want to ask you. Is it?

'No. is it fuck. It drives you nuts man! Its like sometimes if you've had a right busy day, you'll be on the bus on the way back home still tryna like think about things. You're supposed to shut off. Its impossible to shut off…life comes first, work doesn't come first.' (Bryan, W3)

Openly hostile perspectives of waged employment, particular atypical employment, were not uncommon in this study. Similar to Bryan, Baz reported a range of negative experiences working through temporary work agencies. This was not only because of the ever looming prospect of immediate dismissal—which happened frequently for a number of the young men—but he reported poor working conditions and degrading management practices on numerous occasions (cf. Angry Workers, 2020; 178-80; Bloodworth, 2018):

'there were rats constantly dead. From where they've shot em and they've managed to get outside…the managers were walking past em everyday. Just leaving em, telling us to "go pick that up". To me that's slavery. Why don't you go pick them up when you're walking past it? … they'd try and just belittle us because they knew they were the managers and they didn't have to do it.' (Baz, W1)

When I asked him whether he preferred benefits to temporary agency work, Baz went on to suggest that, in spite of hassle from the Jobcentre, remaining on benefits was more attractive than employment via agencies:

'because you're doing all the cheap labour so you think you'd get a bit more respect. But you don't, you just get treated like a slave…it's only for when they need you and when they don't they fuck you off. So I don't wanna work for an agency no more. I wanna work full time.'

Interviewer: Yeah. So with agencies and jobs like that, would you rather be on benefits?

'Yeah. I really would rather be on benefits than agency. Cause at least I know with benefits I know what's coming in. I know what I've gotta do.' (Baz, W1)

As Frayne (2015; 148) identifies, whilst wage labour is generally regarded to have 'become cleaner and physically safer' in the last century or so, the deleterious effects of capitalist demand on the body and mind are 'no less relevant' today. For example, between 2013-4, in the UK 'an estimated 1.2 million people began suffering from an illness they believed to be caused or made worse by their current or previous employment' (Frayne, 2015; 148). In light of this, Frayne (2015; 148) met a number of

people who were 'suffering from various symptoms – from stress, to anxiety, to fatigue' and were making effort to 'take back control' and reduce time spent meeting capitalist demand in order to 'take their lives a little slower, to get enough sleep, to go outdoors more, to prepare a good meal, and to enjoy their leisure time free of tension'. This seemed to be emblematic of the reasons underlying Kian's decision to resign from his job and begin a new benefit claim, as well as the efforts he made to eschew undesirable jobs and training courses. Kian reported mental health problems that were largely aggravated through experiences of working in contingent areas of the labour market:

> 'a lot of the problems I've had are brought up from my old job with McDonalds which was 110 percent pressure all the time constantly like 6 days week. … It's the pressure that the managers are actually putting on ya. And just the way they're treating people…They're like slave drivers instead of managers.' (Kian, W3)

As Wood (2016; 1067) notes, when workers are employed on atypical contracts with weak labour securities, then managers often have more freedom 'to cause distress to specific workers simply by altering their schedule to unsocial hours or to times which clashed' with personal engagements/responsibilities. Kian went into some detail about how managers at McDonalds would use this kind of 'flexible scheduling' to enhance discipline, ensure targets were met and punish those staff who, for whatever reason, didn't endear themselves to management. Eventually, Kian hit breaking point when use of flexible scheduling practices had made him late to pick a house key up from a friend who had been putting him up, subsequently causing friction between him and his friend and leaving him homeless. As such, Kian was making use of unemployment benefits and housing at a supported accommodation to establish some breathing space from the pressures of work; instead focusing his attentions on recovery, improving both his mental health and general wellbeing.

Unlike Kian who, despite his experiences, identified as 'a bit of a workaholic' and was 'happy doing any form of work as long as it was minimum wage or above [and] wasn't any apprenticeship or part time or agency work' (Kian, W1); Peter in comparison seemed far more vexed by the exploitative and precarious nature of many jobs available to the unemployed in the fragmented labour market:

> 'We are currently in a situation where everyone is primed and built and trained from a very young age to prepare for work. Not to work for

> themselves, not to work for their family, but to work for a business, a business owned by one person who makes all of that money. And [sighs] we are paid minimum wage, we are given part time jobs, we are given zero hour contracts, we are given not enough to live, but just enough to survive. We are not made to be happy. We are made to work until we die. That is a sad situation to be in. And that is unfortunately what we've got. It's got to the point where we are getting paid so little for the amount we work that it isn't even worth anything to work anymore.' (Peter, W1)

Peter was firm in his view of work in contingent areas of the labour market as 'degrading'. As a result, he did his:

> 'own thing. I work for myself. I don't work for a company. I don't make thousands for companies just to get paid peanuts. I work for myself. I work when I want. For what I want. Doing what I want.' (W2)

The predominant way in which he established greater control over expenditures of his own labour power was through a combination of unemployment and housing benefits, (mostly undeclared) cash-in-hand informal work as a handyman and, like Bryan, living within more modest means:

> 'If I do one job, I can earn between £25-£60 for a small job. That'll keep me going for fucking ages. Cause I've been on benefits so long that I can live off nothing.' (W1)
>
> …
>
> 'I [only] declare what goes into my bank. Because some things you shouldn't have to. Some things you need to stay alive.' (Peter, W2)

Over the years, a number of researchers have found identical data on undeclared working and claiming unemployment benefits. Similar to Peter's testimony, MacDonald (1994; 511; 520) found that 'much undeclared working was found to be trivial (in terms of money earned), irregular and short-term'; serving more as 'a survival strategy' making 'life more liveable'. Similarly, Cook (1989; 78; see also Regev-Messalem, 2014) found that undeclared working and claiming was principally derived 'from frustration, poverty and hardship rather than from greed'. Reporting identical findings, Fletcher (2010; 333) concluded that 'informal work…is viewed principally as a way of negotiating the uncertainty of the post-industrial labour market and meeting financial needs'. Dean and Melrose (1997; 116) found that many worked and claimed because it allowed for 'consumption patterns' which kept claimants 'precariously in touch with the dominant value system'. All of these conclusions chime with data collected in this study— 'Just

putting a fence up. £60 pound in my hand.' (Tyrone, W1); 'If I didn't do it then fuckin ell I'd have starved' (Curtis, W1). Peter, however, was in some ways a notable exception. While claiming and working informally was undoubtedly a 'survival strategy', Peter's primary rationale for engaging in such activity was not just born from a desire to meet financial needs. Rather, his rationale was also grounded in a desire to eschew selling labour power on terms and conditions he saw as exploitative. Instead he was choosing to forge an alternative path which allowed him to establish greater autonomy over when, how and for whom he worked. In this respect, it could be seen how sporadic working alongside claiming benefits was for Peter a way of subordinating 'surplus labour' to 'necessary labour', often working only what was necessary to reproduce himself (cf. Marx, 1973; 707).

Dis-Valorisation: Predatory Crime and Petty Entrepreneurialism

In autonomist literature, exhibitions of working class autonomy—largely irrespective of whether they take shape in self-valorising efforts to create a life separate from capital (cf. Cleaver 1992) or individual 'moments' of refusal expressed in a 'necessarily covert manner' (Woodcock, 2017; 104; 100)—tend to be ubiquitously portrayed as positive for the working class. They tend to be overwhelmingly portrayed as necessary acts to preserve one's own sanity (Cleaver, 2017; 4) or heroic efforts in waging class war against its enemy (Negri, 2005; 200). However, in the present study, exhibitions of autonomy and 'self-valorisation' were not always positive for the class. On the contrary, some of the young men were (mostly infrequently) engaging in activities and pursuing lifestyles that were not only distinctly separate from capital (cf. Ancrum and Treadwell, 2017), but caused significant distress and harm to both themselves and others within their social proximity. Like a number of participants in this study, Kris not only churned in and out of atypical employment, but he also occasionally dabbled in the drug economy:

> 'I were selling it was smack and crack, that's where the money were. Quick money man. …I were paying for an ounce of crack, 1400 pound on my own. So basically I'm, I don't know what they call it - on fucking finance ha-'
>
> Interviewer: Tick?
>
> 'Yeah tick. Finance, tick, £1400. Outta that yeah, I'd make about £2400 pound off that.' (Kris, W2)

In her ethnographic study on the St Ann's estate in Nottingham, Lisa McKenzie (2015; 60) found that drug dealing 'was part of the fabric of the estate'. Some young men would have a 'low-level' involvement 'carrying and holding low levels of heroin and crack cocaine', occasionally earning more than what they could feasibly acquire through formal means (McKenzie, 2015; 163). Kris reported a similar arrangement, where he would 'run' drugs for another individual or group with a higher involvement in the local drug economy. What's important to note for the present discussion, however, is how opportunities to exist beyond capital through criminal enterprise tended to fuel an array of behaviours that were 'tremendously destructive' to both the young men themselves and others around them (Wacquant, 2008; 66). Kris, for example, detailed how he could re-appropriate power acquired through possession of addictive drugs in ways that enabled him to exploit vulnerable people:

> 'I could get cars and, you know what I mean, I could get smack heads to get you rentals (rented car) out and that. Give a smack head a tenners worth of crack, a tenners worth of smack, a day. Its costing me less than 20 quid really and he got me a rental out' (Kris, W2)

Others, like Paddy, reported more benign enterprises:

> 'I'm not your average guy that sells like crack, heroine. I sell weed. I sell to students. You know like student areas I only work there" (Paddy, W1)

Yet, in almost all instances where the young men interacted with the drug economy, their recollections were accompanied by further experiences of violence and harm to both themselves and others. In Paddy's case, for example, he was soon after arrested and convicted some weeks after our interview for holding someone up at an ATM machine at knifepoint. Curtis told me how, along with a small number of residents living with him in supported housing accommodation, he would occasionally stage meetings with local drug dealers in attempts to rob them:

> 'We just used to rob drug dealers. Cause they can't phone the police. Only problem is they come looking for ya.'
>
> Interviewer: Did you ever get in trouble for that?
>
> 'Er yeah. I actually got in trouble a few week ago. Someone tried stabbing me.' (Curtis, W2)

Accounts such as these draw parallels with Wacquant's (2008) cogitations on the emergence of 'hyperghettos' in advanced capitalist territories. According to Wacquant

(2008; 66), 'for those who are repeatedly rejected from the labour market or who balk at taking dead-end "slave jobs" in the deregulated service sectors that strip them of their dignity by requiring that they execute menial tasks paid at poverty wages with no benefits, vacation or retirement attached, underground activities offer a bounty of full time employment opportunities'. In the present study, it must be noted that underground activities reported by the young men were rarely described as 'full time' and seemed just as 'episodic and chancy as' accounts of contingent employment (Connell, 2005; 98). Nevertheless, much like Wacquant's (2008; 62-9) observations, a combination of (1) an inability to acquire a necessary portion of the total wealth through formal support, (2) 'a lack of employment linked to financial autonomy and self-respect' in the fragmented labour market (McKenzie, 2015; 100), and (3) the availability of comparatively more financially 'attractive, if risky, alternative economic opportunities', appeared to 'sap the willingness of [some] young men [in this study] to work at low-level wages'. Instead, such conditions seemed to fuel an open-mindedness and, in some cases, active pursuit of lifestyles beyond mere subordination as labour power through combinations of voluntary unemployment, small-scale benefit fraud and precarious participation in various modes of 'petty entrepreneurialism' which sometimes manifested in forms of 'predatory crime' (Wacquant, 2008; 66; 27).

As should hopefully now be clear, some of the young men appeared to engage in activities and pursued lifestyles to intentionally negate class command and/or forge a life independent from the direct influence of capital. In other instances, however, such pursuits did not appear to stem from a desire to avoid unattractive jobs and/or the prospect of more financially attractive options beyond what employers could customarily offer. In some cases, 'petty entrepreneurialism' seemed to arise predominantly as a response to suffering widespread *rejection* from subsumption to capital (as labour power) (MacDonald, 1997; Wacquant, 2008; 266). Put another way, in some instances, refusal activities in the Jobcentre and the pursuit of livelihoods beyond capital were not so much intentionally driven by a choice to negate capitalist domination/exploitation as much as they were driven by a *lack of choice* and an inability, for one reason or another, to acquiesce to capitalist domination/exploitation.

This is perhaps reflective of James's story, who seemed open to more or less any job but reported a number of unsuccessful applications for the same jobs that some of the other

young men seemed to be able to walk in and out of almost instantaneously. From what I could gather, his difficulties were likely owed to the fact that, despite reaching 20 years of age, he had had only ever worked as a cash-in-hand glass collector on weekends and held barely any qualifications beyond school. By the second and third interview, not only was James becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of legitimate opportunities available to him and bored with his present circumstances—'you're just not doing owt. Just makes you feel down all the time…Sat in my room 24/7' (W3). However, James also revealed that he had been exposed to more opportunities and had accrued far more experience in the drug economy than the formal economy in recent years. In light of this, it seemed as though mounting frustration at his inability to find legitimate work and a persistent feeling of boredom was making former endeavours appear as an increasingly attractive proposition—'If I don't get a job soon, I probably will start selling bud (cannabis) again' (James, W2).

A somewhat similar situation seemed to confront another participant. Craig had recently moved away into supported accommodation to start afresh, leaving what was described as heavy involvement in a family-ran drug enterprise. Over the interviews, he went into quite some detail about how difficult he found it to get almost any kind of formal work:

> 'Do you know what it is I'm not bothered what job it is I think it's the interviews. I get mad. In the interviews, they judge me. They do. Because obviously I tell them where I used to live, I'm honest with them. Because they always say be honest init so I'm honest. They ask me where I've lived and stuff and I used to live here, I go for an interview and I'll be like I live in a hostel. Straight away shut down' (Craig, W3)

Without going too far off the point, Craig's account here drew some parallels (once again) with Wacquant's (2008; 169; 176-7) cogitations on the emergence of urban 'no-go' areas; who found that a 'powerful stigma attached to residence' exists over certain communities as hotbeds for criminality and worklessness (cf. Fletcher, 2007). This 'territorial stigma' can in turn fuel 'additional distrust and reticence among employers' and further dissuade them from purchasing labour power originating from such communities; thus serving to 'penalise' residents 'on the labour market', 'condemn[ing]' them 'to redundancy' (Wacquant, 2008; 174; 169; 176-7; cf. Wilson, 1987). Whilst it must be also acknowledged that Craig was quite unwilling to work on any terms and conditions—'I don't wanna do no agency shit' (W2)—he quite clearly demonstrated how

a ‘territorial stigma’ casted him as an unattractive prospect for exploitation and dissuaded employers from purchasing his abilities. Despite this, Craig remained committed to his new start and, throughout the months I followed him, had managed to abstain from former endeavours. But I left the final interview feeling somewhat uncertain about how long this might last, and this was for a number of reasons.

First, it became apparent that things were spiralling financially for Craig and his partner. By the second interview he had moved out of supported accommodation, his partner was pregnant and pressure from social services (cf. Wacquant, 2009; 58) regarding his living circumstances had forced him and his partner to begin a new joint claim, resulting in a sizeable cut to an already unsustainable household income. *Second*, Craig clearly felt as though temporary work was the only feasible option for formal employment—‘I don’t really want a temp job, but the only jobs I can get are temporary’ (W3). However, largely on the advice of a support worker, he was reluctant to take anything impermanent for fear of losing what stability him and his family had managed to locate via housing/unemployment benefit—‘I can’t really go back to work because its gonna fuck us up even more’ (W3). *Third*, in the midst of a situation where Craig felt as though ‘everywhere you turn it shorts you, you’re always worse off’ (W3), it was clear that lucrative opportunities in the drug economy were still availing themselves:

> ‘I’m keeping myself out of drugs and stuff. Like fully. Not been back. Obviously people have been like popping- I see em, they’ll drive past in their car. They’ll pull over, they go Craig sell us this, do us this’ (W3)

Craig had thus far managed to resist temptations and remained abstinent from former endeavours in the face of an increasingly bleak set of circumstances. Nevertheless, Craig’s story possibly illustrated how temptations to engage in criminal activity are not always driven by greed and/or a desire to eschew an ordinary life subsumed to capitalist demand—‘I've been tempted [to sell drugs] because of [the soon to be born] baby’ (Craig W2). On the contrary, for some young men, it appeared as though petty entrepreneurialism could be more driven by a combination of persistent poverty and a lack of legitimate options. In other words, a lack of opportunity to acquire a sustainable portion of the total wealth and, by extension, self-respect through formal means, effectively forced some young men to ‘put to use the only valuable assets they possess:

physical prowess and a working knowledge of' the only economy—the underground economy—which truly recognised their value (Wacquant, 2008; 66).

From Discontent-to-Action: Scope for Self-Organisation?

Thus far, the present chapter has demonstrated how claimants in the present study frequently subverted command by utilising an array of 'everyday weapons'. I have also tried to provide an insight into some of the intentions underlying some of the young men's decisions and choice-making, as well as some of the constraints which appeared to circumscribe their choices. What should hopefully be quite evident in the use of 'everyday weapons' and evidence of (dis-)valorisation among the young men 'is an unorganised resistance expressing a refusal' and, at the very minimum, a general discontent with many of the options available to them in the fragmented labour market (Woodcock, 2017; 119). The next question, then, as with any autonomist project, is to assess whether there is scope for a transition 'from discontent to action' (Shukaitis, 2014; 196) and to determine whether unorganised activity and feelings of discontent can be transformed into more powerful forms of self-organised collective class struggles. I'll conclude this chapter by revealing the efforts I made to provide an answer for this question.

Learning from Previous Struggles

As someone who has never been a member of a trade union and whose involvement in activism doesn't extend beyond attendance at a few university picket lines, my first port of call was to see what I could learn from people who had actual experience of organising. The most fruitful outcome of these efforts was a relationship I managed to establish with a local activist (Chris [pseudonym]) who, since the 1980s, has had a heavy involvement in a dwindling nationwide band of Unemployed Workers' Centres (TUC, 2010). I came to Chris and quizzed him about the feasibility of my (perhaps quixotic) ideas around adapting the workers' inquiry method to social research on welfare reform and the prospect of (self-)organising unemployed young men.

As anticipated, Chris listed a host of difficulties that both the unemployed workers' centres and the trade union movement have been perennially faced with when attempting to organise and mobilise unemployed people. The first of these was the

dilemma of place and space. As Woodcock (2014; 509) notes, organising individuals who have no attachment to a specific place (e.g. a shop floor) is increasingly difficult, as there isn't a space where people might be able to easily see that they share a common set of interests or problems. Chris provided an intriguing insight here, recalling conversations he had with organisers from the 1920s and the days of the national unemployed workers' movements (cf. Hannington, 1978):

> 'One of the other things these people told me was that erm- back in the 1920s and 1930s you could stand outside the dole office, stand on an orange box and address people. And people saw that they had a common problem…But in actual fact if you went to sign on in the 1980s, you weren't in a queue at all. Cause you had appointments every two minutes to sign on. So there was never a glut of people standing outside the jobcentre you could address. And the people who I spoke to at the time thought that was really important. That they had learnt the lesson to make sure you isolate and individualise people. So that they don't see that they have a common problem with other people' (Chris)

This reminded me of the numerous occasions I've spent promoting research projects outside different Jobcentres over the last three years or so. These almost certainly aren't places where people have an interest in congregating or listening to political rhetoric—particularly from a student with no comparable experience of poverty/unemployment—about the value of collective action. So this got me thinking about where any possible organisation might take place geographically. Chris went into more detail about how this has posed challenges in the past:

> 'Where do you meet? Where do you see people? Where do you get together to organise? I mean unemployed workers centres er have singularly failed… in actually being able to bring unemployed people together to make great changes in there circumstances' (Chris)

The second dilemma he mentioned was the stigma that many people often feel when claiming benefits (cf. Baumberg, 2016):

> 'you've actually got to see yourself as being unemployed. And that in itself carries a stigma. And so to organise with other people to say I am an unemployed person and I am going to work with unemployed people about my situation is an acceptance that you're unemployed' (Chris)

Chris's words here got me thinking about precisely why people (particularly young people) would want to devote time and energy to organising as an unemployed person. Most of the young men felt a stigma associated with their status and often identified

themselves in different ways (e.g. 'hustler'). Despite bringing to light whole range of issues around social security that they would like to see change, it felt unlikely that they would visibly campaign around this status. This ties into another important issue, that of powerlessness. In one sense, powerlessness occurs as low income generally means that the unemployed possess scarce resources to mobilise:

> 'income, money and resources are always a big issue' (Chris)

But perhaps more importantly, powerlessness occurs as, unlike workers, claimants aren't selling labour power and therefore don't appear to have any commodities to bargain with:

> 'unemployed people generally to change things they have no economic power. You can only burn things down or riot. You can't actually stop work or put economic pressure on the government to do anything' (Chris)

Some of the young men would even use language similar to this to describe their interactions with the Jobcentre; going into some detail about how they felt, notwithstanding the use of 'everyday weapons', almost at the mercy of their Work Coach. So again, Chris's words got me thinking about how claimants might overcome feelings of powerlessness. Are there ways of organising claimants that won't cost them anything? Are there issues and a common status that claimants might share which doesn't evoke stigma? Is there a convenient location that meetings could take place? And what, if anything, do they have at their disposal to use as bargaining power?

Unemployed Frustration and Class Composition in a Supported Housing Accommodation

As the research progressed and I thought through these questions over a number of months, two things began to emerge. First, and far quicker to emerge, was that any scope for organising 'against' the Crisis state and its Jobcentre's was unlikely to come 'from below'. It became quickly clear after speaking to Chris that, whilst some modest defences have been made through unemployed workers' centres in the last few decades, this required significant institutional presence (i.e. trade union involvement) beforehand. In other words, the feasibility of self-organisation against the state was described in the current climate as more or less a fantasy.

Second, in spite of the gloomy conclusions drawn from my chat with Chris, it gradually became clear that some plausible answers to these questions could be revealing themselves in one of the supported housing accommodations I was volunteering at. This dawned on me one afternoon when a number of residents were complaining to on-site workers about persistent internet connection issues, and were becoming increasingly vexed when considering this issue against the high rent/service charges they were paying to live there (I'll come back to this in a moment). To these complaints, one of the workers responded with words to the effect of: 'well your rent isn't coming out of your own pocket is it?'. The 'freeloading' inferences underlying these words were transparent and a couple of the residents were clearly incensed. It was when I saw this response, and spoke to residents about how they felt living there, that I realised there might not only be scope but a need for some kind of organised response.

For context, this particular accommodation is a part of a nationwide network of properties ran by a not-for-profit housing association. Occupying this accommodation are usually anywhere between 50-60 and residents, as well as around 10-15 support workers and security staff. For a single-bed en suite room with a microwave, kettle and fridge freezer, rent and on-site services (health and wellbeing, security, benefit administration and advocacy, housing and relocation) are charged at a flat fee of approximately £150.00 per resident per week. Not only did high rent charges undermine, if not wholly eradicate, incentive to find work and encourage undeclared activity:

> 'I didn't wanna work while I were living here…when I did move in here for the first like three month I were working but it were cash in hand…I'm not paying £150.00 a week to live in this shithole it's not worth it' (Curtis, W1)

But, in spite of claims made by the housing association that 'any profit we make is reinvested into our homes and improving services for customers' as well as reporting an operating surplus of £155.8 million in 2019, living conditions were frequently reported as sub-standard.

As I began to hear these kinds of complaints more frequently, it became clear that a number of features were present which made, on the surface at least, the residents of this housing accommodation suitably composed for some form of self-organisation.

Most obviously, the residents shared a common set of problems and regularly shared frustrations about high-rent charges and their living conditions with the staff as well as with one another. Alongside this, perennial issues of place and space ordinarily associated with unemployed struggles didn't seem to be an issue. There were approximately 60 residents all in close proximity with one another. There were also a number of different rooms which could be used for meetings, and I would often use these rooms to host activities where anywhere between 5 and 20 residents would attend. Moreover, the residents all shared identical relationships, as rent-payers, to the housing association. In other words, these unemployed people had an economic value to the housing association and, whilst this was in no way comparable to the power some wage workers hold, had a modicum of bargaining power. So, as should hopefully be clear, these were the key features (shared problems; shared space and a modicum of bargaining power) which suggested self-organisation could be a possibility for this small cohort of unemployed people.

On the flip side, however, there were a number of factors underlying the residents' composition which clearly threatened any potential for self-organisation. Most obviously, should management be dissatisfied with any action taken, I could be fired/banned from the premises on the spot and residents could be easily evicted. Similarly, residents don't tend to stay indefinitely (maximum one year) and there is quite a high turnover rate, which poses issues of mobility and precariousness quite alike those confronting activists in the workplace (cf. Woodcock, 2017; 135-8). Ethnic and language differences were also a potential barrier (cf. Angry Workers 2020, 153-55). From my own observations, native and non-native speakers seldom communicated and non-native speakers rarely attended the activities I put on. Moreover, a number of residents also possessed (sometime multiple) complex vulnerabilities, with issues ranging from drug and alcohol addiction to physical and mental health problems. Finally, as alluded to in the previous section of this chapter, some of the residents' actions and intentions were not always described as those we might ordinarily understand as compatible with the solidarity needed to establish successful forms of self-organisation. In other words, predatory forms of crime within the residence and between residents were present (albeit infrequently). From what I could gather, it seemed quite clear that a hierarchy (cf. Angry Workers, 2020; 203-4) based on intimidation existed within the residence

(although this regularly changed as residents came and went), which some residents occasionally capitalised upon for small monetary gains.

A Failed Effort and Some Concluding Thoughts

As someone with no real experience in organising (unemployed) workers, and recognising that many of the residents possessed a range of vulnerabilities that could be worsened by any kind of imprudent action on my behalf, I never really intended to try and organise anything other than some weekly leisure activities in my voluntary capacity. But then, some months into my tenure at the abovementioned housing accommodation, I was unexpectedly offered the opportunity by management to act as some kind of 'citizenship engagement' officer. This opportunity arose at a one day performance review event I got invited to with other staff and a regional manager. At the meeting, I spoke very briefly about my voluntary capacity and how I felt that more should be done to gather and address residents' grievances, particularly around living conditions. I got a response which, given how high the rent/service charges were in comparison to the relatively poor living conditions, I suspect was well rehearsed. According to one manager, there is an unwillingness to invest in this particular accommodation because of the amount of drug use (predominantly cannabis) and vandalism that tends to occur inside the property. Renovation was only likely to occur, they said, if the residents would take the first step and either consume drugs off the property or cease their drug use altogether. Yet, in spite of their evident awareness of the residents' main grievances, my suggestions were received positively by management and they asked whether I would be willing to gather and develop ways of addressing grievances as part of my voluntary role.

I accepted their offer. So over the next few months, as part of the events I ran a couple of times a week, I would casually ask some of the residents if there is anything that could be improved and, given the unlikeliness of addressing their main concerns (living conditions) in the immediate future, whether there is anything more feasible we might be able to acquire. One response I heard from a few residents was that they wanted to do better activities and a handful of the young men were quite eager to start up a five-a-side football team. I was attracted to this idea for a number of reasons. Not only do I enjoy football and have played sporadically for many years. But, through this

experience, I am well acquainted with how team sports can cultivate collective mind-sets and forms of solidarity. Alongside this, as Woodcock (2017; 120) notes, 'it is important to remember that workplaces' or, in this case, residences, are 'not a laboratory' and that people's 'own self-activity in any organising process' will likely determine any future success. As such, I thought this could be a risk-free, ethical, and pre-approved way of gauging whether the residents would be interested in engaging and persisting with collective, team-based activities without imposing myself on them too much. Now of course, and this needs to be said, I'm well aware that starting a football team in no way amounts to the lofty ambitions (and successes) of many autonomist struggles orchestrated in the past. But, at the same time, I'm not aware of any project which has probed for avenues of self-organisation in such adverse political, economic and social conditions. So after finding a suitable location and costing the activity, which came to a total of £56.00 per week, I proposed the idea to management.

In spite of working for an organisation boasting an operating surplus of 155.8 million, stressing how they 'must listen to [their] customers' and claiming to 'go beyond asking [their] customers to help shape and improve' their accommodation, management swiftly rejected the proposal on the grounds of insufficient funds. So over the next week, to their expectation but nonetheless disappointment, I relayed this back to the residents. I then suggested to a couple of young men who regularly attended my activities that we should try and get all those who wanted to be involved in the football team together for a meeting, to see if we could collectively come up with a way of securing the funding. They agreed and suggested that even if we only got together for a kick-about, this might show willingness to the staff and work in our favour. Prior to this, I had printed a number of sheets off with all the relevant details about the costing, the location of where we would play and what league we could enter, so I left these with Tyrone (a participant in the study) who agreed to re-distribute them to the other residents for a meeting at the next activity. Unfortunately, the meeting never materialised. I got a phone call from Tyrone a few days later saying he had left the residence after stealing a few hundred pounds worth of cannabis from another resident. When I returned to the residence the following week to carry out my usual volunteering duties, none of the young men who'd expressed interest in starting a football team were in attendance and, over the next few weeks, any desire to get together for a meeting

seemed to have vanished. This wasn't so much related to what Tyrone had done, it appeared mainly down to the fact that the weather was improving and so many of the residents were spending more time outdoors and in different places. But I think this example productively illustrates how difficult it can be for individuals in such bleak circumstances to engage with the possibility that it might be better to fight together 'for a bigger slice of the pie' rather than 'fighting' among one another 'to get half a crumb more than someone else' (Angry Workers, 2020; 174). Despite being enthusiastic at the prospect of playing football with other residents, Tyrone's priority was ultimately to lift himself out of the predicament he had found himself in. And, in this instance, prioritising his own interests to the detriment of others (via theft) provided him with enough money to start afresh in another city.

I'd be lying if I said that the combination of Tyrone's actions and subsequent low attendance levels didn't kill any enthusiasm I initially had for my so called 'citizenship engagement' role in the months that followed. In effect, I had failed at the first hurdle and I decided against pushing the idea of meeting up to discuss grievances any further. Yet, in spite of my failure, there were some positives to take. Residents evidently shared common problems and some had even expressed a desire to come together to try and seek solutions. Whilst this never came to fruition, I suspect that with more resources and more time spent on site than I could have offered—e.g. via a paid part-time 'citizenship engagement' officer role—there is likely scope to informally organise small groups of unemployed people around housing related issues in supported accommodation. Of course, the positive effects of self-organisation in such spaces are likely to be very modest and are perhaps incomparable to grandiose notions of class struggle depicted in autonomist literature. Nevertheless, if such a project can be operationalised effectively, informal organisation in such spaces may have a productive benefit for improving both intra-residence relationships as well as relationships between housing associations and their 'customers' more generally.

9. Conclusion: Towards a New Interpretation of UK Welfare Reform

Chapter Overview

Over the last five chapters, I have attempted to use autonomist Marxist theory and practice as a lens for (1) examining the (re-)emergence, delivery and receipt of social expenditure cuts and workfarist welfare reforms in Britain; and (2) examining whether there is scope for struggle, resistance and self-organisation among those on the receiving end of workfarist welfare reform. In this concluding chapter, I'm going to bring everything discussed in the previous five chapters together by sketching out a 'class struggle' approach to welfare reform. This sketch will follow the logic of the two dominant regulation and criminalisation approaches to welfare reform illustrated in chapter one (see importantly Appendices 1.2 and 1.3). In other words, the sketch will begin by first situating welfare reform within wider processes of historical development before, second, examining and interpreting how welfare reforms are experienced.

It is worth adding here that it might be productive for the reader to first consult the regulation and criminalisation approaches (in Appendices 1.2 and 1.3) before reading the 'class struggle' approach that follows (I have been unable to include any in depth illustration of these approaches in the main text because of the word count limit). If this is possible, this should allow the reader to discern with greater transparency (1) areas where these approaches converge; (2) areas where they clearly differ; (3) areas where one approach may appear more persuasive than another; and (4), most importantly for the assessment criteria, areas where the present approach provides (potential) original contribution(s) to knowledge.

After sketching out the 'class struggle' approach, I'm going to very briefly make explicit the features of the present thesis which could make original contributions to knowledge. Finally, I will conclude by disclosing (some of) the key theoretical and empirical flaws with the present analysis. In doing so, I will also highlight some potentially novel directions for future research and ideas.

Sketching out a 'Class Struggle' Approach to UK Welfare Reform

The purpose of this section will be to bring the content of the last five chapters together into a coherent 'class struggle' interpretation of the (re-)emergence, delivery and receipt of social expenditure cuts and workfarist welfare reforms in Britain. To do this, I will first quickly refresh and run through the framework of theory and concepts that was used to develop a 'class struggle' interpretation of welfare reform.

Cycles of Class Struggle: The Autonomist Theory of Historical Development

The present thesis is ultimately founded upon an alternative theory of historical development—one that has not only yet to comprehensively feature in analyses of UK welfare reform (cf. Wiggan, 2015) but has been marginalised even among radical left circles over the last forty years (Wright, 2017)—which places *working class autonomy at its heart*. To be more precise, as discussed in *chapter two*, this theory of development was forged via the intellectual might of the post-war Italian Operaismo movement (Tronti, Negri, Panzieri, Bologna etc.) and, at its crux, suggests that the two dominant classes in capitalist society—capital and labour—are constantly locked in an irreconcilable *class struggle*. On the one side of the struggle, according to the Operaisti, there are labouring subjects who have an inherent tendency to resist the imposition(s) of capitalist domination and exploitation mediated through a manifold of 'commodity-form(s)' pertaining to wage and reproductive labour (Dalla Costa and James, 1972; Cleaver, 1979; 71-85). These labouring subjects are a perennial, paradoxical and problematic 'other' to capital as, on the one hand, they remain essential as the lifeblood (human labour power) to capital's existence (Tronti, 2019). Yet, on the other hand, they simultaneously possess inimical interests and regularly find ways of injuring capital through various forms of *refusal of work*. These range from individual acts of resistance to more damaging collective forms of 'strike, sabotage, direct action' taken to advance the political and/or material interests of those involved (Negri, 2005; 270).

On the other side of the struggle there is capital. In the face of labouring subjects which are not only resistant and potentially insurgent but essential to its survival, capital must continuously ensure the subordination of these subjects as docile objects suitable for exploitation (Tronti, 2019). The way capital does this is by engaging in forms of class

struggle, which predominantly take shape in efforts seeking to control ‘the class from within’ (Baldi, 1972; 12) and creating/preserving a working *class composition* that is conducive for exploitation. In other words, capital looks to create 'a particular distribution of inter- and intra-class power' within the arrangement of the working class 'which gives it sufficient control *over* the working class to guarantee accumulation' (Cleaver, 1992; 114). In particular, capital may actively impose divisions via job title, wage differentials, attendance patterns (and so forth) to create this distribution of inter and intra-class power (cf. Angry Workers, 2020). Or alternatively it might rely on divisions within the class composition that emerge from alternative directions, such as those posed by ethnicity, gender or culture—in some instances capital has been known foster divisions on these differences too (Gambino, 1976). As Negri (1973; 1974) argues, capital may also turn to its ‘vehicle of system maintenance’ (Skocpol, 1980; 171), the state, to forcibly establish *command* over the working class composition and repressively enforce capitalist exploitation.

But capital (and its vehicle of system maintenance) isn’t the only progenitor of class struggle. On the contrary actually, for the Operaisti, labour is the true progenitor of class struggle. Fuelled by an inherent tendency to resist imposition(s) of capitalist domination and exploitation, labouring subjects tend to come together, organise and ‘recompose the structures and distribution of intra-class power among themselves' (Cleaver, 1992; 114). Should they do this effectively enough, then they can undermine their own class composition, enact more powerful forms of refusal and, in so doing, threaten capitalist profitability as well as its overall control. If, or more pertinently, when the working class manages to do this, according to the Operaisti, capital must at some point respond and make a counter-move to *decompose* working class power. In other words, capital (and its vehicle of system maintenance) must once again deploy new political, economic and technological mechanisms to eliminate refusal of work activity, break down working class solidarity and *recompose* the class in a way that once again subordinates resistant labour as docile labour power suitable for exploitation.

Irrespective of whether capital, the state, or a combination of both are successful at decomposing the working class, the Operaisti suggest that this is ultimately inconsequential in the long run. Not only is there 'no active life in capital without the living activity of labour power' (Tronti, 2019; 245), but the class antagonism that exists

between the two classes is a natural product of their unequal relationship, so it can never be eradicated. It is these paradoxical certainties, according to the Operaisti, which drive capitalist societies forward into periodic *cycles of class struggle* based on this class *composition-decomposition-recomposition* motion. The cycle is first articulated in an 'upswing' involving a period of recomposition featuring increasing solidarity and an aggregate growth in the ability of the working class to assert its interests against its class enemy (Cleaver, 1992; 114). It is then followed by a corresponding 'downswing' involving a process of class decomposition through which capital draws upon political, economic and technological mechanisms to re-establish a new working class composition sufficient to preserve its continuity as the dominant and exploiting class. By developing the concept of 'class composition' to better articulate how cycles of class struggle push capitalist societies forward, the Operaisti had demonstrated that working class struggle—and not just blind economic forces (e.g. regulation theory) or a semi-spontaneous 'violence from above' (e.g. criminalisation theory)—was the true 'motor of development' and therefore the true catalyst for political, economic, cultural, social (and so forth) change (Negi, 1992).

Class Compromise, Conflict, Crisis, Counterattack and Command

Drawing heavily on this 'cycles of class struggle' theory I contend that—as seen in *chapter four*—the processes which have truly shaped the contours of expenditure cuts and workfarist welfare reforms in contemporary Britain begin in the late 19th/early 20th century and the years of the Great Unrest. Not only is it here, in the midst of a surge in workers' organisation and working class power, where social insurance schemes centred on 'redistibutionary aims' gain significant traction in government (arguably) for the first time in British political history (Ogus, 1982; 183; Price, 2000; 6-29). But it is in the 1910s, right up until the nether years of the General Strike in 1926, where the shop stewards' movements overcome factional divisions within the class composition and British capital—*in its totality*—is for the first time rocked by the organised power of the British working class (Pribićević, 1959).

To save itself, capital quickly turned 'to the technological path of repression' (Negri, 1988; 10). Employers quickly harnessed the disciplinary potential of time and motion (scientific management) to dilute the class composition with large swathes of unskilled

labour, thus severing their dependency on the strongholds of skilled labourers and extraditing them from their hegemonic producer role as indispensable prostheses of the bone and muscle of early 20th century production. However, successes made in re-establishing control were quickly lost. Productivity increases resulting from techno-economic development had pushed the supply of commodities tremendously upward without corresponding rises in demand. Capital was paying a price for blind faith in the orthodox economic doctrine that supply creates its own demand (Baldi, 1972; 12).

Now in the full swing of a global depression in the late 1920s/1930s, Keynes, with a widely popular diagnosis of the crisis and a radically new doctrine, emerges as the new trailblazer of mainstream economics. With a working class now strong enough to interfere with the market, no longer could the invisible hand of the market be trusted to mediate the relationship between supply and demand. Rather, says Keynes, the visible arm of the state must marshal economic activity and plan the economy via supply/demand manipulation so that mass production resultant of techno-economic productivity increases (supply) could be met with mass consumption (demand). Thus, 'capitalist science takes a remarkable leap forward'; the working class is for the first time recognised as an autonomous entity within capital, capable of both challenging its domination and escape (Negri, 1988; 28-9). The dominant 20th century bourgeois intellectuals of the inter-war/post-war epoch (à la William Beveridge) recognise this and declare that *compromise with* rather than *command over* the working class is needed. They usher in a new era of the *Keynesian Planner state*. No longer can working class struggles be left as an unmanaged and unpredictable risk factor, but they must be instead incorporated into the dynamic of development, valued and cemented into mutually beneficial productivity bargains, and thus institutionalised (in the form of trade unionism) within the formal governance structure of industry (Barnes and Reid, 1980). *Compromise*, according to Beveridge, should also take shape in protection from risks (ill-health, unemployment, old age) typical of a life within capital. Workfarism should be (and was) subordinated to welfare. Cradle-to-grave service provision, along with a minimum income for all, was to be established for the first time in British history. The message of the bourgeois intellectuals of the new post-depression/post-war epoch was perfectly clear. So long as the working class would subordinate itself as labour power and accordingly submit itself to the exploitation of its enemy, it would be offered in

exchange both a greater protection from risk and an overall better standard of living than it had been hitherto accustomed to.

In spite of their attempts, the class compromise pursued by the mid-20th century bourgeois intellectuals was little more than an abstraction—*because the class antagonism can only be managed it can never be done away with!* And so the so called 'class compromise' era was marked by a series of hostile (sometimes violent) and, as the year's progressed, increasingly frequent and damaging confrontations between workers and capital, as well as workers and the state. The working class had once again become composed in such a way—both politically (via Keynesian planning) and economically (via Fordist mass production)—that facilitated an intensification and massification of refusal (of work) activity. For the most part, this was reflected in an aggregate upsurge in more aggressive, frequent and diverse industrial and political refusal activity among the active army of labour (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972).

However, the Keynesian Planner state was also having a number of problems with the claiming fractions of the reserve army. In the midst of workers' struggles, Brian Abel-Smith and Peter Townsend had rediscovered poverty and were becoming something akin to intellectual prize-fighters for the poorer fractions of the working class (Banting, 1979). Their political campaigns around poverty essentially forced through a new de-stigmatised, more accessible and more valuable 'Supplementary Benefit'. By the late 1960s/early 1970s, this had narrowed the gap between wages in the lower echelons of the post-war labour market and out-of-work benefit levels. This in turn resulted in a significant take up effect, particularly among those who were of working age and unemployed (Deacon and Bradshaw, 1983). Unemployment levels were also on the rise as workers' struggles were undermining profitmaking levels and forcing through investment refusals (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972). Moreover, working class struggles were also severely damaging what Marxists tend to describe as the 'reserve army mechanism' (see Green, 1991). This occurred as benefit claimants were unionising and mounting (albeit small-scale) subversive challenges to the social security system (Rose, 1974). Alongside this, and ostensibly largely as a result of the narrowing gap between wages and out-of-work benefit levels, there were also aggregate increases in voluntary unemployment (Maki and Spindler, 1975) and benefit fraud (Cmnd 5228, 1973).

Thus, in order to pacify the political pressure of anti-poverty movements and sustain a rapidly growing claimant count of inactive or subsidised (and in some cases recalcitrant) labour power over the late 1960s/early 1970s (see Lowe, 2005; 157), the Keynesian Planner state was also rapidly expanding social security expenditure on both unemployment benefits and administration services (Gough, 1975). Initially, the state tried to pass off increasing expenditure in the ways it had usually done, through incomes policies and higher taxation of workers' wages. However, in the late 1960s and 1970s, workers were not acquiescing to attacks made on their wages and, in many cases, they were making advances (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972). Whenever workers were confronted with higher taxation or income restraint policies by the state, they frequently used refusal activities to defend their real wages which, in the process, ended up passing the costs onto capital via inflation (Crouch, 1978). Therefore, 'wage inflation accelerated' and 'workers managed to pass the bulk of extra taxation onto companies' through the extra inflation they caused (Bacon and Eltis, 1978; 110).

By the late 1960s and the early to mid-1970s, then, this *accumulation of working class struggles*—that is; more aggressive, frequent and diverse industrial and political refusal activity among active workers; the rediscovery of poverty and mounting political pressure in the shape of anti-poor movement; increasing levels of voluntary unemployment, benefit fraud, unionisation and subversive challenges among the ranks of the unemployed—had essentially placed capital in a stranglehold, forcing through a crisis of profitability. Working class struggles had successfully obliterated both the rate at which capital made profits as well as its overall share (Glyn and Sutcliffe, 1972). The crisis of profitability was soon after followed (and magnified) by a refusal to invest and, by the mid-1970s, capitalist class domination was in serious jeopardy (Glyn and Harrison, 1980).

In response to this accumulation of working class struggles, as demonstrated in *chapter five,* both capital and its vehicle of system maintenance, the former Keynesian Planner now turned *Crisis state* launched 'political, economic and technological' counter-attack to save British capitalism by restoring/preserving capitalist profitability and (re)exerting *command* over the working class (Negri, 1988). The Crisis state 'rolled back' when facing capital and 'rolled forward' when facing the working class (cf. Gamble, 1988). In doing the latter, the relationship of *compromise* between workers and the (Keynesian Planner)

state was abolished and supplanted by a relationship of (often violent) direct state *command* akin to that seen in earlier centuries. From the late 1970s onwards, the Crisis state (and capital) rolled forward in three (not exclusive) broad, corresponding ways in efforts to attack the working class 'in its [post-war] class composition'; divide up its 'overall thrust' and control 'it within the mechanisms of its own accumulation' (Negri, 2005; 243).

First, capital and the Crisis state used divide and conquer tactics by dismantling strongholds of working class power and fragmenting the labour market along dual and/or segmented lines (Negri, 1988). The result was to scatter workers in a more complex and diverse range of wage/status hierarchies, vagarious attendance patterns and inversely competing ('balkanised') relationships to capitalist technology; thereby making it exceedingly difficult for workers' to mobilise an effective counter-attack (Angry Workers, 2020). It is salient to note that the fragmentation of the labour market correspondingly resulted in an aggregate growth in the number of jobs on more insecure contracts, more irregular working patterns and on relatively lower pay than the bulk of jobs available in the post-war period (cf. Goos and Manning, 2007).

Second, the Crisis state set out to restructure the social security system via a retrenchment-cum-privatisation manoeuvre in order to ameliorate the fiscal threat posed by high levels of social expenditure. This not only (more than) halved the portion of total wealth redistributed towards both the fit-to-work unemployed and social security administration services. But, by putting many social security services out to tender on the market, the state converted large portions of remaining social security expenditure into dispossessed wealth (Harvey, 2007b). In doing so, this pacified any fiscal threat by 'articulat[ing] [capitalist] command via budgetary manoeuvrings' (Negri, 1988; 215) and routinely providing capital with opportunities to invest and accumulate social security expenditure as profit.

Sites of Class Struggle: An Autonomist Perspective on the Experience of Welfare Reform

Third, as discussed in *chapter six* and *seven*, the Crisis state set out to repair damage inflicted upon the 'reserve army mechanism'; recalibrating it to restore its appropriate function as a disciplinary apparatus and, in so doing, re-articulating capitalist *command*

over the claiming surplus populations. To do this, the Crisis state confronted voluntary unemployment and benefit fraud by, *on the one hand*, strengthening and/or introducing a range of mutually reinforcing policies and practices to *decompose* the claiming fractions of the reserve army of labour. In other words, a series of policies and frontline practices were developed to identify, correct and thus prevent any refusal activities/anti-work behaviours (hence 'decompose') present within the reserve army. In this vein, complimentary arrangements of benefit administration offices, employment services, and local employers often function as a *network of surveillance*. In these offices, workers often monitor, record and communicate with one another about claimant work-related behaviour/activities. This is done to locate suitable methods for eradicating refusal activities and fostering work-related compliance. Without going too far off the point it is salient to note that, in more recent years (particularly 2010-15), managerial efforts to ensure frontline workers appropriately monitor and, where necessary, discipline and punish claimants, have actually encouraged workers to develop harmful techniques of dissuading claims and shifting claimants off the books. More precisely, a combination of off-flow targets and 'hidden managerial methods' appear to 'dehumanise' claimants in the eyes of frontline staff, encouraging them to find ways of disrespecting and antagonising their caseloads.

On the other hand, the Crisis state has also set out to *regulate* the reserve army of labour. State managers have done this by strengthening and/or introducing another range of complimentary policies and practices ensuring that the claiming fraction of the reserve army is both exploitable and intricately synchronised to the vicissitudes of atypical labour demand in the current fragmented labour market design. In this vein, complimentary arrangements of benefit administration offices, employment services, private labour market intermediaries (e.g. temporary work agencies) and local employers often function as a *network of regulation*. Benefit administration/employment services offices tend to feature employer-facing liaison staff whose role is to work and frequently communicate with frontline employment service staff, recruitment agencies and local employers to compile information on both the characteristics of current employer demands and the characteristics of the unemployed labour supply. This in turn provides a more intricate synthesis of local

labour supplies with any fluctuations in local demand (particularly for labour on atypical terms and conditions).

While the Crisis state has made a number of (aggregately successful) efforts to pursue welfare reforms which repair and recalibrate the reserve army mechanism by *decomposing* and *regulating* unemployed labour, this is by no means a foregone conclusion on the ground. As discussed in *chapter eight*, the claiming surplus populations are often (not always) quite far from being 'passive victims' of capitalist command (Finn, 2019; 262). Rather, in the face of attempts made by the Crisis state to decompose and regulate unemployed labour power, claiming surplus populations find novel ways to navigate, negate and ultimately refuse command channelled through workfarist welfare reform. These refusals are often undertaken as forms of survival strategy; negating policies and practices which ultimately serve as a threat to the individual needs and the interests of the reserve army and the working class more generally.

When this is acknowledged, benefit administration offices/employment services appear as *sites of class struggle*. On one side of the desk, workers operate in pressured conditions to probe for refusal activity; ensure compliance via discipline and punishment; force through sales of unemployed labour power and, in some instances, bully their caseloads into resignation and disengagement. On the other side of the desk, claimants utilise a plethora of 'everyday weapons'—e.g. 'foot-dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering and so forth' (Scott, 1985; 29)—to secure very minor gains; resist modalities of discipline and punishment; eschew undesirable expenditures of their labour power and negate efforts to secure their resignation from benefit receipt.

The Class Struggle Approach Summarised and Situated in the Canon of Critical Knowledge on Welfare Reform

Taking all this into account then, the present class struggle approach is best summarised and situated as follows. Quite unlike the regulation approach, which posits that historical development is ultimately a determination of mostly blind economic forces sustained by a corresponding array of institutional 'flanking subsystems' (Offe, 1984). Or the criminalisation approach, which largely fails to discuss historical development but nonetheless holds that a period of 'neoliberal restructuring' emerging out of the 'throes

of stagflation' resulted in a 'violence from above' pertaining to 'class, race and space' (Wacquant, 2008; 22; 24; 2). The 'class struggle' approach is founded upon an alternative 'cycle of class struggle' theory of historical development which places *working class autonomy at its heart*.

When applying this theory, I contend, this provides an examination of the (re-)emergence, delivery and receipt of social expenditure cuts and workfarist welfare reforms in Britain that is considerably different to much of the existing critical literature. Unlike the regulation approach, welfare reform is not so much a response to the problems created by a neoliberal accumulation regime, nor are those services tasked with delivering welfare reform experienced predominantly as sites of (violent) labour regulation (see Appendices 1.2). Similarly, unlike the criminalisation approach, welfare reform is not so much one of half of a dual effort to contain increasing social unrest and marginality among the urban poor, nor are those services tasked with delivering welfare reform experienced exclusively as sites of criminalisation and suffering (see Appendices 1.3). Rather, in the present class struggle approach, welfare reform is predominantly part of a wider response to an *accumulation of working class struggles* and a subsequent effort to re-establish and preserve *command* over the working class composition; whilst those services tasked with delivering welfare reform are predominantly experienced as *sites of class struggle*.

Contributions

With a rough sketch of the 'class struggle' approach to welfare reform in full view, the remainder of this chapter will first underscore some key contributions that the present approach may offer to existing knowledge. After this, I will highlight some key flaws in the present approach and offer some brief insights as to how it could be developed in future.

Mapping the Cycle of Class Struggle in Britain

As far as I have read, the present thesis contains the first class struggle cycle analysis of British capitalism. The most novel feature of this analysis, which is distinct from other analyses using class composition theory (see Negri, 1988; Dyer-Witheford, 1999; Ovetz,

2018), is that it begins to incorporate the movements and effects of the reserve army as well as the active army of labour in the cycle of class struggle.

When I started reading Negri (see in particular, 1988) and his theorising on and illustration of the historical development of capitalism, I realised (I could be wrong) he has quite an interesting approach to reading and analysing secondary material. Negri seems to take Engels (1908; 24) quite literally when he says that the task of the dialectician is to 'trace out the internal connection[s]' that comprise the 'integral whole' of a thing and to locate 'the inner law running through all its apparently accidental phenomena'. Negri appears to do precisely this when illustrating the historical development of capitalism. He brings together a wide array of phenomena that might outwardly feel unrelated or accidental and traces out their internal connections by showing how they relate to the development of the class struggle cycle.

So I thought I would follow Negri's own modus operandi by operationalising dialectical material principles in my own reading of historical material around UK poverty and unemployment. In other words, I was attempting to locate interconnections, contradictions and antagonisms related to the capitalist mode of production within this historical material. I was constantly trying to see how this material could be related back to the cycle of class struggle in Britain. This is what led me to looking at claimant count rates; (voluntary) unemployment levels; fraud levels; and the rediscovery of poverty in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It's also what led me to try and make sense of these phenomena as part of a broader contradiction of interests between the two classes and as part of a resultant 'crisis of profitability' (see Appendices 4.1 for more detail).

An Inversion of Class Perspective in Regulation and Criminalisation Theory: Working Class Struggles as the True Driver of Welfare Reform

In the dominant critical approaches to welfare reform, post-1970s reforms are frequently understood as a logical social policy compliment to labour market restructuring (Wacquant, 2009). In other words, the idea is that more stringent behavioural conditionality and labour market activation policies are necessary to ensure that people engage with a labour market comprising a growth in 'jobs that nobody wants' (Peck, 2001).

By direct contrast, and in a somewhat similar way to how the Operaisti inverted Marx's original analysis from the perspective of the working class, the present class struggle approach might too be considered as an inversion of class perspective in dominant approaches to welfare reform. In other words, the argument here is that welfare reform has occurred not so much in response to labour market restructuring, but that both labour market restructuring and welfare reform have emerged in response to working class struggle.

This can be seen throughout the thesis in a number of ways. For example, in chapter five, it is shown how reforms in the shape of expenditure cuts have actually emerged as a response to a fiscal threat posed by an accumulation of working class struggles. Moreover, in chapter six (see also importantly Appendices 6.1), it was shown how policies have been introduced in response to sizeable levels of benefit fraud and voluntary unemployment in the 1980s (see Price, 2000). Of particular note in this respect are the thoughts and subsequent reforms introduced by Lord Young in the mid-1980s. Young was heavily influenced by the Rayner report (DE/DHSS, 1981), which identified significant levels of voluntary unemployment and benefit fraud. Young believed that the surplus population was becoming increasingly comprised of long-term claimant unemployed individuals that were outright negating wage labour by intentionally 'resting on the register' (Price, 2000, 240). Young also believed that fraud was higher than suggested in the report (Price, 2000; 239; 268). As such, he proposed a series of reforms—such as the Restart interview and the incorporation of benefit administration and employment services under one roof—to smoke out and decompose refusal activities among the claimant unemployed (Price, 2000; 256). As far as I have read, existing interpretations of welfare reform fail to consider (and actually ignore) clear evidence suggesting that some policies have been specifically introduced in response to class struggles (in the shape of voluntary unemployment and fraud).

From Passive Victims to Active Subjects in Street-level Policy Implementation

In 1980, Lipsky (2010) notably turned policy implementation studies on its head by demystifying the policy implementation 'gap 'through a *bottom up* 'street-level' approach. Of particular note for the present analysis, Lipsky (2010; xiii) suggested that policy delivered through public services is often distorted through 'policy conflicts' and

'struggles between individual workers and citizens who challenge or submit to client-processing'. This occurs as service-users can 'respond angrily to real or perceived injustices, develop strategies to ingratiate themselves with workers, act grateful and elated or sullen and passive in reaction to' decisions made by frontline workers (Lipsky, 2010; 9).

Curiously, however, what remains largely absent in street-level approaches to policy implementation in benefit administration-cum-employment services is any *detailed* investigation of how—as Lipsky suggests—service-users may also shape policy through modes of 'conflict' and 'struggle'. But this is not to say it hasn't been acknowledged in the past and/or is becoming increasingly recognised in the present. In her ethnography of a UK Jobcentre, Sharon Wright (2002; 290; 260) found that 'conflict was frequently a feature of interactions between staff and clients' and that 'policy in general and particular staff practices or decisions were contested'; although there is scarce empirical elaboration on how this plays out. Simone Casey's (2018; 129-140) doctoral research on Australian employment services provides a more substantive empirical account, drawing upon Bourdieusian theory to identify 'personal', 'interpersonal' and 'political' forms of resistance to employment service delivery. Relatedly, Philip Finn's (2019) doctoral research in Ireland draws (predominantly) on Foucauldian theory to identify 'street-level tactics and strategies' of 'compliance, subversion, evasion and resistance' to the 'rationality and practice of welfare conditionality'. Clearly though, there has not been any published examination of how policy conflicts might arise in response to the delivery of workfarist welfare reforms in UK-based employment services. The present thesis may go some way in addressing this. It is shown how young men navigate, negate and ultimately refuse command channelled through workfarist welfare reforms; instead shaping policy implementation to better meet their own individual interests and needs.

From Proletarian Self-Valorisation to Proletarian Dis-Valorisation

In autonomist literature, exhibitions of working class autonomy—largely irrespective of whether they take shape in self-valorising efforts to create a life separate from capital (DeRouffignac, 1985) or individual 'moments' of refusal expressed in a 'necessarily covert manner' (Woodcock, 2017; 104; 100)—tend to be ubiquitously portrayed as positive for the working class. They tend to be overwhelmingly portrayed as necessary

acts to preserve one's own sanity (Cleaver, 2017; 4) or heroic efforts in waging class war against its enemy (Negri, 2005; 200).

The present study attempts to take this further by showing how exhibitions of autonomy and self-valorisation are not always positive for the class more generally. On the contrary, the present study shows how some working class individuals engage in activities and pursue lifestyles that were not only distinctly separate from capital (cf. Ancrum and Treadwell, 2017), but caused significant distress and harm to both themselves and others within their social proximity. This may have some implications for the autonomist theory of self-valorisation (Holloway, 2010). Negri (1991; 162) argues that the progression of self-valorisation within the class can be measured in two ways that both correspond to the extent to which the working class 'subject is able to develop itself, to liberate itself from the relations of production in so far as it liberates and dominates them'. The first, according to Negri (1977; 126) is a negative measurement that gauges 'the progressive reduction of individual and overall labour-time, i.e. the quantity of proletarian life which is sold to capital'. While in second place, 'the progress of the process of self-valorisation is measured positively, by the multiplication of socially useful work dedicated to the free reproduction of proletarian society' (Negri, 1977; 126). The present study suggests a third measurement: proletarian *dis-valorisation*. In short, this measurement would gauge the 'multiplication' of socially un-useful work which, instead of reproducing a free proletarian society, serves to (inadvertently or otherwise) harm working class liberation through non-capitalist forms of domination and exploitation (e.g. petty entrepreneurialism); in turn undermining working class solidarity and collective consciousness against capital.

The Dehumanising Effects of Off-Benefit Flow Targets

Perhaps one of the most important (and unexpected) findings in the interviews was how recent changes to the performance metrics governing frontline staff—called benefit 'off-flows'—encouraged both workers and managers to develop techniques of falsely inflating sanctioning targets, dissuading claims and shifting claimants off the books. By probing more closely around how workers are marshalled into marshalling claimants, It was revealed how a combination of off-flow targets and 'hidden managerial methods' seemed to 'dehumanise' claimants in the eyes of frontline staff, encouraging them to

find ways of disrespecting and antagonising their caseloads (see chapter six). As far as I have read, this is largely unacknowledged in the present literature on welfare reform.

Criticisms

As social scientists and theoreticians of our surroundings, we are aware that the social world is always more confusing, complex, messy, contradictory (and so forth) than the interpretations and, by extension, simplifications we tend to make of it. With most attempts that try to unify and make sense of a vast array of different and outwardly appearing unrelated phenomena, we are often left with more questions, uncertainties and discontents than we are concrete answers. I can only suspect that the present 'class struggle' analysis of UK welfare reform will leave the reader feeling much the same. Therefore, I would like to conclude by discussing some important flaws in the logic of the present analysis and some corresponding thoughts for future thought/research.

Issues with Class Composition and the Cycles of Class Struggle Theory

In my search for ideas over the last three years, little excited me more than discovering the Operaisti's *Copernican inversion* of classical Marxism and their subsequent crafting of the theory of *class composition.* In particular, I found Antonio Negri's (1988) broad brush illustration of historical development as the product of gargantuan class struggle cycles to be intellectually compelling. But there are quite a number of glaring flaws with a class struggle cycle analysis of historical development. The most obvious being, like critics have levelled at Negri in the past (see Dyer-Witheford, 2005; 138), if there is an inherent class antagonism and we are locked in these gargantuan cycles of class struggle then where is labour's latest counter-attack in the last 40 years or so? Why hasn't the working class been recomposed (or recomposed itself) into a new revolutionary subject like how autonomists' claim this occurred in the early and mid-20th century? These difficult questions have equally difficult implications for the present analysis: If Britain is currently in a class struggle cycle, then how have 'Crisis state managers' been able to push through (on aggregate) progressively more punitive welfare reforms, decade after decade, with next to no response from the working class? Is it really plausible to infer that the last 40 years are little more than a 'downswing' in the cycle where labour (in its

active and reserve components) is still being progressively 'decomposed' by capital and the state?

To these questions, particularly the last two, let me first begin by illuminating a point of departure in my own thinking compared to Negri's. As far as I understand, Negri (1988; 1992) sees each cycle of class struggle as constituting a higher stage in the development of the working class as a revolutionary subject (cf. 'professional worker', 'mass worker' and 'socialised worker'). Thus, kind of like how orthodox Marxists tend to see capitalism as doomed to fail according to its own contradictions, Negri infers that the cycle of class struggle ends inevitably in the fall of capitalism and victory for the working class. From the privileged vantage point of the 2020s (as opposed to the 1970s/1980s), there seems to be no good reason to remain loyal to the idea that each phase of the cycle reflects a higher stage in the revolutionary development of the class and/or that class struggle will ultimately lead to capital's downfall. Equally, there also seems no good reason why capital and the state can't (re)arrange, preserve and manage the class composition in a way that contains or ameliorates (not eradicates) the class antagonism for extended periods of time. In fact, there seems to be quite a good deal of evidence emerging which reveals how difficult it is to recompose the class against individual capitals in contemporary workplaces; particularly in the face of present politico-economic conditions where both capital and labour are (relatively speaking) hypermobile while labour securities for large sections of the class are at a historical weak point (cf. Angry Workers, 2020; Woodcock, 2017).

Thus, my own (albeit very inchoate) thoughts are that we may be experiencing a phase in the cycle where the class antagonism still exists but capital and the Crisis state have managed to distribute inter and intra-class power within the composition in ways that are more conducive to a lengthier period of relative working class quiescence. For example, unlike the autonomists, we might broaden our horizons and look more closely at the symbolic divisions within the class composition. In recent decades, haven't we seen emerging evidence (Tyler, 2013; see also Shildrick and MacDonald, 2013; 297; see also Jeffery et al., 2019) revealing how stigma is harnessed by Crisis state managers as a top-down divisive force to cultivate intra-class antipathy as a way of garnering support for policies that ultimately harm the class and benefit capital? Is this not synonymously evidence of a way in which the Crisis state regulates the class antagonism and, by

extension, distributes inter and intra-class power within the working class composition? If one favours such cogitations, then this is in turn might go some way towards theorising a period of relative (working) class struggle dormancy (against capital). And, moreover, understanding why Crisis state managers have been afforded decades to pass through and periodically intensify policies which quite clearly don't reflect working class interests.

In response to the abovementioned criticisms of class struggle cycle theory, I would also question to the extent to which we see the last forty years as a period of relative dormancy for working class struggles. Again, if we favour the idea that inter and intra-class power is distributed effectively enough to dissuade or reduce direct action against capital, then might it be plausible to conceive of class struggles not as absent but rather as manifesting in different (perhaps somewhat new?) forms? As a rudimentary example; rather than witnessing increasing levels of proletarian self-valorisation (as the Operaisti did) during a phase in the cycle where the distribution of inter and intra-class power was favourable to working class solidarity and collective struggles (against capital). Instead, during the current phase where the distribution of inter and intra-class power evidently doesn't favour collective struggle against capital, might we be correspondingly witnessing increasing levels of proletarian 'dis-valorisation'?. If one is sympathetic to such ideas, then a first point of departure might be to look at ways in which we can harness the explanatory power of 'class composition' and take it in new directions. Perhaps we could learn more about the working class and its struggles, for example, by rescuing 'class composition' from its narrow focus on workers and workplaces and redirecting it towards examining the distribution of inter and intra-class power between those subjected to a 'violence from above' in the marginalised 'neighbourhoods of relegation' (Wacquant, 2008). In performing such an analysis, might we learn more than Wacquant (2008; 30) about the powers that 'undermine the sense of collectivity necessary to engage in community building and collective action'? I haven't read or researched enough to know but it seems plausible.

Issues with Interpreting Qualitative Data: Some Inconsistencies at the Street-Level

Another issue I want to reflect on is the present interpretation of the empirical data collected at the 'street-level'. Unlike conventional policy implementation analysis, which

tends to focus almost exclusively on workers by looking for inconsistencies and deficits between policy-as-imagined and policy-as-delivered (see Blackmore, 2001); I wanted to observe how a dialectical power relation or, more precisely, a binary struggle pertaining to exertions of power and counter-power (e.g. control and resistance) manifests within street-level encounters and frontline policy implementation (see Chapter six, seven and eight). Whilst there's little doubt that these binary struggles exist, it's possible I overstate the prevalence of binary struggles in frontline worker/claimant relationships to the exclusion of all else. Or, putting it as straightforwardly as I can, my concern is that the present analysis comes across mistakenly as arguing that all frontline-worker/claimant relationships compromise binary struggles and/or that binary class struggle is the *only* feature of their relationships.

From what I can gather many street-level encounters do appear to contain some kind of conflict and struggle over one issue or another (e.g. disagreements over jobsearch activity or turning up late to an appointment and lying). But to suggest that this is the only feature of these relationships would be a crude reduction of their reality. Much like there are periods where workers are somewhat willingly selling their labour power to their employer and other periods where those same workers are going on strike against their employer, in the present study, worker and claimant relationships too seem to go through phases of struggle and quiescence. Equally, there were times when worker-claimant relationships didn't seem to contain any semblance of a class struggle. In fact, Worker 3 even suggested that workers in his/her office have at times been unable to monitor, discipline and punish claimants due to staffing cuts and new administrative pressures surrounding new legislation. Thus, there were evidently times when alternative struggles, such as that between worker and employer, actually squashed any potential for worker-claimant struggles (cf. Brodkin, 2013 'cost-shifting'). This was seemingly confirmed by some of the young men I spoke to who on a number of occasions suggested that at certain periods their claims have not been under any form of scrutiny.

I don't have much to say in terms of a defence of these evident deficiencies with my interpretation. But I will recite a point Loïc Wacquant (2019; 312) made when identical flaws were highlighted in his own analysis by Ball (2019; 128). Ball (2019; 128) suggested that Wacquant can over-determine the 'inevitability' of policy implementation and

correspondingly understate the ability frontline workers have (consciously or otherwise) to disrupt 'the translation of government policy to practice'. To which Wacquant (2019; 312) conceded, but also stated that 'the social world is always, by necessity, more entangled and muddled than the models we build of it'. I endorse Wacquant's response here. Undoubtedly policy implementation and street-level encounters in benefit offices contain far more than a binary struggle relation and policy implementation studies have powerfully exposed their complexities over the years. Nevertheless, if we are to understand how policy implementation and street-level encounters relate to, and make sense within, a broader illustration of the social world, then I suspect we must also have to take some leaps with our interpretations that may—in the qualitative reality of everyday social interplay—outwardly appear crude or even quixotic.

On Claimant Autonomy

Another potential issue with the present study concerns the specific sample of (young male) claimants I spoke to and their autonomy; that is, the extent to which an individual can govern oneself and/or be characterised as a 'purposive and creative actor, capable of a degree of choice' (Lister, 2004; 125).

Autonomy has been a politically sensitive and sociologically polarising subject for many years (Deacon, 2004). This is even truer when discussed in the specific context of the labour market behaviour of those who live poor and on the margins in advanced capitalist societies (see Dunn, 2014; 16-54). There is now a sizeable body of research which argues that most poor individuals certainly do have some degree of autonomy but this is often severely circumscribed by conditions or circumstances beyond their control. In particular, there is a branch of intellectuals who argue that the archetypal welfare claimant is committed to the notion of selling their labour power and actively seeks opportunities to do so (Wright, 2016). But the archetypal claimant is also 'constrained by a lack of material resources and power' (Lister, 2004; 127), 'subject to "othering"' and employer discrimination (Wright, 2016; 249), and/or constrained by mental/physical health conditions that often emerge as a result of living in poverty (Hoggett, 2001). There is of course another counter-posing strand of intellectuals and pathologisers whom place far more emphasis on the idea that the archetypal welfare claimant has considerably more autonomy than is often stated and is actively resistant

or ‘choosy’ when it comes to selling their ability to work (Perkins, 2015; Dunn, 2014). Some scholars argue this as symptomatic of an ‘underclass’ of individuals who, largely owed to a permissive criminal justice system combined with generous welfare provision, choose to live an immoral life outside capital and beyond the ennobling clutches of the commodity form (cf. MacDonald, 1997; 1-13).

In the present thesis, one potential flaw is that I overstate and/or misrepresent claimant autonomy. This potential flaw is perhaps most visible in chapter eight (see in particular; Self-Valorisation), where it is shown how some of the young men I interviewed were locating ‘cracks’ in the surface of capitalism to either reduce the time they spent working or outright negate wage labour (Holloway, 2010). To this, I want to make three further points.

First, as regards overstating claimant autonomy; quantitative evidence would overwhelmingly suggest that the sample of young men I spoke to are not representative of the claimant count more generally. Rather, the quantitative evidence overwhelmingly suggests that, overall, ‘the total demand for labour determines employment, and that is essentially the entire story’ (Shildrick et al., 2012; 36). Whilst I remain loyal to Marx’s (1973; 736; 2013; 514-519) view that some working class people will not work under the conditions posited by capital (unless forced) and especially if a financial and/or symbolic alternative of equal standing was provided; it is clear that, for the most part, these alternatives haven’t been provided for the bulk of Britain’s political economic history. So the aggregate picture reveals quite clearly that working class people—poor or otherwise—tend to acquiesce and take jobs where they can and, in the lower echelons of the labour market, they even tend to precariously cycle in and out jobs more or less in line with capitalist demand.

Second, as regards misrepresenting claimant autonomy; the point I want to make clear is that even though struggles against workfarist policy implementation were present in most of the sample, these struggles were by no means exclusively driven by an underlying unwillingness to work. It was made quite clear in chapter eight that a small number of the young men were struggling against policy implementation to maintain benefit receipt, negate undesirable work and/or as a way of illicitly claiming a miniscule but nonetheless greater portion of the total wealth.

However, it is salient to note that everyday weapons were also used by claimants who would quite literally take any job to escape their situation—and later proved this by taking work—but suffered a number of disempowering obstacles (ranging from mental health issues to labour market discrimination). I feel this is a very important point to drive home. It was evident that even those who were most compliant with the overarching logic of workfarist welfare reforms (i.e. getting the unemployed into work) felt compelled to struggle against policies and practices at certain points. Most often, these struggles were framed by the young men as necessary forms of 'survival strategy' (MacDonald, 1997; 520) to protect themselves against a threat to their needs. Thus, in short, the straightforward point I want to make explicit here is that struggles against workfarist policy implementation do not evenly correlate with an underlying unwillingness to work—it is of course more nuanced than this.

The *third* and final point I wish to make is more in anticipation of (and response to) those who may read this thesis and seek to moralise the testimonies of the young men, such as Peter below, who were quite openly hostile towards many (not all) of the job 'opportunities' available to them:

> 'If you live to 80, you sleep I don't know a good 40/50 percent I don't know maybe around there of your life. Erm there's all these ridiculous numbers and if you add them all together you realise that what you actually have is fucking tiny. So then why do people then sacrifice that for minimum wage? To give away all of their time, all of it, just to have the last little bit of the day to sleep. Have something to eat. Go back to work. To repeat the process until the weekend. In which they have that couple of days off go out and have a drink to celebrate and then struggle to do everything back on Monday. And it's the endless cycle until you hit retirement…The thought of working a good 80 per cent of my time for minimum wage, for that many years, was shocking. Cause you work until you're just old enough until you're not able to work. Until you are infirm. Ill. Old. Then, the system just kind of brushes you onto one side until you wait to die. That's, it. They have sapped all of your life. You have given them every hour of your life that you can for a currency that they print £25 million worth of a day. It's pointless, it's absolutely idiotic.' (Peter, W2)

For some intellectuals, like Murray (1996; 26), individuals like Peter who express such views and choose to claim benefits over selling their ability to work are something like a 'disease'. They are not part of the working class but comprise an 'underclass' who pose

a contagious threat to the hard-working values of those occupying nearby social space. But I fail to see any signs of disease here. On the contrary actually, does this not actually read as the sign of a perfectly healthy working mind? Does this not convey an acute but so often un(der)stated awareness of the ruination that capitalist domination and exploitation can and still does incur on the human life? This is an important point of departure between the present analysis and that of those bourgeois social theorists who frequently seek to moralise the actions and behaviours of those in poverty. Whilst they would point to a psychological deficit of that small minority who are work resistant; the present analysis, on the flip side, would instead suggest placing firm focus on precisely what it is that some appear to be resisting.

10. Appendices

1.1.The Historical Development of UK Benefit Administration/Employment Services

Whilst there is a substantial amount of information about benefit administration and employment services in the UK in the main body of the thesis, I thought it might be useful to attach some basic peripheral notes I made about their history.

A Very Brief Note on Poor Laws and Speenhamland

Official state administration of subsistence-level benefits for the unemployed dates back to the introduction of regional poor law in 1552, before coming into national agenda in 1601 (see Slack 1990). The stated purpose was to provide fiscal relief in the form of money, food and raw materials so as to 'set the poore on worke' (Smith, 1972; 83). Over the centuries following the introduction of poor law, poverty and unemployment was predominantly managed through 'farming' the poor and the erection of workhouses (Higginbotham, 2018). 'Farming' referred to the practices of regional officials; where landowners were paid to house the poor and put them to work on their land. Workhouses came to prominence in the early 18th century as a proposed solution to warehouse ostensibly growing numbers of 'idle and improvident' poor and prevent the ‘exploitation’ of taxpaying citizens (Daunton, 1995; 453).

In the late eighteenth century, benefit administration appeared to reflect a slight easing of the workfarist solutions characteristic of early poor law. New measures were introduced that appeared to be more concerned with redistribution and ensuring basic subsistence levels were met. The implementation of Speenhamland 'law' in 1795 (it was never nationally enacted) saw regional parishes respond to a period of social and economic turbulence with income supplement provisions in accordance with the price of bread and family size (see Block and Somers, 2014). Meanwhile, according to Polanyi (2001; 83), 'though in principle work was still enforced' unemployment benefits had become general and workhouses had become 'so lax that the most potent method of taming the recalcitrant was to threaten to give them their discharge' (Longmate, 1972; 82).

However, this period was short lived. Influential critic Thomas Malthus decried minimum income provisions as undermining willingness to work and incentivising early marriage, thereby exacerbating rather than ameliorating poverty (cf. Block and Somers, 2014). Policymakers responded by enacting a swift return to workfare through the introduction of the 1834 new poor law. New legislation saw eligibility for poor relief depend upon incarceration under new workhouse regimes of strict discipline and sexual celibacy for the destitute (Hirschman, 1991). Meanwhile, the 'casually destitute' were to be 'relieved in the workhouse, where they could be employed in suitable labour' (Nicholls, 1853; 372).

The Introduction of Labour Exchanges

> 'The attainment of the maximum of mobility depends upon the universal application of the principle of the Labour Exchange - that for every trade or administrative area there should be offices to which all men seeking employers, and all employers seeking men, should invariably and at once resort' (Beveridge, 1907; 66-81 cited in Showler, 1976; 19)

Official state responses to poverty and unemployment were to change significantly in the early 1900s. Beveridge thought that poverty and unemployment were predominantly driven by labour market inefficiencies and the persistence of casual, temporary work as opposed to moral turpitude. He believed that a public employment service could have a significant effect on de-casualising the labour market by acting as an intermediary organisation providing more labour market information (Finn, 2018). Beveridge saw the role of public labour exchanges as synthesising the individual demands of firms for labour into one joint demand (Showler, 1976). In other words, employers could use the labour exchanges to overcome shortages of labour supply, whilst unifying the demands of multiple firms would make it easier to match supply with demand. A public employment service was also considered a possible option for diverting men from low-skill uneducative employment into roles that increased their value through upgrading skill and education levels (Showler, 1976). Moreover, a public employment service was viewed as especially important for mitigating displacement brought on by industrial transitions, thereby retraining/rerouting displaced industrial workers into growing areas of the economy.

By 1909, strongly influenced by William Beveridge's ideas on unemployment, Winston Churchill introduced the Labour Exchanges Act after an easy passage through the commons (Thane, 1996; 85). The first labour exchanges opened in 1910 (Chegwidden and Myrddin-Evans, 1934; 3). Initially, the exchange agencies operated without providing social security entitlements, the focus was strictly on matching the unemployed with job vacancies (Wright, 2003). Gradually, a state funded unemployment insurance scheme, devised by William Beveridge, was incorporated into the functioning of labour exchanges. From that point onwards, labour exchange agencies began their dual 'policing' (of entitlement through means-test) and 'enabling' (the unemployed to find work) role (Price, 2000).

In the initial four years of their commission, labour exchanges proved to be of more use to temporarily displaced skilled workers rather than the long-term, chronically unemployed (Thane, 1996). Before 1914, owing in part to the suspicion of bureaucratic intervention held by workers and the apathetic view of employers, there was markedly little impact. Yet, by the year marking the First World War 'the exchanges were filling three thousand vacancies a day', dealing with over two million workers in 423 registered exchanges per annum (Thane, 1996; 86). By 1916, a separate Ministry of Labour was established which oversaw the labour exchanges, renaming them *employment*

exchanges. The exchanges were highly useful during the war period to organise labour for war mobilisation (Showler, 1976).

By the 1930's, employment exchange agencies had come under criticism for failing to provide enough vacancies. Exchanges had come 'to be associated in the mind of the public more with the payment of unemployment benefits than with job placement' (Helmore, 1976; 249). Yet, criticism had somewhat waned by the coming of the Second World War, as exchanges were once again deployed to supplement the war effort and increase the supply of labour. For Showler (1976; 24), there was no doubt that the wars had 'emphasised the central role of manpower and manpower planning, and led to a very considerable extension of the powers of the employment service'.

The Manpower Services Commission

Notable developments occurred again in the 1960's. Spending cuts had affected the job matching function of the exchanges, with only around 15 percent of registered unemployed finding jobs through public employment services (Finn and Taylor, 1990). Alongside this, concerns surrounding skill shortages in key areas of future growth, coupled with overmanning and underinvestment in declining industries were seen as posing serious threats to Britain's economic future (Whiteside, 1991). According to Wright (2003), an OECD review of UK manpower policy (1970) heavily criticised Britain's employment exchanges, citing their excessive devotion to benefit administration at the expense of redirecting the unemployed into the labour market. This shaped the context underpinning ideas to formulate a new compact between state and industry, which comprised of state coordinated training programmes to facilitate skill development. These programmes were eventually brought in with the introduction of a new training agency, the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) in 1973. The MSC's objective was relatively straightforward:

> 'It was to revamp government placement agencies and training schemes, promote redeployment from declining to expanding sectors of the economy, foster recruitment of school leavers into areas where their services would be most needed and generally eliminate the high-tech skill shortages that continued to dog Britain's economic performance.' (Whiteside, 1995; 65)

In the early years after the MSC's inauguration, the MSC's Training Opportunities Programmes (TOPs) were hailed as revolutionising employment policy. The employment exchanges were retitled as Job centres and set free from their unemployment benefit administrative duties (Whiteside, 1991). Organisationally, this meant job centres were separated from Unemployment Benefit Offices (UBO's). From that point, recruitment and training practices for staff became distinguishable between the two organisations (Wright, 2003). Contrary to the back alley image of the UBO's, the Job centres were also relocated in attractive premises amongst shopping centres and on major high streets. Moreover, the Job centres had begun to implement new organisational management strategies, placing increasing importance on performance objectives and targets pertaining to volumes of vacancies, placements and training applications (Showler,

1976). By 1977, public service job placements had risen by 30 per cent (Whiteside, 1991).

Despite the initial success of the Manpower Service Commission and growing faith in public employment services, economic decline and rising unemployment in the mid-1970s/80s forced the MSC to readapt its functions. During this time, the Labour government had introduced a variety of special employment programmes through the MSC in order to prevent redundancies and boost recruitment in regions of economic depression (Whiteside, 1995). Although the cost of these programmes was partially balanced by savings in unemployment benefits and sustaining tax revenue, there were recurring worries concerning substitution effects. Put simply, the MSC employment schemes subsidised labour. As such, they were thought to fail to promote genuine productivity and (surplus) value creation (cf. Bacon and Eltis, 1978). As a result, there were not only concerns that employers were replacing unsubsidized workers with subsidized workers. But that subsidized labour was a growing burden on rising wage inflation (Whiteside, 1995) and, later, a crisis of profitability over the 1970s.

The Thatcher government saw the objectives and activities of the MSC as a waste of public resources and ultimately incompatible with a new agenda to prioritise inflation control. Critics of public employment services claimed that state bureaucracies were more concerned with securing the growth of their own 'budgets, responsibilities, status, and job security' (Finn, 2009; 2). They were also criticised as inefficient and of poor value, paying insufficient attention to the needs and experiences of service users. MSC schemes were subsequently reduced from being a strategy to cope with more general labour market problems to a solution for youth unemployment (Whiteside, 1991). The role of government playing a major role in retraining and redeployment of unemployed labour fell by the way side. The training opportunities and special employment programmes were decommissioned and state agencies returned to a residual role. Job centres, akin to the labour exchanges that preceded them, 'became solely used by employers for low-grade and ill-paid vacancies which they found hard to fill by other means' (Whiteside, 1991; 105).

Throughout the 1980s, employment policies were geared towards schemes for the young, long-term unemployed, with the primary objective being to raise competition for vacancies and to cut wages (Whiteside, 1995). By 1987, unemployment was falling and economic recovery was underway. Thatcher used this to her party's advantage, taking the opportunity to reduce commitment to public training schemes. Publicly funded training schemes were significantly reduced in favour of the Job Training Scheme (renamed Employment Training in 1988). Responsibilities for training and state subsidies covering longstanding commitments to the young, long-term unemployed were passed over to employer led Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). The Training and Enterprise Councils and the Employment Training schemes earmarked the privatisation of employment service initiatives. Though governments during the interwar period used private and voluntary sector agencies and educational establishments to restore labour market discipline, Thatcher had essentially reintroduced 'pauper apprenticeships' by providing public money to the private commercial sector in return for the unemployed labour of young people (Whiteside, 1991; 105). However, more pertinently, Thatcher's

aggressive economisation of public employment services gave way to the rise of private sector Training and Enterprise Councils, in turn signalling the demise of the Manpower Services Commission (Finn, 2005).

The Introduction of the Employment Service (1987): A New Mixed Economy of Welfare Provision

The closure of the Manpower Services Commission resulted in a reversal of policy. The newly titled Employment Service (ES), initiated in 1987, was implemented as a 'Next Steps' executive agency. The public employment service was to revert back to the previous format of the old employment exchanges; amalgamating the vacancy-cum-placement function of the Job centre, and the public relief function of the Unemployment Benefit Office (Fletcher, 1997; Finn, 2005; Cole, 2007). However, for those receiving inactive benefits, including Income Support and Incapacity Benefit, entitlements were still provided through the Benefits Agency—a separate executive agency (Riley et al., 2011). Despite retaining a job broking role, the objectives and activities of the ES were significantly different to its predecessor. First, the ES was focused on reinforcing work incentives and policing the job seeking behaviour of the unemployed—this came to be known as the 'stricter benefit regime' (Fletcher, 1997). Second, the ES marked an organisational shift towards a 'work first' system underpinned by increased usage of low cost measures aimed at immediate job searching and job entry (Finn, 2005). Third, a new performance targets regime was in place, increasingly geared towards immediate activation, closer scrutiny/monitoring of benefit entitlements, and a more punitive sanctioning mechanism (Finn, 2005).

The introduction of the ES not only signified a reversion back to workfarism, but an organisational and ideological shift towards faith in *market based solutions* for unemployment (Grover, 2009). Grover (2009) views the changes seen during the tenure of the ES as the privatisation of employment services. As briefly touched on, in 1987, the delivery of training programmes for the unemployed was handed over to private sector Training and Enterprise Councils. Over the following ten years ('87 to '97) the Employment Service withdrew 'from most direct programme provision'; instead contracting 'out its schemes via competitive tendering and performance related contracts to a diverse range of private providers, voluntary sector organisations, colleges, Local Authorities and religious groups' (Finn, 2002; 8).

According to Finn (2005), the ES marked a shift towards a 'mixed economy' of public and private welfare provision. On the one hand, the ES still retained its figurehead role as a public employment service, retaining core functions in Job centres as a broker of job vacancies and a policer of benefit entitlements (Fletcher, 1997; Grover, 2009). On the other hand, by 1996, the ES had contracted out most employment programmes, often to private 'for-profit' firms, via competitive tendering on performance related contracts (Finn, 2009).

Welfare-to-Work and the new Jobcentre Plus

Following the agenda set out by previous successive Conservative governments, the newly elected New Labour government announced ambitious plans to progress the 'work first' welfare state (Finn, 2018). New Labour's New Deal reforms signified a further shift towards a workfarist model of benefit administration/employment service delivery. The New Deal started a process which gradually extended work-related conditions and employment services to lone parents and people on disability benefits. Initially, this took the form of voluntary work placements and mandatory 'work-focused interviews'. However, within a decade, job search requirements and mandatory programmes were extended to include parents with children aged over five. Alongside this, the new Employment Support Allowance (2008) brought about stricter access to disability benefits. This replaced earlier disability benefits, entailing a more rigorous assessment process, bifurcating claimants into a 'Work Related Activity Group' (WRAG) and a 'support group' depending on whether the individual was deemed fit to begin preparing for work (Finn, 2018).

New Labour's advancement of the 'work first' welfare state was also to be delivered under new organisational arrangements and a transformation in service delivery. Major organisational change began with the integration of the two executive agencies which previously covered all unemployed and inactive benefit claimants—the former Employment Service and the Benefits Agency. These were amalgamated into Jobcentre Plus (JCP), a singular executive agency overseen by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (Finn, 2009; Finn, 2016; Finn, 2018; Riley et al., 2011). Between 2002 and 2006, by the end of the transition, the new Jobcentre Plus had inherited a network of 1500 offices, 90,000 staff and approximately 4.5 million service users, ranging from a diverse range of working-age claimant groups (Finn, 2016). The new executive agency also implemented a service delivery model which heralded a new, modernised layout and organisation of offices in a network of approximately 800 Jobcentres (Finn, 2009). A new reception point and open plan format, coupled with an appointment system to reduce queues, was designed in line with practices learned from the commercial sector (Finn, 2018). The new offices also modernised its I.T. services with touch screen terminals known as Jobpoints and free phone facilities, enhancing the ability of claimants to search for vacancies and make applications. Moreover, benefit claims and payments became directly delivered into bank accounts, as opposed to a tangible cash transfer (Finn, 2016).

A distinctive feature of the JCP delivery system was the new role of front-line 'personal advisers', tasked with the conflicting objectives of tailoring support to the needs of individual claimants, whilst policing entitlements and making referrals for those deemed to require more intensive support (Finn, 2018). This was recognised as a 'case management' approach to welfare, which had already become a leading practice in welfare services in other countries across the world.

The network of Jobcentres and its front-line 'personal advisers' underwent a further phase of organisational change since 2010, as successive Conservative (-cum-Coalition)

governments sought to deliver Universal Credit, reduce social expenditure and advance 'work first' welfare reforms. According to Finn (2018), the most important driver of organisational transformation has been Universal Credit, which merged five working-age benefits and in-work tax credits into a single monthly payment. Universal Credit has heralded the 'digitalisation' of Jobcentres through new administrative, communications and delivery systems. By the time of 'full roll-out' over 80% of claimants will be managing all benefit related aspects of their claim online (Finn, 2018). Under the full digital service, UC claimants will be expected to manage their interactions with the DWP online. Online activity will also be integrated with the Universal Jobmatch database; a currently operational online vacancy website that requires claimants to submit a CV and agree to monitoring of their job search activity.

The implementation of Universal Credit has been undertaken by a Department (the DWP) and a network of Jobcentres which are simultaneously undergoing major reductions in administration and service budgets. In 2011, the JCP's executive agency status was abolished, as management of the network was brought under the jurisdiction of the central DWP (Finn, 2016). This involved the removal of the large regional management tier and the introduction of 36 district managers (Finn, 2016). Coupled with this, the Jobcentre network was reduced, the number of standalone offices was planned to fall too little over 600 by 2020.

Between 2014 and 2015, Jobcentres were once again physically redesigned. Previous Jobpoints and free phone facilities were removed. New digitalised Jobcentres now enable claimants to use on-site computer facilities or access free Wifi on their own devices to set up a Universal Credit account and find work (Finn, 2018). Unemployed claimants also 'sign on' using electronic pads which verify signature authenticity, a mandatory bi-weekly process (at minimum) to receive entitlements. The shift towards digital services have been designed to facilitate claimant self-service and self -reliance, with the simultaneous aim of freeing up Jobcentre resources for advisory work and more intensive support for those further away from the labour market. Delivery has also been flexibilised with the introduction of Universal Credit, as staff working times have been extended beyond conventional hours to accommodate for 'in work' Universal Credit claimants (Finn, 2018).

The introduction of Universal Credit and the intensification of work-related conditionality has been accompanied with the new 'Work Coach', replacing the earlier 'personal adviser'. Work Coaches have mixed caseloads and their primary role appears indistinguishable to their predecessor, serving to support claimants into work by challenging and motivating the claimant, providing personal advice and using knowledge of the local labour market (Finn, 2018). Work Coaches also act as a re-directory gateway to a wider range of services, particularly for claimants with health problems and disabilities. More recently, the DWP have endeavoured to improve service delivery efficiency at the local level by introducing greater managerial flexibilities. District managers and work coaches have some discretion in setting the frequency of work-focused interviews and the use of employment support depending on the needs of the service user. This discretionary activity is supported by the Flexible Support Fund. Here, Work Coaches may use the fund to tailor support to individual needs, such as travel

expenses or necessary clothing for an interview. Although, these flexibilities sit firmly within the context of meeting the DWP's national efficiency targets.

The DWP's targets underwent major simplification in 2011. Previously, JCP performance was measured against a range of performance indicators, which included the proportion of claimants entering jobs and the number of adviser interviews (Finn, 2018). The new approach to measuring performance has been to assess 'off-benefit' flows at week '13, 26, 39, and 52 weeks from the start of a claim' (Finn, 2018; 10). Off-benefit flow is straightforwardly defined as the point at which the individual has ended their benefit claim. Therefore, this does not necessarily mean that a claimant has found work. This new methodology fits with the 'work first' ethos of JCP, which is 'tasked to ensure some 88.5% of those claiming JSA cease claiming within a year' (Finn, 2016; 80). These targets are enforced by internal scorecards that include other performance indicators used by managers to drive the system and monitor/manage staff behaviour (Finn, 2016).

> 'JCP is effective at meeting its formal targets and even during the recession, around 75% of JSA claimants were moving off benefits within six months of a claim and 90% within 12 months.' (Finn, 2016; 80)

As Finn (2018; 10) notes, the risk of measuring performance based solely on 'off-benefit flows' incentivises 'perverse behaviour which might cause Jobcentre staff or contracted providers to falsely inflate their outcomes, impose sanctions or otherwise pressurise people to drop their benefit claims'. After 2010, the sanctioning rate had notably increased, and the rates of sanction referrals amongst both Jobcentres and contracted providers hit a monthly peak of 11.7% of claimants in March 2011.

The Work Programme: Explaining 'Quasi-Marketised' Employment Services

Following the practices of the Employment Service (1987), the DWP continued to contract out employment services and create a market of welfare-to-work service providers. In 2004/05, the DWP was estimated to have purchased employment services from approximately 2000 for-profit and non-profit organisations (Finn, 2018). Contracts typically lasted for approximately three years and together were worth around £1 billion a year, which roughly equated to around a third of the cost of Jobcentre services. At the time, JCP was largely responsible for designing the contracts and overseeing the employment programmes delivered to service users.

A significant turning point came in 2007. David Freud's (2007) 'Reducing dependency, increasing opportunity: options for the future of welfare to work' report was highly critical of JCP's control over the contracting process and the poor performance of the programmes it had designed (Finn, 2016). Prior to the Freud Report, JCP regional offices were mostly responsible for the procurement and management of private employment programmes. These were designed by the DWP and targeted at various groups, including the young and the long-term unemployed. Therefore, private employment service providers were not allowed a great deal of discretion and agency in the design and delivery of employment programmes. Moreover, private service providers were often on contracts which paid irrespective of performance. The Freud report found this

arrangement to be inadequate, dis-incentivising providers from investing in their ability to deliver services.

Freud proposed few changes to JCP services for the short term unemployed but recommended major changes in how employment programmes should be commissioned and extended to include disability benefit claimants (Finn, 2016). Freud suggested a new funding model which would mandate large prime providers to place an initial investment in their own resources up front. Dividends would thus be paid from the future benefit savings accumulated from placing claimants into sustained employment (Finn, 2016). In effect, by encouraging private service providers to absorb risk, this would ensure that the goals of the DWP and private employment providers were mutually aligned. Moreover, this would free up resources for the DWP, allowing them to extend activation programmes to more workless people nationwide, including those receiving disability benefits (Finn, 2016). Freud's recommendations proved popular (Grover, 2007; 2009), the DWP subsequently published a new Commissioning Strategy which outlined how the welfare-to-work market was to be reformed. The key features of the welfare-to-work market reforms are listed below:

The Prime Contractor Model for Delivering Employment Programmes

Key features of the approach to commissioning employment programmes after 2008 included:

Prime providers and supply chains: The system was made attractive to larger scale, well capitalised prime providers who would be awarded long term and higher value contracts and would have responsibility for marshalling and managing an appropriate blend of subcontractors to deliver services for a wide variety of participants.

Payment by Results funding: Contract incentives and payment systems would be designed to reward long term employment retention with job outcome payments based on sharing with providers the benefit savings accrued when a participant sustains longer term employment. Payment systems would be differentiated recognizing that helping some claimant groups is more costly than helping others. Because the prime provider is paid primarily in arrears after they have secured job outcomes the organisation has to arrange finance to enable them to invest 'up front' and bear a greater share of the risk, on the basis of an income stream they expect to derive from future outcome fees.

Service standards and the black box: In return for accepting more risk prime providers are given greater flexibility to design their own service delivery system with little centralised prescription. These 'black box' contracts give providers freedom to use their expertise to do what they consider needs to be done to secure sustained job outcomes.

Source taken directly from: Finn (2016; 82-83)

The Payment-by-Results (PbR) contracting approach was first fully implemented by the Coalition Governments large scale Work Programme which operated from 2012 - 2017 (Finn, 2018). Approximately two million claimants were referred to the programme, most of which had been unemployment for more than a year or were receiving ESA and thus subject to work activity, or WRAG, requirements (Finn, 2018). The Work Programme attracted significant criticism and was frequently ridiculed for poor performance, poor quality of services and its interaction with the DWP's stricter benefit sanctions regime. During its tenure, approximately two thirds of unemployed participants were not placed into employment whilst Work Programme providers struggled to aid those on disability benefits. Furthermore, there was evidence that the PbR model encouraged a 'creaming' and 'parking' system, as it failed to provide monetary incentives for providers to invest in individuals who required more complex support (Finn, 2018).

It is important to understand why these services tend to be bracketed as part of a 'quasi-market'. Lisa Adkins (2017) explanation of how markets are made for unemployed labour via the Work Programme (WP) provides the relevant detail for understanding the 'quasi-market' of private employment services. Straightforwardly, the 2010 introduction of the Work Programme saw the government creation of a competitive tendering process for potential employment service delivery firms. The firms were required to submit bids to win five year contracts. Bids were largely comprised of various pledges, including the pledge to 'improve relevant skills' or create good 'work experience opportunities' (Adkins, 2017; 298). Once awarded the contracts, providers were given start-up funds and allocated clients from Jobcentre plus. Although Work Programme providers were given a significant degree of flexibility as per the reforms suggested by Freud (2007), in return for the start-up funds and clients, providers were required to ensure that their services were compliant with the broad framework of the Work Programme. In short, this included ensuring that clients started and completed work placements and work experience as well as undertaking training.

As well as delivering on their own service pledges and adhering to the broad framework of expectations set out by the DWP, a range of further pre-set performance targets were in play within the contractual arrangements between the WP providers and the DWP (Adkins, 2017). These are set out by Dar (2016; 10):

- An **attachment payment**. For taking a claimant on to the [Work] Programme. The attachment fee reduces to nil by the start of the fourth year.

- A **job outcome payment**. When a claimant has been in work for either a continuous or cumulative period of employment, as defined by the Department. Job outcome payments for some claimant groups will be reduced in the later years of the contract.
- A **sustainment outcome payment**. A further payment every four weeks for keeping a claimant in employment.
- An **incentive payment**. For jobs delivered beyond a given performance level – defined by the Department as 30 per cent above non-intervention – the number of claimants who would have found employment without a programme.

Since 2013, WP providers have been able to increase their market share, or, in other words, the number of referrals and attachments they can acquire, by meeting and exceeding their targets with regards to job outcomes. To receive an increase in the market share, a range of performance related criterion must be satisfied and exceeded relative to the performance of other providers operating in the same geographical remit. In short, this is a mechanism through which the DWP can stimulate competition between private service providers to ensure the objectives of private business correspond with their own ambition of maximising job outcomes.

The method of contracting out employment services therefore resembles a 'quasi-market' but does not wholly mimic the contours of a 'pure' market found in neoclassical economics. One reason, for example, is that pure markets mandate minimal market intervention from the state, whereas the state is directly involved in creating this market, as well as having a hand in overseeing the design of the product it buys. Second, whilst there are numerous potential contractors, there is only one purchaser (the state). As a result, the state retains dominance in the market relationship and dictates the price at which it purchases services. This makes any regulation through a price mechanism, as in the pure market sense, entirely redundant. Rather, the market is more straightforwardly regulated by the state's objective of maximising job outcomes and not by the competitive price at which the service can be delivered. However, the DWP's market making strategy still retains many features of markets; the most important feature being competition. By incentivising performance with the promise of increased market share and, by extension, increased fiscal return, this strategy seeks to ensure productive and efficient outcomes. However, 'productive' and 'efficient' outcomes are open to interpretation and hence the subject of intense scrutiny.

By 2017, long term unemployment had fallen significantly. As a result, contracts for the Work Programme were not renewed. Instead, a smaller Work and Health programme has been introduced, accommodating for approximately 40,000 referrals per year (Powell, 2018). Although this programme has a budget worth approximately 80% less than the programmes it replaced (Finn, 2018), the aim of the Work and Health programme is not dissimilar to previous private contracting arrangements: 'delivering specialist *voluntary* support for claimants with health conditions or a disability and *mandatory* support some of those unemployed for over two years' (Finn, 2018; 13). These services are the responsibility of a smaller number of prime providers. 70% of

their funding is dependent on securing sustained employment and 30% is paid as a monthly service fee. The result of the scaling down of private service provision has been that higher numbers of long-term unemployed and disabled claimants are once again catered for by Jobcentre Plus offices.

Similarities and Differences between Welfare-to-Work Advisors in Quasi-Private Employment Services and Work Coaches in Public Employment Services

The present thesis has gathered a sample of frontline workers who have worked in either (or both public employment services as 'work coaches' and quasi-private employment services as 'welfare-to-work advisors'. For the reader's clarity, it might be useful to make clear the similarities between the two.

Unlike Work Coaches who deliver services in state-ran Jobcentre Plus offices, Welfare-to-Work advisors deliver employment services in private firms that compete for profitable contracts set up and paid for by the state (see Finn, 2016; Grover, 2007; 2009; Adkins, 2017; Dar, 2016). The main purpose of these contracted employment services—aside from providing investors with opportunities to accrue previously unattainable quantities of wealth—is to work more intensively with claimants who have been identified (and subsequently referred) by a Work Coach as being further away from the labour market (Finn, 2016; 81-87). The way this is predominantly achieved is by paying contractors based on whether they can get claimants into work, who then in turn set 'Job outcome' targets for their Welfare-to-Work advisors and measure their performance against this benchmark (Freud, 2007; Finn, 2016). As such, in practice, Welfare-to-Work advisors are different in the sense that they do not focus on the benefit administration (e.g. 'signing on' administering cash benefits and getting claimants on the correct benefit) side of the role. Rather, they focus more heavily on the 'case management' aspect of the role to work more closely with claimants than Work Coaches traditionally do and in ways that are ultimately aimed at getting claimants back to working again. Both Welfare-to-Work advisors and Work Coaches are expected to make referrals for sanctions when deemed necessary. Thus, it is important for the reader to acknowledge that whilst there are observable differences between Welfare-to-Work advisors and Work Coaches, they both retain many of the same functions and carry many of the same powers.

1.2.The Regulation Approach to Welfare Reform

This strand of neo-Marxist theory is widely regarded to have emerged in late 1970s Europe as a response to 'neoclassical economics' and 'orthodox Marxist theories of capitalist development and crisis' (Lavery, 2019; 61). The core axiom of regulation theory lies in its rejection of the orthodox Marxist claim that the internal contradictions of capitalism (e.g. class antagonism/'the tendency of the rate of profit to fall') will eventually become too difficult to manage and pave the way towards communism. They reject this not only because there is sparse evidence to suggest that capitalism cannot 'absorb and survive periodic crises' (Grover and Stewart, 2002; 4), but, more

importantly, because they refute the idea that economies are autonomous spheres of social activity with their 'own developmental dynamic' (Lavery, 2019; 61). Rather, regulationists insist that economies are embedded within broader institutional frameworks—an array of 'flanking sub-systems'—which make phases of stable economic expansion possible (Offe, 1984; 38). To explain these phases of stable expansion and their 'flanking subsystems' in more detail, regulationists introduce and develop three central concepts (although their precise wording can vary somewhat from author to author).

A Crisis of Crisis Management: The Regulationist Theory of Historical Development

First, they argue that for any period of capitalist development to occur it must comprise some kind of distinctive '*accumulation regime*'. In short, Regulationists use this term to describe 'historically specific configurations of economic activity that aim to sustain "growth in capitalist production and consumption"' (Jessop 1994; 14; cited in Grover and Stewart, 2002; 4). As a very rudimentary example, the post-war British economy was predominantly founded on a configuration which stimulated economic growth through the mass production of commodities and rising incomes linked to productivity increases; thereby ensuring 'that sufficient domestic demand was in place for newly produced economic output' (Lavery, 2019; 62). So we might understand this as a historically specific post-war 'accumulation regime'.

Second, regulationists recognised that, in order to stabilise such an antagonistic and volatile system of wealth production like capitalism, an 'ensemble of norms, institutions, organisational forms, social networks, and patterns of conduct' are often required to stabilise its phases of development (Jessop, 2013; 8). As such, regulationists insist that for any accumulation regime to successfully provide stable and longer-term development, it must be accompanied by a *'mode of social regulation'* (see Offe, 1984; 38-9). By this term, regulationists sometimes refer to more specific 'social modes of economic regulation'; i.e. an ensemble of institutions, organisational forms that intervene, 'sustain and guide' an accumulation regime by promoting complimentarity and compatibility in the face of conflictual capitalist social relations (Jessop, 1992; 3). In other instances, regulationists are referring more specifically to 'extra-economic' (Jessop, 2013; 6) 'modes of social organisation which are not directly oriented towards intervening within the sphere of production, consumption or distribution but which nonetheless play a crucial role in conditioning and stabilising economic development' (Lavery, 2019; 62). Again, as a very rudimentary example, through its primary function to ensure women reproduce current and future generations of labour via unpaid domestic work (De'Ath, 2018), some Marxists tend to see the patriarchal 'breadwinner' family as an 'extra-economic' institution designed to stabilise development (Grover and Stewart, 2002; 72-4).

Third, in direct relation to the first and second, regulationists advance the concept '*mode of development*' (Grover and Stewart, 2002; 4). The 'mode of development' refers to a historical period in which a distinctive accumulation regime 'is effectively coupled with a complementary mode of social regulation' and facilitates a period of stable economic expansion (Lavery, 2019; 63). Thus, borrowing from Lavery (2019; 63) once again, a functioning mode of development 'can therefore be understood as a relatively coherent model of social and economic development which combines economic processes with extra-economic institutional forms and social practices so as to sustain accumulation over time'. As such, when regulationists look at specific periods of historical development and/or crisis, they tend to focus their analysis 'on the institutional nexus which links together accumulation on the one hand with 'extra-economic' institutional forms on the other' (Lavery, 2019; 63).

Keeping these concepts in mind, then, for our purposes of understanding the *general* regulationist contribution to UK welfare reform (there is of course variation and debate within this branch of Marxism), their analysis begins with the contours and crisis of democratic capitalism in Britain (roughly 1945-1970s) (see Jessop, 2002). During this post-war period, regulationists tend to see the *mode of development* as centred on a 'virtuous circle of growth based on mass production and mass consumption' that is 'primarily confined' within 'national boundaries' (Jessop, 1992; 43). More precisely, according to Jessop (1992; 43), this 'virtuous circle of growth' comprised an *accumulation regime* based on cost savings made through greater efficiency in mass production, 'rising incomes linked to productivity, increased demand due to rising wages, increased profits based on full utilisation of capacity' and 'increased investment in improved mass production equipment'. Alongside this accumulation regime, the post-war mode of development also comprised a distinctive *mode of social regulation* (cf. Peck, 2001; 36). There are many different components to the post-war mode of social regulation but, in the main, Regulationists tend to cite an expansion of both collective bargaining practices and the welfare state (see Jessop, 1992; 44-5). Collective bargaining practices promoted the 'virtuous circle of growth' by ensuring management had the 'right to organise the labour process and define corporate strategy'. Collective bargaining also ensured that workers' wages were 'indexed to productivity growth and prices' and were difficult to bump down even in periods of low-growth or fluctuating labour demand (Jessop, 1992; 44). Welfare state expansion promoted the 'virtuous circle of growth' by managing aggregate demand and minimising investment risks (particularly in slump periods) through subsidising and deficit financing capital (Jessop, 1992; 45). Welfare state expansion also simultaneously 'generalise[d] mass consumption norms' via more generous (cash-transfer and service) welfare provision so that most citizens could share in the prosperity generated by the rising productivity and cost-saving efficiency of mass production (Jessop, 1992; 45).

The regulationists tend to believe that the crisis of social democratic capitalism mainly originated from a 'core contradiction' (Lavery, 2019; 52) in this abovementioned post-

war mode of development which resulted in a 'stagflationary tendency' that eventually became irreconcilable (Jessop, 2002; 81). In short, regulationists argue that the post-war mode of development simultaneously relied upon 'yet was also undermined by the expansion of the fiscal capacity of the state' (Lavery, 2019; 52). *On the one hand,* the post-war mode of development relied on the fiscal capacity of the state to artificially stimulate demand by financing capital investment. But, in spite of a long boom over the 50s and 60s, this had become increasingly difficult to achieve 'in the face of increasing internationalisation' over the late 60s and 1970s (Jessop, 2002; 81). More attractive profitmaking conditions began to emerge in other countries which meant that goods and services could be produced cheaper elsewhere. This in turn meant that demand for goods and services in the UK was being met 'from abroad rather than domestic production' (Jessop 2002; 81). Thus, the state had to increase both 'its expenditure in the economic field (the restructuring of industry, aide to the private sector etc.) and the social field (unemployment costs, retraining and youth employment schemes etc.)' (Gough, 1979; 124-5), in order to more effectively combat the difficulties of stimulating demand in an increasingly competitive international climate.

But *on the other hand,* as the state expanded its fiscal capacity and ramped up public expenditure, it began to undermine capital investment (thus contradicting its own purpose). For the most part, any funding of expenditure increases meant that state managers had to increase direct taxation on both workers and capitalists (Gough, 1979; 125-6). But in doing so, tax increases fuelled inflation. In turn, this eroded capitalist profitability and therefore ended up acting as a disincentive to investment. This partially occurred as capitalists sought to pass off higher taxation by uprating prices for their goods and services. But it also occurred as higher taxation on workers ended up spurring on more frequent exhibitions of militancy and more ambitious (often successful) wage struggles in order to protect real wage levels, particularly when they were confronted with higher prices for goods and services (cf. Crouch, 1978). As a result, wage struggles indirectly pushed inflationary pressures back on to capital, making it more difficult for domestic business to sell goods and services in an increasingly competitive international climate.

Moreover, the difficulties of stimulating demand in the face of growing international competition had led to a growing number of social problems typically associated with higher levels of unemployment (Gough, 1979; 133). Thus, to manage these problems, the state began to redirect increasing portions of expenditure towards non-profit producing sectors of the economy (e.g. social security). Numerous attempts were made to finance social expenditure out of workers' wages. But once again, when workers were confronted with higher taxation, they frequently used militancy to defend their real wages and, in the process, ended up passing the costs onto capital through wage inflation (see Gough, 1979; 125). This further undermined profitability, dis-incentivised investment and therefore acted as another 'brake on the rate of accumulation' (Gough, 1979; 108). As such, bringing all this together, the crisis of democratic capitalism reached fever pitch for the regulationists when there was eventually 'an inability of the political system to prevent and compensate for economic crises' (Offe, 1984; 61) and an ensuing 'crisis of crisis management' (Jessop, 2002; 81). Or, in other words, the crisis became

untenable when the modes of social regulation (the welfare state, collective bargaining) could no longer stabilise the 'virtuous circle' of the post-war mode of development and were instead contributing to a climate of high inflation, high unemployment, low profitability and stagnating productivity.

Whilst stagflation is often regarded by Regulationists as the decisive factor in the post-war economic crisis and the driving force behind subsequent efforts to re-organise Britain's political economy (which I'll come on to very shortly), there was also another related issue that was beginning to confront the post-war accumulation regime in the 1970s. Without going into too much detail, as already alluded to, 'competitive threats from low-cost exporters' abroad (Jessop, 1994; 19) meant that mass production labour processes were becoming unprofitable and thus an increasingly unattractive prospect for capitalists to invest in. In such a climate, 'what is at stake [for firms] in international competition…is the ability to switch quickly and easily among innovative products and processes with each new product offering better functional qualities and improved efficiency in production' (Jessop, 1993; 14). In the 1970s—largely (but not exclusively) through their ability to provide firms with better product market information and thus greater scope to (re)calibrate production costs in accordance with fluctuations in market demand for their goods and services (Castells, 2010; 167)—major advances in micro-electronics based information communication technologies were providing firms with this new capacity to 'switch quickly and easily among innovative products and processes' via the introduction of 'flexible manufacturing or service delivery systems' (Jessop, 1993; 14). However, firms seeking to compete via flexible production also tend to require 'an appropriately flexible workforce that often combine multiskilled and unskilled workers in flexible ways' (Jessop, 2002; 98). Which, and this is an important point to note, in turn meant that any serious expansion of capital accumulation via flexible production would require political-economic conditions that provided sufficient quantities of workers willing to work on terms and conditions 'more directly determined by the market' (cf. MacInnes, 1987; 113). That is, on more insecure contracts, more irregular working patterns and, often (but not always) as a result of insecurity/irregularity, on lower pay than the bulk of workers employed on 'standardised' contracts in the post-war mode of development. So again, emerging capitalist demands for flexible production were at odds with a number of post-war modes of social regulation that were originally designed to act as a brake on flexibilisation in order to more effectively facilitate the 'virtuous circle' of mass production and mass consumption.

Bringing all this together then, according to the regulationists, resolving this crisis of democratic capitalism would require a reorganisation of the post-war mode of development in ways that effectively responded to inflationary pressure, stiff international competition and, largely as a result of international competition (as well as 'techno-economic' developments), emerging demands for flexible production. Now I need to quickly add that the Regulationist explanation of this reorganisation is both complex[2] and incomplete (Jessop, 1993; Jessop, 2002; 139; Peck, 2001; 80). But very broadly speaking, regulationists tend to see reorganisation of the post-war mode of

[2] to gain more detail and an insight into the meticulous complexity of the regulation approach see Jessop (2002; 95-139)

development as predominantly manifest in a number of efforts made 'by state managers, officials, economic and other forces' in the late 1970s/1980s to create politico-economic 'conditions favourable to inward investment' (Jessop, 2002; 96; 126). And this was achieved through a number of measures to 'secure economic growth within [British] borders and/or to secure competitive advantages for capitals based in [British] borders…by promoting the economic and extra-economic conditions…deemed vital for success in competition with economic actors and spaces located in other states' (Jessop, 2002; 96; see also Cerny, 1997; 2010).

Domestic competitiveness would be restored by dismantling many post-war modes of social regulation that were geared towards an accumulation regime based on mass production in favour of prioritising minimalist state intervention, inflation control and a new accumulation regime primarily based on flexible production. The state would no longer make 'vain efforts to maintain declining sectors' (Jessop, 2002; 128; cf. Glyn 2006; 37-42), which also meant that full employment policies would be abandoned and job creation would no longer 'flow quasi-automatically from effective management of national demand' (Jessop, 2002; 125). Equally, the state would no longer impose high taxation on the marketed sector in order to devote large quantities of wealth towards the expansion of non-surplus value producing public sector bureaucracies—so 'draconian budgetary cutbacks in welfare state expenditures were implemented' (Harvey, 2007; 58). Further, the state would no longer shoulder responsibility for mass consumption norms by ensuring that workers' wages were indexed to enhanced productivity and price increases. Instead, trade unionism and collective bargaining practices were seen as inflationary threats that had 'to be disciplined, if not destroyed' (Harvey, 2007; 75) and were thus quickly marginalised from the formal governance structures of British industry (see Crouch, 1986). By dismantling these post-war modes of social regulation which, at their heart, sought to create demand for mass production by protecting workers' pay, conditions and consumption norms, state managers had managed to carve out suitable conditions for 'neoliberal' forms of capital accumulation via flexible production. They had achieved this by cultivating new politico-economic conditions based on low-taxation (for capital), minimalist employment protection and 'relatively low wages…with ten years' (Harvey, 2007; 59; see also Standing, 2011; 54-6).

Active Proletarianisation: The Regulationist Perspective on the Experience of Welfare Reform

Whilst state managers' efforts to re-organise the post-war mode of development were somewhat successful in reconciling the contradictions (and subsequent crisis) of democratic capitalism and restoring domestic competitiveness. For some regulationists, the new 'neoliberal' accumulation regime they had supplanted it with was to create a new set of 'regulatory dilemmas' and contradictions that would once again require state attention (Grover and Stewart, 2002; 39-42). The dismantling of post-war modes of social regulation had left a glaring 'crack' in the logic of 'neoliberal' capital accumulation which threatened its long term stability (cf. Wiggan, 2015; 376). More precisely, the

transition toward neoliberal capital accumulation had resulted in a sharp growth of precarious and low-pay 'jobs that nobody wants' which were comparable in terms of remuneration levels, and perhaps even status, to that of out-of-work benefits (Peck, 2001; 6). In such conditions, where the fiscal incentive to work is undermined, 'the transformation of dispossessed labour power into active wage labour does not occur through the market alone, but must be sanctioned by a political structure of rule, through state power' (Offe, 1984; 99). As such, state managers have been left with little choice but to subordinate social policy 'to the demands of labour market flexibility and structural competitiveness' (Jessop, 1993; 9) by forcibly ensuring capital has 'a continuous and (fairly) compliant supply of labour' that will take 'the jobs that nobody wants' (cf. Grover and Stewart, 2002; 176).

Claus Offe (1984; 92) alludes to this process of subordinating social policy to economic competitiveness as a form of 'active proletarianisation'; whereby policymakers in more recent decades have pursued new modes of social regulation by re-designing social policies to 'help overcome some of the regulatory dilemmas of neoliberal capital accumulation' (Grover and Stewart, 2002; 38). The way policymakers have principally done this, according to the regulationists, has been by ensuring labour market discipline through the implementation of workfarist welfare reforms in order to 'create flexible, enterprising workers' (Jessop, 2002; 168). Moreover, policymakers have pursued reforms aimed at 'forcibly attaching' surplus populations 'to the lower end of the labour market' (Peck, 2001; 356). Thus, for Jamie Peck (2001; 341), workfarist welfare reforms have emerged as a 'logical social policy compliment' to the emergence of a neoliberal accumulation regime:

> 'Under conditions of falling wages, chronic underemployment, and job casualization, workfarism maximises (and effectively mandates) participation in contingent, low-paid work by churning workers back into the bottom of the labour market, or by holding them deliberately close to the labour market in a persistently "job-ready" state' (Peck, 2001; 12-3)

Moreover, in holding the unemployed 'deliberately close to the labour market in a job ready state', workfarist welfare reforms tend to have regulatory benefits for neoliberal capital accumulation beyond their immediate creation of 'flexible, enterprising workers'. According to Peck (2001; 349), through their tendency to create 'a "flexible" pool of employees who have no alternative accept what is on offer', workfarist welfare reforms tend to expand the supply of labour available for employers. As Marx (2013; 444) noted, in periods where employers have more choice about what labour they can purchase, this provides them with greater leeway to assert downward pressure on wages/working conditions (see also Peck, 2001; 188). As such, workfarism not only has a disciplinary effect on those who are strictly unemployed. But, through its ability to expand the labour supply and thereby 'further erode pay levels and working conditions at the bottom of the labour market', workfarism can also have a wider disciplinary effect on workers more generally (Peck, 2001; 350).

To successfully impose these disciplinary effects and regulate the unemployed in accordance with demand for labour on precarious/low-paid terms and conditions; regulationists tend to argue that workfarist welfare reforms have transformed the claiming process. More precisely, policymakers have transformed the claiming process from a comparatively passive or permissive experience, into a process that 'destabilises the experience of welfare receipt' by packaging 'a scenario of threats and opportunities that point only in one direction: off welfare and into work' (Peck, 2001; 169; 182; cf. Mead, 2004; 158). According to Peck (2001; 184), workfarism has meant that benefit administration/employment service delivery has become increasingly about 'motivating' the unemployed and 'not simply through esteem building but also through deliberate exploitation of uncertainty and fear' (cf. Wright and Stewart, 2016; 6). Regulationists tend to see this as fostering more intensive engagement with the lower end of the labour market in two related but distinctive ways. On the one hand, the combination of 'threats and opportunities' inculcates (self-)discipline and the unemployed acquiesce to instruction by actively seeking and taking available work. While on the other hand, particularly as this combination of 'threats and opportunities' is 'coupled with systematic erosion/withdrawal of alternative means of subsistence', workfarist welfare reforms produce a 'deterrent effect' and end up fostering more intensive engagement with precarious work by increasing levels of disengagement with social security provision (Peck, 2001; 184).

It is worth mentioning that, in more recent years, regulation theorists (or those inspired by regulation theory) have argued that the claiming process is increasingly experienced as a site of institutionally mediated violence (cf. Cooper and Whyte, 2017; 23). In particular, Tyler (2020; 28) argues that a productive 'stigma power' is intentionally 'embedded in the design of social policies, and infecting the culture, practices and attitudes of welfare workers'. Once again, this serves to 'lubricate' structures of 'discipline and social control' (Tyler, 2020; 17) by inducing feelings of shame among welfare recipients so as to foster more intensive engagement with undesirable jobs (Redman, 2020). Grover (2019) argues that more recent welfare reforms may have signalled a transition from 'active proletarianisation' (see above; Offe, 1984) to 'violent proletarianisation'. Grover (2019) suggests that more recent workfarist welfare reforms not only reflect stronger efforts to force the reserve army into precarious wage labour; but they end up doing so in a way that 'socially murders' some of the unemployed through penury and suicide.

Bringing this all together then, the general regulationist interpretation of UK welfare reform can be summarised as follows. Regulationists generally see welfare reforms pertaining to retrenchment and social expenditure cuts as necessary to reconcile the stagflationary contradictions of the post-war mode of development and subsequently as part of an effort to create more attractive domestic profitmaking conditions in the face of an increasingly competitive international landscape (Jessop, 2002). Moreover, workfarist welfare reforms are generally seen as a response to new 'regulatory dilemmas' emerging from the transition to a neoliberal accumulation regime comprising

relatively precarious and low-wage job opportunities (Peck, 2001; Grover and Stewart, 2002). As a result, or at least for the regulationists, the benefit administration/employment services tasked with delivering workfarist welfare reforms are increasingly experienced as sites of labour regulation achieved via multiplicities of discipline and control (with potentially violent outcomes).

1.3.The Criminalisation Approach to Welfare Reform

Since the turn of the century, Loïc Wacquant has taken critical interpretations of welfare reform in directions radically beyond that of the regulationist approach presented in the previous appendix (1.2). Insofar as Wacquant's interpretation of welfare reform corresponds with regulation theory, they would both agree that the shift towards workfarism in advanced capitalist territories has something to do with securing 'neoliberal' forms of capital accumulation primed on flexible production, low-wages and labour insecurity (see Wacquant, 2008; 26-7; 2009; 5-6; 102 cf. Peck, 2001; 6). However, there are many novel departures, developments and nuances in Wacquant's analysis which transcend the economic determinism customarily found in Marxist analyses (including the Marxist analysis presented in this thesis). Perhaps most important to note before proceeding is that the starting point of Wacquant's analysis and, more precisely, his theory of historical development, is ontologically distinct from regulationist analysis. Unlike the regulationists (generally speaking), whose analysis infers that (mostly blind) economic forces ultimately shape all aspects of a society (cf. Jessop, 2002; 3-4), Wacquant (2008; 2 [*my emphasis*]) understands the development 'of each society at a given epoch' as a 'historical matrix of *class, race* and *space'*. Wacquant also supplements this by doing something else that is typically uncharacteristic in regulationist literature (but by no means entirely absent; see Jessop et al., 1988; 88; Lavery, 2019; 153-182). Unlike regulationist analysis, which tend to focus heavily on the 'materialist' aspects of historical development (e.g. matter related to facilitating modes of stable economic expansion), Wacquant (2009; xvi) claims to 'wed the virtues of a materialist analysis' with 'the strengths of a *symbolic* approach' to show how development is also moulded by 'the production of social reality' at the discursive and ideological level. These points of departure will be important to keep in mind for what follows over the next few paragraphs.

Violence-From-Above-Violence-From-Below: The Criminalisation Theory of Historical Development

In spite of these departures, Wacquant's historical starting point is roughly the same as the regulationists. That is, the post-war period and the later 'dismantling of the Fordist-Keynesian social compact' in the 1970s (Wacquant, 2008; 229). Wacquant (2008; 15) pays barely any attention to the post-war period, but he nonetheless opens by ambivalently suggesting that, in the immediate decades after the Second World War, 'inherited statuses, such as class, ethnicity or 'race', were increasingly irrelevant for access to valued social locations and the attendant bundle of life chances'. If this was a

reality in the post-war period, then Wacquant hints that this would be in some part owed to combination of 'industrial consolidation' and 'the continued expansion of newer service sectors' alongside 'wide provision of public goods, such as education, health and housing, through the arm of the welfare state', which promised to alleviate if not eradicate 'the most extreme forms of inequality' and 'usher in an unprecedented era of personal well-being and social comity' (Wacquant, 2008; 15-16).

Wacquant (2008; 15-7; 229) does not make it clear whether he sees this era of 'social comity' as a reality or a self-indulgent mirage projected by advanced capitalist societies of the capitalist west[3].But he irrespectively proceeds, once again with brevity, to suggest that it was short-lived 'following the throes of stagflation' which subsequently paved the way to 'a period of neoliberal restructuring' (Wacquant, 2008; 22). It is worth quickly adding that unlike regulationist analyses (or the analysis presented in this thesis) Wacquant does not dissect the causes underlying 'stagflation' (unless there are works in other languages that I am unaware of). Rather, it is in the period of restructuring in the 1980s where Wacquant begins to deepen his analysis. He argues that, directly as a result of neoliberal restructuring, the 'impoverished fractions of the working class' situated in the inner cities (the 'urban poor') across a number of advanced capitalist territories (including the UK) have been subject to a structural 'violence from above' comprising 'three main components' (Wacquant, 2008; 22-30).

First, Wacquant (2008; 25; 234-5) suggests that the urban poor have been subjected to processes of 'de-proletarianisation' and a 'de-socialisation of wage labour'. The first process, 'de-proletarianisation', is 'quantitative and entails the disappearance of millions of low-skilled jobs under the concomitant pressure of automation, competition from cheap labour overseas, and the economic centre of gravity towards personal and business services' (Wacquant, 2008; 265). The second process, 'de-socialisation', 'is qualitative' and involves 'the deterioration and dispersion of basic conditions of employment, remuneration and social insurance' typically associated with 'the proliferation of part-time, flexible, variable-schedule positions; fixed-term contracts with reduced (or non-existent) social and medical coverage whose extension and eligibility conditions are negotiable (or based on a fee); pay scales modulated according to performance and date of first employment (as opposed to length of employment); the reduction of the average job tenure and the correlative increase in staff turnover and related tactics used by businesses to make their employees bear the risks of vagaries in economic activity and evade their homogenising effects of state regulation of wage work' (Wacquant, 2008; 266; 234-5). According to Wacquant (2008; 266), de-proletarianisation and de-socialisation have meant, on the one hand, that a 'significant fraction of the working class has been made redundant' and 'will likely never find stable work again'. This is particularly the case for 'older industrial workers laid off due to plant

[3] He appears to provide some later insights when discussing the roll back of the 'charitable state' (Wacquant, 2009;41-2; 48-58); suggesting that the former American welfare state's goal was not 'to reduce inequalities, but at best to relieve the most glaring destitution and to demonstrate society's moral sympathy for its deprived yet deserving members'

shutdowns and relocation' and 'youths who exited the school system at an early age, who are without qualifications or experience in the world of the firm, and who find themselves pushed to the tail end of the queue of job applicants, due to discrimination based on their physical appearance (skin colour), manner of speaking or demeanour, or residence in a stigmatised estate' (Wacquant, 2008; 266; 27; see also MacDonald, 1997). Whilst, on the other hand, the 'volatile and individualised' nature of de-socialised wage labour means that those whom periodically engage in such activity are unlikely to lift themselves out of poverty or alleviate the material and symbolic deprivation that it customarily entails (Wacquant, 2008; 267). Instead, for noticeable numbers of the urban poor, 'survival based on a mix of casual labour, welfare support and illegal activities trumps regular wage labour participation' (Wacquant, 2008; 27; 62-69).

The *second* form of 'violence from above' dealt toward the urban poor, according to Wacquant (2008; 25), has been manifest in their 'relegation to decaying neighbourhoods'. More precisely, a combination of 'de-industrialisation', 'retraction and disarticulation of the social welfare state', and a 'fresh influx (or the definitive settlement) of immigrants…channelled into those very neighbourhoods where economic opportunities and collective resources are steadily diminishing', has intensified 'conflict' and 'competition for access to scarce public goods' in the urban peripheries 'of the metropolis of advanced societies' (Wacquant, 2008; 27; 28; 268; 271). Whilst Wacquant (2008; 28) tentatively suggests that it is 'unclear…whether or not the arrival of the new immigrants has accelerated the partial de-proletarianisation of the native working classes by providing a substitute pool of pliable labour'. He remains firm that 'that their concentration in the segregated and degraded lower-income neighbourhoods' came at a time where public and social retrenchment were already causing 'material deterioration and social denudement' in these same neighbourhoods (Wacquant, 2008; 28; 268). As such, 'the disenchanted offspring of the declining fractions of the autochthonous working class' may well be facing 'unexpected competition of youths from ethnically stigmatised communities and of new immigrant inflows on the markets for jobs, affordable housing and credentials' (Wacquant, 2008; 245). This, in turn, has meant that 'the illegal drug economy ha[s] become the most reliable source of employment for many of them' (Wacquant, 2008; 29). Therefore, for Wacquant (2008; 271), this above combination appears to have 'mutated' many urban peripheral areas into 'empty space[s] of competition and conflict, a danger-filled battleground for the daily contest for subsistence, scarce collective resources (such as the use of public spaces and amenities) and, above all, for finding the means to escape' (Wacquant, 2008; 271).

Wacquant (2008; 25) refers to the *third* and final form of 'violence from above' as 'heightened stigmatisation…increasingly linked not only to class and ethnic origin but also to the fact of residing in a degraded and degrading neighbourhood'. It is here where Wacquant most visibly 'weds' materialist and symbolic analyses. Those fractions of the working class who reside in the 'neighbourhoods of relegation' on the urban peripheries 'do not suffer only from material deprivation', but 'they must also bear the weight of the public scorn that is now everywhere attached to living in locales widely labelled as

‘no-go areas’, fearsome redoubts rife with crime, lawlessness and moral degeneracy where only the rejects of society could bear to dwell’ (Wacquant, 2008; 29). Not only does this ‘taint of place’ undermine residents’ chances of securing formal employment by fuelling ‘additional distrust and reticence among employers’ (Wacquant, 2008; 174; 238). But it also fuels ‘rage’ and encourages ‘sociofugal strategies of mutual avoidance and distancing which exacerbate processes of social fission, feed interpersonal mistrust, and undermine the sense of collectivity necessary to engage in community building and collective action’ (Wacquant, 2008; 30)

And this latter point is very important, as Wacquant argues that this cumulative ‘violence from above’ has forced a '(socio)logical response' (Wacquant, 2008; 24) from the urban poor which has, ostensibly on too many occasions to ‘enumerate’, taken shape in 'the most effective, if not the only, weapon at their disposal, namely, direct confrontation with the authorities and forcible disruption of civil life' (Wacquant, 2008; 22). While, as should hopefully now be clear, Wacquant (2008) argues that this corresponding ‘violence from below’ has emerged as a logical response to ‘ethnoracial injustice’, ‘economic deprivation and widening social inequalities’ (aka. ‘violence from above’), he proceeds to demonstrate how this perspective has (for the most part) not been one shared by authorities, the media and some intellectuals. Rather, the general orthodoxy in political and media discourse holds that ‘violence from below’ is either ‘fuelled by growing ethnoracial tensions’ or emerges as ‘symptoms of moral crisis, pathologies of the lower class, or as so many signs of the impending societal breakdown of law and order’ (Wacquant, 2008; 20; 24; cf. Wacquant, 2009; 8-11).

Transforming Claimants into Offenders: The Criminalisation Perspective on the Experience of Welfare Reform

In efforts to manage these confrontations as well as the ‘social insecurity’ and ‘urban dislocations’ of ‘advanced marginality’ more generally, Wacquant (2009) believes that, from the 1980s onwards, politicians and state managers have taken a distinctively punitive approach. They have done this by reforming the 'two modalities of public policy' that are customarily directed towards the urban poor—namely, 'welfare and criminal justice' (2012; 242). More specifically, state managers have re-designed them as 'workfare' and 'prisonfare', wedding them together in order to, on the one hand (‘workfare’), 'bend' the urban poor toward 'dependency on super-exploitative employers at the margins of the labour market’ (Wacquant, 2009; 59; 2012; 240). And, on the other hand (‘prisonfare’), ‘warehouse’, ‘track’ and ‘confine’ its ‘most troubled and troublesome persons’ (Wacquant, 2009; 65; 2012; 240).

It is worth quickly going off track and adding that Wacquant (2009; 305-311) suggests his discovery of this ‘double regulation of the poor’ (15) undermines conventional Marxist theories of the ‘neoliberal state’. In particular, Wacquant (2009; 309) suggests David Harvey’s (2007) theory of the neoliberal state ‘is woefully incomplete’ primarily on the grounds that it is economically deterministic and largely neglects the repressive

role the state continues to play in managing urban marginality. Even in instances where state repression is mentioned by Harvey, according to Wacquant (2009; 309-10), it only occurs to silence 'political opponents to corporate rule and dissident movements that challenge the hegemony of private property and profit'. This is folly for Wacquant (2009; 310); particularly as the state has devoted increasing time and resources to criminalising those who have 'little capacity or care to contest corporate rule'. Thus, Wacquant (2009; 288; 43) claims to extend state theory 'beyond its usual economic characterisation' by suggesting the neoliberal state is actually more a '*centaur state*, guided by a liberal head mounted upon an authoritarian body'. Whereby, as conventional Marxist neoliberal state theories attest, 'the doctrine of laissez faire et laissez passer' (the free play of capital, dereliction of labour law and deregulation of employment, retraction or removal of collective protections) is most certainly applied 'upstream'. But, when it comes to managing and 'coping with their consequences on a daily level', and quite unlike conventional Marxist neoliberal state theory, 'it turns out to be brutally paternalistic and punitive downstream' (Wacquant, 2009; 43).

Bringing this back on point, Wacquant (2012; 242) suggests that the synergies between 'workfare' and 'prisonfare' lie not only in their mutual objective to dually regulate the urban poor and manage the social insecurity and urban marginality propelled by a trifecta of 'violence from above'. But they are also 'guided by the same philosophy of moral behaviourism and employ the same techniques of control, including stigma, surveillance, punitive restrictions, and graduated sanctions to "correct" the conduct of their clients' (Wacquant, 2012; 242). In particular, as regards the delivery of workfarist welfare reforms, Wacquant (2009; 43; 59-60) argues that benefit administration/employment services increasingly operate 'in the manner of a labour parole program' and benefit claimants are increasingly 'supervised and, whenever necessary, corrected through rigorous protocols of surveillance, deterrence, and sanction, very much like those routinely applied to offenders under criminal justice supervision'. As such, and this is a very important point to note, Wacquant (2009; 60; 42) believes that workfarist welfare reforms have heralded a transition in frontline service delivery from treating the poor with '*compassion*' in the post-war period to, in the present day, treating '*the poor as cultural similes of criminals*'.

Developing Wacquant's theory in specific relation to British welfare reform, Fletcher and Wright (2018; 338) have since argued that workfarist welfare reforms have imposed a 'wholesale criminalisation of benefit receipt'. However, Fletcher and Wright (2018; 338) take this further by showing not only how policymakers have borrowed 'the stock-and-trade techniques of the correctional institution' (Wacquant, 2009; 101) and redesigned benefit administration/employment service delivery to '*deter* claims, subject recipients to *surveillance* and *punish* by harsh sanctions' (Fletcher and Wright, 2018; 338; cf. Wacquant, 2009; 59-60). But, as a result of this, they also show how unemployed populations increasingly experience benefit administration/employment services as a 'criminalising' sites of 'symbolic and material suffering' (Wright, Fletcher and Stewart,

2020; 284). To take one example, Wright, Fletcher and Stewart (2020; 287) conceive of futile job-search activity as 'degrading social abuse intended as a deterrent' and as a 'reinvention of a historical form of physical punishment that operated in British prisons' where 'prisoners were forced to turns the steps of a never ending staircase…[which] did nothing but grind the air'. And by virtue of being treated like a criminal, or at least in some instances, claimants were even found to 'mirror offender adaptations to prison' (Wright, Fletcher and Stewart, 2020; 281) through variations of 'ill-discipline' and (re)engagement with 'the informal economy or criminal endeavours' (Fletcher, 2019; 418). In particular, where claimants were dealt benefit sanctions, Fletcher (2019; 417) found that 'shoplifting, burglary and drug dealing were frequently mentioned as financial coping strategies'.

2.1. A Very Basic Explanation of Marx's Labour Theory of Value

Marx begins capital by quickly outlining that commodities comprise three values. First, 'use-value'; the utility of something (Marx, 2013; 18). Second, 'exchange-value'; this simply means the proportion in which two commodities might be exchanged (e.g. 20 yards of linen might share equivalence and be exchanged for five ounces of metal). Third, 'value'; this is the abstract 'labour time' that is congealed within the commodity. The third value is the main focus of this short appendix.

Marx proceeds to suggest that the exchange-value of a commodity is actually 'only the mode of expression, the phenomenal form, of something contained in it, yet distinguishable from it' (Marx, 2013; 18). In simple words, if two commodities can be exchanged as equals yet in different quantities (e.g. 20 years of linen and five ounces of metal), then they surely must contain something within them that makes them exchangeable. Marx believes that this third property, the only property left within them, is the human labour power that it took to create the commodity.

Once Marx suggests that human labour power provides the value that makes a commodity exchangeable, he proceeds to ask: 'how, then, is the magnitude of this value to be measured?... Plainly, by the quantity of the value creating substance, the labour (time), contained in the' commodity (Marx, 2013; 20). However, Marx quickly explains that it's not really that simple. For example, if a really bad labourer worked longer and harder on a commodity, this doesn't simply make that commodity more valuable because more labour time was put into it. On the contrary, 'the labour…that forms the substance of value (of a commodity), is homogenous human labour, expenditure of one uniform labour power' (Marx, 2013; 20). Ok, but what does Marx mean by a 'homogenous…uniform labour power'? Basically, Marx argues that commodities are produced in constantly competitive and perpetually changing exchange relations. So if someone was to use advanced machinery to make the same commodity that I was making but it took them half the time, that doesn't make my commodity more valuable when coming to sell it on the market. The reason for this is that they could sell it at the

same price or cheaper to the commodity I'm trying to sell. So these competitive exchange relations are essentially what governs labour time and makes individual human labour power homogenous. Individual units of human labour power only have a value that is relative to 'the character of the average labour power of society'; that is, 'the average degree of skill and intensity [labour productivity] prevalent at that time' (Marx, 2013; 20). It is salient to note how Marx says 'prevalent at that time'. Marx is suggesting here commodity exchange relations are contingent and perpetually shifting depending on where the market for any given commodity begins and ends (e.g. it could be local or global). Marx is also suggesting that exchange relations are contingent on the time specific technological development (in relation to the commodity in question) of any given society. This is essentially what Marx's means by 'abstract' or 'homogenous' labour. It is contingent and perpetually shifting exchange relations which ultimately make (abstract) labour homogenous and enables commodities to be valued and exchanged in accordance with how much (abstract) labour went into making them. Generally speaking, the more abstract labour (time) invested into the commodity, the more valuable it is. This is a very basic explanation of Marx's labour theory of value (see Harvey, 2010; 19-21).

4.1. A Brief Summary of Debates Surrounding the Crisis of Profitability

Whilst few commentators would now contest that Britain was suffering an economic crisis over the course of the 1970s (cf. Gamble, 1994), there is considerable dispute, even within Marxist analyses, over the underlying causes of this crisis. The purpose of this appendix will be to provide a brief summary of some of the different diagnoses of the profitability crisis. It is hoped that, in doing so, this will better enable the reader to reach stronger conclusions on the strengths and weaknesses of the present 'class struggle' analysis. To do this, I will first make explicit my own diagnosis of the profitability crisis (which can be found in more detail in chapter four), before briefly summarising some of the competing diagnoses.

My own diagnosis of the crisis of profitability essentially brings together (1) Glyn and Sutcliffe's (1972; Glyn and Harrison, 1980) analysis of workers' (wage) struggles against employers; (2) Bacon and Eltis's (1978) analysis of the expansion of non-profit making services; (3) Abel-Smith and Townsend's (Banting, 1979) re-discovery of poverty and the introduction of Supplementary Benefit; (4) claimant count figures, claimant unionism, voluntary unemployment rates and levels of benefit fraud. I bring these different bodies of data/research together by tracing them back to the cycle of class struggle in Britain. In other words, I do this by showing how all these phenomena can be seen as an accumulation of refusal (of work) activity which, by the mid-1970s, ended up obliterating the rate at which capital made profit, as well as its overall share. The main reason for this, I argue, is because the working class had become composed in such a way (politically via Keynesian planning and economically via Fordist mass production) that gave it greater ability (on aggregate) to perform more powerful refusal activities

(among both its active and reserve fractions) and thus greater ability to resist the exploitation of its class enemy. As Glyn and Sutcliffe (1972) pointed out, there were of course other factors which brought about the crisis of profitability. Most notably, greater international competition made it more difficult for capitalists to pass off the effects of wage struggles through inflation of prices for their commodities; as other firms abroad could produce at cheaper rates. However, it is thought in the present thesis that class struggles were the ultimate driver of the profitability crisis. Quite straightforwardly, if the working class wasn't composed in the way it was, it wouldn't have been able to perform the refusal activities which threatened capital's ability to exploit labour power. Similarly, if there wasn't a struggle against *relative poverty* and a consequent introduction of Supplementary Benefit, then the figures suggest that Britain would not have seen such a rise in 'fit-to-work' unemployment rates and an expansion of non-profit producing social security services.

As far as I have read of regulation theory Marxism, this would provide a different interpretation to my own (see Jessop, 2002). Jessop (2002; 81) argues that the crisis mainly originated from resulted in a 'stagflationary tendency' of post-war British capitalism that eventually became irreconcilable. In short, post-war capitalism simultaneously relied upon 'yet was also undermined by the expansion of the fiscal capacity of the state' (Lavery, 2019; 52). *On the one hand,* post-war capitalism relied on the fiscal capacity of the state to artificially stimulate demand by financing capital investment (a.k.a. Keynesian demand management). But, in spite of a long boom over the 50s and 60s, this had become increasingly difficult to achieve 'in the face of increasing internationalisation' over the late 60s and 1970s (Jessop, 2002; 81). More attractive profitmaking conditions began to emerge in other countries which meant that goods and services could be produced cheaper elsewhere. This in turn meant that demand for goods and services in the UK was being met 'from abroad rather than domestic production' (Jessop 2002; 81). Thus, the state had to increase both 'its expenditure in the economic field (the restructuring of industry, aide to the private sector etc.) and the social field (unemployment costs, retraining and youth employment schemes etc.)' (Gough, 1979; 124-5), in order to more effectively combat the difficulties of stimulating demand in an increasingly competitive international climate. However, spending more to stimulate demand and manage the effects of economic downturn also meant that the state had to tax capital more. This undermined capitalist profitability and in turn undermined the incentive for capital to invest. As such, increasing expenditure levels ended up contradicting and acting against the very objective it was designed to achieve (stimulating demand; stabilising investment levels). Jessop (2002; 81) neatly summarises this as a 'crisis of crisis management' institutions; whereby the institutions designed to manage and regulate economic crisis ended up fuelling the crisis instead (see Jessop, 2002; Offe, 1984; Gough, 1979 for more detail).

Another interpretation I came across was provided by classical Marxist economist Michael Roberts (2009). Robert's (2009; 130) disputes the idea that wage struggles/increases was the key cause of the profitability crisis in the late 1960s/1970s by stating that 'the empirical evidence compiled by several people (including myself) is that the rate of profit in the OECD economies started to decline after 1964 well before

labour's share rose'. Instead, Robert's argues that the rising organic composition of capital was the main cause. In other words, Robert's believes that the aggregate amount of machinery (constant capital) expended into creating surplus value increased relative to the aggregate amount of labour power (variable capital) expended into creating surplus value over the 1960s and 1970s. This arose 'from increased mechanisation and investment in new industries' over the post-war period (Roberts, 2016; 60). For Roberts, when constant capital rises relative to variable capital, this 'remove[s] the active value producer from the labour process and so make it more difficult' for capital 'to produce surplus value[s]' (Harvey, 2010; 265). In turn, this makes it more difficult for capitalists to make profits and thus begins to undermine the incentive to invest, which eventually brings about crisis. Having said all this, Roberts' (2009; 130; 2016; 60) does accept that, 'in the latter part of the sixties, profits were also squeezed by a rising share going to labour'.

Beyond strictly Marxist understandings of the economic crisis, there are also a number of interpretations which view economic crises in Britain as a corollary of a longer term set of trends that have brought about economic decline. In this vein, the best summary I have come across so far has been provided by Andrew Gamble (1994). Gamble (see 1994; 30-39) identifies four theses on long-term economic decline in Britain. First, 'the Imperial thesis lays the blame on Britain's world role, which led to an over-extension of British power and the undermining of domestic economic performance. It sees decline as a result of the slowness with which Britain adjusted to its changed status in the world and shed the burdens and attitudes and policies which the world role had left behind' (Gamble, 1994; 31-2). Second, 'the supply-side thesis concentrates on the relative backwardness of British manufacturing, which it ascribes either to an inadequate relationship between the state and the economy or to a balance of power between the classes that has produced stalemate' (Gamble, 1994; 32). Third, 'the state thesis shifts the focus to the institutions of the British state and why the organisation of this state makes it very difficult for British governments to carry through programmes of long-term modernisation. The state appears weak because it has proved neither effective nor representative' (Gamble, 1994; 32). Fourth, 'the cultural thesis sees the main cause of British decline in the existence of a deep-rooted anti-industrial political culture, which has created powerful resistance to modernisation and change, and perpetuated many traditionalist aspects of British society' (Gamble, 1994; 32).

5.1. 1974-79, the 'Sea-Change' in British Politics

Among the most remarkable of turning points in 1974 was the Labour government's immediate push to impose a voluntary income restraint policy upon organised labour. This was not only remarkable because it marked a swift and significant departure from Labour's initial manifesto, but equally because of the relatively warm manner in which the proposal was received by many trade union leaders. Statutory and voluntary incomes policies had been bitterly opposed by the trade union movement and many sections of the working class in previous years. Yet, by the end of 1974, trade union

leaders aligned with policymakers in expressing increasing concern for rising inflation and the decline of UK competitiveness. By the end of 1974, 'inflation in Britain was running at 23 per cent, by March 1975 the annual rate had reached 27.7 per cent, and by April it was 33 per cent' (Cohen, 2006; 31), whilst 'retail prices rose at an annual rate of nearly 38%... compared with an average of some 10% for the UK's major competitors' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 107). At the same time, 'wage settlements of 30% or so were still common and in the second quarter of 1975 average earnings were 27% higher than in the previous year' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 107; see also Coates, 1989; 72). This led many union leaders to believe that 'wage generated inflation was damaging the UK economy and thereby preventing the government from carrying out policies in favour of the working class' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 109; see also Coates, 1989; 72). As such, the bulk of the trade union movement gave its support for two years of voluntary pay restraint, during which no official challenge to the policy was initiated through strike action (Coates, 1989; 88). Thus, rather than enjoying the role they had successfully fought for in the years of the Heath government—'as arbiters of the national economy'—trade union leaders subordinated themselves to a Labour Government that was under growing external financial pressure (Coates, 1989; 88). This was reflected in actions taken to restrain rank-and-file militancy for as long as possible and thereby knowingly support the imposition of policies which would have a detrimental bearing on the real wages of their members (Coates, 1989; 88). The introduction of voluntary wage restraint had an 'impressive' outcome, 'workers experienced a cut in real take-home pay of 6 per cent between 1974 and 1975, with a further 2 per cent and 3 per cent over the next two years' (Cohen, 2006; 30). Consequently, overall 'earnings rose more slowly, and less than the rate of increase of prices: by 13.9% between August 1975 and July 1976' (Coates, 1989; 73).

Alongside the introduction of a wage restraint policy, the Labour government was also quick to renege on the industrial planning agenda set out in their initial election manifesto. The Wilson administration's election manifesto boldly suggested that it would go further than its predecessors, by transferring 'economic wealth and power from a small economic oligarchy to the people' via the extension of 'public ownership into the centre of British manufacturing capital' (Coates, 1980; 87). To do this, a new National Enterprise Board (NEB) was formed in order to purchase shares and bring firms under partial public ownership, so that union leaders could enjoy 'executive powers in a tripartite relationship with private employers and government appointees' (Coates, 1989; 70). However, the 1975 act placed heavy restrictions on the amount the NEB could borrow and made it mandatory for the board to bid for shares on the open market. In so doing, 'these two provisions were sufficient to prevent the National Enterprise Board acquiring profitable companies to any significant extent' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 114). Throughout its lifespan under Labour in the seventies, the NEB was almost entirely restricted to operations in eight companies already under public ownership, where it sanctioned sizeable job losses with a number of 'savage reductions in operating levels in an attempt to restore' these businesses 'to commercial viability' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 114). Accompanying the introduction of the NEB, the Labour government also initially devised a number of compulsory planning agreements to be developed with firms among Britain's major industries. Yet, by 1975, 'the idea of making them

compulsory had been dropped' (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 115). Only one planning agreement was ever officially signed—with Chrysler UK in 1976— which, according to Glyn and Harrison (1980; 116), 'well illustrated' the lengths to which 'Labour was prepared to go to avoid implementing its industrial policy'. Running at a loss, the government enticed Chrysler UK into a planning agreement with a £55m investment loan and a guarantee to cover a proportion of its losses for the following three years. Despite the new arrangement, Chrysler still managed to rationalise operations and shed 8,200 jobs (Glyn and Harrison, 1980; 116). In the following years, the planning agreement became so meaningless that Chrysler managed to sell its British subsidiary off without the Labour government's knowing (Coates, 1989; 71). In short, despite the bold intents set out in their original manifesto, the Labour government actually did very little to successfully democratise industry and redistribute power from capital to organised labour.

5.2. Finance Led Accumulation and the Expansion of Fictitious Capital

Undoubtedly, one of the most important political-economic departures emerging from the 1980s and the Thatcher administrations has been 'the growth of financial markets relative to both the state and the real (productive) economy of goods and services' (Davis and Walsh, 2016; 667). To be clear, by 'growth of financial markets', I mean that financial capital, or capitalists involved in the administration of credit (e.g. loans and mortgages) and/or the trading of securities (e.g. stocks), has been more economically active in relation to the state and capitalists active in others areas of the economy (such as manufacturing).

As Davis and Walsh (2016) argue, the growth of financial markets can in large part be attributed to a number of reforms imposed by the state during the Thatcher administrations, which have successfully deregulated financial markets and have more or less remained in place ever since. As Glyn (2006; 54) notes, prior to the Thatcher administrations, financial capitalists 'had been constrained in many countries as to the interest rates they could offer and charge, what sort of loans they could make, what type of financial assets they could purchase and whether they could gain access to overseas markets'. In and beyond the 1980s, this all changed. Reforms were made along two key lines: to deregulate the retail banking and mortgage markets, as well as the securities trade (Gallas, 2015; 202).

As regards the former, quite straightforwardly, restrictions on how much ordinary people could borrow (e.g. to buy a house or a car) were relaxed. As regards the latter, less straightforwardly, radical measures were taken to reform the London Stock Exchange (LSE) (explaining this requires a bit more detail). Prior to 1986, 'fixed minimum commissions' made certain kinds of trade more expensive, while a 'close-entry system' was in operation meaning that the 'public had no access' and it was 'next to impossible for outsiders to gain entry' to the LSE (Gallas, 2015; 203). In other words, prior to 1986, the LSE was ran by an 'old boys club' of economic elites who barred access to foreign

investors (Blakeley, 2019; 65). Beyond 1986, restrictions that had preserved this order were removed. In particular, 'fixed commissions were abolished' and 'foreign firms were invited into the city', which allowed more 'investors and wealthy individuals from around the world to channel money into the UK's stock markets', facilitating 'a wave of mergers and acquisitions, many by foreign banks' (Blakeley, 2019; 66; 70). Alongside these reforms, according to Davis and Walsh (2016; 677), the growth of financial markets has also been fuelled by a privatisation programme which saw a reduction in 'government-owned companies from 12% of UK GDP in 1979 to less than 2%' in 2006 (Glyn, 2006; 38). The straightforward reason why this has contributed to the growth of financial markets was that these firms were sold by the state as stocks to investors on the LSE (Blakeley, 2019; 66-67).

As a result of all these reforms, the growth in financial markets can be seen as comprising two key developments. First, capital is increasingly investing in and making profit out of financial instruments, such as setting up loans and credit cards or buying and selling securities on the stock market (Glyn, 2006; 52-57). Second, 'the privatisation programme handed over great swathes of UK industry, public services and debt directly into the hands of London's financial sector' (Davis and Walsh, 2016; 677). As such, the financial sector grew exponentially from the late 1970s onwards. Between 1979 and 1989, ‘investment in financial services grew 320.3 per cent next to investment in manufacturing’ (Davis and Walsh, 2016; 667). While, ‘between 1970 and 2007, the UK’s finance sector grew 1.5% faster than the economy as a whole each year’ (Blakeley, 2019; 12). This has led many commentators to argue that, from the 1970s onwards, there have been radical changes in how capital accumulates wealth in Britain. No longer is capital accumulation overwhelmingly dictated by the movements of industrial capital and the production of tangible goods. Rather, capital accumulation is now predominantly 'finance led'. In simple terms, this means that the movements of financial capital and investments in/profits made via various financial instruments (such as returns on credit and/or the trading/stockpiling of securities) now dominate economic activity in the UK.

Now, on the one hand, when taken in the context of the class struggle cycle, financial deregulation has been really good for capital as it has opened up new avenues to invest, make profit and thus restore levels of profitability which were at crisis point prior to the Thatcher administrations. Unlike industrial capital, financial capitalists for the most part haven't had to contend with the hiring of troublesome, recalcitrant workers to make profits—which is undoubtedly another bonus.

On the other hand, however, all these reforms contributing to a finance led model of accumulation are really problematic for the health and continuity of a capitalist economy. This is going to take a few paragraphs to explain but, in a sentence, some Marxists believe this because they agree with Marx's (1999) thoughts that financial instruments (such as loans or stocks) don't produce any new wealth.

For Marx, wealth is only truly created when money is invested into a process of interaction between human labour power and the means of production (e.g. machinery/raw material) which results in the creation of something more valuable than the cost of the monetary investment. By contrast, loans and stocks don't create wealth

because they don't really have 'any material basis in commodities' or a 'productive activity' that creates something new (Harvey, 2006; 95; many do contend this: see Cleaver, 2017; 165-180). All these financial instruments really do is move existing wealth around and/or serve as a representation of 'accumulated claims, or legal titles, to future production' of wealth (Marx, 1999; 336. As such, Marx (1999) describes ownership and profiteering of such financial instruments as a process of '*fictitious capital*' accumulation. Whereby money is invested and a profit is made(M-M') but nothing new has been created and therefore nothing new has really been accumulated (other than existing wealth, or claims to future wealth).

Take a very common, rudimentary comparison as an example. Imagine you have a landlord who inherits a house and a tenant who rents this house using the wages they receive from working on a production line (say, in a food factory). One day the landlord decides to increase the rent of the property, not because he wants to make improvements to the property and increase its value, but he just wants the extra money to make his bank balance look better. The tenant willingly obliges and pays the rent plus the increase that the landlord has asked for. In this exchange, the landlord has managed to extract more income but hasn't directly created anything new—so no wealth has been made as a result of this exchange (Cleaver, 2017; 168). The only thing that has happened is that the landlord has extracted more of the wealth that had already been created (and partially received in money wages) by the food factory worker on the production line. And he's done this by managing to get a greater share of his wages without creating anything new.

In this sense, as Blakeley (2019; 80) argues, 'economic rents are unproductive transfers from one group to another based on an asymmetry of power'. And the same principle goes for, say, investing money in the stocks of a company. In such an instance, the investor may well (and often does) receive more money than they originally invested. However, unless their initial investment is used to expand production and create something new then no wealth has been created. The only thing that's happened is that, through obtaining greater legal claim (stock) to the productive output of the company, the investor has extracted a greater portion of the wealth generated by those involved in the company's productive output (i.e. the workers).

So why, then, is this a problem for the health of a capitalist economy? An important example is put forward by Glyn (2006; 54-63) and Blakeley (2019; 60-87). They argue that because 'large swathes' of productive industries have been handed over to investors on the stock exchange, there has been a crucial change in the governance structure of many UK industries (Davis and Walsh, 2016). In a sentence, because UK industry is now predominantly owned by shareholders on the stock market, they are now governed by the logic of maximising something called 'shareholder value' (Blakeley, 2019; 62-63; 74-6). For a shareholder, the primary goal above all else is to maximise returns on their stocks as quickly as possible, and the way to do this is to 'minimise costs and rationalise' production wherever this is possible (Glyn, 2006; 55). As such, 'shareholder needs for immediate returns' transforms how firms operate (Blakeley, 2019; 70) and, most importantly, instead of distributing profits 'internally or using them

for investment', companies often end up distributing their profits to shareholders (Blakeley, 2019; 77).

Thus, 'with shareholders placed firmly at the centre of corporate decision making, and managers remunerated based on share prices, long-term investment has fallen. UK companies' investment in fixed assets fell from around 70% of their disposable incomes in 1987 to 40% in 2008' (Blakeley, 2019; 78). Instead of investing in 'fixed assets', capitalists have been investing in various financial instruments (like stocks) to extract 'financial rents' from existing wealth creation, often without investing or creating anything new. Citing Epstein, Blakeley (2019; 80-81) claims that the share of wealth being extracted in this fashion 'in the UK had risen from 1970 to 1990, from 5% GDP to nearly 15%'.

On the surface, this kind of financial accumulation might appear as 'capital's most perfect incarnation - a system in which profits seem to appear out of thin air' (Blakeley, 2019; 15). But the reality, or at least according to some Marxist economists, is that an accumulation regime dictated by investment and profiteering via financial instruments is a false, or a 'fictitious' mode of capital accumulation. The reality is that capital is investing less in the production of wealth, productivity is stagnating, poverty is rising and, as an offshoot of fictitious capital expansion, 'today's capitalists are running out of thing's to take' (Blakeley, 2019; 17). For Blakeley (2019; 17), 'we are currently living through the death throes of finance-led' accumulation. And, through its privatisation programme alongside a series of finance sector reforms, the state, it seems, has been an unknowing accessory.

5.3. The Thatcher Offensive: Confronting the Active Army

At first the Crisis state moved furtively, pursuing a series of industrial relations reforms 'piecemeal, drip by drip' (Coates, 1989; 121) which slowly set out to 'exclude organised labour entirely from all important decision making' and strip the trade unions of their legal power to disrupt industry (strike) effectively (Crouch, 1986; 140). The first major piece of legislation was the 1980 Employment Act, which 'restricted picketing to a striker's own place of work, and made secondary action against an employer's customers and suppliers unlawful' (Taylor, 1987; 21). As a result, 'so called sympathy strikes, as well as blacking and blockading were to be confined to only the direct suppliers and customers of the firm in dispute' (Taylor, 1987; 21). Actions were also taken to weaken 'closed shop' agreements. New Legislation allowed workers to refrain from joining 'a union where closed shops existed' (Crouch, 1986; 133), while 'the conscious grounds for exclusion from a closed shop were widened and compensation was to be provided for workers who lost their jobs because they refused to join a union in a closed shop' (Taylor, 1987; 21). Furthermore, from 1980 onwards, closed shop agreements 'had to achieve an 80% majority vote of approval of the workers concerned in a secret ballot to become lawful' (Taylor, 1987; 21). Alongside this, the Act 'curtailed rights to protection against unfair dismissal and also limited the maternity leave entitlements of women workers' (Crouch, 1986; 133). Overall, the 1980 Employment Act

was used to undermine trade union density and 'restrict to a derisory level the number of pickets legitimately able to enforce a strike call' (Coates, 1989; 121).

From 1980 onwards, the Crisis state also set out to deregulate wage bargaining mechanisms and demolish legislation which had previously established industry and/or nationwide pay and conditions (Crouch, 1986; 134). Both the government and the Confederation for British Industry aimed to 'discourage the concept of a going rate for wage settlements in favour of agreements tied more specifically to conditions in individual companies and regions' (Crouch, 1986; 135). One key example occurred in 1982, when the government decided to repudiate a Fair Wages resolution which had covered large numbers of public sector and contracted-out, 'quasi-public sector' workers since 1946 (Coates, 1989; 124). This resolution had previously ensured that government enforced 'pay and conditions no less favourable than those generally prevailing in related private-sector employment', and this was particularly useful to low-pay grade employees in the manual civil service (Crouch, 1986; 136). Upon repudiating this resolution, the Conservative government proceeded to 'impose 10 per cent wage cuts on some of its lowest-paid staff' (Crouch, 1986; 136). According to Longstreth (1988) the government did this intentionally as part of a broader strategy to reduce state expenditure and set the wheels in motion for a new low wage economy. Particularly as the repudiation meant that public authorities were increasingly required to put their services out to tender and ‘in numerous cases’ it was ‘the same workers rehired by the sub-contracting firm with reduced pay and benefits, more intensive workloads and sometimes on an explicitly non-union basis: all under the guise of greater efficiency’ (Longstreth, 1988; 6).

Another Employment Act was also introduced in 1982, but this time with a series of more intensive measures. The Act banned industrial action against non-union companies and outlawed clauses in contracts which mandated the use of unionised labour, which meant that 'employers could selectively dismiss strikers without this being grounds for appeals of unfair dismissal before an Industrial Tribunal' (Coates, 1989; 122). More importantly, 'the definition of what was a trade dispute under the law was narrowed to outlaw disruption where none of the workers were in direct dispute themselves with their employers; disputes where workers were in conflict with their own unions; and those not wholly or mainly about pay, conditions and jobs or matters of an industrial character' (Taylor, 1987; 21). This was not only further progression towards making solidarity strikes illegal, but a significant step towards the illegalisation of politically motivated strike action.

By 1984, 'a drastic reduction in the range and number of contacts between ministers and union leaders' had ensued (Crouch, 1986; 137), with the government announcing that unions would 'no longer be regarded as a major interest meriting representation on public bodies considering matters of general importance' (Crouch, 1986; 138). Moreover, a new Trade Union Act was introduced which recalibrated the focus of reform away from limiting the unions’ capacity to strike to their individual members (Marsh, 1992). The Thatcherites sought to ‘giv[e] the unions back to their members’ (Taylor, 1987; 21) and the Act set out to do this by mandating ‘that unions should hold secret ballots before strikes to ensure they were lawful’, while also requiring that union

executives should ‘be elected once every five years through a secret ballot of the members’ (Taylor, 1987; 21).

More importantly, however, 1984 was the year that the Crisis state decided to confront ‘the most militant and best-organised fraction of the labour movement’ (Gallas, 2015; 164)—the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). The Conservatives were convinced that in order for British capitalism to survive the most disruptive sections of the working class must be eliminated (cf. Norman Tebbit quoted in Mitchell, 1987; 34). As such, Thatcher set out to phase out the coal industry and, in so doing, launch a direct attack upon arguably the strongest and most subversive facet of the post-war working class composition.

Yet, the Conservatives were extremely wary of the depth in organisation and refusal (of work) power held by the miners. Particularly as conflicts in the previous decade had resulted in the declaration of 'no less than five' State of Emergencies and, in 1972, a confrontation in which '15,000 miners, engineering workers and their supporters outmanoeuvred less than a thousand police' ('Battle of Saltley Gate': see Darlington and Lyddon, 2001; 56-62), sending 'shock waves through the Establishment' (Beynon and McMylor, 1985; 31). With this in mind, the Conservative government waited until conditions suitable to withstand a lengthy strike arose before strategically closing down colliery operations and forcing the NUM into action (Phillips, 2014). March 1984 was apposite as coal stocks were high, the police and road haulage companies were ready and changes to social security legislation had been made (Jones and Novak, 1985; 87-100), which left ‘the burden of sustaining striking miners through a long dispute fully on the shoulders of the union and its supporters’ (Coates, 1989; 130). The strike was to last just a few days shy of a year and, partially as a result of social security reforms, the sheer length of the strike ended up severely weakening the miners’ resolve, as growing numbers were left without any income (Jones and Novak, 1985; 87-100; Gallas, 2015; 184). Alongside this, the Crisis state mobilised both the police and the judiciary to repress the miners. The police were ordered to prevent picketing and disbanded picketers via sophisticated methods of surveillance and control, resulting in the arrest of 'almost 9,000 miners' (Beynon, 1985; 4; Gallas, 2015; 182). While the judiciary played its part by using the ‘repressive capacities of the law to undermine the strike effort’ and place hefty sentences on militants (Gallas, 2015; 190).

By March 1985, all these methods of repression had proven successful. The miners were sent back to work without any concessions. It was a major victory not only for Thatcher but, more importantly, for capital. One of the strongest and most subversive elements of the class composition had been brought to heel and, within a handful of years, the Crisis state quickly phased out most of the coal industry. The victory was a landmark sign of a turning tide. Not only had the miners been defeated, but the steady upward growth of union membership in the 1970s was now in reverse. Over 2.5 million members were lost by 1985, down from a peak of 13.3 million in 1979 (Coates, 1989; 134). Thus, through direct confrontation and a series of reforms which undermined the influence of trade unionism, the Crisis state had begun to break the organised depth of the post-war class composition and reinstate capital's dominance over industry.

5.4. The Rise of the ‘Gig’ Economy

A more recent phenomenon emerging in recent years has seen employers harness and monopolise digital platform information technologies to 'match' individuals 'selling services to customers' (Bivand and Melville, 2017; 25)[4]. In such an arrangement, workers are classified as ‘self-employed’ and are ‘individually contracted’ via online labour platforms ‘to each specific task according to an employer’s need’ (hence ‘gig’) (Wood, 2020; 1). Recent surveys ‘conducted in 2017 found that 10 percent of workers in the UK received work from such labour platforms at least once a month’ (Wood, 2020; 3). Popular examples of the gig economy include Uber and Deliveroo.

This ‘gig’ arrangement of workers has been found to provide a number of important benefits to capital. First, online labour platforms ensure a very intricate synthesis of consumer demand with labour supply; thereby enabling employers to shave labour costs to the required minimum. Second, employers have been able to eschew basic employment protection legislation by classifying platform workers under current labour laws as 'independent contractors' (or 'self-employed') rather than employees (Cant, 2020; 69-72). Finally, online labour platforms have facilitated greater forms of labour discipline and workplace control. In particular, new forms of ‘customer management’ have prevailed; whereby ‘platforms use algorithms that rank workers according to factors such as consumer satisfaction’ (Wood, 2020; 14), such as the ‘star ratings assigned to drivers on platforms like Uber, or the micro-workers operating on online crowdworking sites’ (Umney, 2018; 143). These ratings and satisfaction algorithms then filter work ‘away from workers deemed low quality or unproductive’ and towards the highest performing workers (Wood, 2020; 14). According to Umney (2018; 143), ‘these things have a big impact’ on workers; as ‘the knowledge that they can be subject to continual anonymous judgment (and will lose work if their star rating drops) can regularly lead them to offering more work for less’.

5.5. The Role of the Crisis State in the Historical Development of the Temporary Help Industry

The temporary help industry has become an increasingly prominent feature of the UK economy over the last forty years or so. In short, the core function of this industry is to:

> 'provide temporary employees to user enterprises to cover employee absences, skill shortage and varying seasonal workloads. Workers are employed and paid by the agency, but are contracted out to a client for either a prearranged fee or an agreed hourly wage. Some companies choose to use temporary workers on a long-term basis rather than permanent staff. (...) The resulting employment is often called “temporary work”, “temping” or “agency work”. The hiring firm pays fees to the agency, and the agency pays the wages (even if the hiring company has not yet paid the agency).

> Flexibility for both worker and employer is a key feature (...).' (International Labour Organisation, 2009; 1 paraphrased in Eichhorst et al., 2013; 18)

Prior to the 1970s and the formation of the Crisis state, the temporary help industry was met with hostility by both the trade union movement and the Keynesian Planner state (see Forde, 2008). Over the first half of the twentieth century there was minimal regulation over private employment agencies; which went some way in allowing agencies to promote temporary vacancies in order to maximise their own gains. From the late 1920s, the Trade Union Congress lobbied for the total abolition of private agencies (Forde, 2008). The TUC took a dim light on private agencies, likening registration fees as the unemployed having to buy the right to work. By 1933, the International Labour Organisation had developed a convention that called for the abolition of fee charging employment agencies, although this was never legislated. In the late 1950s and 1960s, state inquiries into the hiring practices of firms made explicit recommendations to reduce employers' use of casual labour and expand the use of direct, standard employment relationships. Moreover, the TUC were mounting pressure on government, complaining about the practices of the growing number of temporary employment agencies. Tighter regulation of the employment agency was subsequently considered by the Home Affairs Committee in 1965, proposing the compulsory licensing of all employment agencies and placing restrictions on the fees that they could charge for their services. Though the proposals were meant for all private employment agencies, they were considered especially necessary for the temporary work industry. However, by 1967, the Bill collapsed as a loophole in the regulations meant that temporary work agencies would be able to escape the key reforms (Forde, 2008). Nevertheless, the government maintained close scrutiny over the temporary segment of the private employment agency industry over the latter years of the 60s. In 1973, a legal framework governing the temporary help industry in the UK eventually came into practice through the Employment Agencies Act. The legislation required agencies to obtain a licence, whilst an Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate (EASI) was established to monitor agency practices and enforce legal obligations (Finn, 2016).

By the time Blair had successfully steered New Labour into power in 1997, the state's hostility towards the temporary help industry had disappeared. Rather, private employment agencies had come to be seen as among some of the most lucrative and important contributors to the British economy. This was most visibly evidenced in the Crisis state's tenacious resistance to EU regulations that were initially put forward by an Agency Workers Directive (AWD) in 2001 and subsequently passed in 2008 and placed into UK law in 2011.

The Agency Workers Directive (AWD) that was passed in 2008 has a lineage dating back to the 80s, where the increasing legitimisation of temporary agency work across numerous European states called for community action to monitor its development. Attempts at imposing regulations on temporary agencies were regularly submitted over the latter part of the 20th century, and in turn repeatedly rebuffed or abandoned by

member states (Vosko, 2009). In 2001, however, a legislative process for a new directive on TAW was initiated between two European level social partners - the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and Business Europe, formerly the Union of Industrial and Employers Confederations of Europe (UNICE). As one might be able to ascertain from simply reading their names, 'the differences between the two professional bodies could not have been more pronounced', with ETUC seeking to limit the use of TAW whilst UNICE viewed it as a sign of a healthy labour market (Wynn, 2014; 54). Negotiations quickly broke down which, under EU law, meant legislative authority was passed to the European Commission.

The European Commission's initial draft of the AWD appeared to follow the interests of ETUC (the social partner seeking to limit TAW) by following the principle of equal treatment of agency workers. This, in theory, meant that agency workers would enjoy the same pay and working conditions as a comparable permanent worker in the same user worker enterprise (Forde and Slater, 2016). However, this initial protective measure was:

> 'undermined by a series of exceptions: first, where workers were paid between assignments; second, derogation via collective agreements; and third, for assignments of less than six weeks. These exceptions, particularly the six-week grace period, opened the doors to a considerable dilution of the principle of equality' (Wynn, 2014; 55)

These exceptions are important to note because, even at this early stage, EU proposals to regulate TAW already appear as a relatively weak attempt to instil some model of 'flexicurity' into the industry. Nevertheless, these proposals were met with vociferous rejection from both business and the UK state, who was 'concerned that the Directive risks decreasing the attractiveness of agency workers to user companies, which might reduce the number of jobs available' (Department of Trade and Industry, 2003 in Wynn, 2014; 57).

Despite subsequent amendments to the AWD, which continued to concede ground on its propositions to strengthen the position of agency workers, New Labour continued to oppose the draft claiming that it would threaten the balance of 'flexicurity' in one of the UKs fastest growing industries (Forde and Slater, 2016). The next phase in the legislative process was drawn out over a prolonged period of years by a collection of member states that had various different reasons to block the AWD. As the directive could only be passed by a qualified majority vote, the UK assembled a blocking minority of Germany, Denmark and Ireland.

The stalemate was finally broken as a result of numerous political factors in 2008. For one, the EU used the UK's individual opt-out clause on the Working Time Directive[5] as a

[5] The individual 'opt-out' means that, in the UK, employees can choose to work more than the maximum 48 hours per week set out by the European Union's Working Time Directive

bargaining tool, threatening to rescind this privilege. Moreover, the Crisis state was facing increasing pressure to cooperate with the directive from trade unions and some MP's (Forde and Slater, 2016). However, despite growing pressure, the state still saw the AWD's current proposals as a threat to the industry and instead pursued a remarkable third way. The idea was to redraft the AWD and manufacture a domestic political agreement between with domestic social partners. If this could be achieved, the UK could then persuade other member states to vote for their new directive. They were successful; the state managed to assemble an ad-hoc domestic agreement between themselves, the Trade Union Congress and the Confederation of British Industry which reconciled on a new, heavily diluted regulatory framework of temporary agency working. Wynn (2014; 61) outlines the relevant clauses of the new 2008 AWD in more detail:

> 'The key protection, the equality clause in Article 5 (1), is a much-denuded version of the original formula. The comparison of "basic working and employment conditions" with workers "recruited directly by the user undertaking to occupy the same job" allows the user firm to compare the temporary agency worker with other temporary workers rather than permanent workers, so equality might become an instrument of further segmentation rather than promoting true parity with permanent workers' (2014; 61).
>
> 'Article 5 is then subjected to a series of derogations whereby equality can be adjusted by national or sectoral social partners to suit different social models. Article 5 (2), or the 'German derogation' states that agency workers who have a permanent contract with the agency and are paid in between assignments can be treated differently. There are no restrictions on rates of pay. German companies may pay reasonable rates, but other member states may use this derogation to undercut wage rates' (61)
>
> 'Article 5 (4) specifically permits a qualifying period for equal treatment and allows member states to specify whether occupational social security schemes, including pensions and sick pay, are included in basic working conditions.' (2014; 61)
>
> 'The scope of Article 1 and 3 allows further the commercialisation and deregulation of the employment relationship. Article 1 confirms that a temporary worker may have no contract with either agency or user as the user's function is defined as "supervision" and the agency may have a contract of employment or "employment relationship" with the temporary worker.' (2014; 62)

Most crucially, both Wynn (2014) and Forde and Slater (2016) go on to describe how *the new AWD can be seen to actually benefit both client and agency firms at the expense of agency workers in the UK*. Having lobbied for a new AWD, the UK government's

implementation of the directive into British law in 2011 enabled further tailoring to the needs of the industry (Wynn, 2014). Put differently, the state handed capital enormous scope to evade basic equality protections. Take, for example, the new twelve week qualifying period (Article 5 (4) - the British derogation seen above). In order to qualify for equal rights to a comparable permanent worker, the agency worker must work in the same role with the same hirer for 12 continuous calendar weeks. Put another way, the agency worker does not qualify if they start a new role with the same hirer, or if they have six weeks off between the same job. Wynn (2014; 64) believes that 'this set of provisions will clearly allow rotation of workers on short-term assignments between different jobs in order to ensure that they never complete the qualifying period'.

A further consideration in regard to the British derogation is cost. If agency workers were entitled to parity with permanent workers, as would be the case should the agency worker pass twelve qualifying period, then the cost of any increase in wages would be burdened by the employers. In theory, this serves as an incentive to employers to make use of short-term agency contracts in attempts to minimise costs. Wynn (2014) notes that around 20 percent of assignments last between three and six months; the new Directive could therefore pose a substantial rise in the number of unprotected agency workers.

Another potential issue, for agency workers at least, is that the UK Government was also able to explore implementation of the derogations put forward by other countries when transposing the new AWD into British law. Of particular interest is the Swedish derogation. In layman's terms, use of the Swedish derogation means that, even after twelve weeks, a British employer can forfeit paying the worker equal pay to that of a comparable permanent worker (ACAS, 2013). For this to come into play, the temporary work agency must offer the agency worker a permanent contract of employment and pay the worker between assignments. But, most importantly, despite being paid between assignments, the pay only has to be at least half of the pay received on the assignment and equal to that of the National Living Wage (ACAS, 2013). Furthermore, this contract can be terminated after four weeks (ACAS, 2013). Whilst this might be useful for Sweden where it is significantly harder to get rid of workers on permanent contracts, taken in the wider context of the 20th century and the development of British capitalism, it's hard not to see this derogation as yet another way in which the Crisis state has preserved and expanded the utility of temporary agencies for capital. One way of interpreting this would argue that the Crisis state has used law to allow employers to escape paying workers the *market value of their labour:*

> 'by incorporating the 'Swedish derogation' in the UK AWR, an incentive to pursue new contractual forms was created, allowing UK business to continue to access agency workers at differential cost, benefiting UK competitiveness' (Forde and Slater, 2016; 602).

Even if the agency worker is to succeed the twelve week qualifying period, there are also loopholes which allow employers to negate the provision of basic working conditions:

> 'Basic working conditions are ones that are "ordinarily included in the contracts of employees of the hirer" (Reg.5 (2)(a)). These include pay, working time, night work, rest breaks and annual leave (Reg. 6).' (Wynn, 2014; 65)

However, as the scope of 'comparability' in the directive is limited to the conditions of identical workers recruited by the employer. In other words, employers can satisfy the regulations of the directive by directly comparing agency workers to workers already treated less favourably than the hirer's permanent workforce. Once again, this provides an incentive to maintain the unequal treatment of workers by allowing functional flexibility to take precedence over the conditions of labour.

Forde and Slater (2016; 600-601) went on to complete interviews with agency managers and peak-level organisations assessing responses to the implementation of the new AWD post-2011. In contrast to initial hostility and uncertainty, they found that regulations had been shaped by collective industry wide lobbying and the final regulations were seen as a 'positive outcome'. Forde and Slater (2016) found that the Swedish Derogation has played a significant part in shaping agency responses to the AWD. It appeared that the 'pay between assignments' model had become more commonplace in the industry. Whilst this undoubtedly transfers a greater degree of risk onto temporary work agencies, in particular industries where there's a high volume of temporary labour, this model can prove profitable. As the client firm profits by circumventing the requirement to pay comparable wages after 12 weeks, the agency *can charge a higher margin to cover the risks associated with the pay between assignments arrangement* (Forde and Slater, 2016). Unsurprisingly, the loser then, is the temporary worker. The gain they have made of a direct employment relationship with the agency is offset by the fact that the relationship exists under a broader institutional arrangement that makes it very easy for the firm to fire them. And, more importantly, they are not entitled to the pay comparability as the original directive promised. Forde and Slater (2016) note that many workers are not aware of the Swedish Derogation or the pay increases that they sign away when they agree to a 'pay between assignments' contract.

> 'In business terms, the government had achieved precisely what it wanted- i.e. the preservation of its highly flexible, lightly regulated agency workforce at minimum cost to the staff hiring industry, thus enabling it to maintain its competitive advantage. The regulations, despite giving the appearance of a protective framework for temporary agency workers, in fact achieve the opposite. The UK has in effect designed its own version of "flexicurity" which has removed security from the most vulnerable workers - i.e. those who

> perform successive short-term contracts on a regular if intermittent basis. (Wynn, 2014; 63)

In sum, by acknowledging this chain of events, it is possible to observe how the state has not only fought to maintain the temporary help industry, but took further measures to ensure that capital can extract more profit (and possibly surplus value in some instances) from agency labour. There are perhaps a number of reasons as to why this has occurred. For one, the temporary help industry has offered capital a new direction to invest, accumulate and valorise itself; exploiting labour power and purchasing the means of production necessary to, perhaps ironically, sell and exploit labour power further. It is salient to note that the temporary help industry doubled 'in size over the period 1994-1999 and again in the years 1999-2006 - reaching a level of US$341bn', with the UK emerging among the global market leaders (Coe et al., 2010).

But the temporary help industry has not only been fruitful for capital as a new investment opportunity. The services it provides are also geared primarily (though not always exclusively) towards the interests of the capitalist class. Perhaps the most obvious attraction of labour power employed through an agency (temporary, permanent or self-employed) is that the capitalist has even fewer obligations to the worker and thus usurps even greater control in the employment relationship. By using temporary agency workers, for example, a capitalist can better synthesise demand for their commodities with the amount of labour power they employ. Some firms such as Amazon have been found to refuse their temporary staff work on-the-day, so as to maximise efficiency and save on wages when demand falls (Briken and Taylor, 2018; Bloodworth, 2018; cf. Angry Workers, 2020).

6.1. Re-emerging Concerns about the Behaviour and Values of the Reserve Army of Labour

For as long as poor laws and unemployment benefits have existed, concerns about their potential utility as a resource for individuals to refuse work and even develop cultural values independent from the influence of capital have been a recurrent feature in both the design of unemployment policies and the surrounding discourse (cf. Slack, 1990; 31-36; Bruce, 1968; 32; Daunton, 1995; 453; Block and Somers, 2014; 150-192). However, these concerns had once again begun to intensify during the peak years of the profitability crisis, as state managers were becoming increasingly aware of the broader effect that cumulative refusal activity was having on the reserve army mechanism and the economy more generally (Keith Joseph in The Times, 1974; 14; See also Grover, 2016; 95; 231).

One of the catalysts for such concerns were the findings broadcast by a young Robin Page, a frontline visiting officer and later turned Special Investigator for the

Supplementary Benefits Commission. In 1971, Page concluded vociferously that ‘abuse of the system is so widespread that the public purse is being regularly plundered by a growing army of professional poverty-pleaders' (1971; 46). Using government (DHSS) data, Page (1971; 50) argued that benefit fraud had escalated dramatically by the late 1960s. Claiming that the British social security system was dealing with a ’60 per cent malingering rate’, before quickly proceeding to detail qualitatively the range of methods he found claimants were using to subvert the system. The main reason for this ‘malingering rate’, according to Page (1971; 75), was that the introduction of an uprated Supplementary Benefit meant that benefit levels had begun to reach levels close to real take-home pay: 'Many people almost receive the same sum by way of benefits as the take-home pay they would receive from so-called 'gainful employment'…as a result, they see no sense in working 42 hours each week for what in effect would be a few shillings'.

A couple of years later, in 1974, Secretary of Social Services Keith Joseph echoed quite similar statistics and concerns. According to Joseph, it was foolish to think that:

> ‘the million unemployed in 1972 were the "gaunt, tight-lipped men in caps and mufflers" of the 1930s. They were not. Over 30 per cent were unemployable or voluntarily unemployed and another tenth he claimed, were working and signing on or practising some other form of fraud’ (Deacon, 1981; 77).

Joseph’s theory was that deprivation and social disadvantage were being inter-generationally transmitted among some of the poorest members of Britain's citizenry, thereby '[re]producing problem children, the future unmarried mothers, delinquents, denizens of our borstals, subnormal educational establishments, prisons, hostels for drifters' (Welshman, 2013; 122; Macnicol, 1987; 294; Dean and Taylor Gooby, 1992; 35). While Joseph believed that this was a multi-faceted and complex issue, he no less thought that voluntarily unemployment and other forms of benefit fraud were corollaries of this deprivation cycle (Digby, 1989; 104-106; 111). As such, he decided to establish a Committee which set out to 'reduce abuse of the benefit system by "the shirkers and the scroungers"' in the early part of the 1970s (Price, 2000; 148; 160; see Cmnd 5228, 1973).

Despite mounting concerns voiced by some state managers and intellectuals in the early 1970s, they were ostensibly minor in the grand scheme of what was to come in the latter years of the decade and beyond. By the time Thatcher had been elected into central government, the notion that social security benefits were being used by reserve members of the class to refuse work, fraudulently advance their individual material interests and/or cultivate new anti-work values was becoming something of an orthodoxy among state managers:

> “I think, one of the tragedies in which many of the benefits we give, which were meant to reassure people that if they were sick or ill there was a safety net and there was help, that many of the benefits which were meant to help

> people who were unfortunate—"It is all right. We joined together and we have these insurance schemes to look after it". That was the objective, but somehow there are some people who have been manipulating the system and so some of those help and benefits that were meant to say to people: "All right, if you cannot get a job, you shall have a basic standard of living!" but when people come and say: "But what is the point of working? I can get as much on the dole!" You say: "Look! It is not from the dole. It is your neighbour who is supplying it and if you can earn your own living then really you have a duty to do it and you will feel very much better!" (Margaret Thatcher, 1987)

This orthodoxy was significantly influenced by departmental research or, more specifically, 'fraud drives', which continuously found significant levels of refusal activity among claiming populations (see Price, 2000; 239). In 1980, an investigation commissioned by the respective Department for Employment and Department for Health and Social Security (titled the 'Rayner' report) found that '16 per cent of claimants were not looking for work' and 'roughly 8 per cent or more of unemployed people might be unlawfully working and claiming benefits' (Price, 2000, 208). It is worth looking at these findings in closer detail:

> 'The main source of evidence on the extent of fraud are special drives by special investigators which have been undertaken in the past few years mainly in two DHSS regions – NW and West Midlands. In these special drives a relatively small number (normally the number of cases that can be dealt with by 2 or 3 Special Investigators in 3 months) of unemployed Supplementary Allowance claimants in a given ILO are selected as being 'likely' to be fraudulent are investigated. In a consistently high proportion of cases positive indications of fraud are recorded – on average in 55 out of every 100 cases investigated. The largest number investigated was during a recent drive in a NW town where out of 300 cases 148 were recorded as fraudulent. These 148 represent 8.6% of all the unemployed Supplementary Allowance claimants in the town'
>
> …
>
> 'We examined the cases of claimants ceasing to claim after the most recent special drive. In 8 out of 10 of these cases it seemed to us that fraudulent activity had been established beyond any reasonable doubt. In the remaining cases there may well have been fraudulent activity since the claimant suddenly ceased claiming after interview, in most cases after 9 months or more unemployed.'
>
> …

> ‘Applying the result that 8 out of 10 cases were fraudulent beyond reasonable doubt to the figures obtained from all special drives suggests that if 18 in every 100 unemployed SA claimants were investigated in a given office 7% of all the unemployed would be found to be fraudulent. Since it seems unlikely that there is no fraud in the 82 claimants who would remain not investigated, we consider that special drives indicate that the minimum likely level of fraudulent claims was 8%. ’ (DE/DHSS, 1981; 62)

These findings made a particularly strong impression on Lord Young, the man anointed by Thatcher to rectify persistently high unemployment levels in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Price, 2000; 236; 239). Young believed that the surplus population was becoming increasingly comprised of long-term claimant unemployed individuals that were outright negating wage labour by intentionally 'resting on the register' (Price, 2000, 240). Young also believed that the level of refusal activity identified in the abovementioned report was higher than estimated (Price, 2000; 239). In particular, he thought that a substantially higher number of claimants were working alongside claiming to illegitimately increase their own portion of the total wealth (Price, 2000; 268).

Alongside heightened concerns of voluntary unemployment and fraud following the Rayner report, fears of a growing anti-work culture among the claimant unemployed were galvanised once again in the first half of 1980s by what some Autonomists Marxists might describe as a 'bourgeois social theorist'[6] (see Cleaver, 1992; 124). Commenting first on poverty and welfare in America (1984) and subsequently later invited to inspect Britain (1990; 1994), Charles Murray (1990; 68) declared that a new and dangerous 'underclass' of individuals defined (in part at least) by their 'deplorable behaviour' and an 'unwillingness' to take available jobs was growing in the UK: 'the definitive proof that an underclass has arrived is that large numbers of young, healthy, low income males choose not to take jobs' (1990; 17). Murray's (1990; 71) diagnosis was that the Keynesian Planner state’s provision of a comprehensive social security system was primarily to blame 'for wrong-headed policies that seduce people' into dependency, hostility towards work (20), and thus an anti-work culture.

It was a perspective which not only struck a chord with a number of intellectuals in the UK (see Marsland, 1996; 112-113; Segalman and Marsland, 1989), but left a lasting impression on individuals exerting direct influence in government. This was particularly the case for the Secretary of State for Social Services, John Moore (1987; 23), who, shortly after returning 'from a visit to the United States of America where he had studied Libertarian views of welfare' (Digby, 1989; 109), declared that generous social security provision 'corrupt[ed] the human spirit' by creating a 'sullen apathy of [welfare] dependence' among claimants. Moore was increasingly of the view that social security

[6] This term captures theorists who interpret anti-work behaviours as 'deviant, delinquent, deficient, uneducated, primitive, backward, underdeveloped, criminal, subversive, schizophrenic, infantile, paranoid, sick, and so on' (Cleaver, 1992; 124), with the broader objective of maintaining capitalist society and enhancing the relational power of the class enemy.

benefits were not only permitting a range of refusal activities, but they were also cultivating anti-work cultural values.

Despite significant changes to government occurring within the Crisis state from the 1990s, state managers were still broadcasting these same concerns. In his inaugural speech in 1997, New Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair insisted that 'three generations have never had a job' and 'the greatest challenge for any democratic government [was] to refashion our institutions to bring this new workless class back into society' (Blair, 1997; Peck, 2001; 261). A decade or so later, it was declared by Conservative-Coalition Prime Minister David Cameron that Britain was 'broken' and suffering a widespread condition of social and moral decay (Slater, 2012). Again, by 'broken', Cameron largely meant that the present social security system was still cultivating values and behaviours which were ultimately antithetical to capitalist class domination and exploitation:

> "When the welfare system was born, there was what we might call a collective culture of responsibility. More than today, people's self-image was not just about their personal status or success.it was measured out by what sort of citizen they were; whether they did the decent thing…Now let's be honest about where we've travelled to…that collective culture of responsibility - taken for granted sixty years ago - has in many ways been lost. You see it in the people who go off sick when they could work or the people who refuse job offer after job offer… the benefit system has created a benefit culture… we've created the bizarre situation where time and again the rational thing for people to do is, quite clearly, the wrong thing to do." (David Cameron, 2011).

Thus, to combat and rectify these issues, Crisis state managers have repeatedly (for the last 40 years or so) turned to the ideas of another American bourgeois social theorist and self-anointed 'Darth Vader' of welfare reform—Lawrence Mead (1986; 1991; 1992; 1997; 2018). At the crux of Mead's (1986; 69-90) ideas was his belief that, over the course of the 20th century, both active and reserve members of the working class were showing signs of a declining work ethic and were becoming less inclined to subordinate themselves to exploitation across advanced capitalist territories (Mead, 1986; 81; 243); although he believed this was more pronounced among the reserve army of labour. Like Murray before him, Mead saw generous social security benefits as cultivating anti-work behaviours and values (Mead, 1986; 88). But he also thought that this was partially because the new fragmented labour market design (see previous chapter) made work less attractive in some expanding areas of the economy: 'work, at least in low-wage jobs, no longer serves the individual's interest as clearly as it does society's' (Mead, 1986; 82). Mead (1986; 85-86) therefore believed the 'real issue' that any social security restructuration agenda really needed to address was simple: who must make the sacrifice? Must the state adjust the job market to create better jobs or 'must the jobless themselves adjust to it as it is?'. Mead (1986; 84) argued that it should be the latter and,

as a result, he thought that unattractive work 'must be mandated' by the state 'just as a draft has sometimes been necessary to staff the military'.

To achieve this, Mead proposed a contemporary rehashing of workfare—policies which hadn't really been seen in Britain since the 1930s (Fletcher, 2015). He believed that a 'need for authority' was required in state encounters with the reserve army of labour, so as to (re)condition its (labour market) behaviour in accordance with the new labour market design (Mead, 1986; 82). This would entail imposing reforms which 'discipline[d] the poor' (Mead, 1986; 9) by reducing the monetary value of social security benefits and redesigning the delivery of benefit administration/employment services to 'threaten punishment (in this case loss of benefits)' for any failures to prepare for, seek and take available work (Mead, 1986; 87-88). In effect, similar to how the Thatcherites set out to decompose the active members of the class by locating the strongholds of working class power and reforming industrial relations policy to curtail refusal activities, Mead was proposing another complimentary decomposition project. But this time one aimed at rectifying refusal activities and anti-work behaviours present within the reserve members of the class.

6.2. Sanctioning Table (Explained)

The table shows that under the 'SBR' (stricter benefits regime—a common terminology used from 1987 onwards—Price, 2000; 267), this particular office was 'looking to make at least 8 refs (referrals) to DM (decision makers) a day' in 'Jan 2013'. Different coloured sticker stars appear to be used to document different reasons for sanctions. 'RE', or Refusing Employment, was marked by a silver star. 'FTC' direction, or Failure to Comply with a Jobseekers Direction was marked with a gold star. 'ASE sanction', or failure to Actively Seeking Employment, was marked by a blue star. It's worth noting, however, one slight point of confusion with the table. As the reader should be able to see, there is another 'ASE' ('actively seeking employment') category marked by a red star. While I can't be certain of the meaning behind this, one participant thought that this may be to distinguish between sanctions successfully administered and sanctions currently referred to an Independent Decision Maker for failures to Actively Seek Employment. Each day of the month that the Jobcentre was open is listed horizontally across the bottom, with the number of referrals made on each of these days (from 1 to 8) listed vertically along the left side. The different coloured stickers are placed in the boxes to reflect the day, type of referral (e.g. refusing employment) and amount of those referrals made in that day. Finally, across the top are boxes to record the total number of sanctions made each day.

7.1. Resistance to the 'Jobs that Nobody Wants'

A number of academics have suggested that labour market restructuring and the subsequent rise of low-paying, contingent jobs has undermined much of the incentive to sell labour power and has therefore been met by a general reluctance among the working class to undertake such work (Wiggan, 2015). Some evidence for this can be

found in contemporary research conducted on the attitudes of the reserve army towards the prospect of selling their labour power in 'peripheral'/'contingent' areas of the labour market. Lindsay and McQuaid's (2004) survey found 38% of respondents willing to rule out employment in the retail sector, 41% willing to rule out working in hospitality and 51% of respondents willing to rule out employment in call centres. Incidentally, all three are among the largest industries in Britain and comprise a significant portion of the jobs falling into the precarious/low-pay strata, or peripheral/contingent areas of the labour market (Grint and Nixon, 2015). To an extent, this is supported by Nixon's (2006; 214) research; finding that 'only four of the 35 [unemployed] men in [his] study were seeking atypical types of work in growth areas of non-manual or service employment'. Although, Nixon (2006; 214) found that resistance to such work was not so much owed to its atypical nature, but that it was largely 'feminised' and required young men 'to be passive and socially acceptable, to cover up their class and their backgrounds, their feelings and emotions, their accents, their behaviour'. Alongside this, Ray et al (2009; 982) found exhibitions of resistance amongst older skilled workers to the pressures of policy interventions which aimed to place them into low-paid, unskilled work. Similarly, Dunn's (2010; 11; 2014) mixed methods research on attitudes towards employment also suggests that there was 'choosiness' amongst unemployed and employed individuals about what kinds of work they would feasibly undertake, sometimes expressing a preference for 'dole' as opposed to 'drudgery'.

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