Active Labour Market Policies and Active Citizenship?

Experiences of Universal Credit Claimants with Jobcentre Plus



Alistair Andrew Leitch

Jesus College
University of Oxford

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ABSTRACT

The last thirty years have seen marked changes to the social citizenship settlement in Britain. Social rights have become increasingly conditional on compliance with behavioural conditions formulated in meetings between benefit claimants and caseworkers in the public employment service. These changes have been legitimated by both Labour and Conservative governments by reframing social citizenship in terms of a communitarian morality whereby the duty to seek and take up waged employment precedes social rights. The specific conditions placed upon claimants are legitimated via the use of welfare contracts, which imbue the arrangement with the perception of contractual consent.

Parallel to these changes has been a shift in the research agenda on social citizenship. Formerly a purely theoretical field, an empirical literature on social citizenship as a lived experience involving interactions with state welfare institutions with affective, performed, spatial, and intersubjective dimensions has emerged. The British lived social citizenship literature has focused on affective dimensions such as the effect of reforms on citizenship identity and performed dimensions such as the effects of reforms on benefit claimants' everyday lives. This thesis makes empirical and theoretical contributions to this literature by instead investigating the ethical framing of social citizenship and how it is given praxis in the lived experience of citizens and discovering how and in what ways lived experiences of social citizenship do or do not map onto the premises of its ethical legitimation. As welfare contractualism is used to legitimate the imposition of communitarian duties on the premise of contractual consent, it stands to reason that consensuality ought to be an affective feature of benefit claimants' interactions with welfare institutions. As such, the thesis asks the question '*How do Universal Credit (UC) claimants experience consensuality in their dealings with Jobcentre Plus?'*. It comprises four original research papers, each covering a dimension of consent as described in the ethics literature and the Social Security Advisory Committee's recommended principles of welfare contracts: voluntariness, understanding, authenticity, and non-coercion. Data were gathered from 33 semi-structured interviews with UC claimants and analysed using both reflexive and framework method thematic analysis.

Paper 1 presents evidence that the autonomy required to exercise voluntary agency is often abridged by the embodied or structurally generated nature of claimants' need. Furthermore, that the complex nature of UC often caused interviewees to struggle to access requisite information, have additional support needs recognised, or conditions scaled to levels they felt appropriate for their circumstances. Paper 2 presents evidence that contracting-out of welfare functions and the rigid performance-based approach to contract taken in UC can foster claimant distrust in welfare institutions. Paper 3 suggests that the work-first nature of UC can conflict with the individualisation of supports purportedly central to the rights-duties exchange at the heart of UC. Paper 4 presents evidence that coercive pressures are a design feature of UC but that such pressures are dynamic and not always efficacious.

Given the lack of affective consensuality in the lived experiences of these claimants, the procedural and substantive ethical legitimacy of the conditions placed upon them are questioned in a theory-practice immanent critique. Discussion is also included of whether contractualism serves as a means of consent generation at the macro-political level, rather than the micro-level of individuals. Finally, the potential tensions, discernible from the data, between a liberal ethic of contractual consent and a communitarian morality of social duty are explored.

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INTRODUCTION

1: THE RESEARCH PUZZLE

Until recently, the study of citizenship was considered to be a solely theoretical field concerned with the theorisation and normative evaluation of the relationship between state and individual and the concomitant rights and responsibilities exchange between them "conducted in what is virtually an empirical void" (Conover et al. 1991:801). The research agenda around citizenship has undergone considerable change in the last fifteen to twenty years, however, as the conceptualisation of citizenship has developed from being a formal legal status to "a social practice involving participation and governance" (Dean 1999:213). A prominent feature of this research agenda is Lister's (2007) concept of *lived citizenship* where:

> "*citizens appear on the stage of both theory and practice not simply as the passive holders of rights but as actively engaging with political welfare institutions, both as individuals and in groups*" (Lister 1997a:5).

Citizenship as an aspect of cultural, social, and political life has therefore become an object of study. This research has focused on everyday experiences of citizenship in terms of identity, acts of civic engagement, negotiation of rights and responsibilities, and participation and negotiation with services and institutions as an empirical base upon which to investigate and understand citizenship (Dickinson et al. 2008). This literature has dealt with four 'dimensions' of citizenship as lived experience: the *affective* (related to subjectivity and the normative and emotional aspects of citizenship), *performed* (actions and practices of citizenship), *spatial* (concerning the scales at, and spaces in, which citizenship operates and is experienced), and *intersubjective* (citizenship as it is embedded within relationships and networks).

This lived citizenship literature forms part of the wider lived experience literature in the social sciences. Lived experience has become an increasingly salient and utilised analytic in the academic study of social policy, even if it is still an under-utilised perspective guiding reform (Speed and Reeves 2023). The lived experience of welfare reform is a topic of especially increasing interest in the British social policy literature, although not always with an analytical focus on citizenship. This research has focused on the increasingly conditional nature of benefit receipt in Britain, with access to benefits increasingly contingent on meeting stringent behavioural conditions. These studies have analysed impacts of such reforms on mental and physical health (Cheetham et al. 2019; Dwyer et al. 2020; Mahase 2019; Walton 2018); different forms of activity, reflexivity, and agency in the lives of those receiving benefits (Wright 2016); experiences of low-pay and insecure work (Shildrick et al. 2010, 2012); experiences of disability benefit receipt (Garthwaite 2014, 2015; McNeill et al. 2017; Patrick 2011a, 2011b, 2012a); the negotiation of labour market precarity and workfare programmes (Ray et al. 2009); or the experience of in-work conditionality (Wright and Dwyer 2020).

There is a strand of this literature which does focus explicitly on citizenship, specifically the lived experience of *social* citizenship. This literature has focused primarily on the affective and performed dimensions of social citizenship. The literature focusing on the affective dimension has focused on the ways that reforms to the welfare state have affected citizens' perception of themselves as citizens, or normative views of the concept of social citizenship itself (Dean 1998a, 1998b; Dean and Melrose 1996, 1997, 1998; Dwyer 2002; Edmiston 2017; Hudson et al. 2016). Studies focusing on the performed dimension have focused on how reforms to the social citizenship

settlement have affected the everyday lives of citizens interacting with the welfare state, often with an emphasis on coping (or lack of coping) mechanisms (Andersen 2019; Dean and Melrose 1996, 1998; Duffy 2012; Koch and Reeves 2021; Wright 2011; Dean and Melrose 1996, 1998; Patrick 2016, 2017; Reeve 2017).

This literature has made invaluable theoretical and empirical contributions to the understanding of social citizenship as a lived experience in Britain. Nevertheless, several key theoretical premises underpinning the changing research agenda on social citizenship towards the study of it as a lived experience have yet to be investigated empirically. For example, although the British lived social citizenship literature has considered the performed dimension of citizenship, and to a limited extent in terms of participation in processes of governance as described by Dean, it has not done so in terms of engagement and negotiation with political welfare institutions *at the intersection of practice and theory*, as described by Lister. Instead, studies of performed dimensions of lived citizenship in the UK tend to be concerned with the type of 'everyday citizenship' as defined by Duffy (2016:41-42) as that which "helps people live good lives" and therefore focus on the impact of reforms to social citizenship on people's everyday lives. Although dealings with welfare agencies play some part in that overall picture, the locus of analysis and theorisation tends to be on outcomes on the everyday lives of claimants (Patrick 2016, 2017; Reeve 2017). Where there is a focus on governance more explicitly, the analysis tends to be on refuting the premises of reform by demonstrating that the current social citizenship settlement is needlessly punitive, inadequate to meet social need, or that the assumptions made of and narratives about claimants are false (Andersen 2019; Patrick 2016, 2017; Reeve 2017).

Where there is a focus on theorising social citizenship explicitly, the focus tends to be about inefficacy of policy design (Andersen 2019; Dean and Melrose 1996, 1998; Patrick 2017).

Missing from the literature is the idea that the social citizenship settlement is the institutional expression of civic morality and brings with it concomitant standards of ethical legitimation. In other words, the design and content of social citizenship is based on moral ideas (ideas about the Good and what is right and wrong) which create ethical standards (procedural standards of just and proper treatment) that have to be met in order for these moral claims to be substantiated. Fundamentally, the ethical standards which give praxis (or not) to that civic morality are enacted at the level of individual citizens and their dealings with the state. It is therefore important to consider what that civic morality is, operationalise its key concepts for study, and observe whether and how the praxis of that morality is experienced by those subject to it as a means of understanding the nature of social citizenship and its potential ramifications for current and future policy. Indeed, as Haque (1999:309) notes, business management in the private sector is differentiated from social policy in the public sector due to the:

> "*unique relationship of public administration with citizens that maintains its public identity, reinforces its legitimacy, sets its ethical standards, (and) determines its roles and duties*".

Moreover, as I will detail shortly, these ethical standards in the British context are fundamentally related to affective experience. The literature considering the affective dimensions of social citizenship in Britain has focused on issues of identity, normativity, and experiences of negative or positive affect**.** This thesis investigates an aspect of social citizenship as a lived experience heretofore unexamined. It considers

the moral and ethical framing of social citizenship and studies whether and how these legitimatory claims and standards are given praxis in the affective experiences of citizens in their dealings with the welfare state. This approach more fully encapsulates Lister's idea of lived citizenship as being where citizens appear on the stage of both theory (in terms of the moral and ethical ideas underpinning social citizenship) and practice (through their active engagement with political welfare institutions) and Kallio et al.'s (2015) notion of it as 'the locus of political agency in participatory policy'.

Specifically, the thesis considers how the increasingly conditional nature of social rights, with benefit claimants subject to stringent behavioural conditionality, is legitimated through discourse invoking a communitarian morality (communitarian principles of good conduct and citizenship) governed according to liberal ethics (liberal standards of proper procedure). In practice, this involves what Carey and Bell (2022:6) call the "ontological association drawn between contractualism and communitarianism". This refers to the legitimation of the behavioural element of behavioural conditionality through communitarian moral emphasis on responsibility and duty, in this case the personal responsibility of the individual claimant to actively seek work and demonstrate that active effort. It also refers to the legitimation of the conditionality element of behavioural conditionality on the basis of claimants signing a contract-like agreement with the public employment service (PES) outlining the conditions they must meet to receive benefit. Contracts are used to create and legitimate duties on the basis that they are consensual**.** As such, it stands to reason that to substantiate the responsibilisation of claimants and give praxis to this duty-based conditional social citizenship, consensuality ought to be an affective feature of

how citizens experience contractual welfare governance through their dealings with the PES (called Jobcentre Plus (JCP) in Britain).

The thesis is underpinned by a central research question -'*How do Universal Credit claimants experience consensuality in their dealings with Jobcentre Plus?*- and is based on semi-structured interview data with 33 Universal Credit (UC) claimants which is analysed across four standalone yet interrelated research papers each of which explores a different dimension of consent.

The remainder of this introductory document will proceed at follows. It will begin with a section which more fully develops the research puzzle. This section will introduce UC, the shift to behavioural conditionality, and the wider shifts toward the activation of labour market policy and social citizenship of which they are part. It will introduce the idea of the individualisation of social citizenship and how it coalesces with activation through the contractualisation of welfare policy. These changes will be tied to changing moralities and ethics of social citizenship as I demonstrate how citizenship is framed in terms of a communitarian morality emphasising responsibility and duty, and that making social rights conditional on meeting such responsibilities is legitimated by the liberal ethic of contractual consent. The concept of *imparfaite* or imperfect citizenship will then be introduced so as to situate the assumptive rationale of the inquiry that the abstract ethical frameworks upon which citizenship are based are, in practice, imperfectly implemented and experienced. Moreover, that the consideration of the exact nature of this imperfection is instructive about the nature of social citizenship as a phenomenon in the context being studied.

2: THE CHANGING NATURE OF BRITISH SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP

2.1: UNIVERSAL CREDIT AND THE SHIFT TO CONTRACTUAL WELFARE POLICY

Introduced through the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and rolled-out across the UK since 2013, UC is the flagship welfare reform of the UK Coalition government of 2010-2015. It replaces six 'legacy benefits'[1] with a single needs-based payment. One of the defining features of UC has been the intensification of conditionality that it entails. To some extent, conditionality has always been a feature of the unemployment benefit system in Britain but successive reforms since the 1986 Restart programme have changed the nature of this conditionality both qualitatively and quantitatively. On the qualitative side, conditions of *category* (conditions restricting access to benefits to members of specific targeted categories such as the unemployed, homeless, or disabled) and of *circumstance* (being of demonstrable need or lack of means) have been joined with increasingly intense use of conditions of *conduct* (Clasen and Clegg 2007). These conditions of conduct include mandatory job search/work availability requirements or participation in upskilling/workfare programs and are monitored by JCP with sanction of benefit loss for non-compliance. Further on the qualitative side, these conditions have been progressively applied to more and more population subgroups (Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl 2008): starting initially with the long-term unemployed, then expanding gradually to include almost all working-age persons deemed medically fit to undertake some form of employment with the exception of those with young children, and expanding under UC to include those in paid employment but earning below a threshold (Millar and Bennett 2017; Patrick 2011;

[1] Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, and both Income- and Contribution-Based Jobseeker's Allowance.

Pennycook and Whittaker 2012; Rafferty and Wiggan 2017; Whitworth and Griggs 2013; Wright and Dwyer 2020). On the quantitative side, UC has seen expansions in the scope, severity, and incidence of sanctions to the strictest point seen in the post-war period (Adler 2016, 2018:45-63; Dwyer and Wright 2014; Watts et al. 2014; Webster 2017, 2019, 2023).

These changes have taken place under the dual rubrics of the 'activation' of labour market policy and the concomitant 'activation' of citizenship. The former refers to the recalibration of labour market policy away from the (contestably) passive provision of unemployment benefits to the mandatory activities mentioned above. The latter refers to the broad thirty-year shift in the ideological basis of British social citizenship. This shift involves a move away from a (largely) rights-based liberal approach (Bode 2008; Delanty 2000; Marshall 1950; Titmuss 1950; Van Parijs 1995) towards a duties-based communitarian approach where social rights are conditional upon meeting obligations imposed by the community via the state (Avineri and de Shalit 1995; Galston 2005; Kymlicka 2002; Selbourne 1994). Communitarianism is a school of thought that has developed out of the civic republican tradition which places the promotion of public and civic virtue and the duty to participate in public and civic life at the heart of citizenship. In this way, citizenship is conceived of not merely as a status but as an activity that individuals ought to participate in through engagement with their local community (Etzioni 1995a, 1997; Oldfield 1990).

In this case, 'active citizenship' entails seeking and finding paid employment as the prime duty of the 'good citizen' (Dean 1999; Lister 1990, 2001a; Patrick 2012b, 2014; Prideaux 2010) with an emphasis on 'personal responsibility' (Clarke 2005; Dwyer

1998, 2000; Lister 2011; Newman 2011; Wright 2012) defined as financial independence from the state (Dean 2004; Dwyer 2004; Jayasuriya 2001; Wiggan 2012). As employed persons derive social rights through fiscal contributions from their labour, the unemployed without similar active contribution are rendered passive recipients of state support, leading to unequal social citizenship (Mead 1986, 1992, 1997). Walters characterises this as a shift from a 'welfare society' to an 'active society', where the welfare state as a 'passive' entity has been replaced by a form of society wholly antithetical to that which universal social security embodies: one where an individual's welfare is contingent upon "their ability to constantly work on themselves, through practices like lifelong learning, to become or remain employable" (1997:221). Others (Jessop 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1995; Peck and Jones 1995; Torfing 1996, 1999) characterise such a shift as one which moves away from a 'Keynesian welfare state' to a 'Schumpeterian workfare society' whereby the right to employment (or non-market income) has been replaced by employment (or work-related activity) as a precondition of rights.

These changes are conceived of as representing the individualisation of social citizenship. Individualisation is a broad and nebulous term that encompasses multiple different discourses (Valkenberg 2007) but here we are only concerned with two elements: the individualisation of supports and the individualisation of responsibilities. The latter refers to the processes mentioned earlier whereby conditions of conduct are applied to claimants. The former refers to the argument that job search strategies and the active supports provided by JCP ought to be tailored to the circumstances of individual claimants as their needs are becoming increasingly

heterogeneous due to demographic change and the growing flexibility of the labour market (Armidgeon and Bonoli 2006; Bonoli 2005; Taylor-Gooby 2004; Rice 2017). This was the apparent logic behind the integration of benefit and employment policy through the creation of JCP in 2002 (Bryson 2009). This same logic of individualised responsibility exchanged for individualised support was kept in place through the transition from the New Deals to UC (Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) 2020).

Successive governments have legitimated this shift via the 'contractualisation' of welfare: the use of contract-like agreements (called 'Claimant Commitments' (CC) in UC) formed between claimants and JCP caseworkers (called 'Work Coaches' (WC) in UC) delineating the activities the claimant must undertake to receive benefit (Ben-Galim and Sachrajda 2010; Bonvin and Moachon 2007; Carson and Kerr 2010; Gregg 2008; Hartley 2019; Holmes 2011; Ramia and Carney 2001; Sol and Westerveld 2007). The appeal of this lies in that it imbues the arrangement with two features of contractual exchange: those of mutuality/reciprocity (Freedland et al. 2007; Paz-Fuchs 2008; Miscampbel 2014) and consensuality (Eichenhofer and Westerveld 2005; Freedland and King 2005), which can be used to legitimate the conditions placed upon claimants and the sanctions they incur for non-compliance.

The first of these two elements, reciprocity, is discussed widely in both the theoretical and policy contractualism literatures. Arguments range from the functionalist (Ellwood 1988); to attempts to reconcile communitarianism with Rawlsian liberalism and/or social democracy through the proviso that claimants are provided access to an acceptable minimum of 'opportunity goods' (Gutmann and Thompson 1996), economic opportunities, and share of the social product (White 2000, 2003a, 2003b,

2005); to ethical theories which critique the moral individualism of liberalism and see contractualism as the formalisation inside the civic space of our moral interdependence and obligations outside of it (Deacon 2005; Etzioni 1998a, 1998b; Selznick 1998).

The second element, consent, is largely absent. This is perplexing for two reasons. One is that consent plays a critical role in legal theories of fair contract (Deveci 2007; Engle et al. 2007; Mann 2004; McLean 2010; Smith 2017). In the Anglo-American liberal legal tradition for example, this entails the notion that individuals are only obligated to do that to which they freely consent with contracts being the means by which "we consent to the imposition of certain duties upon ourselves (…) connected to (exchanged for) legal rights to some good or performance from the other contracting party" (Bix 2018:222). If welfare contracts are used to legitimate the conditionality element of the rights and duties exchange between claimant and state then it stands to reason that consensuality must be a feature of how these contracts are created and implemented, yet such inquiry is absent from the theoretical and empirical literatures.

The second reason is that welfare contracts are social contracts which, while purely administrative and not legally enforceable in the traditional sense, express "a set of obligations associated with membership of society which are regarded as mutually owed between a member of society and a public agency" (Freedland and King 2005:120). In this way, welfare contracts are not purely administrative tools but technologies of governance (Rose 1999a) which give praxis to the moral political economy of social citizenship and are used to legitimate the obligations of claimants to the community via the state. As such, the absence of a consent-based analysis is

even more perplexing given the centrality of consent to theories of obligation in political philosophy (Beran 1977; Leyden 1981; Simmons 1976, 2010; Steinberg 1978; Tuckness 2018).

2.2: COMMUNITARIAN MORALITY WITH A LIBERAL ETHIC OF GOVERNANCE

Communitarianism, in this context at least, has developed as a contemporary conservative strand of thought within the broader civic republican tradition that emphasises that citizens have a duty to actively participate and contribute to civic life (Dwyer 2010). While there remains a debate about whether such a community can be appropriately constituted at national level and embodied by the state (Miller 1995; Walzer 1995), the notion of loyalty to the state and state-enforced duty to uphold the values of the citizenry has become central to the translation of communitarian ideals into welfare policy.

Deacon (2002:75-77) summarises how communitarian ideals ought to be translated into welfare policy in terms of four key unifying values. The first and "most obvious" one is that *duties take precedence over rights* and that "the idea of reciprocity (…) is at the heart of the communitarian understanding of social justice" (Responsive Communitarian Platform 1998:xxxiv, quoted in Deacon 2002:75). As such, any access to social goods or resources in the form of benefits or services must be made conditional upon fulfilling some set of socially recognised and mandated behavioural obligations, whether that be "as a parent, a neighbour or a member of the labour force". Alongside this is the insistence that communitarian welfare reforms must be instituted as part of a democratically legitimated political process whereby popular support for such a programme can be built. This is rooted in the commitment of

communitarians to voluntary moral order whereby the citizenry have the chance to express their desires over which obligations are enshrined in policy and the manner in which they are implemented and enforced. Related to this are two further corollary ideas. One is that welfare policy ought to be moralising and judgemental and that, by definition, a system which posits that citizens ought to conform to a dominant and democratically endorsed standard of 'good citizenship' must moralise the failure to meet that standard. The other is that welfare policy ought to actively seek to inculcate the claimant to both think and act in ways which conform to this dominant notion of morality and good citizenship.

While communitarianism is not a unitary body of thought (Hale 2004), the broad trend towards an increasingly communitarian ethos in British welfare policy is noticeable from the 1990s onwards (Heron 2001; Heron and Dwyer 1999). One can identify three distinct phases. The first phase during the Thatcher and Major years saw the government critique the welfare state as being overly concerned with the rights of citizenship to the detriment of the responsibilities of it (Lister 1990:7-22). This period saw the introduction of the notion of 'active citizenship', as described before, into welfare policy discourse and the recalibration of benefit conditionality from having to accept supports and offers provided through the PES to having to actively demonstrate job search activity. The second phase, New Labour's contribution to the communitarian turn, came in the form of the moralisation of responsibility in terms of social integration and community renewal. The notion of active citizenship inherited from previous governments was rooted in the individualism of Thatcherism whereby unemployed citizens have a duty to be active because their employed fellow citizens

are. In this way, it was rooted in creating parity between individuals. New Labour, however, reframed the individualisation of responsibility as an issue of duty to community. Unemployment was framed as a route to social exclusion, a fraying of community bonds, which in turn leads to social decline (Driver and Martell 1997). The valorisation of 'activity' was therefore framed in a social integrationist (Levitas 1998) discourse about employment as a route to cohesive communities and socially integrated individuals. The third phase, unfolding during the Conservative-led governments post-2010 and the introduction of UC, developed in reaction to New Labour's communitarian turn which shifted the terms of political debate away from Thatcherite individualism and prompted a revival of communitarianism in Conservative Party thought. A revival which, although differently articulated across policy fields (Gibson 2015; Hickson 2013; Sage 2012a), involved moving from a social integrationist discourse of active citizenship to a moral underclass one (Levitas 1998). This vision of communitarianism is in line with the last two values described by Deacon whereby welfare policy ought to be explicitly moralising and seek to change the normative character and behaviour of the individual, with the state having a duty to support the 'deserving' who are active and responsible with tough remedial measures in place to sanction those who are not (Centre for Social Justice 2006, 2007).

Although the characterisation of recent changes to British social citizenship as a shift from a liberal to communitarian framework is tenable, it is important to remember that policy programmes are products of multiple intellectual influences (Clarke 2004). To an extent, British social citizenship has always had a morally communitarian element through the contributory principle and the requirement to take up job offers (Deacon

1976; Sinfield 2001; White 2000). In turn, it can be argued that the shift to a more communitarian emphasis on responsibilities has involved the retention of the ethical and methodological individualism (Newman 2007; Valkenberg 2007) of liberalism of which communitarians tend to be critical (Deacon 2002; Selznick 1998). This has manifested itself during the communitarian turn in British welfare policy through the "ontological association drawn between contractualism and communitarianism" (Carey and Bell 2022:6), with contractualism being used as a means by which a claimant's obligations to the community can be delineated and enforced.

Welfare contracts were first introduced by the Major government in the form of the 'Jobseeker's Agreement' as part of the introduction of Jobseeker's Allowance in October 1996. However, contractualised welfare was still in its infancy when the Major government was replaced by Blair's New Labour government in May 1997. Under New Labour, the communitarian emphasis on balancing rights and responsibilities was transposed as 'no rights without responsibilities' (Giddens 1998). We can think of this in terms of Etzioni's notion of the 'New Golden Rule': "Respect and uphold society's moral order as you would have society respect and uphold your autonomy" (Etzioni 1997:xviii) or, perhaps more elegantly, "(i)f the government keeps its part of the bargain, then the claimant should keep theirs" (Deacon 2004:915). As social rights were now couched in terms of reciprocal exchange rather than as claims on the state, New Labour's welfare reform was presented in their Green Paper as *A New Contract for Welfare* which promised "rights and responsibilities on all sides" (Department for Social Security (DSS) 1998:24) and the Jobseeker's Agreement was retained and expanded as part of the New Deal legislation subsequently introduced from the Green

Paper. This was continued under the Conservative-led governments from 2010, which fought the 2010 election by promising *A New Welfare Contract* (Conservative Party 2010). This was evoked by then-Prime Minister David Cameron at his first party conference speech after the passing of the Welfare Reform Act in 2012 in the following terms:

> "*Now you have to have to sign a contract that says: you do your bit and we'll do ours. It requires you to have a real CV and it makes clear: you have to seek work and take work - or you will lose your benefit*" (Cameron 2012b).

In this way, in terms of unemployment benefit, we can conclude that British social citizenship has come to be defined as a communitarian morality that frames the rights and responsibilities of the citizen and the state as reciprocal and balanced and with a firm attempt on the part of the state to moralise benefit receipt. However, this communitarianism is tempered by the use of contracts as a means of defining and enforcing this exchange, an approach which is based explicitly on liberal ethical principles.

2.3: 'IMPERFECT' CITIZENSHIP

This thesis is concerned with the idea of citizenship as *imparfaite*. This is the notion that citizenship Is not merely a question of abstractions which are translated perfectly into policy but rather that it consists of principles, ideals, and standards of both service delivery and ethical legitimation which might be at once institutionalised and recognised, yet not always fully realised. Or, put otherwise, it is constantly in the process of being negotiated and translated into practice in an 'untidy', contingent, and often partially realised manner as one finds in any realm of social life and especially one where dominant notions about the nature of political subjectivity conflict with the actual experience and exercise of it (Clarke et al. 2014). Or, as described by Bénéï,

(2005:8), “if citizenship comprises the modern nation-state’s range of attempts to define and produce “ideal, loyal and dutiful citizens”, no less does it also comprehend social actors’ negotiated responses to these”. It is fitting that this last quotation comes from a chapter entitled *Manufacturing Citizenship* in reference to Lipmann’s (1922) concept of ‘manufacturing consent’ whereby states and governments legitimate political projects. This is because the focus of this thesis is the utilisation of notions of contractual consent to legitimate a social citizenship based on strict behavioural conditionality or, put otherwise, the actions of governments to manufacture both consent and citizenship.

A helpful distinction is that between the idea of ‘formal’ and ‘substantive’ citizenship (Tamayo 2019:130). Formal citizenship refers to the ideal-typical form of citizenship that has institutional approval and which forms part of a political project based on a specific moral rationale with associated standards of legitimation. Substantive citizenship refers to processes, actions, and experiences whereby that formal citizenship is realised -partially, completely, or not at all- in practice. Many scholars argue that the realisation of substantive citizenship is a “condition of possibility” of formal citizenship (Isin 2008:17).

If we take these two premises -that contractual consent is the basis upon which the UK’s present behaviourally conditional social citizenship is legitimated and that the reality of citizenship is that it is an imperfectly implemented and realised concept in practice- then the relevance and underlying rationale of this thesis becomes apparent. As Freedland and King (2003:476) note in direct reference to welfare contractualism:

> “*(S)tandards on participants need to be evaluated not simply in terms of theoretical outcomes but in practice too. What may appear to be compelling*

> *theoretical logic may prove fatally detrimental when implemented. This is especially likely to occur when discussion of policy shifts from the macro-level of general societal and political aims to the micro-level of administration*".

As consent is the legitimatory basis of contract, consensuality is a "normative pole" or "symbolic marker" (Clarke et al. 2014:11-12) against which contractual relationships can be studied and evaluated. As British social citizenship as expressed through UC uses contract to ethically legitimate conditionality of social rights, consensuality becomes an appropriate analytic lens through which to study citizenship as a lived experience. The ways in, and extent to, which consensuality is experienced by claimants in their dealings with the state can provide insight into the realities of social citizenship in contemporary Britain. As Vincent-Jones (2009:6-7) argues; "welfare contractualism may be used to focus attention on the state's own reciprocal obligations, and on whether it is delivering its side of the bargain' but "lack of negotiation and consensus in the determination of agreements; the lack of reciprocity in the state's undertakings and ability to deliver on them" potentially undermine the credibility of the claim that contractualism can be genuine, reciprocal, and fair. Consent is the implicit standard of 'formal' citizenship and so understanding whether and how consensuality is experienced by citizens in practice provides a basis upon which we can draw conclusions about 'substantive' citizenship.

3: THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF LIVED CITIZENSHIP

Despite its increasingly common use in social research, lived experience as a topic, analytic, and/or as an epistemological basis is often poorly explicated. The following section will detail the four dimensions of lived experience which pertain to the lived citizenship literature as described by Kallio et al. (2020). This is so as to take the somewhat nebulous concept of 'lived citizenship' and make clearer the kind of

experiences and topics on which the thesis will focus, as well as detailing how each of these dimensions have been treated in the British lived experience of social citizenship literature.

3.1: THE AFFECTIVE DIMENSION

The dimension of the lived citizenship literature most directly researched in this thesis is the *affective* dimension of citizenship. The analytical centrality of this dimension is a natural by-product of the general shift in orientation in citizenship studies away from the status-based analysis of rights and obligations to the empirical analysis of citizenship as lived as the latter intrinsically concerns issues of subjectivity and the emotional, intellectual, and normative aspects of being (as both verb and participle) a citizen (Fortier 2016). As such, issues of affect tie together the other three dimensions (Kallio et al. 2020:718).

The affective dimension of social citizenship is one of the most discussed in the British social policy literature. The analytical focus of these studies is the impact that reforms to the benefit system have had on individuals' self-perception as citizens or of citizenship as a concept (Dwyer 2002; Hudson et al. 2016). Dean and Melrose (1996, 1997) have suggested that benefit fraud represents not an erosion of the work ethic but a response to the erosion of solidarity and feelings of mutual obligation caused by the fracturing of the rights-based social citizenship settlement (Dean 1998). Similarly, Edmiston (2017) has presented evidence that welfare retrenchment has caused a bifurcation in how affluent and deprived citizens experienced their citizenship. The affluent described feeling that their employment histories and productive contributions give them secure and legitimate claims to citizenship rights and status

with deprived citizens described feeling that the material realities of benefit cuts render the concept empty.

This thesis deals with the affective dimension of citizenship in a different way to these studies. It is predicated on the notion of consensuality as an affective experience that sits at the heart of the ethical legitimation of conditional social citizenship. Informed consent theories tend to conceive of consent as a one-time action or decision whereby someone authorises someone else to do something. This is why informed consent theories assume a disembodied asocial (i.e. liberal) subject: subjects are not their actions. Consent is a feature of an action, not the person taking it (Faden and Beauchamp 1986:235-237). However, as relational contract theorists posit[2], contracts generally do not govern decisions or transactions but rather relationships which are more longitudinal and dynamic (Gordon 1985; Macneil 1985a, 1985b; Palay 1985). As such, four features of *consent as a decision* are transposed in this thesis into features of *consensuality as an affective experience of contractual welfare governance*.

3.2: THE PERFORMED DIMENSION

The *performed* dimension of lived citizenship focuses on actions and practices. Of particular concern is the idea that citizenship is something which is 'enacted' in the sense of being constituted, negotiated, asserted, denied, or realised through the actions and practices of individuals and institutions. These acts may be in the formal political space, but may also be more spontaneous, voluntary, and localised.

[2] Relational contract theory will be discussed more fully in Paper 2 and the conclusion.

The performed dimension of citizenship is, alongside the affective dimension, the dimension most covered in the British lived social citizenship literature. These studies focus on the experiences of everyday life arising from changes to the social citizenship settlement, often with an emphasis on coping (or lack of coping) mechanisms. Topics of interest has included the negative effects of conditionality on primary caregivers (Andersen 2019; Wright 2011); experiences of insecurity (Koch and Reeves 2021); benefit fraud as a retrenchment survival strategy (Dean and Melrose 1996, 1998); 'othering' of the less deserving to cope with stigma (Patrick 2016); conditioning and compliance in order to meet the demands of contemporary citizenship (Patrick 2017); and the disproportionate effect of conditionality on the homeless (Reeve 2017).

This literature is one of the most theoretically complex in the lived citizenship literature and it is important here to specify some of its contours in such a way as to make its terminology, assumptions, and focus clear to ensure that the ways in which the performed element of citizenship are treated here is also clear. In particular, I want to differentiate between the notions of 'active' and 'activist' citizenship and between 'acts' and 'practices' of citizenship (Jakimów 2022). The literature concerning 'acts' of citizenship has developed in the years since the publication of landmark title *Acts of Citizenship* and subsequent theoretical work of its editor (Isin 2008, 2009). This work constructs 'acts' of citizenship as those which are done in the assertion of rights in a transformative sense in contexts where the rights of citizenship are being denied or abridged. In this sense, 'acts' of citizenship is a specific term used to denote actions of resistance and assertion which may even be subversive or extra-legal (Bargu 2022; Pfeifer 2018; Puggioni 2014). It is in this sense that the term 'activist' citizenship is

used. This is in contradistinction to more traditional notions of 'active' citizenship and 'practices' of citizenship which are used to describe more everyday processes concerning individuals and their interactions with institutions whereby their social citizenship is enacted.

This is an important distinction to make because this thesis is mainly concerned with 'active citizenship' and 'practices of citizenship' in this parlance through its focus on claimants' dealings with JCP. Studying citizenship through the lens of claimant experiences with JCP has an intuitive logic as dealings with officials of state services constitute many citizens' most common form of political engagement with the state, of much greater frequency than voting or engaging elected officials (Hasenfeld 1985; Peterson 1988). However, there is a deeper significance to studying these experiences. Smith (1999) argues that the settings of everyday life and work are themselves empirically linked to broader processes of administration, governance, and social control. That in the very act of working and administering within specific institutional sites, translocal processes whereby power is exercised and experienced are at play. Although institutions like JCP treat a wide variety of claimants with differing needs and circumstances in a variety of different locations with similarly differing needs (Saraceno 2002), they are united in being sites in which the same relations and exercises of power occur. These relations of power manifest themselves in the activities and relationships which occur within these institutions and are in key respects microcosms of the broader citizen-state relationship in which they are embedded. In this way, welfare offices are sites:

> "*of policy conflict, wherein politically contested policy projects may be advanced indirectly through administrative means (…) structuring the*

> *possibilities for advancing claims on the state, asserting rights, and pursuing redress (...) sites within which individuals indirectly negotiate sociopolitical status*" (Brodkin 2013:23-24).

In addition to its general focus on social citizenship as performed through claimants' dealings with JCP, this thesis also discusses performed citizenship in the sense of 'acts' of citizenship as Isin describes in Paper 1. Paper 1 focuses on forms of agency exhibited by claimants related to their claim and one of the findings relates to the ways in which claimants became involved in organised support for other claimants on a voluntary basis.

3.3: THE SPATIAL DIMENSION

This literature explores a variety of different dimensions related to spatial aspects of lived citizenship, of which two are relevant to this thesis. The most analytically important of these is the "politics of scale" (Delaney and Leitner 1997; Desforges et al. 2005) in which citizenship is simultaneously a local, national, and supranational phenomenon with a differentiated scalar citizenship of *place* (Linklater 1998; Rygiel 2010). The construction of citizenship as a scalar phenomenon underpins essentially all of the lived experience of social citizenship literature in Britain through the idea of 'citizenship from below' (Patrick 2017). This means looking at how dominant discourses, assumptions about subjectivity, and nationally directed policies (citizenship 'from above') are experienced and navigated by individual citizens 'from below' as a means of exploring the realities and complex dynamics of social citizenship. This thesis also takes this general overarching approach to the subject matter as well as discussing various issues of scalarity in its constituent papers.

For example, Paper 2 analyses the dynamics of social trust expressed by claimants related to their experience of claiming, as trust is key to the political legitimacy required to sustain the notion of citizenship (Taylor-Gooby 2009:6). One of the key findings is that interviewees felt that their WCs are constrained in their ability to be responsive to their needs and to be empathetic by a system that is overly restrictive on their discretion and that the distrust in UC they feel is levelled at the macro-institutional level rather than the micro-interpersonal one between themselves and their WCs. Scalarity is also a theme discussed in Paper 4, where the efficacy of stigma as a macro-level mechanism for securing political support for conditionality is contrasted to its efficacy as a micro-level mechanism of coercion. This demarcation between the macro-politics of consent generation for conditionality and the micro-politics of claimant acceptance of their conditions as discussed by Freedland and King (2005), Nilssen (2014), and Sage (2012b) is then discussed further in the conclusion. Scalarity is also discussed in Paper 1, the findings of which include that claimants sometimes join online communities whereby they can be sources of social capital for other claimants. This notion of the digital as a new political space for citizenship is then more fully developed in the conclusion paper and suggested as a potential avenue for further research.

The second spatial aspect discussed in this thesis is that of participatory policies and spaces. The lived citizenship literature on participatory policies and spaces discusses their use as a means of community engagement (Cornwall 2008), citizen empowerment (Bäcklund et al. 2014), and consensus-building and conflict aversion (Innes and Booher 2004). However, this has taken place alongside concern with the

way that participatory spaces might be used as a means of legitimating what are *de facto* exclusionary practices (Leal 2007; Leino and Laine 2012; Silver et al. 2010). These are key issues discussed in Paper 3 which uses recognition theory as an analytical framework to look at reciprocity and whether or not the identities, preferences, and individual circumstances of claimants are reflected in their CCs and their agreed-upon activities. Participation is framed as the way in which theorists of recognition across the political spectrum conceive of as the means by which recognition theory ought to be given praxis and therefore guides the operationalisation of recognition as an analytical framework for the empirical analysis.

3.4: THE INTERSUBJECTIVE DIMENSION

The *intersubjective* dimension of lived citizenship refers to the aspects of citizenship defined by social relationships which are "embedded in the relationships that both construct places and link particular places to broader networks" taking on "different aspects and significance for people in different contexts" (Staeheli 2010:393). These relationships may be either proximate or distal and can involve a variety of different forms of socialisation, including political (Häkli et al. 2020), cultural (Habashi 2019), or geographical (Kallio 2018). In particular, this literature explores how the political sphere influences, or is influenced by, interpersonal relationships and interactions as well as how individuals can enact their citizenship away from the formal practices of the state in their personal lives (Hall et al. 1999; Hörschelmann and Refaie 2014).

The intersubjective dimension of citizenship is not one which forms an explicit part of the analytical focus in the British lived social citizenship literature but this thesis does discuss the following intersubjective elements of lived citizenship. Paper 1 discusses

the notion of social capital and how the realisation of citizenship is facilitated by individuals both accessing and, in some cases, becoming sources themselves, of social capital. In this way, we see both how intersubjectivity helps people to better realise their citizenship in relation to the state and also provides them a route through which to enact their citizenship with their fellow citizens in a voluntary sense away from the state. Paper 4 discusses voluntary activities undertaken by claimants as part of its exploration of motivation. Also, Paper 3 uses recognition theory as an analytical lens through which to analyse the extent to which the purportedly individualised and tailored service delivery of UC entails recognition of individual autonomy. In part, this concerns the notion of the recognition of occupational identities and discusses specifically public service-oriented occupations whereby individuals generate their sense of self relationally through labour designed to serve others in their communities as well as the recognition of family commitments and the important roles in social cohesion and reproduction individuals play outside of the labour market.

4: METHODOLOGY

4.1: QUESTION, AIMS, AND OBJECTIVES

The structure of this thesis is based on three research *aims* (desired achievements regarding the contribution to knowledge made by the research related to discovery and theorisation of the subject matter) and a further three research *objectives* (desired achievements related to aspects of the research process and output). The central research question is '*How do Universal Credit claimants experience consensuality in their dealings with JobCentre Plus?*'. This question was developed with a view to the attainment of the broader research aims and objectives and was formulated in such a way so as to provide data upon which they could be satisfied. The aims of the research

which the central question attempts to provide a basis to satisfying are *'to explore how the ethical framing of social citizenship is given praxis in the experiences of citizens*' and '*to discover how and in what ways the lived experience of citizenship does or does not map onto the premises of its ethical legitimation*'. As the thesis comprises four standalone papers which, together, provide an answer to the research question, a variety of secondary research questions are addressed in each paper.

In terms of research objectives, the most general is '*to contribute to the growing literature on lived citizenship by examining social citizenship through the lens of the claimant experience of UC*'. A more specific objective which straddles the methodological and the normative is '*to promote the perspectives of citizens themselves as a basis of theorising and understanding social citizenship*'. A third objective is '*to bridge the gap between the theoretical and empirical literatures in social policy by doing empirical research which operationalises ethical frameworks*'.

4.2: ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

This thesis employs a qualitative methodology based upon a critical realist ontology. Critical realism is a philosophy of social science that offers a critique of, and alternative to, both positivism and constructivism yet also draws from them in its ontological and epistemological orientation. The core criticisms of positivism and constructivism that critical realism makes is that they both rely on the "epistemic fallacy" (Bhaskar 1998) that reduces all of reality to what can be known. Critical realism is ontologically realist in the sense that it posits an external reality that exists independent of human cognition. However, in contrast to *direct,* sometimes called *naïve* realism, it does not then take the position that knowledge in the positivistic sense

is immediately and perfectly knowable (Willig 2012:13). It is in this sense that critical realism does not rely on the epistemic fallacy. Rather, critical realism takes a constructivist epistemological position. It takes the position that the real, external reality of its ontological position acts as a causal force that exists on a spectrum between enabling or constraining agency in the social world as experienced by subjects within it. As a result, knowledge is inherently perspectival, located, and both constructed and mediated at the intersection of cultural, social, and political context and the subject's experience of them (Pickens and Braun 2018:435).

This relationship between an objective reality of macro-scale causal forces shaping human experience and the perspectival, located, and constructed nature of knowledge is explicated in critical realism through a stratified and tripartite ontological model whereby reality is theorised as consisting of three nested domains: the 'Real', the 'Actual' and the 'Empirical' (Bhaskar 2008). These three domains are nested in the sense that each one is a layer of social reality constitutive of those above it and inclusive of those below it (see Table 1 below). The lowest-level domain is the Empirical. This domain consists of events as they are experienced by the human subject. The Empirical is the transitive level of social reality where discourses are given praxis, social meanings are generated, and where actions constrained or enabled by macro-scale structural factors occur. Importantly, however, all of this occurs through the filter of human cognition, subjective experience, and interpretation. The middle-level domain of social reality is the Actual. This domain consists of events which may or not be experienced by individuals. As such, they are not experienced through the filter of subjective experience. Where they are, the Actual consists of the event

independent of cognition rather than through it. In this way, we can see how the Empirical is a subset of the Actual nested within it. The highest-level domain of social reality is the Real. It is at this level that causal structures or forces exist. Again, the nested nature of the model becomes evident when we consider that the Actual domain, that of events, is constitutive of the domain of the Real as it is the structures that exist at that level which produce those events and shape their context. The domain of the Real, therefore, includes causal mechanisms and structures as well as the events caused by them and, in turn, the empirical subjective experiences of those events.

Table 1: The Nested Structure of Critical Realist Ontology (Adapted from Bhaskar 2008:13)

	Domain of Real	**Domain of Actual**	**Domain of Empirical**
Mechanisms	✓		
Events	✓	✓	
Experiences	✓	✓	✓

In the case of this thesis, the mechanisms and forces in the domain of the Real pertain to the social citizenship settlement: the dominant discourses of deservingness, political decisions, and ideals influencing policy design and implementation, the structural factors driving individuals to claim UC and so on. The events in the domain of the Actual are the interactions claimants have with JCP and the experiences in the domain of the Empirical are the lived experiences of the claimants themselves.

4.3: METHODS

This thesis uses the qualitative case study method to presents a theory-practice immanent critique of conditional social citizenship, both of which are core critical realist methods (Ackroyd and Karlsson 2014; Isaksen 2018). Data were gathered from 33 semi-structured interviews analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) for Papers 1 and 2 and framework method thematic analysis (FMTA) for Papers 3 and 4[3]. As fieldwork took place during COVID-19 restrictions, interviews took place over the phone. The phone was set to 'speaker' mode and, where participants had given permission, interviews were recorded using voice note functionality on a laptop. These recordings were used to make transcripts, after which they were deleted. When participants did not give permission to record, detailed interview notes were typed up on an interview protocol template[4]. Data were then analysed using NVivo software.

The nested ontological model of critical realism makes it apparent how interviews were an appropriate method of data collection, and the aforementioned forms of thematic analysis appropriate methods of data analysis, for the subject matter. The experiences discussed in the interviews (the Empirical) are subsets of the phenomenon in the question, social citizenship (the Real). As such, the phenomenon can be theorised on the basis of that empirical information. Furthermore, as critical realism notes the fundamentally constructed and situated nature of knowledge, interpretative analysis centred on the theoretical knowledge of the researcher whereby

[3] Methods of data analysis are more fully explicated in the papers themselves.
[4] See Appendix 5.

data from the domain of the Empirical is considered within the context of theories of the Real was also an appropriate approach.

There are two potential objections one could make to the use of experiential data in this context. One concerns the criticisms made by the likes of Butler and Scott (1992), Scott (1992), and Moya (2000) and the other by Cicourel (1964). The first is that experiential data is *ipso facto* bound up in, and is a product of, the very discourses and systems which social research attempts to investigate. As such, experiential data cannot form the basis of a truth or knowledge claim in itself. For Butler and Scott, the very language we use and the concepts and mental schemata which shape how we understand and relate to experience renders it contaminated by the very systems of ideology that experiential research seeks to understand and/or critique. Relatedly, the second objection sees all experiential data as contaminated by the dialogic nature of knowledge production in experiential research whereby it is never driven entirely by the experience of the research subject but by the interaction of experiential data with researcher interpretation.

Although both of these criticisms are based in fact, they do not invalidate the kind of approach taken here. For one, the idea that all human experience is a mere by-product of dominant ideology ignores both human agency and the possibility of critical thought itself. Moreover, this research does not claim experiences in and of themselves as a source of universal truth claim, merely that theoretically guided interpretations of those experiences can be instructive about a subset of the spectrum of lived experiences of discourse in a situated context. Scott's criticism in particular is levelled more at historical research whereby experiential claims cannot be counted as truth-

claims because of their historical situatedness. However, it is precisely the interaction between subjective experience and the structural forces acting upon the subject that is the focus of this research. This is also why Cicourel's criticism, while correct in acknowledging that purely experiential research is an impossibility (perhaps outside of autoethnography), does not invalidate the approach taken here. Experiential research does not claim that the experience itself is the source of knowledge, but the contextualisation and theoretical situation and interpretation of experience within the wider landscape of the established corpus of empirical research and theory. Critical realism aims to investigate the dynamics between experience and the social forces shaping it with a view to better understanding those forces.

The design of the interview protocol was influenced by the core tenets of ethnographic interviewing, based on the theoretical and methodological influence of institutional ethnography on the research. Institutional ethnographies study administration and implementation within institutions through the practices of workers within them rather than service users' experience of that work. As such, this thesis is not a work of institutional ethnography. Nevertheless, the core theoretical and methodological assumptions of institutional ethnography were formative scholarly influences guiding the choice of subject matter and research design and this is reflected in the design of the interviews. DeVault and McCoy (2006:15) describe institutional ethnography as "the investigation of empirical linkages among local settings of everyday life, organizations, and translocal processes of administration and governance" which constitute "a complex field of coordination and control" and, in the words of Smith (1999:79), "the forms in which power is generated and held in contemporary

societies". Thinking in terms of the critical realist ontology and epistemology of this thesis, we can think of the social citizenship settlement as the complex field of coordination and control forming part of how power is generated and held in contemporary Britain (the Real), experiences of claimants with JCP as the translocal processes of administration and governance through institutions (the Actual), and the lived experience of claimants as the analytical focus of inquiry through which we can understand them (the Empirical).

Reflecting this theoretical and methodological influence, interview questions were designed according to principles of ethnographic interviewing, particularly the notions of descriptive questions and structural questions (Westby et al. 2003). Descriptive questions aim to elicit first-order descriptions of lived events. In this case, such questions asked what occurred when an interviewee was dealing with JCP, trying to establish the 'what' of these experiences. Asking them, for example, to describe the processes they have been through as part of their claim, to recount how their meetings would proceed or, when interviewees spoke in generalities, to ask for examples of what they were talking about. Structural questions are those whereby the participant's feelings about those experiences and their attitudes towards them are sought. In this way, while utilising ethnographic methods was not an option, the interview protocol remained faithful to methodological principles appropriate to the subject matter.

Interviews were conducted via telephone due to pandemic restrictions and, where consent was given, recorded on voice note software before transcription[5]. Each

[5] See Section 4.6.

interview was separated into five main sections[6]. The first section was introductory. To make the participant feel comfortable with both the setting and the researcher, this section comprised two elements. First, the interview topics were relayed to the participant. These were included in the ethics and consent materials sent to participants beforehand but it was important to restate these particulars to make them feel at ease and check that the participant was still happy to proceed. Participants were then asked to introduce themselves and their hobbies and interests. During these sections, points of connection with participants (e.g. having family who live abroad; interests in sports, reading, and video games; the student experience, and growing up in Scotland) were sought to develop rapport.

There are two inter-related methodological considerations important to discuss at this point related to this idea of building rapport through establishing commonality that applies both to the introductory section of the interviews and emphasis of the researcher's own history as a UC claimant in recruitment materials[7]. These concern issues of 'insiderness' and the 'rapport vs neutrality' dichotomy. Insiderness is a highly contested concept in qualitative research. Perspectives are divided on whether it provides researchers with unique insights into the emotional and affective worlds of participants and a specialist understanding of terminology or practices esoteric to the researched population or whether insiderness can skew the researcher's perception and interpretation of data (Taylor 2011). As regards this research, neither of these perspectives were accurate. Only 2 participants described experiences which resembled the researcher's own and while these are detailed, discussed, and

[6] See Appendix 5.
[7] See Appendix 6.

considered throughout the thesis, they were not the most central ones shaping the main conclusions.

Moreover, the 'insider-outsider' dichotomy is a false one (Oakley 1993). Whilst the researcher was socially proximate to participants in having been a UC claimant and in terms of class and embodied vulnerability, the sample reflected a wide range of people with differing needs and circumstances which the researcher did not share. Part of the simplification agenda of UC is the integration of several benefits into one and this naturally produces a heterogeneous participant stock to which no individual could be fully an 'insider'. As such, the researcher's social proximity to participants served not as an epistemological influence but was leveraged through what Folkes (2022) calls "moving beyond 'shopping list' positionality", where positionality is not a mere procedural checklist for researchers to demonstrate reflexivity but a substantive tool to improve research through improving the comfort participants feel during the research encounter and creating an atmosphere of trust that facilitates candour.

Moreover, it is important to consider the 'rapport vs neutrality' dichotomy whereby rapport with participants need not interfere with the neutrality the researcher takes to the views expressed during the interview. As Patton (2002:356) describes it, "(r)apport is a stance vis-a-vis the person being interviewed. Neutrality is a stance vis-a-vis the content of what that person says". This is related to the point about how insiderness might skew the perception and interpretation of data but applies more directly to the fact that participants must be able to express themselves with candour without it affecting the researcher's respect for, or treatment of, them. This was taken very seriously during the research process and was especially important given that

participants often expressed views on social and political issues that varied markedly, sometimes antithetically, from the researcher's. Despite this, interviews ended on a friendly note and usually segued into informal conversation after the interview concluded. As such, the building of rapport served to enhance the quality of the research, rather than undermine it.

After this initial introductory section, the interview moved onto questions concerning the initial process of claiming. This involved a variety of different descriptive questions, some of which were experiential[8] and asked about how participants made their claim, what sources of information they used, what information was provided by JCP, and whether the particulars of the process were clear to them. This section also included some knowledge questions such as whether participants understood the conditionality group they were placed into, or the five reasons they might incur sanction. This was framed in terms of whether JCP had supplied this information to ensure that claimants who did not know this information did not feel as though they were under investigation. This section also included opinion-based questions which asked if participants felt the procedures of UC were easy to interact with and how they evaluated certain aspects of the process.

The next section focused on understanding participants' work histories and aspirations and whether JCP supported them in utilising their skills and aspirations during the process of their claim. These questions were also largely descriptive and experiential. They asked what jobs participants had worked in the past, what they enjoyed about them, what kinds of jobs they hoped to get while claiming UC, the

[8] For a description of question types, see Patton (2002:348-351).

reasons they wanted those jobs, and what their meetings with their WCs were like. This last type of question included questions designed to understand the procedures of the meetings in terms of whether they were supported to find the kind of jobs they desired but also included more structural and value/opinion-oriented questions about why they felt their aspirations and desires were valued and listened to.

The penultimate section focused on issues of conditionality. Descriptive experiential questions in this section focused on participants' motivations for seeking work, whether or not sanctions were discussed regularly in participants' meetings with their WC, whether or not they had been sanctioned, and what the particulars were surrounding the sanction if they had. More value/opinion-based questions concerned asking participants to evaluate their relationship with their WC and how this relationship affects their motivation and job search activities.

The concluding section was open-ended, giving participants the space to air their general thoughts and feelings concerning UC and conditionality, and asking whether there was anything else not covered in the interview that they felt would be important for a researcher to know. This served the dual purpose of ensuring that participants did not leave the interview feeling as though they were denied opportunity to express something of importance to them and allowing for potential discovery of interesting and relevant themes which may not have been considered during formulation of the interview protocol. After interviews stopped, informal conversation regularly ensued and these occasions were used to ensure that participants ended the encounter feeling positively about the experience.

4.4: INTERVIEWS WITHOUT OBSERVATIONAL DATA

Conducting fieldwork during the pandemic precluded the possibility of conducting observations of claimants and their interactions with JCP staff. As such, whether or not this compromised the empirical validity of findings and concomitant conclusions in a meaningful way had to be considered. Although it is the case that 'muddling through' in the face of practical constraints is sometimes the nature of qualitative research and the pandemic was a unique confounding and exogenous contingency on the research process, this does not mean that the epistemic standards which it must meet can be compromised. As will be argued below, there are defensible reasons why the research was not compromised by the lack of observational data and, had the opportunity to collect such data existed, it would not have been appropriate for reasons both epistemological and normative, in any case.

4.4.1: EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research process was considered in light of the arguments presented by Jerolmack and Khan (2014), who consider the relative methodological implications of studies using only interview and survey methods against those which combine them with observational methods. They posit that there are three methods through which social scientists can investigate human behaviour and society: by observing it in process, through analysis of written or other artefactual records, or by asking questions and listening to responses. Echoing Deutscher et al. (1992), they note the irony that sociologists often prefer verbal methods such as interviewing when it is behaviour with which they are most often interested. This assumes that the attitudes and sentiments expressed by interviewees are manifestations of their tendencies to act. However, this

stands in contradistinction to psychological studies of attitude-behaviour consistency (ABC) which have found that people's verbal responses at one point in time often differ from their observed behaviour at another.

This would appear *prima facie* to suggest that a lack of observations would compromise the epistemic value of my conclusions. However there are two reasons why this is not the case. For one, the authors note that there are circumstances where gathering observational data is an impossibility and that interviews are appropriate in such circumstances. This clearly applies in this case with regards the pandemic. Moreover, one must also consider the present institutional difficulties researchers face in terms of accessing JCP offices and getting permissions to do observations of meetings between WCs and claimants (Bennett and Jones 2022:52-54; Redman and Fletcher 2021:6-7). However, these are practical rather than epistemological arguments.

An epistemological argument is that interviews without observations are appropriate for discerning individuals' "emotional landscape of desire, morality, and expectations'' (Pugh 2013:50, quoted in Jerolmack and Khan 2014:180). As was stated in the review of lived citizenship literature and its analytical dimensions, the granting of consent is considered by proponents of informed consent standards of contract to be an *action*, an enacted verb whereby an individual consents to something. This is why informed consent theories are explicitly focused on procedural respect for autonomous decision-making predicated on the assumption of liberal subjectivity. Consent is conceived of as a feature of decisions, not persons. This may appear to lend credence to the idea that observations, therefore, were required with the procedural respect for

autonomous decision-making forming the social action of interest. This context, however, is more appropriately conceived of in terms of the critique of classical contract theory offered by relational contract theorists who posit that contracts rarely govern one-off transactions with clearly defined terms of exchange but rather ongoing relationships between parties (Gordon 1985; Macneil 1985; Palay 1985). As this is the case with claimant experiences of contractual welfare governance, consent as a verb and focus on procedural respect for autonomous decision-making is transposed to consensuality as an *affective* dimension of that temporally non-unique experience. As such, consensuality is an adjective describing an affective dimension of citizenship which, whilst emergent from a performed dimension, is fundamentally theorised from subjective experience and so does not require third party observations to record data pertaining to it.

This decision was critical to the realisation of the theoretical framework and the critical realist ontological and epistemological positions that informed the formulation of topic, questions, and research design. Lived experience as an epistemological basis through which to understand social citizenship is predicated on an ontology whereby the "micro world of the meaningful, emotional actions of individuals" in everyday life are both constitutive of and shaped by the "the macro world of structures, discourses, fields and institutions". In this way, "'encounters and patterned interaction among individuals" at the micro-level are particularistic manifestations of "groups, organizations, institutions and cultural production" that "through mechanisms of social control, constitute both opportunities and constraints on individual behaviour and interactions" (Inglis 2010:509-513). Therefore, we can "access the social through

the individual" (Thomson 2009:20) or access the Real though the Empirical (Pawson and Tilley 1997; Stutchbury 2021). Undertaking observations of these meetings would only have created a barrier between me and this world of "meaningful, emotional actions" unless the observations were used purely as a means of guiding interview protocol. In and of themselves, they would not have revealed anything about consensuality as an affective feature of claimants' experiences. We can use the Empirical to theorise the Real as it is nested within it, therefore interview data is appropriate. However, the use of lived experience as the epistemological basis of that theorisation means that observational data would make the Empirical phenomenon not the lived experience of the participants, but the researcher's third-party Empirical experience. As such, even had it been possible to conduct observations, they would have been unhelpful.

4.4.2: NORMATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Beyond methodological considerations, there were also normative reasons why observations would have been an inappropriate method. These relate to the research objectives of '*contributing to the growing literature on lived citizenship by examining social citizenship through the lens of claimants' experiences claiming UC'* and *'promoting the perspectives of citizens themselves as a basis of theorising and understanding social citizenship'.* This thesis is a contribution to the scholarship on social citizenship that seeks to move its analysis beyond citizenship as status to citizenship as subjectively experienced social practice. A vital component of that scholarship has been that we ought not to to consider social citizenship merely in the Marshallian terms of rights and resources and the respective realisation of, and access

to, them but through the lens of participatory rights in the form of institutional respect, recognition, and voice (Fraser 1995, 2003; Lister 2001, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2013; Williams 2000; Yeatman 2009; Young 1997).

This theoretical and normative concern with participation and voice has, naturally, influenced the empirical social policy literature. A small but growing literature on welfare reform has sought to give 'voice' to individuals who often find that their experiences go unnoticed, their voices unheard, and their general perspective and views ignored. This literature has not only been concerned with participation and voice, but also refuting dominant characterisations of benefit claimants in popular discourse and dispelling stigmatising myths about their behaviour and character (Garthwaite 2014, 2016; Patrick 2014, 2017, Wright 2016). In articulating the research objectives, using the term 'voice' was pointedly avoided. This is because the term is often used in a way which, while well-intentioned, does not fully explicate the concept and its implications, normative or methodological.

The reluctance to speak of 'voice' in this research derives in part from concern about the presentation of the researcher as passive and has both methodological and normative dimensions. Academic ventriloquy describes when a researcher uses the frame of giving voice to research participants as a form of empirical truth claim. In effect, the researcher uses the data to position themselves as impartial and objective, that the data they present is an objective reflection of the social world stemming from the fact that the evidence presented comes straight from source, bypassing the contaminating influence of researcher interpretative subjectivity (Fine 2002:212-215). Such an approach assumes "a naïve realist view of qualitative research, where the

researcher can simply ‘give voice’ to their participants” (Braun and Clarke 2006:80) and, as will be made explicit in the methods section of the papers themselves, the approach to thematic analysis taken here is one that heavily emphasises researcher subjectivity and interpretative skill.

In terms of the approaches to thematic analysis employed here, we can think in terms of the difference between semantic and latent modes of analysis and how themes are developed as analytic outputs of the research. In semantic analysis, themes are identified with reference purely to the data themselves. They are entirely surface-level readings of the text with reference to terminology explicitly used by participants with no input from the researcher in terms of theorising the higher order meaning underlying or implicit in the data. Of course, the semantic-latent dichotomy is a false one (Braun and Clarke 2019:4). Often, the initial phases of coding and data familiarisation will involve developing descriptive codes that are largely first-order descriptions of data content before latent analytic codes are then developed. Nor are semantic and latent coding confined to different stages of data analysis. Sometimes, analytic codes will be semantic and tightly connected to the actual and phrases used by participants (for example, the ‘number’ analogy that is discussed in the empirical material of Paper 3 or the penal and totalitarian metaphors in the empirical material of Paper 4). Nevertheless, the mode of data analysis employed here in terms of the main thematic analytical outputs was latent and so involved the interpretation, theoretical situation, and understanding of the data. Such analysis inevitably entailed “carving out unacknowledged pieces of narrative evidence that we select, edit, and deploy to border our arguments” (Fine 2002:218, quoted in Braun and Clarke 2006:80).

This is related to issues of positionality. Throughout the research process, it was considered what it would mean to claim that a research objective is to 'give voice' to claimants and/or that this research does so, especially in light of the latent approach taken to analysis. As Alcoff (2009:119) considers:

> "*As social theorists, we are authorized by virtue of our academic positions to develop theories that express and encompass the ideas, needs, and goals of others. However, we must begin to ask ourselves whether this is ever a legitimate authority, and if so, what are the criteria for legitimacy? In particular, is it ever valid to speak for others who are unlike I or who are less privileged than I?"*

In this case, there are two points to make in response to this. One is that the researcher was socially proximal to the participants. Despite gaining a modicum of social privilege in terms of academic attainment, the researcher is a former UC claimant with an embodied vulnerability who grew up in a working-class household on a post-war council estate in the Scottish Central Belt with a disabled single mother who struggled to gain recognition of her condition in a way that allowed her to manage her condition and her work and care responsibilities. The researcher meets the sampling and selection criteria of the research and has experience of the kind of structural and embodied issues that participants described in their interviews. This social proximity aided the recruitment process as adverts stated that the researcher is a former UC claimant who is interested in learning from other claimants, current and former, about their experiences. It also means that researcher and participant were less 'Other' to each other in the discussions in a way that facilitated candour and openness during the interviews themselves (Folkes 2022).

Yet, it would be wrong to present the research as though it were speaking for other people, regardless of the social proximity of researcher and participants. This is

because there is never unanimity across a sample and this research did not use a participatory, collaborative, or co-produced research design where findings were reached through consensus rather than purely through researcher interpretation. This inquiry was theory-led and data interpreted through specialist knowledge of the corpus of existing theoretical and empirical scholarship across fields relevant to the subject matter.

However, that does not mean the researcher does not share the normative commitment to listening to voices that may often go unheard, to using their experiences as the epistemological basis from which conclusions and theories about social citizenship are drawn, or the use of research as a means of disseminating their testimony. As such, despite reservations about the notion of giving 'voice' as an academic project, the researcher wanted to base all theorisations from data comprising the words of the citizens themselves and not a third-party perspective on them. Therefore, had observations been possible, they would have been inappropriate for this reason, also.

4.5: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION CRITERIA[9]

The 33 interviews were conducted in two phases: 20 between January-March 2021 and 12 between February-March 2022. Originally, recruitment was indented to take place in-person at a few JCP offices chosen for sampling based on local characteristics but due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the closing of JCP offices, recruitment had to move online. Participants were recruited through adverts placed on social media forums for

[9] Descriptions of the sample are provided in the papers themselves.

benefit claimants, as well as on the websites of advice centres and housing associations. A £10 gift voucher was offered as recompense for participants' time.

As recruitment was originally planned to take place in-person at JCP offices, the original sample was assumed to be restricted to current claimants. However, with recruitment moving online, former claimants as well as claimants no longer subject to conditionality were able to be recruited. This allowed sampling to follow something closer to a maximum variation sampling logic (Patton 2002:109-110) with claimants from across the nations and regions, claimants both current and former, and claimants who had switched between different forms of benefit. Due to the constraints faced in recruiting participants, selection criteria were kept broad with exclusion criteria applying only to those who had never had to sign a CC to keep the focus on the contractual element of social citizenship. Respondents to the recruitment material but who did not complete an interview included seven who never replied after being sent the consent materials, one who realised she fell outside of the selection criteria upon reading the information materials, two who never passed my selection criteria, and two who gave consent after receiving the materials but then never picked up when called at the arranged time or responded when contacted to arrange another.

4.6: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research was given approval by the Departmental Research Ethics Committee[10]. As fieldwork had to be conducted remotely due to the pandemic, an amended ethical approval for gaining and demonstrating consent to participate had to be sought. Resultingly, further approval was granted to use correspondence between researcher

[10] See Appendix 1

and participants as evidence of their consent to participate in the interview and to have an audio recording of the interview made until such time as a transcript could be made, after which the recording was deleted[11]. Two participants stated a wish to not be audio recorded and, in these instances, their responses were typed out on a template of the interview protocol during interview. One of these interviewees declined to speak over a smartphone and, in this instance, the call was conducted via a 'dumb' phone in the researcher's possession. On another two occasions, the participant did not explicitly affirm or refuse consent to being recorded so the protocol template method was used for these interviews, also.

Given that the research topic concerns consent and ethics, ethical issues of consent were a paramount concern during the research process. Participants were provided with the research's ethical approval letter, a consent form[12] and an information sheet detailing the objectives of the research, the rationale for their inclusion, as well as information about potential benefits, risks, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity[13]. The approach taken to consent here treated it not as a discrete matter of procedure, but as an ongoing dialogical process between researcher and participant (Ramcharan and Cutliffe 2002), much akin to the relational contract approach discussed in Paper 2. This involved going over the particulars of the study at the beginning of each interview and making sure the participant wished to proceed. As the questions were theoretically guided and divided into sections, each section was

[11] See Appendix 2
[12] See Appendix 4.
[13] See Appendix 3.

introduced individually and the participant's comfort and happiness to proceed re-checked.

This decision was also guided partly by the seriousness with which I regard the ethic of care (Holland et al. 2014) in the research encounter and concern that the disembodied setting had rendered the researcher unable to check on participants' comfort level and well-being as would be possible in a face-to-face encounter where non-verbal cues could be monitored. There were two occasions where participants could be described as perceptibly agitated. One participant who suffers from social anxiety admitted during informal conversation post-interview to feeling anxious when the interview began but that he quickly came to feel comfortable during the introductory questions and had enjoyed the experience. Another participant expressed frustration at his experience of claiming UC by raising his voice and swearing before apologising. In this circumstance, humour was used to defuse any potential tension though the assurance that, as a working-class Scot, the researcher was used to hearing and, indeed, saying much worse and that the participant should express himself freely. At this point, mutual laughter emerged and the interview proceeded.

Both of these are examples of where the researcher was guided by the principle of reciprocity in the research encounter (Oakley 1993) and of using rapport to ensure a comfortable and candid research setting, as detailed earlier. This aim for reciprocity was furthered through the decision to give participants a £10 gift voucher for participating. Although there is some debate as to the ethicality of paying research participants (Grady 2019), it was considered a necessity in this context. The critical

labour market policy literature notes the pressures on people's time, whether that be the requirement of UC to job search for 35 hours a week (Fletcher and Wright 2018) or the reconciliation with waged employment with other responsibilities (Threlfall 2000). As such, it would have been inappropriate and not in keeping with the normative orientation of the research to not show respect for participants' time through a form of renumeration. Not as payment, but as a sign of gratitude and respect. The value of £10 was chosen as the interviews were designed to take between thirty to sixty minutes and this value was roughly equivalent to that of the hourly national minimum wage (at time of writing, £10.42 for people over 23). Furthermore, the value would be insufficiently high to distort the incentive structure of participation.

The decision having been made to offer a £10 gift voucher, other ethical issues were considered. The university's Best Practice Guidance (BPG) states that, generally, researchers should refrain from stating the value of any reimbursement in recruitment materials. However, the BPG are not mandatory, and state that researchers ought to consider their appropriateness to their own research. In this case, it was considered justified to state the value due to concern that omitting the value may have caused potential participants to expect a higher sum and become consternated upon discovering the real value. This would have then raised further ethical problems. It was decided that stating the modest and proportional value of the voucher beforehand would both create appropriate expectations and minimise the chances of participants agreeing to participate primarily for the recompense.

As it transpired, this appeared to be a prudent decision. A handful of participants tried to refuse the voucher after the interview as their intention was to provide help to a

student who needed it. Some had been students themselves so empathised with the practical difficulties of recruitment. Others simply felt positively that a doctoral student wished to write about issues of personal import to them and was actually interested in their perspective. Of course, acceptance was insisted upon and all participants received a voucher. Even amongst those who did not attempt to refuse, many stated that they were 'happy to help'. Furthermore, there was often a delay between the interview and provision of the voucher as the website through which they were sourced limits the number purchasable in any week. As such, participants were often that it could be several weeks until they received their voucher. This was never a problem.

Regarding the statement of renumeration value in recruitment materials, the BPG were followed. The BPR state that "advertisements must not emphasise the value of the payment (for example, through the use of formatting)" or take prominence over other relevant information "such as what participants are being asked to do" (Central University Research Ethics Committee 2020)[14].

One area which did present ethical challenges surrounded the maintenance of anonymity in the writing up process. Elements of this were straightforward. Identifying data which participants may have mentioned during interview such as their date of birth; names of individuals (either the participants' or anyone else); specific organisations, advice centres, or online groups they may have attended or be affiliated with; or specific JCP offices were all removed from the transcripts. As recordings were deleted after transcription, the only materials which could directly identify

[14] See Appendix 6.

participants were their consent materials, which were stored on an encrypted hard-drive accessible only to the researcher.

The challenge lay in reconciling the normative values guiding the research with good pseudonymisation practice in the presentation of empirical evidence. This research was guided by the normative principles of valorising the perspective of everyday citizens, of giving their perspectives and views respect and using them as the basis upon which we ought to evaluate the state of social citizenship. As such, giving a sense of the real human beings behind the testimony and avoiding presentation of evidence as though participants' testimony were numbers in a table was considered imperative. Three presentational means were employed to achieve this goal: liberal use of quotations; the use of longer quotations, where appropriate; and, where crystallising examples binding together analytic themes were to be found, the use of more developed narratives about that individual's case.

The initial approach to pseudonymisation was to use numeric codes for the interviews. This was an acceptable approach within a single paper but, given the widespread use of (sometimes long) quotations and of mini-narratives about participants, over four papers from a base of 33 interviews, it was felt that this might convey too much information about individual participants as:

> "*Neither the use of subject pseudonyms nor anonymity alone is any guarantee of confidentiality. A particular configuration of attributes can, like a fingerprint, frequently identify its owner beyond reasonable doubt. So social researchers need to remove the opportunities for others to infer identities from their data*" (Social Research Association 2003:39).

To avoid this, two actions were taken. First, pseudonyms were used and different pseudonyms were used across different papers. Next to each quotation was included

a pseudonym and one piece of information about the participant to give the reader a sense of the individual. Often, this would be their geographical region, especially for regions like London or Scotland which were prominent in the sample. However, it was also sometimes their age, marital status, hobby or interest, or other fact about the person (but never more than one). This information is not intended to signify analytically relevant categories (where such categories are analytically relevant, they are discussed as such in the main body of the discussion sections of each paper) but are rather an attempt to humanise the evidence and the individuals who provided it whilst maintaining good pseudonymisation practice. Secondly, with regard to the mini-narratives, striking the balance between humanising data and ensuring confidentiality was a recursive process in the search to find a way of presenting data that gave a sense of the human person behind the data in such a way that they could not be identified from it that occurred over different drafts until the right balance was found.

5: STRUCTURE OF THESIS

This thesis is organised into four standalone research papers, each of which explores issues pertinent to a different dimension of consensuality. Due to the requirement of the papers to be standalone, they do not explicitly discuss their findings with reference to the aims, objectives, and main research question detailed here. Rather, they make individual contributions to social policy sub-literatures and their findings are then brought together and discussed with reference to the aims, objectives, and main research question in the final conclusion paper.

The four dimensions of consensuality were chosen with reference to two sources. One was the ethics literature pertaining to informed consent. In particular, the work of Ruth

Faden, Tom Beauchamp, and James Childress, whose works are among the most influential standard texts in the field (Ahlin 2017:8; Delany 2007; Ebbesen et al. 2015). Faden and Beauchamp's *A History and Theory of Informed Consent* (1986) outlines the historical development of the informed consent standard in ethics and law and develops a theory of conditions for informed consent based on the historical debates which informed its conceptual development. These include that the consenting subject *understands* that to which they are consenting, that they are consenting *intentionally* (this is posited as an alternative to an authenticity condition but this thesis does look at authenticity, for reasons which will be explained in due course) and *without coercive or controlling pressure*. Beauchamp and Childress's *Principle of Biomedical Ethics* (2013) further introduced the notion that informed consent must be given *voluntarily*. The second source is from a Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) Occasional Paper which advanced a set of principles by which CCs in UC ought to be designed and implemented (SSAC 2019:16) which map onto the dimensions of informed consent described above. These principles include that CCs are *clear* and that claimants be *informed* (commensurate with *understanding*), that they be *tailored* and *accepted* (commensurate with *authenticity*).

Of course, as ideas overlap and the papers are based around the same interview data, elements of some dimensions of consensuality cross over papers to an extent. For example, Paper 1 is the main paper dealing with the dimension of voluntariness but the findings of Paper 4 also spoke to issues of voluntariness. Similarly, Paper 2 is the main paper dealing with the dimension of understanding, but the findings of paper 1 have ramifications for this dimension, also.

5.1: VOLUNTARINESS

Voluntariness is considered paradigmatically to be a necessary precondition of the granting of informed consent based on the Kantian ideal of humans as a site of subjective experience and moral reflexivity, normativity, and agency. Whilst not an uncontested concept, the dominant school of thought is that derived from the work of Beauchamp, Childress, and Faden (Beauchamp and Childress 2013; Faden and Beauchamp 1986) which sees an action as voluntary if "he or she wills the action without being under the control of another person or condition" (Beauchamp and Childress 2013:138). This definition is generally held to be broad and to entail not just interpersonal influences inhibiting the exercise of voluntary agency, but to any externally controlling factor (*cf.* Appelbaum et al. 2009; Nelson et al. 2011).

Critics of the idea of informed consent tend to take aim at the liberal construction of the subject that lies at the heart of its assumptions (Corrigan 2003; Ells 2003). It assumes the subject is rational, reflexive, and capable of exercising utility-maximising agency based on their autonomous desires. This is combined with a methodological individualism which constructs the subject as asocial and disembodied, acting as a discrete entity completely divorced from any structural, social, or embodied factors which may affect their rational, reflexive, autonomous, utility-maximising decision-making power. Such critics contend that the notion of voluntariness must be considered with reference to structural and relational conditions and lived experiences, especially in the case of traditionally subaltern or marginalised groups (Fisher 2013), and to embodied sources of vulnerability (Hewer 2019; Mackenzie and Stoljar 2000). This liberal epistemology of the subject is the same as that of neo-

classical economics, the *Homo Economicus*, that underscores the shift to behavioural conditionality as exemplified in UC.

Paper 1, *Dynamics of Subjectivity, Agency, and Forms of Capital in the Lived Experience of Vulnerable Universal Credit Claimants*, explores these themes of voluntariness, agency, the subject, and vulnerability. In the British welfare state, behavioural conditionality and the assumption of liberal subjectivity has gradually been applied to more groups over time and now includes individuals who would traditionally have been considered to be vulnerable. This paper considers how processes of liberal subjectivation have been experienced by individuals in traditionally vulnerable categories who have had to claim UC. Furthermore, as the importance of voluntariness centres on the notion that individuals are sites of subjective moral agency, it also explores the forms of agency these people exercise. It asks the two research questions; '*What are the experiences of vulnerable claimants with claiming UC*?' and '*What forms of agency do vulnerable UC claimants exhibit related to their claim*?'.

The paper presents evidence that, while vulnerable claimants with high levels of administrative capital can successfully interact with UC, others can experience significant administrative burden when subject to policies which assume liberal subjectivity in the form of psychological and compliance costs. The paper also demonstrates how claimants can exercise reflexive agency, albeit in constrained ways and most often in attempts to mitigate the administrative burdens both they and others experience. These findings are used in the conclusion to call into question liberal

assumptions about the autonomy of claimants and the concomitant substantiveness of claims that their relations with JCP can be described as consensual.

5.2: UNDERSTANDING

A function of the construction of the consenting subject as rational and capable of making autonomous decisions is that theories of informed consent emphasise the centrality of full disclosure of all relevant information which may affect the decision to give consent. In this vein, the SSAC (2019:16-20) notes the importance of an 'understanding' condition in three of its principles for an effective CC. Firstly, in that it ought to be "easily accessible", it "should be clear about what actions are required, which are voluntary and mandatory, and when the actions need to be completed, and that "claimants should have the right information to be able to make decisions, which includes knowing the implications of non-compliance". One of the main impetuses for the introduction of UC was the desire to make the benefit system simpler, both for administrators and for claimants (Summers and Young 2020). In terms of simplifying the process of claimants, especial importance was placed on simplifying incentive structures, improving take-up through simpler assessment procedures, and clearer explication of the expectations and conditions placed upon claimants through jargon-free communication (DWP 2010).

While issues of this type are dealt with as part of the analysis of Paper 1, which discusses the notion of administrative capital and the capacity of individuals to find, access, and use information within bureaucratic systems **(**Bisgaard 2020; Döring 2021; Döring and Madsen 2022; Nisar 2018), they are mainly taken up in Paper 2, *Contactualism and Managerial Reforms in British Labour Market Policy: Ramifications*

for the Social Trust of Service Users. Informed consent theorists note that consenting subjects in medicine and academic research almost never possess deep, substantive knowledge of the procedures they are participating in and so the standard of disclosure and understanding is limited to sufficient knowledge of procedure and risk (Faden and Beauchamp 1986:305-330). However, this cannot be said of the citizenship exchange as expressed through the CC whereby the individuals entering into this agreement are citizens with the right not just to hold opinions but the prerogative to express them at the ballot box and in the civic space. Freedland et al. (2007) state that welfare contracts serve not just a "declaratory educational" function whereby claimants can remain informed about their obligations and associated conditionality but also as a means of making clear the reciprocal nature of the relationship. As such, consensuality is not just determined in this context by an understanding of which activities on what timescale a claimant must demonstrate and the penalties incurred for non-compliance, but their understanding of the broader and inherently political nature of the relationship.

To this end, paper 2 presents an analysis of claimant experiences through the analytical lens of trust in the institutions of the welfare state. It asks the research question '*How do UC claimants discuss their trust or distrust in the UC programme?*'. It presents evidence that claimants express intentional distrust in welfare state institutions as they perceive JCP agency goals to be at variance with, and privileged over, their own. This distrust is also framed in the conclusion as an impediment to claimant experiences claiming UC as being consensual.

5.3: AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is a conceptual ideal associated primarily with existentialist philosophy (Kernis and Goldman 2006:288-293) concerning the ability of individuals to act in accordance with their subjectively felt identity (Harter 2002). Some informed consent theorists argue for an 'authenticity condition': that an action needs to reflect the consenting party's truly held desires, beliefs, values, or goals in order to be truly consensual, whilst others believe the standard is context-dependent (Faden and Beauchamp 1986:262-273) or insufficiently theorised (Ahlin 2018). Advocates, however, make two arguments why an authenticity condition is required. One is that, where normativity is involved in any decision-making or strategising process, it is imperative that the normativity guiding those decisions ought, to some extent, be that of the consenting party with their goals, values, and desires reflected in the agreement (Berghmans 2011). The second concerns the idea of competence and intersubjective disagreement (White 2018). The argument here is that authenticity is a necessary condition of informed consent where the consenting party is competent to provide input into the deliberative processes of agreement as it is the only way to safeguard autonomy in cases where intersubjective disagreement exists. I contend that these arguments in favour of the authenticity condition apply to claimant-WC relationships whereby job search strategies and CCs detailing mandatory job search activities are developed and enforced. The SSAC's (2019:16) principles for the CC include that "(t)he requirements in a claimant commitment should be tailored to the needs of each claimant", that claimants "should feel ownership of their actions and outcomes" and that "a clear challenge process [should be] available to claimants who do not agree on the content of their commitment". Furthermore, the DWP explicitly state that the role

of the WC is “someone who listens, and can help a claimant think through their own work goals and aspirations” (DWP 2014:8).

Whilst authenticity has come to be applied as a theoretical and analytical framework in the social sciences (Barret-Lennard 1998; Goldman and Kernis 2002; Kernis 2003; Rodgers 1961; Wood et al. 2008), it has not been directly applied in social policy literature. However, there is a social policy literature which discusses the politics of recognition (Fraser 1995, 2003; Lister 2001, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2013; Williams 2000; Yeatman 2009; Young 1997). Recognition is often discussed as a means to facilitate authenticity (Siep 2010; Taylor 1994). Paper 3, ‘*The New Golden Rule? Universal Credit, Recognition, and the Self as Welfare Subject’* investigates the authenticity condition using a recognition framework which transposes Honneth’s (1996, 2003) tripartite conception of recognition as *esteem*, *love*, and *respect* into *recognition of occupational identities and skills*, *respect for individual circumstances*, and *rights*.

This paper frames the reciprocity of the communitarian ‘New Golden Rule’ (Etzioni 1997) as an exchange of performed for recognised subjectivity: where claimants are expected to perform a construction of the ‘active welfare subject’ (Wright 2016) as the obligatory precondition of receiving their social right to individualised supports which recognise the self as the subject of welfare (Yeatman 2009). It asks the research questions ‘*What needs and goals do UC claimants express concerning their job search activities?*’ and ‘*Do UC claimants feel that their needs, wants, and circumstances are adequately accounted for in meetings with their WCs?*’.

This paper presents evidence that, while claimants do perform appropriate welfare subjectivity by demonstrating the active will to work and reflexivity about their

situations, the 'work-first' nature of UC often undermines this. This can result in the occupational identities and skills which claimants have accrued in their working lives, as well as their individual situational circumstances related to their stage of life and familial circumstances, going unrecognised. These findings are also discussed in the conclusion as impediments to the realisation of consensuality in the experience of UC claimants.

5.4: NON-COERCION

Perhaps the least contested facet of informed consent is that it involves an absence of controlling/coercive pressure. To this end, Paper 4, *The Limits of Governmentality: Claimant Experiences of Self-Determination and Coercion in Jobcentre Plus*, looks at the controversy surrounding the expansion of behavioural conditionality and examines the concern that it involves the use of coercive practices as a means of social control. It reviews the critical literature on conditionality and coercion in the British welfare state and pays particular attention to governmentality-style analyses. It presents the argument that such analyses of the British welfare state often focus on interpreting the *telos* of policy design and so do not take full advantage of what was arguably Foucault's primary theoretical and methodological contribution: to place individuals at the centre of analyses of power and how it is exercised. The tendency towards macro-level analysis in this literature means it is unable to fully capture the dynamics of coercion in policy delivery, which is where the interesting power dynamics actually occur in this context. To this end, the paper also reviews the street-level bureaucracy literature and, whilst noting its value, notes that the focus on caseworker practices overlooks that coercion occurs within the individual subject. Coercion occurs when a subject's

behaviours or motivations are changed in response to outside coercive pressures and so analysis of coercion in the welfare state must consider the motivations and behaviours of claimants and how they interact with those pressures. This paper seeks to redress this gap in the literature using Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which has informed but never been fully utilised in social policy analysis (Fledderus and Honigh 2016; Grant 2012; Wright and Patrick 2019). It asks the questions '*What motivations do UC claimants have for seeking work*?' and '*How are claimants' existing motivations supported or amended through interaction with their WC?*'.

This paper presents evidence that claimants display not merely autonomous motivations but, generally, the most autonomous forms of motivation to find work. These include for stimulation, development, and the fulfilment of familial roles. Nevertheless, they experience multiple different forms of coercive pressure. One of which, institutional stigma, appears to be a source of negative affect but an inefficacious means of coercion as it produces no discernible changes in motivation or behaviour. However, the wider social stigma in which institutional stigma is nested is an enabling condition for policies which employ financial penury and the threat of benefit removal as technologies of coercion, which are effective means of coercion as they produce both behavioural and motivational change in claimants. The conclusion chapter will also discuss these findings so as to question the consensuality of claimant experiences.

5.5: CONCLUSIONS

These findings are synthesised in the conclusion to provide a theory-practice immanent critique of conditional social citizenship in contemporary Britain with

reference to both the main research question and the broader research aims of the thesis.

In terms of the main research question, '*How do Universal Credit claimants experience consensuality in their dealings with JobCentre Plus?*', the lack of affective consensuality in the lived experience of UC claimants interviewed here is argued as undermining the procedural and substantive ethicality of the behavioural conditions placed on claimants. Without consensuality as the touchstone of how social citizenship is experienced in practice, neither the liberal ethic nor the communitarian morality underpinning the legitimation of conditional social citizenship are realised. It both fails to give praxis to the liberal ethic of contractual consent and, in so doing, fails to confer legitimate duty onto claimants.

The conclusion will further present the argument that, insofar as consent is a reified element of social citizenship, it is reified in ways wholly at variance with the discursive legitimation offered by successive governments. This is framed in terms of the key analytical dimensions of lived citizenship: the spatial, intersubjective, and performed. Invoking the arguments of Freedland and King (2005), Nilssen (2014), and Sage (2012b), it is argued first that, in spatial terms, while consent is claimed at the microdemocratic level of service delivery, it is, in practice, sought and generated at the macrodemocratic level. As such, in intersubjective terms, consent is a feature of the relationships between government and electorate and between in-work taxpayers and benefit claimants rather than between claimants and state institutions, as is purported. Consequently, in performative terms, it is enacted at the ballot box rather than inside JCP.

In terms of the broader research aims of '*exploring how the ethical framing of social citizenship is given praxis in the experiences of citizens*' and '*to discover how and in what ways the lived experience of citizenship does or does not map onto the premises of its ethical legitimation*', arguments which highlight how the experiences detailed in the evidence are incompatible with a communitarian vision of social citizenship are also offered. These arguments suggest that interviewees held views and lived lives which can defensibly be characterised as communitarian, which were actively inhibited rather than supported by claiming UC. Firstly, I will present the argument that the 'work-first' nature of UC can conflict with the emphasis on prosocial forms of work advocated by communitarians. Secondly, I will present the argument that the critical opinions expressed by some interviewees about outsourcing welfare services echo communitarian criticisms of such practices. Thirdly, I will present the argument that in their criticisms of UC, interviewees expressed broad support for services built on relational principles which reflect the ideals of communitarianism and that their negative experiences were related to features of UC more in line with instrumentalist ideas of liberalism. Finally, it is suggested that the only evidence of UC actively promoting forms of citizenship in line with communitarian ideals discernible from the testimony of interviewees was that it promoted the utilisation of social capital. More besides, it inspired some interviewees to become producers of social capital themselves by volunteering to help other UC claimants. However, these were both defensive reactions to problems experienced while claiming, rather than positive developments inculcated by UC.

Findings pertaining to both the research questions and the research aims are then brought together to offer final conclusions. This section begins by considering the title of the thesis, and how active labour market policy (ALMP) was purported to realise both liberal and communitarian notions of active citizenship. In the liberal sense of the term, ALMP was purported to realise 'active' citizenship through the ethic of contractual consent which requires active claimant engagement and participation in the procedures, and therefore content, of social policy. In the communitarian sense of the term, ALMP was purported to realise 'active' citizenship in that communitarian citizenship involves active enactment of duty. However, realisation of both conceptualisations of 'active' citizenship were undermined by the lack of affective consensuality in the lived experience of claimants.

This provides the platform to demonstrate that conditionality is not inextricable from communitarian notions of citizenship and a moralising labour market policy. Instead, recognising social contributions beyond the realm of waged labour and amore demand-side labour market policy which creates and/or inserts claimants into work in line with their skills, goals, and values can more fully enact a social citizenship based around principles of duty than can a conditional one. Furthermore, the security provided by a basic level of inalienable social rights provides the basis from which service delivery can more fully realise procedural principles of consent.

PAPER 1: *DYNAMICS OF SUBJECTIVITY, AGENCY, AND FORMS OF CAPITAL IN THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF VULNERABLE UNIVERSAL CREDIT CLAIMANTS*

1: INTRODUCTION

Recent unemployment benefit reforms have entailed a shift away from conditionality of category and circumstance to conditionality of conduct (Clasen and Clegg 2007). Claimants must accept any offer of paid employment and undertake and demonstrate mandatory job search activities to their caseworkers (Work Coaches (WC)) in Jobcentre Plus (JCP), to avoid sanction of benefit removal. Underpinning this shift is a reconstruction of the 'welfare subject': the dominant ontological and epistemological construction of claimant subjectivity and economic agency. Unemployment has been recast as an individualised behavioural or character deficiency rather than a problem of economic and social structure with claimants requiring 'activation' to become responsible for their own job search.

These assumptions about claimant subjectivity and agency have increasingly been applied to more claimant groups, now including those traditionally considered 'vulnerable' (Reeves and Loopstra 2017; Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) 2013a; Stinson 2019). Universal Credit (UC) represents the apotheosis of this trend, with conditionality calibrated to vulnerability categories replaced by the assumption of unencumbered capacity for employment. Onus is placed on claimants themselves to demonstrate, or WCs to recognise, needs and circumstances requiring that conditionality be moderated, suspended, or transferal to another benefit.

This paper investigates how these changes operate in practice by asking the questions: '*What are the experiences of vulnerable claimants claiming UC*?' and '*What forms of*

agency do vulnerable UC claimants exhibit related to their claim?'. Evidence from 27 interviews with UC claimants belonging to traditional categories of vulnerability is presented that partially vindicates these changes, with claimants possessing high levels of administrative capital and/or personal assertiveness able to navigate the system to their advantage and satisfaction but that other claimants experience high administrative burden in the form of psychological and compliance costs. The research reveals claimants as reflexive and active, albeit constrained, agents able to draw upon social capital to navigate their claim in the absence of adequate institutional support who, in some cases, become sources of social capital themselves.

The paper is structured as follows. First is a section which details the dominant construction of the welfare subject in UC, introduces the concept of vulnerability, and its operationalisation in British welfare policy both historically and in UC. Following this is a section outlining the methods used in the empirical investigation, the findings of which are presented and discussed in the following section before conclusions are offered at the end of the paper.

2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1: CHANGING CONSTRUCTIONS OF AGENCY AND THE WELFARE SUBJECT

Although academic social policy is a relative latecomer to debates concerning subjectivity and agency (*cf*. Deacon and Mann 2009; Titterton 1992; Williams 2021:121-148; Wright 2012, 2016), subjectivation is a topic of increasing salience. Much of this literature has centred on the activation of labour market policy whereby the welfare subject has been reconstructed upon liberal assumptions, as "a free and

autonomous ”atom” of self-interest (...) fully responsible for navigating the social realm using rational choice and cost-benefit calculation” (Hamann 2009:38) (Macleavey 2008; Novak 1997; Read 2009; Whitworth 2016; Wright 2016). This reconstruction of the welfare subject has recast unemployment as a behavioural, rather than structural, issue requiring operant policies to correct it. Traditionally, individuals belonging to categories considered vulnerable would have the requirements placed on them by the state reduced or waived however, in UC, there is no set administrative definition of vulnerability. Rather, all claimants are assumed to be subject to full conditionality by default, with the onus on them to demonstrate needs and circumstances requiring reduction or waiving of conditionality.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how these changes have been experienced in practice by those subject to them. To this end, it asks the research question: ‘*What are the experiences of vulnerable claimants claiming UC*?’. Furthermore, as UC is a policy assuming an unencumbered welfare subject able to exercise voluntary agency reflexively, the paper asks a second research question: ‘*What forms of agency do vulnerable UC claimants exhibit related to their claim?*’.

2.2: UNPACKING VULNERABILITY AS A CONCEPT

As the analysis focuses purely on claimants in categories traditionally considered vulnerable in British welfare policy, it is worth unpacking vulnerability as a concept both theoretically and in terms of its operationalisation in policy. Vulnerability is a nebulous concept which is much contested in both academic literature and policy (Virokannas et al. 2018) that has come to occupy a central place in both (Brown 2017; McLaughlin 2012, 2017). Brown (2015:27-46) identifies five different, although not

mutually exclusive, constructions of the concept (2015:27-46) which will be detailed before a brief account of vulnerability as operationalised in British social security policy and, therefore, this paper, will be given.

One is the idea of *vulnerability as natural or innate* which constructs vulnerability as embodied and as applying to children, the pregnant, and the elderly as well as those with disabilities or physical or mental ill health. Another is *situational vulnerability* whereby vulnerability is related to biographical circumstance, situational difficulty, or transgression. This construction is often related to particular social categories such as the homeless, sex workers, addicts, convicts, care leavers, asylum seekers or refugees. This construction of vulnerability has been particularly influential in social policy as it has influenced the formation of *a priori* categories of vulnerability readily identifiable for assistive intervention. However, this form of vulnerability discourse draws attention to issues of desert and public sympathy so creates potential for the stigmatisation and social control (Harrison and Sanders 2014). Depending on whether the situational vulnerability is attributed to structural forces or deficient or transgressive character or behavioural traits of individuals, there exists the potential for intervention to be tutelary or disciplinary rather than assistive. By contrast *vulnerability constructed as spatial, environmental, or arising from social disadvantage* generally de-emphasises individual agency beyond a sub-focus on the differential capacity to withstand and cope with external forces (Pugh 2014). Rather, the influence of social structures, institutions, and both built and natural environments are centred. Then there is the notion of *vulnerability as a concept closely related to risk*. While it should, and has been, noted that risk and vulnerability are

neither synonymous nor coterminous (Appleton 1999; Goodin 1985), this has been the most prominent discourse in British social policy discourse (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991; Lupton 1999; SSAC 2013a; Taylor-Gooby 2000).

There is a more theoretical and critical construction of *vulnerability as a universal feature of the human condition*, which has had little influence on policy. This critique is prominent in the critical legal studies and ethics literatures, notably from feminist theorists (Butler 2004; Fineman 2008, 2013). The core of this construction is that all humans share ontological and embodied vulnerability differentiated by individual characteristics, position in the social structure, and which varies over the life course.

2.3: TRACING THE DEFICIT MODEL CONSTRUCTION OF VULNERABILITY IN UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Vulnerability as operationalised in British social security policy has traditionally straddled four of Brown's constructions. Primarily, however, vulnerability has been conceptualised as commensurate to risk. Originally, the Beveridgean welfare state was designed in two tiers: a contributory National Insurance tier and a means-tested social assistance tier. Both tiers reflected different conceptualisations of vulnerability as risk. National Insurance was designed as a way to insure individuals against the risk of poverty due to unemployment, illness, injury, or age. In order to reduce the risk of such contingency, and therefore both premiums and expenditures, National Insurance was accompanied by 'Allied Services': the Butler Act for public education, the National Health Service, and expanded and improved social housing provision. In this way, we can also see vulnerability as risk overlapping with notions of vulnerability as 'innate' (i.e. through ill-health or old age), as related to social disadvantage or the environment

(e.g. because of poor housing or a lack of education and skills) and as situational (i.e. related to social categories).

By contrast, the means-tested tier exemplifies the way that situational constructs of vulnerability can be used to construct certain populations as behaviourally or morally deficient and in need of operant behavioural modification. Beveridge's initial plan for National Insurance overlooked social assistance as the post-war policy of full employment meant that the only able-bodied persons who would be left uncovered by the system would be "vagrants and moral weaklings" (Glennerster and Evans 1994:59). This stigmatising and situational approach to means-tested benefit is a long-standing feature of British social policy (Macnicol 1994) which forms the core of the behaviourally operant approach of UC (Fletcher and Wright 2018; Tyler 2014).

This dual construction of vulnerability as risk and situational was initially continued over into the paradigm of activated labour market policy though the concept of 'new social risk 'whereby particular demographics face particular challenges to secure labour market attachment (Armingeon and Bonoli 2006; Bonoli 2005; Taylor-Gooby 2004). New Labour's 'New Deal' comprised multiple streams of differentiated supports and expectations based upon demographic categories. However, this approach ended with the introduction of UC.

Probably the most influential document on UC's design was the *Gregg Report* (2008) which proposed benefit reforms centred on maximising labour market participation (Adler 2018:30-32) by expanding behavioural conditionality to "virtually everyone" claiming out-of-work benefits (Gregg 2008:7,11,12,14,45,46,55,58,70,84,103,107). Two of *Gregg*'s recommendations formed the basis of the subsequent recalibration of

benefit conditionality in general and the bureaucratic definition of vulnerability in particular.

One was the end of category-based approaches to conditionality which *Gregg* recommended be replaced by claimants being subject to full conditionality and job search requirements on the default assumption of claimants' unencumbered capacity for employment. To have conditionality reduced or suspended, claimants would have to demonstrate, or JCP staff recognise, additional needs or risk (Gregg 2008:57-63). Without an administrative definition of vulnerability, a deficit model construction of claimant subjectivity and agency was enshrined into administrative practice on the justification that "(a)ny attempt to do so would risk some people with complex needs falling outside of the prescribed definitions and then not receiving help that they may genuinely need" (SSAC 2013a:20). While a legitimate concern, pre-defined categories of vulnerability which automatically incur assessment procedures need be neither exhaustive nor exclusionary (SSAC 2013a:22).

The second was the drive towards system simplification. The near-universalisation of conditionality (Dwyer and Wright 2014) has entailed a push towards simplification on two fronts. Firstly, administrative simplification so that claimants can more clearly understand their entitlements, obligations, and the operations, procedures, and decisions made in UC (Summers and Young 2020). Secondly, improved clarity in communications between JCP and claimants through training WCs to communicate with claimants in simple, jargon-free language and the improvement of communications materials and information available to claimants (SSAC 2013b). This can be thought of as also part of the translation of liberal ideas about subjectivity and

agency into administrative procedure as the liberal assumption of rational and reflexive engagement with both the benefit system and the wider labour market is, in theory, facilitated and enabled by improving flows of information to the agent.

3: METHODOLOGY

3.1: METHOD

Data were gathered from single semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted with 27 UC claimants considered vulnerable by historic criteria (*cf.* Reeves and Loopstra 2017; SSAC 2013a; Stinson 2019). 17 were conducted between January-March 2021 and 10 between February-March 2022. As fieldwork first took place during the second COVID-19 lockdown, participants were recruited online through adverts placed on social media and the websites of housing associations and advice centres.

Data were transcribed and analysed using RTA, a method of thematic analysis (TA) developed by Braun and Clarke (2012, 2013, 2014, 2019, 2020, 2021)**.** The impetuses behind the development of RTA have been the desire to develop the theoretical underpinning of TA more fully in response to criticisms that TA is less well developed theoretically than other qualitative methods and to counter a perceived adoption in interpretative methods of the language and assumptions of positivistic and quantitative methodologies (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2021). Instead, RTA valorises the subjectivity, knowledge, and interpretative skill of the researcher and "encourage[s] the researcher to embrace reflexivity, subjectivity and creativity as assets in knowledge production" (Byrne 2021:1393-1394).

Data were analysed according to the five-step process of RTA, beginning with data familiarisation through repeatedly listening to the interviews during transcription. The

second phase involved initial coding whereby data were categorised into first-order 'descriptive' codes. The third phase involved looking for "patterns of shared meaning, underpinned by a central meaning-based concept" (Braun and Clarke 2019:5) in the coded data to generate themes. The fourth, and longest, stage involved the recursive re-reading of transcripts alongside constant review of codes and overarching analytical themes for duplication, integrative potential, or necessity of new themes to better encapsulate patterns of shared conceptual meaning. The final phase was the reporting of findings through the final write-up.

As RTA is an analytical method which posits "qualitative research as creative, reflexive and subjective, with researcher subjectivity understood as a resource rather than a potential threat to knowledge production" (Braun and Clarke 2019:3), the fourth stage of analysis was conductive abductively. Abductive analysis involves "parallel and equal engagement with empirical data and extant theoretical understanding" (Thompson 2022:1411) and is similar to inductive analysis in that it produces knowledge purely through theorising empirical observation rather than by testing hypotheses and predictions deductively. However, it differs from inductive analysis in its consideration of observation *and* existing knowledge while inductive analysis produces knowledge purely from observation. In this way, abduction is an analytical approach used to develop theory by considering the ways in which findings may fall outside of existing theoretical models when such models are applied to them. Similarly, it can be used to justify existing theory or to demonstrate that a particular interpretation of data or working hypothesis is legitimate and/or worthy of further study (McKaughan 2008). In this case, abduction involved recursively analysing the themes

interpreted in the data with reference to various theoretical models until a theory which provided a plausible interpretation of findings was found.

3.2: SAMPLE

Interviewees sampled here reflect traditional categories of vulnerability in British social security policy prior to the introduction of UC. Such groups represented in this sample include: individuals with physical or mental health conditions, migrants and non-native English speakers, single parents, prison leavers, and the homeless (Reeves and Loopstra 2017; SSAC 2013a; Stinson 2019).

Interviewees included 18 individuals with physical and 6 with mental health problems, of whom 7 were currently of Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity (LCWRA) and 2 Limited Capability for Work (LCW) status. Four were single parents of school-age children. Five were migrants, 4 from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) and of Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) background; and 3 were non-native English speakers (all were perfectly conversational but one was still actively studying the language). Another 2 were BAME British. One individual was a prison leaver and another was currently in specialist accommodation for the homeless.

3.3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

As data were analysed abductively using RTA, there were no *a priori* analytical frameworks employed in the analysis. Rather, data were considered with reference to extant theoretical frameworks until theories of best fit were found. For the first research question, regarding the experiences of vulnerable claimants, that theory was 'administrative burden'; a concept used in public administration literature to describe when service users experience the implementation and delivery of a policy as onerous

(Burden et al. 2012). Administrative burden can refer to financial, personal, social, psychological, or affective costs experienced by subjects of policy processes. Examples include the time, effort, or material costs of learning how to navigate the procedures, eligibility criteria, and rules of a system (learning costs) or complying with its conditions (compliance costs) and any affective burdens of psychological drain, stress, and stigma users might experience (psychological costs) (Herd and Moynihan 2018; Moynihan et al. 2015).

As regards the second research question, concerning agency, that theory was Lister's (2004) quadrant-based model where one axis concerns agency enacted in an everyday or strategic context and a second concerns agency exercised in a personal or political/civic capacity. Acts which are personal-everyday are termed acts of 'getting by': strategies of survival, coping, or managing everyday situations. Acts which are personal-strategic are termed acts of 'getting out': agency exercised with the goal of escaping poverty. Acts which are political-everyday are termed acts of 'getting back at': small acts of everyday resistance and nonconformity. Finally, acts which are political-strategic are termed acts of 'getting organised': political acts of citizenship aimed at helping others or advancing the causes of their communities (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Lister's Model of Agency (2004) (Taken from Schiettecat 2016:86)



4: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1: ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

As regards the first research question, it was evident that vulnerable claimants' experiences of being integrated into UC were overwhelmingly defined by administrative burden. Experiences recounted here exemplify psychological and learning cost in terms of the stress of having to navigate a complicated system whilst already in poor health, being subject to conditionality inappropriate to one's physical or mental condition, and the material costs of receiving a benefit less financially generous than other benefits more appropriate to their circumstances. This administrative burden often stemmed from claimants being required to actively

demonstrate additional need or unsuitability for work or work-related activity. Several faced long and affectively traumatic processes to have their conditions amended or removed. Of the 18 interviewees who suffer from physical or mental health problems affecting their capacity to work or seek work, fewer than a handful did not experience problems getting their conditions scaled down or suspended.

Maurice has a chronic mobility impairment. He started claiming UC after being told he was no longer entitled to claim Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Maurice did not understand this decision so sought advice from JCP about what to do while appealing it. He was advised that his only recourse was to claim UC as he would not be in receipt of money during the appeal process. Consequently, because his income fell, Maurice could no longer afford vital expenditures and was unable to navigate the system to access any potential assistance. This led to severe psychological anguish for him:

> "*I was seeing a psychiatrist; I couldn't cope with it (…) I cancelled all me life insurance, I cancelled me wheelchair, because I couldn't pay it out of me PIP*[15] *(…) And no council tax was getting paid by UC. I had to reclaim all me council tax and I didn't know how to do it. So I was just falling behind and I was gonna snap because nobody'd help me (…) I were suicidal (…) (T)o be honest with you, I was going to give it all up*".

Part of the 'simplification' agenda has been the move towards 'digital by default' services whereby users can communicate and access information from a single digital portal. In the case of UC, this takes the form of an online 'journal'. Such changes have raised concerns about the 'digital exclusion' of claimants who possess neither the

[15] Personal Independence Payment.

technological skills nor capacity to maintain their claim (Ball et al. 2023; Edmiston et al. 2022). Maurice's case typified such concerns:

> "*[My] rent went up. That's another nightmare. I got me carer to take me new rent agreement to JCP. I got summat put on me journal; 'We can't accept it. You'll have to put it on your journal'. I said "I don't know how. I sent you copies of it". They would not accept a simple copy of it. (…) I don't know how you do it. I sent me carer up with all the details and it's just not good enough; 'We don't do it that way'. That's the only way I know how. I can't do it the way you're doing. And if you don't do it, you get sanctioned*".

Geraint, 43, had a similar experience. Geraint had been claiming ESA and inquired whether he could work whilst claiming it and was told he would need to switch to claiming UC. For three months, Geraint was subject to conditionality despite being eligible for ESA and voluntarily seeking work. Geraint found a job but found it beyond his capabilities and lasted only three days in post. Geraint was told that until his capacity to work was reassessed, he would be subject to full conditionality and have to accept any job offer. This distressed Geraint as, if he refused an offer or either quit or been dismissed because of his health issues, he would lose his benefits. Geraint subsequently sought professional benefit advice and discovered that, provided they earn under £152 a week, ESA claimants are allowed to take 'permitted work' of up to 16 hours per week and so he ought never to have been told to claim UC. Furthermore, as someone transferring from the support group of ESA onto UC, he should have received transitional protection whereby he would have been considered to have LCWRA from the outset and have his previous benefit levels matched.

Administrative burden is a dynamic rather than merely static and descriptive concept. This is exemplified through the "Catch-22" of administrative burden (Christensen et al. 2019) whereby ill-health increases the need to engage with state services and

institutions but also decreases capacity to navigate them, potentially exacerbating health issues, and making their successful navigation harder still. This "Catch-22" was evident in the experiences relayed in the interviews.

For example, Maria, who was claiming UC during an extended period of convalescence, recounted how the initial process of claiming UC had been a "nightmare" because she "wasn't in the right frame of mind to do it, obviously. I was highly anxious at the time and stressing because of my diagnosis (...) that was sort of, like, added stress". Others, like David who receives medication for his mental health issues, spoke of the financial penalty they had suffered and how "receiving less than half of the money what I was receiving monthly before on ESA consequently caused my mental health to take a downward spiral". Others spoke of how their WCs just did not seem receptive to listening about the struggles they were facing:

> "*I expressed a lot of times about mental health issues and it was like, sort of, pushed away and just was like, "Oh, you just need to go back into work". It was not addressed when I said to him about wanting to go to a doctor and go down a mental health route (...) (I)nstead of actually addressing that, it would be putting me under a bit more stress and strain*" (Barney, 29).

For these interviewees, experiences of claiming UC were overwhelmingly negative and defined by administrative burden, primarily as psychological cost and secondarily as learning cost. Furthermore, this was inextricably tied to the application of a deficit model of liberal subjectivity to them and the lack of *a priori* identification of vulnerability. The results of which were not simply that claimants were affectively distressed and subject to inappropriate policy treatments, but in some cases the active exacerbation of existing mental health problems.

4.2: ADMINSTRATIVE CAPITAL

Another dimension of administrative burden theory evident in these findings is the concept of 'administrative capital': a form of human capital influencing the capacity to interact effectively with bureaucratic systems and utilise resources that reduce administrative burden (Bisgaard 2020; Döring 2018; Döring and Madsen 2022; Nisar 2018). Simplification of the benefit -in effect reducing the necessary level of claimant administrative capital- was a key justification for the introduction of UC. The individuals interviewed here, however, tended to find UC difficult to understand, especially those who came from ethnic minority migrant backgrounds who did not speak English as a first language, all of whom had to seek outside help to make their claim.

One, an Indian man approaching retirement, told me that UC is "not for the fragile people, it's for someone who's educated who is going to get your head around all these systems". Similarly, a South-East Asian mother of three young children told me that "It's not a simple process. It's really, erm, that time I was single and I was pregnant and I lived in a one-bedroom property, and it's so difficult for me". The process was difficult even for those whose first language was English. One man told me that claiming "was like trying to untie a thin necklace when you're wearing boxing gloves". Yet another expressed how he was given no help with his claim despite his dyslexia, telling me that "Because I'm dyslexic, I need to put extra time into my writing and organizing skills and things like that (...) I was looking at the screen and trying to figure out what they wanted me to do. There must have been 30 pages of stuff".

These are very general examples of difficulties people had with UC's complexities. One specific manifestation of a lack of administrative capital that was mentioned consistently was confusion concerning the role of, and correct procedures regarding, the use of 'Statements of Fitness for Work' or 'fit notes': letters from healthcare professionals about a claimant's suitability for work if it has been impaired beyond the seven-day self-certification period. Confusion commonly stemmed from the temporary nature of fit notes, covering at most a period of three months, and their insufficiency regarding suspending conditionality. Rather, they act as guidance for WCs to determine what, if any, work search activities claimants can still undertake and the appropriate intensity of their enforcement. One participant who was unaware of this was Kieran, who suffers from agoraphobia and was referred to the Work Programme (WP) whilst claiming UC. His partner, who acted as an intermediary between myself and Kieran during our interview due to his anxiety issues, relayed to me that Kieran:

> *"(H)ad got sick lines from his doctor before the WP and, obviously he wasn't looking for work. He got sanctioned because, at that point, he didn't realise that sick lines don't stop your commitments (...) We didn't realise that they have their own process for being sick, if that makes sense, at that point. So he ended up getting sanctioned*".

Kieran's example sits at the intersection of several concepts of administrative burden. It demonstrates psychological and financial cost stemming from a lack of administrative capital as the confusion concerning sick notes led to him getting sanctioned:

> *"(W)e hadn't been advised properly about the sick, kind of, process at the start and we were under the impression that the sick line was what covered his*

> *commitments, basically, from the doctor because he was on the waiting list to receive mental health help from the CPN[16]"*.

It also demonstrates the "Catch-22" effect and compliance costs in that the financial loss of being sanctioned then made it harder to comply with his requirements. This exacerbated the problems associated with his agoraphobia, as he was required to walk to his WP appointments as the sanction meant he could not afford the train. He had to do this while fighting to have his need for reduced conditionality recognised:

> "*(H)e'd handed a sick line for agoraphobia and depression and anxiety. To walk, like, over two hours to a place he doesn't know -he's just moved into the area- that he doesn't know (…) (H)e was handing sick notes in all the way through this. He's been handing sick notes in since he's been on UC and they were expecting him to travel and walk to the WP place*".

The problems Kieran faced regarding fit notes were experienced by other participants too, especially the feeling of being inadequately briefed on how fit notes operate. One man who suffers from generalised anxiety disorder told me: "I had a call from my adviser yesterday, and basically, I've been told that I should have been supplying sick lines from September of last year, but they didn't inform me of that". Another woman who suffers from fibromyalgia felt there is a lot of "misinformation in the system" because when she moved from ESA to UC she was not told that she would have to provide any kind of new medical evidence. It was two years before a WC told her that she needed to continuously supply medical certificates and to apply for PIP and LCWRA, both of which she was subsequently given. Another, who had recently been asked to submit a fit note expressed dismay that she had "been claiming the last six

[16] Community Psychiatric Nurse

months and now they want a sick note. Why are you asking me for one? I could probably get one but why are you asking for one?".

That fit notes are insufficient to reduce conditionality and, when they are, suffice only on a temporary basis was a source of considerable angst for many interviewees, demonstrating another way in which psychological costs are exacerbated by a lack of administrative capital. One told me that he told his WC at "practically every meeting, "Why am I doing this when I'm reporting sick notes? I'm not fit for work so why are you making me look for work?"" and that he "shouldn't have been expected to work search".

Another example demonstrated how psychological cost could be compounded by compliance costs in such circumstances when conditionality was not switched off fully:

> "*(T)he phone call yesterday was "Mr Naipaul, why are you not here at JCP?". I said "Excuse me, you've got my doctor's certificate. I've got a bad back" (...) I'd sent them the sick notes from the doctor a week before and, even on the day, he rang me. He said, "Oh, Mr Naipaul, you have an appointment". I said "Hold on a minute, I sent you a sick note a week ago. I'm on sick leave now. I'm physically not well" (...) "Oh, you're supposed to be here, physically" (...) (H)e's given me an appointment in six weeks' time when the sick note runs out and he said "You have to physically come to JCP" and, you know, that doesn't make sense to me. The doctor's actually told you that I can't, sort of, stand for 90 seconds. And they're giving me the excuse that 'you've got to go to the shops' or something"*.

These findings build on the characterisation of vulnerable claimants' experiences of UC being defined by administrative burden but also suggest a second dimension to the problem. One of the assumptions of the 'Becoming' model of the AWS is that claimants are perfectly able to access and process information, but despite efforts from the DWP to make claiming benefits a simpler and more user-friendly system,

many claimants are often unable to access relevant information both due to existing vulnerability and because information flows remain insufficient.

4.3: ADMINSTRATIVE CAPITAL AND PAST LIFE EXPERIENCES

While the modal experience of the claimants interviewed was negative, the extent to which interviewees felt that UC was navigable differed across claimants with different characteristics and different forms and levels of administrative capital. The early scholarship from which the administrative burden literature developed studied the different ways bureaucratic competence developed and manifested itself in citizen-bureaucratic relations (Danet and Harman 1972; Gordon 1975). These works framed such phenomena in terms of socialisation: learning how to behave and present oneself in various social contexts. Masood and Nisar (2020) note a turning point in Hasenfeld's (1985) work which recast analysis of citizen-bureaucratic encounters as power-dependence exchanges involving utilisation of power resources to produce better outcomes and offset or avoid negative experiences. Danet and Gurevitch (1972) identified three key factors determining an individual's level of bureaucratic competence, or administrative capital, to engage with the bureaucratic state: formal education, exposure to bureaucratic norms in working life, and experience of bureaucratic systems as a client.

These dynamics largely played out in the data. Participants with a higher level of education tended to find the system easier to navigate and reported less affectively distressing experiences engaging with it. The point was repeatedly emphasised, however, that these people learned about UC and its processes through their own research, noting that relevant information is available but that JCP do not necessarily

provide it directly. Whilst these people were able to access necessary information, they qualified this by saying that they could easily see how it would be complicated for other people. Those who had worked in bureaucratic environments claimed similarly, although there was some overlap in membership of these groups. More notable was the differences between people who had experience as a client of bureaucratic systems or had some form of inside knowledge of them. Several participants spoke of how they had come to "know how the system works" either through claiming for an extended period of time or intermittently over an extended period of time.

For example, Sharon, who suffers from a chronic health issue, decided to change job as she was finding work exhausting and not finding enough time to spend with her partner. Alongside her job, Sharon is a long-term volunteer benefits advisor and the knowledge she acquired in this role allowed her to find a UC arrangement amenable to her needs. Sharon's health condition means she is not subject to conditionality but still allowed to undertake permitted work. As such, Sharon joined an agency whereby she can take short-term work as and when she wishes to while still being able to claim UC with no conditionality element:

> "*(I)f I work under 20 hours a week, I am much better off (…) I'm not working now because me contract's ended, I'm just doing voluntary work. But I don't have to look for work 'cause I'm on the limited capability but I chose to do a little bit of work what I can manage*".

Sharon's example stands in contradistinction to that of Ramsay, whose story was the one notable example contradicting the theoretical expectation that people with more experience of bureaucratic systems, either as client or employee, would have greater capacity to navigate them effectively. Ramsay is a civil servant with experience of public employment services. One would expect a person with such experience to have

relatively straightforward experiences with claiming, but Ramsay felt that his past as a civil servant "made no difference to the way they treated me, I can tell you. In fact, it made it worse". The main source of Ramsay's problems was that he started his claim with a three-month sanction having left his previous job while awaiting a disciplinary hearing:

> "*I was very depressed at what was going on. I had reported suicidal feelings to JCP and my doctor and, while I was on £42 a week, I actually had to say to JCP that I was feeling suicidal in order to get a payment because it appeared to me that there was going to be no money coming in because I was sanctioned*".

Ramsay's civil service experience in the same services he was now a client of actively created additional psychological cost rather than serving as a source of administrative capital to alleviate it partly because he perceived the normative reorientation of the benefit system since he worked in it to be negative:

> "*(T)hey would see it as you were a failure* (...) *I'd go back to my initial training in JCP where we knew that people were actively seeking work. We just assumed they were actively seeking work. I always assumed that the people that came to JCP were actively seeking work, and it seemed to be reversed that they were automatically assuming that you did nothing or that you didn't really want to work*".

In this way, while Ramsay's experience contradicts theoretical expectations, it is also an explainable and idiosyncratic case whereby Ramsay's working experience was at a bureaucratic institution which has undergone an 180° normative reorientation in the intervening period. This suggests how administrative capital theory might not always account for specific individual circumstances while also providing a sufficiently workable model of differentials in capacities to navigate bureaucratic systems and affective experiences with them.

Relating these findings back to the research question, we can see the effects of expanding the deficit-based 'Becoming' model of the AWS and its associated

assumptions about claimant ability to access and process information to claimants traditionally conceived of as vulnerable are complex. Often, it results in 'administrative burden' in the form of psychological and learning cost as claimants expend time and energy navigating a system that remains complex despite the centrality of simplification to its promulgation. In some cases, this psychological cost leads to increased risk of exacerbated of vulnerability. However, this is not the case with everybody. Claimants have differential human capital resources to draw upon and so some claimants who have higher levels of education, or experience with bureaucratic systems either in working life or as clients, are able to navigate the system more easily with less administrative burden.

4.4: 'GETTING BY': UTILISING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Having looked at findings that relate to the first research question concerning issues of subjectivation in the experiences of vulnerable UC claimants, we can turn to the second research question concerning the forms of agency they exhibit. A common form of agency exhibited can be thought of in terms of Lister's (2004:130-140) notion of 'Getting By': developing coping strategies and harnessing personal and social resources to manage life as a claimant.

As discussed previously, many participants expressed difficulties understanding and accessing information related to their claims and social rights. For several participants, this necessitated recourse to various alternative sources of information and help with the practicalities of claiming. Some were idiosyncratic. One met a friend of his landlady who works for a private company that helps people into work in his local library to go through his claim. Another was helped by her Macmillan nurse, and

another still by the sheltered housing association he was living with. In one case, the individual wrote to their MP for advice who then informed a local councillor who visited the man personally to help him with his. However, two forms of support were the most common. One was online advice pages run by other claimants:

> "*I found an amazing Facebook group. They were so incredibly knowledgeable about it (…) they now have a website and they are amazing. That's literally how I understood how it all worked, it was from that Facebook group (…) (A)ny one of my friends who is going to claim UC, I always direct them to their website because it literally has everything on there, all the support they need*" (Geri, 34).

> "*That page on Facebook was actually what, kind of, really helped us at that time. That's where we went for our advice. I would have went to them before I went to JCP themselves because I felt at the time that JCP just didn't know what they were talking about*" (Muriel, single parent).

The other was advice centres. One of these was a legal advice centre but mostly claimants sought help from either Citizens' Advice (CAB) or specialist benefit advice organisations. Participants used these services to help them understand eligibility criteria; payment calculations; housing payments; joint household claims; or how to provide health information. The role of 'local ecosystems of support' (Edmiston et al. 2022) and support networks (Hill et al. 2021) as sources of information, assistance, and moral support is well-known and discussed. What their use here demonstrates is how claimants are able to reflexively understand the limitations of their own administrative capital and strategically source and access social capital. We can think of this in terms of Hogget's (2001) notion of a 'constrained reflexive agent' bound by the social situation they find themselves in but able to act reflexively within it.

4.5: 'GETTING ORGANISED': BECOMING PRODUCERS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

While most interviewees had accessed sources of social capital to 'get by', a handful subsequently volunteered to help other claimants, transitioning from being utilisers to

producers of social capital. Engaging in this kind of collective self-help is one of the most common forms of what Lister (2004:149-57) terms 'Getting Organised', which she describes as most often being 'getting organised to get by' rather than as a form of political action.

One story which encapsulates a variety of different motivations and analytical dynamics is that of Abdur who belongs to a migrant community he described as facing a myriad of different issues: "I am from Bangladesh and our community, we suffer in so many ways. We have a language barrier, our housing conditions, many don't even have a bank account". Abdur volunteers as a peer researcher, conducting meetings and focus groups with families with a local charity and spoke of his volunteering in a multitude of interesting ways. For instance, he told me that:

> "*I am not speaking just for me. I see people around me who are suffering in silence. Sometimes they don't speak English, they don't have a computer at home. These people are crying because they are on UC (…) People are crying out, "Please listen to us. Let our voice get heard"*".

Here, Abdur framed his volunteering in terms of giving his community a voice. Multiple theorists have discussed how the views and experiences of claimants and people in poverty often go unheard and unrecognised, especially when these statuses intersect with other ones, such as ethnic or linguistic minority status, adding symbolic and cultural injury to the material (Fraser 1994, 1995; Taylor 1994). Desire for voice was evident in Abdur's testimony: "They are doing great work. We have been talking and, you know, our voice is getting heard". Expressed like this, it suggested Abdur's volunteering was about catharsis and a community who lack capacity either to navigate UC or express their experiences with it being seen and heard. Furthermore, Abdur implied a sense of duty or responsibility concerning the role that he, a fluent

speaker with some education in Britain, has in facilitating and disseminating that cathartic expression of voice:

> *"Luckily, I can speak, I can go and get the good advice what to do about it. I am just speaking on behalf of who are, who can't speak English, who have no knowledge, who are on the system and are suffering in silence"*.

Migrant and linguistic minority status here are crucial. Lupton's (2003:114-115) study of community-based responses to poverty found that 'neighbourhood', 'area' and 'community' are not experienced as unitary phenomena but rather in terms of interlinking subcommunities where categories like ethnicity and gender are more salient. Indeed, the capacity of ethnic and linguistic minority groups to generate social capital within wider localities and economic systems with exclusionary tendencies is a well-studied and documented factor in the potential mitigation of those exclusionary forces (Logan et al. 1996; Sampson and Morenoff 1997). However, whilst Abdur spoke in a collective sense, of being someone who articulates the views of a community, he also discussed his volunteering in personal terms that suggested confluence between collective and personal benefits. As well as being able to provide empathy and understanding to others, he was benefitting from learning that his negative experiences were not unique, something that was both validating and upsetting:

> "*(W)hen I am with this charity at work, I do this and when I hear the families saying this I say "Oh my God, I am not alone. It is not just me on my own". When I hear the similarities of the people on UC, I know what they are going through, what they are saying. Recently I was in one of those meetings and when I heard what those families, what they went through, I said, "Oh My God, I went through the same thing" but some people went through worse things than I went through*".

Taken together, we can conceive of Abdur's efforts as an example of 'getting organised', yes, but 'getting organised to help others get by' rather than as an active attempt to press for wider recognition and change. When Abdur discussed pressing for change,

he did so passively, as though it were not the main goal, merely a hypothetical, albeit desperately needed, positive externality that might arise from the dissemination of his community's experiences:

> "*I have been speaking out for the families and, you know, maybe something will change (…) Maybe one day things might change, you know, for the better and, I think needs to change*".

These themes of 'getting organised to get by' and of 'first accessing then producing social capital' were evident in the testimony of others who had become active in helping other claimants. Two interviewees had voluntary experience with CAB as benefit advisers, with one eventually becoming a permanent employee. Finally, there was Geraint, whose story was discussed earlier. Geraint's experience led to him to become an administrator on an online peer-support group for claimants to help other people, just as he had found himself when first claiming UC:

> "*Whatever question, like, the person asks if I know the answer, I'll give it to them. Where they ask, like, with a limited capability and work-related activity, where there's a three-month qualifying period before it's paid I work out, like, when their payments would start from the date where they reported their first sick note and from when they've been awarded it. Things like that, and then there's other things about, erm, work search requirements, commitment, it's practically everything. Any little question they ask. I primarily know everything about UC".*

That claimants both access and produce social capital in peer-supportive ways demonstrates how technology is changing the way that claimants can organise to create and access social capital. Traditional concepts of 'community' often construct a spatially bound collective, particularly as regards community organisation or volunteering. However, the example of Geraint and others shows how communities of support are evolving. Of particular interest is that the literature suggests a tendency for community organisation activities to become less emotionally supportive and more utilitarian as geographical scope increases, decreasing to simply being informational

sources when extended to maximum (Putnam 2000:170-174). However, sites such as Geraint's have become not merely sources of information but also of moral and emotional support where online friendship can flourish and develop, as well as information and advice be shared.

4.6: 'GETTING BY' OR 'GETTING BACK'? ASSERTIVENESS AND CHARISMA AS HUMAN CAPITAL

As well as administrative capital, the which in which individual personality characteristics can act as forms of human capital affecting individuals' capacity to exercise agency was also evident in the data. We return here to the example of Sharon. As well as being able to leverage her administrative capital to find the best arrangement of work and UC supports for her needs, Sharon was an ebullient, talkative, and assertive personality. She told of various situations where these aspects of her personality had served her well, both in the workplace and in her dealings with JCP. In terms of the former, she told me of a time when she worked in a retail outlet and her confidence in facing shoplifters: "(T)hey didn't have security there, they just made sure that I was there (…) I have the confidence". She also told me of a problem she had experienced with JCP when offered an advance payment whilst still paying off another she had taken previously. She had assumed the terms were the same as with Social Fund loans for legacy benefit claimants whereby advances are paid back sequentially. She discovered, having not been informed of the fact, that she would have to pay them back concurrently. The monthly cost was unaffordable for Sharon; forcing her to borrow from her mother. Feeling she had been treated unfairly, Sharon remonstrated with her WC and successfully negotiated her repayments down to a manageable sum.

Elsie is a similar case. Despite her misgivings about UC, Elsie's experiences of claiming have been positive. She found the system easy to navigate, citing that she enjoyed form-filling and had previously worked in I.T. so found the online system easy to use. It was evident from talking to Elsie that she was a colourful and charismatic character. She self-described as "loquacious", was crafty and creative, cracked jokes about her ex-husband, and laughed often throughout the interview. She told me of a previous time she had claimed benefit, when her now-adult son was a baby, and how when she found work, her caseworker had said she would be missed and had bought her son a present. Elsie was also straightforward in attributing her positive experiences to her personality type. She told that me she knew, "(A) lot about the system, anyway, because I'm not stupid, okay. Which means I actually go out and research things" and that this helped her understand and navigate UC's procedures. Furthermore, she was forthright about her comfort within herself, her body, her capacity to assert her needs, and her resilient nature:

> "*I'm very lucky. I talk very openly about my conditions (…) I've got multiple disabilities (…) And if they try to get me to work, I'll appeal against it. Been there with appealing, did it with PIP. So, yeah, and I don't get stressed about things. I refuse to get stressed. I had a lot of stress a few years ago, erm, and it was horrible, and I refuse to live like that again (…) I've got a very positive outlook (…) So I don't get bothered about things. I just get on with it*".

Elsie was also keen to acknowledge that whilst she was "confident and able", that this is not the case for everybody. In such circumstances, she stressed the importance of finding helplines, or the sort of claimant support groups discussed here previously and the importance of being persistent and challenging decisions people feel are not fair,

citing examples of people she knew who did not bother appealing against decisions because of the psychological effect of the initial negative outcome.

Compare this to the experience of Esther. Esther lived abroad for several years, returning to Britain after being diagnosed with a neurological condition. For many years, Esther received social insurance and pension support from her time abroad until she made an inquiry to JCP about the possibility of accessing mobility support and was told that her benefit eligibility had to be determined before any supports could be put in place. Esther told me that she had "no knowledge of benefits" because she had worked up until her diagnosis and trusted that if she went through this process, it would help determine what help she might be entitled to. Esther was given mobility aids, which "really helped", but also described the ensuing battle over her benefit payments as "a disaster":

> "*I was a bit naive and I didn't know what I was getting into, really, because I was following what the woman from social services told me I needed to do (…) I thought it all went quite smoothly (…) (I)t was not until about six months down the line when I was told that, or a year down the line maybe even, that I've been overpaid, even though I'd given everything of my information truthfully and honestly. And then I was told that, you know, it's my problem, that I have to pay them back*".

Esther was put onto UC with her overseas social insurance payments being deducted from it. Those payments were also reduced and Esther was required to contribute money towards her medical fees. Furthermore, Esther was told she owed JCP £5,000. Esther's self-described naivety is telling as it bisects the themes discussed earlier concerning administrative capital and the ability to engage knowledgably with bureaucratic systems but also the role played by the self-confidence to assert oneself at key points in one's claim. In Esther's case, she turned to the CAB but they had no specific knowledge of the social security system in the country she was receiving

payments from or more general knowledge about how benefit payments from abroad affect benefit entitlement at home. All that they were able to offer was to write to Esther's MP on her behalf to see what we could be done. However, Esther demurred at this prospect. As she told me: "(A)t the time, because all this other stuff was going on, I said, "No, it's okay. I can't do with the stress" and I didn't know if it would come to anything anyway".

This highlights the role of personal assertiveness as a key differentiator between participants' ability to exercise key dimensions of agency as Lister details: that of 'getting back at'. Lister uses Scott's theory of 'everyday resistance' which in some cases involves intentional acts of minor subversion of official structures but "nearly always survival and persistence" (Scott 1985:301, quoted in Lister 2004:141). Esther's reluctance to assert herself to avoid the pressure of confrontation was echoed by other claimants. One gentleman had sought advice about payment calculations from an advice centre, who suggested that he was entitled to an extra £300 per month in UC payments. When he raised this with JCP, he was simply told that their calculation was accurate and they would not review the suggestions of the advice centre. While he protested initially, when I asked how he followed it up afterwards, he told me that "I'm not one to antagonize people". Similarly, a woman who suffers with anxiety problems told me about a time when "because of my stress I had got up really late and missed the appointment and got there in the afternoon. He asked me all these questions. They keyed it all into the computer and I got a sanction". The sanction lasted twelve weeks and, when I asked if she remonstrated or appealed the decision, she told me no because "it stresses me out".

These examples are contrasted by stories of individuals who *did* assert themselves by appealing decisions or taking other actions to protect themselves. For example, another participant who suffers with anxiety told me that:

> "*(T)here was a couple of times I had been late bringing in my fit notes and they said that if I'm late bringing in my fit notes that sanctions could be put in place. I was like, wait a minute, it's been a couple of days, you know? I says, "Well, yeah, that's fair enough, but I have severe anxiety issues and some days I just can't go past the door and you're saying to me that you're going to sanction me because of my mental health issues?". "What we're saying is that you could be sanctioned if you don't bring in your fit notes". And I'm saying, "But the reason I don't bring in my fit notes is because of my health". And she said, "No, no. We'll just leave it at that". She couldn't justify their reasoning for it so I guess she decided to sort of scrap that idea*".

Another individual spoke of how he had been sanctioned for being late to an appointment when he was adamant that he had arrived on time. He sought advice at his local CAB and was told that this had been a frequent occurrence of late and he ought to check the time in the JCP clock against the time on an electronic device that takes its time from the internet. Upon doing so, it was discovered that the clock in the JCP office was ten minutes fast. The CAB then remonstrated with the man's WC and so he "never was actually sanctioned. They'd went through the process of sanctioning me but as soon as that was sorted out, erm, the woman at JCP said, "Oh, we'll just scrub that"". Ramsay, the former civil servant discussed previously, also spoke of how he appealed a sanction retrospectively after winning an employment tribunal for wrongful dismissal against his previous employer. As his sanction had been based on the fact he had been dismissed, he fought to win reimbursement and won back one third of the money he had lost as a result of the sanction. Another man, who at sixty years old is now afflicted with vascular dementia, told of how he had initially been

entirely cleared for work by an initial Work Capability Assessment but that he had pushed for re-assessment, after which he was subsequently classified as LCW.

Thinking of these findings in terms of our research questions concerning the types of agency vulnerable claimants enact in the process of their UC claims, we can see that, whilst proactive in some senses, it is also primarily defensive. While claimants are able to reflexively accept their lack of administrative capital and show resourcefulness in accessing forms of social capital, it is important to remember that this is not agency 'enabled' (Gilbert and Gilbert 2002) by the UC system, but rather exercised in defensive reaction to it as forms of 'getting by'. Indeed, even other forms of enacted agency detailed here that involved 'getting organised' or 'getting back at' were also primarily aimed not at the furtherance of change but simply at surviving and resisting negative changes to their lives brought by a system that is supposed to support them.

5: CONCLUSION

From this analysis, I offer two conclusions. The first is that interviewees demonstrated forms of agency more consistent with the 'Being' model of the AWS than the 'Becoming' model. Of all of the assumptions of the 'Becoming' model, only the reflexivity of claimants appeared to hold true of this sample. However, these reflexive exercises of agency often consisted of 'getting by' through finding sources of social capital to assist them in the process of navigating a system defined for them by intense administrative burden; 'getting organised' by becoming sources of social capital for others; or in fighting against mistakes and problems they encounter in the process of their claim to 'get by' or 'get 'back at'. In other words, while the welfare subjects interviewed here were 'active' agents, the 'Being' that they enacted was essentially

defensive in nature against the administrative burden created by the system rather than proactive towards employment because of supports it offers.

Secondly, whilst interviewees here displayed reflexivity and agency, it was evident that the deficit construction of vulnerability that assumes these qualities as unbounded places intolerable burdens on some very vulnerable individuals. Of course, we also saw examples of individuals who managed to work the system to their advantage and found arrangements which suited their needs and preferences. This partially validates the DWP's contention that providing scope for claimants belonging to traditionally vulnerable categories to enter the mainstream system is a potentially positive development. Clearly, there are individuals for whom being able to access a combination of work and out-of-work benefit can be fulfilling. Yet the depth of negative affect, and difficulties in dealing with the system, experienced by many participants suggests paying heed to the SSAC's (2013a) argument that some sort of categorical system of risk assessment to ensure potential difficulties are identified at the start of the process with less onus placed on individual claimants to demonstrate their additional needs is required to make the system work smoothly and to cut down on the administrative burden experienced by some of the most vulnerable.

However, there are limitations to these findings. Foremostly, the sampling approach taken has treated vulnerable claimants as a unitary category rather than looking at sub-categories of vulnerability individually. For present purposes, this was acceptable as the salient analytical themes cut across different types of vulnerability. For example, both those with health conditions and those from BAME and migrant backgrounds or who had English as a second language all found the system difficult to

understand and navigate, sought to access sources of social capital to help them with their claims, and in turn tried to become producers of social capital. However, this underplays the heterogeneity of vulnerable sub-groups and the potential for worthwhile discovery and theorisation of experiences and phenomena unique to them. Similarly, while there was some evidence of vulnerable individuals navigating UC effectively, there was little evidence of 'getting out' via exercising strategic agency (Lister 2004:144-149). While vulnerable groups face significant structural or embodied constraint in exercising this form of agency, understanding how those who do are able to do so would be highly valuable. In both cases, a purposive sampling strategy designed to explore these phenomena more fully than the approach taken here would be a worthwhile endeavour.

PAPER 2: *CONTRACTUALISM AND MANAGERIAL REFORMS IN BRITISH LABOUR MARKET POLICY: RAMIFICATIONS FOR THE SOCIAL TRUST OF SERVICE USERS*

1: INTRODUCTION

Trust is one of the fundamental bases upon which political and welfare institutions can be legitimated and sustained. Just as reciprocity and inclusion are necessary to foster and sustain support for horizontal and vertical redistribution, respectively, so is trust needed to legitimate and sustain the entire social settlement (Taylor-Gooby 2009). Over the last thirty-five years in Britain, both the relative importance and dominant conceptualisations of these three facets of social citizenship have undergone considerable recalibration, fuelled by changing prevailing ideas surrounding the sources and nature of social and economic risk and need; the construction of the welfare subject; and citizenship ethics. This paper concerns itself with changing bases of trust in welfare institutions which have been reconceptualised away from trust in a hierarchical bureaucracy based on professionalism and expert judgement to a model based on consumer trust under the rubric of New Public Management (NPM) ideas.

The paper asks the question '*How do Universal Credit (UC) claimants discuss their trust or distrust in the UC programme?*'. The paper answers the research question through interview data collected with 33 UC claimants which were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). The data were analysed abductively; moving recursively between data and literature to make sense of and situate findings, and to see where they confirm or disconfirm the expectations of existing theory in order to offer tentative arguments and conclusions that can serve as a guide for future study.

The paper presents evidence of a lack of trust in post-NPM reform welfare institutions on the part of UC claimants in the form of a lack of perceived encapsulated interest, meaning trust that the intentions of the other party are aligned with one's own (Hardin 2004). This lack of perceived encapsulated interests instantiated itself in interviewee testimony in a multitude of ways: a general perception of agency goals taking precedence over their needs, distrust of contracted-out services, and the perception of their job search conditions as intentionally unreasonable. These findings are used to build the argument that UC's eschewing of flexible, relational contracts as preferred by interviewees for a rigid, performance-based approach to contract is inimical to the development of claimant institutional trust.

The paper begins with a literature review detailing the relevant shifts in British welfare policy and the concomitant theoretical changes in the bases of user trust they entail, the integration of labour market and social security policy, as well as introducing the theoretical debates on the dynamics of trust and contractualisation. This is followed by explication of the methods and analytical concepts used in the paper. Findings are then presented and discussed before conclusions are offered, bringing the paper to an end.

2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1: NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT, CHANGES IN MANAGERIAL AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURES, AND THE LOCUS OF TRUST WITHIN THE WEFLARE STATE

The post-war British welfare state (PWWS) was based on an operational and managerial model of professional and bureaucratic hierarchy. This hierarchy was characterised by large-scale, vertically integrated service delivery; centralised control

of policy from formation to delivery; upward accountability to local or national electorally accountable political authorities; expert bureaucratic and professional operational governance; and effort to ensure output uniformity. This system was predicated upon the assumptions of Fabian empiricism: a neutral and benevolent state apparatus using professional expertise to best manage resources in the name of social welfare. Under this arrangement the collective trust of society or the public was implicit in a number of ways. Derived theoretically from the protection the welfare state offered from social risk, in practice it was individual experience with the welfare state underpinned by consensus around its principles which generated public trust in welfare state institutions. These principles included equality of treatment and faith in the benevolence of the professional elite reinforced through the democratic state and the self-regulation of welfare state professionals. Individual trust derived from personal experience of welfare services. This two-tier system of trust generation, collectively based on consensus and individually based on experience, meant that trust in the welfare state was unlikely to be affected by negative experiences with individuals working within it and, by turn, that negative experiences with systemic administrative problems would not affect trust in individual professionals (Barnes and Prior 1998:130-132; Newman and Clarke 1994:22-23).

Of course, these are only the conceptual principles of system design and belie the fact that trust is dynamic and that flaws with, and critics of, the system still existed. During the 1970s, this arrangement came under sustained criticism from both left and right (Yeatman 2009:3-116), with market liberal critiques forming the basis of the wholesale reorganisation of the managerial and operational order of the welfare state during the

1980s. Consequently, services were to be managed in a manner reflecting private sector practices, or actively by the private sector in some circumstances through contracting-out of operations and services, the devolution of financial and operational control -often to arm's length agencies-, and increasingly performance-based management (Walsh 1994:189-190).

Two particular structural changes have knock-on ramifications for the basis of social trust (Newman 1998). One is the introduction of the ethos of consumerism into public services. Rather than being constructed as individual sites of social need treated passively by professionals in a benevolent and trustworthy system planned by expert bureaucrats to meet those needs, citizens have been recast as 'customers' (Clarke 2007; Clarke et al. 2007; Ling 1994; Needham 2007; Powell et al. 2010; Secker et al. 2012). Citizens have been reconstructed as sites of individualised preference and risk rather than of need *per se*. As such, the meeting of need was replaced as a concern with user satisfaction and the promotion of choice in public services in a manner intended to recreate the notion of consumer sovereignty in public services.

Whilst it is arguable that choice in public services is meaningful in other fields of social policy (*cf.* Burchardt et al. 2015; Gewirtz et al. 1995; Gingrich 2011; Gorard et al. 2003; Le Grand 2007; Sandel 2012; Simmons et al. 2009), this is not the case with regard to social security and particularly means-tested benefits. Whilst there may have been a rhetorical shift towards private sector notions of consumer sovereignty, the nature of the relationship between state and individual in this context blunts the capacity for developing any such relationship. Thinking in Hirschman's (1970) terms, consumer sovereignty is predicated on dissatisfied users' capacity to exercise loyalty, voice, and

exit. Of course, exit is not an option in this circumstance without considerable negative social effects like entering the shadow economy or placing stress on social networks and relationships. Similarly, market model managerial reforms to public services are designed to change the locus of accountability in the system from the process-based and democratic to the outcome-based and managerial (Barnes and Prior 1995, 1996; Walsh 1994). As such, the only real recourse available is loyalty (*cf*. Stafford 2003; Yeatman 1997).

More meaningful to social security policy are structural changes wrought by performance management or 'quality assurance' NPM ideas. The concept of 'quality assurance' is somewhat problematic. Pollitt (1990) argues that two visions of NPM have influenced public service reform concurrently. One derives from critiques of the PWWS that viewed hierarchical, professional, and expert-led services as inherently oppressive to the learning potential, creativity, innovativeness, and enterprising nature of service providers (Durose 2009, 2011; Lowndes 2005; Stoker 2004). The second, and most influential on British welfare reform, concerns maximising the input-output efficiency of service delivery, which Pollitt terms 'neo-Taylorism'. In social security policy, this has entailed prioritising reducing expenditure on out-of-work benefits and maximising transitions into paid employment.

2.2: INTEGRATION OF LABOUR MARKET AND SOCIAL SECURITY POLICY

One manifestation of neo-Taylorism in British social security policy has been the turn to labour market activation which Newman (2007) argues is a condensate for wider ideational shifts in social policy. These include shifts from a hierarchical to network-based, and from a bureaucratic to market-model, social policy as discussed above. It

also involves the normative recalibration of the welfare state from paternalism to personal responsibility. Under these auspices, successive British governments have introduced contractualised forms of welfare whereby claimants sign agreements to undertake and demonstrate mandatory work search activities (called a 'Claimant Commitment' (CC) in UC). Following the merger of the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service in 2002 (Champion and Bonoli 2011; Evans and Cerny 2003:32-35; Osgood et al. 2002), job search counselling is merged with benefit eligibility determination so claimant compliance with their CC is monitored through regular meetings at JobCentre Plus (JCP) with their Work Coach (WC). Claimants are held personally responsible for meeting the obligations stipulated in their CC and face the sanction of benefit removal for non-compliance. As such, whilst managerial changes may emphasise a more 'customer'-centric orientation of welfare governance rhetorically, in reality claimants are constructed both as 'sovereign customers' and 'objects of control' simultaneously, with tension arising between the two (Rosenthal and Peccei 2007).

2.3: CONTRIBUTION OF PAPER

Trust is a subject with a long and varied history in social policy literature stretching back to its foundational texts (Titmuss 1950, 1970, 1987). The relationship between institutional design and trust has remained a persistent feature of the social policy literature whether that trust be between social partners (Bonoli and Emennegger 2010; Jeon 2012; Offe 1999), citizens and migrants (Penvick 2006, 2009), citizens and state institutions (Della Porta 2000; Freitag 2006; Levi 1998; Levi and Stoker 2000; Rothstein 2000, 2005; Rothstein and Stolle 2008); or between citizens themselves (Fukuyama

1995; Kevins 2019; Putnam 2000). Trust has also been utilised as an independent variable shaping political preferences (Berggren and Bjørnskov 2017; Cho and Moon 2019; Edlund and Lindh 2013; Pitlik and Rode 2021).

Recently, trust has become an analytic in literature concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, exploring standard questions about the role of trust as explicans for policy responses and their results (Chaney and Sophocleous 2021; Toshkov et al. 2022) and public acceptance of, and compliance with, restrictions (Baharuddin et al. 2021; Jäckle et al. 2022). Intuitively, given the preference-shaping capacity of institutional trust, it is also a common theme in research into developing and transitional states (Casieri et al. 2010; Kornai and Rose-Ackerman 2004; Radin 2019; Rothstein and Uslaner 2005; Li and Wu 2018) which find that institutional trust has a variety of positive outcomes for economic growth, efficacy of governance, and democratic stability.

Against this backdrop, this paper makes empirical contributions through its approach to research design and subject matter. Previous trust-based analyses fall into two broad categories: case studies of system design and large-*n* survey studies. There is a paucity of small-*n* qualitative studies with service users employing trust as the central analytical focus generally and none of British activated labour market governance in particular. This is an important research gap to fill because the integration of job search counselling with contractualised compliance and eligibility monitoring means the claimant-WC relationship has become a microcosm of the citizen-state relationship. As trust is an important part of the citizen-state relationship, so it is regarding the claimant-WC relationship as an instantiation of it.

The importance of trust in the claimant-WC relationship as an instantiation of the citizen-state relationship is evident if we consider the four characteristics of situations where trust is, if not necessary, highly desirable identified by Taylor-Gooby (2009). One is *uncertainty*. Trust concerns the confidence an individual has that a person or institution is reliable and will act as they need and/or expect them to. If individuals or institutions worked in infallibly predictable ways, trust would be of minimal functional necessity, if not redundant (Dasgupta 1988; Gambetta 1988; Lewicki and Bunker 1996; Luhmann 1979). Furthermore, the situation needs to be *future-oriented* with tangible *significance* and ramifications. Tied to all of these is that the situation must involve *vulnerability* as trust involves faith placed in others in a context involving risk. All four of these conditions apply to UC claimants and their experiences of contractual welfare governance. They are vulnerable in that they will usually have no other recourse available to them and no ability to press independent claims or ensure desired outcomes; there is future-oriented uncertainty in terms of their future employment status, income security, and general social needs; there is also uncertainty over how WCs will perform and whether they will be a help, hindrance, or source of assistance or additional stress. Finally, the resolution and outcomes of all of these factors are of great import for the claimant and their well-being.

Moreover, by situating the locus of trust-based citizen-state interactions within the claimant- WC relationship the dynamic interplay of *interpersonal* and *impersonal* trust can be investigated empirically. Interpersonal trust being trust that another individual person will act in your best interests through alignment of common goals and impersonal trust being trust based on shared norms, values, institutions, identity, or

altruism (Radin 2019:659). While interpersonal trust tends to be associated with interpersonal relationships and impersonal trust with individual-institution relationships, this context provides a space wherein both forms can co-exist and interact in potentially revealing and instructive ways.

The paper also makes a theoretical contribution in its conclusions and theorising relating to the relationship between trust and contract. Despite extensive theoretical and empirical work on this relationship in the business and management literatures, it has received limited treatment in the British social policy literature. Where it is discussed, it is confined to the public management literature and focuses purely on the ramifications of using performance management contracts and tendering within public services (Coulson 1998; Deakin and Walsh 1996; Mackintosh 1995; Walsh 1991a, 1991b, 1994, 1995a, 1995b; Walsh et al. 1997). A study which utilises the theoretical literature on the relationship between contracts and trust to look at relationships between benefit claimants and the state embodied through their WC is a novel theoretical contribution.

3: METHODOLOGY

3.1: METHOD

Data for this paper are derived from semi-structured interviews with 33 former and current UC claimants, conducted in two periods between January-March 2021 (20) and February-March 2022 (13). As fieldwork took place during periods of COVID-19-related restrictions, recruitment for interview was conducted online through adverts placed on the websites of advice centres, housing associations, and social media.

Interviews were conducted over the phone with a £10 gift voucher offered as recompense.

An upshot of online recruitment was that heterogeneous participants in terms of geography, current claimant status, and labour market or benefit trajectory were able to be recruited. This allowed for a sampling strategy akin to the 'maximum variation' logic whereby commonalities of experience that transcend individual differences can potentially be identified (Patton 2002:109-110). Of those interviewed, eighteen were female and fifteen male. Twenty interviewees came from England (six from London, five from the South-West, four from the South-East, three from the North-West, and one each from Yorkshire and the Humber and the West Midlands); nine came from Scotland; three from Wales, and two from Northern Ireland. Five were migrants, four of which were of non-European Union/Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) origins, and another two were British and BAME. Ages ranged between 18 and 65. Two were teenagers, five were in their twenties, seven were in their thirties, four were in their forties, eight were in their fifties, five were over sixty, and two declined to share their exact age but were in middle age.

Online recruitment also allowed for the recruitment of former, as well as current, claimants. In some cases, this meant claimants who managed to find employment, for whom the system 'worked', so to speak, and might have a different perspective to current and/or long-term claimants. Just over a third of the sample (13/33) were no longer claiming UC. Four were in full-time work, five in part-time or agency work, three were self-employed, and three were in education (although one of these three was still claiming UC). It also allowed recruitment of individuals who had since been classified

as having Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity (LCWRA) or Limited Capability for Work (LCW), of which there were seven and two, respectively. One was now in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

3.2: APPROACH TO DATA ANALYSIS

Interview data were analysed using RTA. This approach to thematic analysis (TA) has been developed over the last 15 or so years by Braun and Clarke from an initial article seeking to respond to criticisms of TA as a "poorly demarcated, and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method" (2006:77) and outline the unique value of TA in relation to both other thematic pattern-based qualitative methods and various epistemological and ontological positions. Multiple subsequent works have further developed and delineated RTA as a specific approach within TA (Braun and Clarke 2012, 2013, 2014, 2019, 2021).

RTA is defined as a unique approach to TA in contradistinction to two other broad categories of approach: coding reliability approaches and codebook approaches. Coding reliability approaches are defined by their positivistic approach to TA, which assumes an objective reality perfectly discoverable by researchers, a position described as 'naïve realism' (Braun and Clarke 2006; Willig 2012). In keeping with the naïve realist/positivistic orientation, coding reliability frameworks often use codebooks or coding frames and cross-checking between multiple coders to ensure that coding is 'reliable'. Codes are therefore both analytic inputs and outputs of the research process (Braun and Clarke 2021:237) and results are often presented as 'domain summaries' (Braun et al. 2019:3); summaries of what was said by participants in relation to topics or questions within the research. Codebook approaches, in a

sense, sit halfway between coding reliability approaches and RTA in that, whilst also using codebooks or *a priori* analytical frameworks, they embrace the active role of the researcher in data interpretation and the generation of knowledge.

RTA does not share the positivistic idea that the researcher is essentially passive in the research process with their role being simply gathering data in the social world which have patterns of meaning intrinsically located within them to be discovered and reported. The RTA approach sees this as antithetical to the basic principles of qualitative interpretative research which include that the knowledge of the researcher and their active role in interpreting data are key to the process of knowledge production. Rather, RTA values "the researcher's reflective and thoughtful engagement with their data and their reflexive and thoughtful engagement with the analytic process" (Braun and Clarke 2019:6) and asserts that:

> "*Themes do not passively emerge from either data or coding; they are not 'in' the data, waiting to be identified and retrieved by the researcher. Themes are creative and interpretive stories about the data, produced at the intersection of the researcher's theoretical assumptions, their analytic resources and skill, and the data themselves"* (Braun and Clarke 2019:6).

As such, the purpose of RTA is to generate analytic themes as research outputs which tie coded data together through unifying underlying concepts developed interpretatively by the researcher. In keeping with the outlined process of RTA, the data were analysed along the following five recursively, and not always uniformly sequential, steps: starting with familiarisation with the data based on repeated listens to interviews and readings of transcripts; generation of initial codes which categorise the data on a first-order basis; generating themes by looking for underlying concepts that unite the coded data; reviewing, defining, and naming those themes; then writing the report.

3.3: INFERENTIAL APPROACH

Despite the central role in RTA of the researcher's interpretation, it remains the case that the scope of defensible interpretations of, and conclusions drawable from, data is not unlimited. So as to provide a defensible account of how data were interpreted, an abductive inferential approach was taken. Abduction is a process of data interpretation involving "parallel and equal engagement with empirical data and extant theoretical understanding" (Thompson 2022:1411). It moves beyond the syllogistic inference of deduction or the reporting of observed occurrences as with a purely inductive approach. Rather, it seeks to "observe individual occurrences of objects or processes in order to come up with the most probable explanations" based on both data and existing knowledge and using both "to develop a plausible explanation of some observed phenomena" (Giese and Schnapp 2021:78-79). McKaughan (2008) argues that the role and purposes of abduction can be conceived of in three ways: to *generate* new theories, to provide *justification* of a theory, or to demonstrate that a working theory or hypothesis has '*pursuitworthiness*'. These last two conceptions are sometimes thought of as "inference to best explanation" (Ritz 2020:457). Abduction is used here for these latter two purposes: as a way of justifying an interpretation of data and demonstrating that it may form the basis of a fruitful line of future inquiry.

Empirical materials are presented in four sub-sections. The first establishes the lack of perceived encapsulated interest in general terms, the second that interviewees perceived their CC conditions as intentionally unreasonable, the third that certain interviewees' distrust was aimed at contracted-out services, and a fourth which

establishes that distrust is aimed at the institutional level of UC and not the interpersonal level of the WC.

4: FINDINGS

4.1: "THEY'VE DELIBERATELY MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR PEOPLE": ESTABLISHING A LACK OF PERCEIEVED ENCAPSULATED INTEREST

The overarching finding interpreted from the data as regards the main research question was that participants often felt a lack of intentional trust towards UC based on a lack of perceived encapsulated interest. Instead of discussing their interactions in terms of being helped or assisted, participants frequently made the point that the purposes or motives of UC were antithetical to their interests and actively working against them:

> "*(I)t just seemed a weighted system (…) (T)hey were already, sort of, angry when I went in. It was almost as if it was a set-up that I was doomed to fail*" (Callum, Scotland).

> "*I think one of the things is that they've deliberately made it difficult for people*" (Gwyneth, Wales).

Also common was the feeling that, while participants experienced different forms of need and barriers to work with which they needed help, their opinions, feelings, and circumstances were not "valued", that their WCs had "not taken my thoughts into consideration", and that their influence over their meetings had been little to none.

Instead of relationships defined by perceived encapsulated interest and by trust that WCs had the intention and motive to act in their best interest, several participants expressed that they felt their WC was simply there to minimise benefit expenditure and to find ways to catch claimants out and refer them for sanction. One participant who

had worked in the Jobcentre before the introduction of these reforms went so far as to say that "the Jobcentre really has become the Sanctioncentre":

> "*I just felt they were trying to catch you out. They were definitely wanting to sanction people*" (Roy, Scotland).
>
> "*My personal opinion on the matter is they're trained to catch you out and purposely sanction you to save the government money*" (Leigh, Wales).
>
> "*I got a feeling there, they were always trying to trip you up, you know? You're kind of on the defensive and you have to sort of take it steady even though I wasn't -I don't think- doing anything wrong. Quite legitimately claiming*" (Thomas, South-West).
>
> "*(T)hey just to get rid of you for your appointment to get to the next one, to get to the next one, to get to the next one so they can sanction someone*" (John, Scotland).

One manner of expressing this feeling was, for a handful of participants, to tell anecdotes referring to conversations with WCs or JCP staff, either in meetings or informally through friends and acquaintances in such positions. One referred to having a discussion with a new WC with whom he had a more productive and respectful relationship as compared to others and telling her that he felt that his previous WC was just looking for any reason to sanction him and how she demurred in reply by claiming she "can't officially comment on that" by way of confirmation rather than denial: "A nod is as good as a wink, yeah". Another, who was claiming UC whilst self-employed so as to manage a variety of complex working, financial, and familial commitments, recalled how an advisor told him that they "won't stop" and that "unless you're totally off UC" they will not stop pushing "even if you're claiming £10 from UC".

A couple of these anecdotes referred to the use of incentives within JCP. In one example, this concerned the use of incentives in JCP offices not undertaking managed migration to maximise the number of claims moving from legacy benefits to UC and, in

another, the use of incentives to reduce expenditure. This participant claimed that a close friend who works in JCP told him "it's their job to stop your benefit". Prompting him to say that:

> "*UC is fine if it is fair, but it is not fair when the department has incentives for them, personally, to get credit or their department, personally, to get credit for so-called 'saving the government money'*" (Frank, North-West).

It is important to note that trustworthiness and fairness are not interchangeable, commensurate, or synonymous concepts. However, in the sense in which the participant used the terms above, where unfairness is described as the existence of agency goals in opposition to the interests and needs of claimants, this last excerpt perhaps best summarises this overall finding of a lack of intentional trust as encapsulated interest. A system cannot be trustworthy where the goals and interests of one party, in this case JCP, are not aligned with those of claimants.

The core of the abductive data analysis process is recursive analysis of data and theory; moving between the two so as to establish defensible and coherent interpretation. As such, an important part of establishing a lack of encapsulated interest in the data was to consider other forms or *loci* of distrust. In particular, to establish whether or not they existed alongside the lack of encapsulated interest or if they were perhaps better conceptualisations of the distrust claimants expressed than encapsulated interest. To this end, I analysed the data for evidence that claimants distrusted the value orientation of UC as one of the core elements of institutional trust highlighted in the literature is that people trust the basic underlying value orientation of the institution (Gilson 2003).

In so doing, it became evident that the expressed lack of perceived encapsulated interest existed despite a broad level of support across the sample for UC and its conditional nature. On the whole, participants were supportive of behavioural welfare conditionality. There were exceptions, of course. Several stated that they felt conditionality was "wrong" and that, while they agreed that people ought not to be able to free-ride the system, that the effects of sanctions -particularly on people who may have cognitive difficulties- were too severe. A good example of this was the gentleman who accepted that:

> "*(T)here's always at least theoretically been that* quid pro quo *that you had to look for work in order to get the benefits. It's just that they've screwed conditionality up a few notches (…) basically all the risk is put on you as the claimant. Whatever happens it's dropping back on you, which is quite a difficult place to be*" (Henry, has lived in 3 countries).

One went so far as to describe benefit sanctions as "one of the nastiest" things she has heard of a government doing. Nevertheless, most participants were of the opinion that conditionality was a good thing and that "there should be repercussions" for not actively searching for work. Participants were largely supportive of people being "forced", "pushed", or "made" to work. UC was good, therefore, because it "makes you work" or makes you "accountable". This was because people are not always "genuine", "need that push", and because:

> "*Unfortunately, people these days, they don't do anything unless there's a threat or a reward. And yes, people aren't happy just to go to work and have their pay anymore. They want more than that. And if people can sit at home without a job and claim benefits and be fine financially, then that's what they're going to do*" (Kelly, single mother).

In establishing that the value orientation of the system did not constitute a parallel, competing, or better-fitting alternative conceptualisation of distrust, the

characterisation of the overarching form of distrust as a lack of perceived encapsulated interest as the main finding from the evidence is strengthened.

4.2: "IT STRUCK ME AS INSANE": CLAIMANTS PERCEIVE CONDITIONS AS UNREASONABLE

The lack of perceived encapsulated interest expressed by interviewees manifested itself in different ways in the data. As well as the more general statements of feeling that the system was weighted against them and that agency goals took priority over providing assistance based on claimants' felt needs, many participants expressed the more specific view that the stipulations for mandatory activities in their CCs were manifestly inappropriate. A common contention was that WCs' prime concern are your "numbers"; prioritising quantitative measures of claimant activity over qualitative emphasis on the appropriateness of that activity and its efficacy in helping the claimant into suitable work. Common problems included unreasonable expectations about how many hours they were expected to undertake job search:

> "*I don't think searching for 35 hours a week was a realistic or appropriate thing for anyone. The idea that looking for work is itself a full-time job I don't think is very realistic. It struck me as insane*" (Robert, university graduate**).**

> "*It's all very well saying that you have to apply for seven hours' worth of jobs a day or you have to look for seven hours for jobs. If there aren't seven hours' worth of jobs for you to be looking at or searching for then, ultimately, once you scroll through the website of the local area, that is your searching ended, really*" (Amanda, works in local government).

> "*I don't think anyone can realistically job search 35 hours a week and especially if this is a small town that has seasonal employment and low wages and so on, so I had to find things I could at least apply for legitimately*" (Kirk, lives in a seaside town).

Other points of contention and concern surrounding the appropriateness of mandatory activities included the expectation to look for work within a 90-minute

travelling radius which raised fear of additional costs and incompatibility with non-work commitments. Participants who had health issues in particular expressed feeling that their WCs were asking for evidence of job search simply to make up the numbers on their online journals regardless of whether those jobs were inappropriate for someone in their position:

> "*I was practically forced into job searching. Which again made my illness even worse. And it was practically, I was applying for jobs, which I knew I would never start*" (Ryan, suffers from mental health issues).

> "(*I)t's a waste of the claimant's time, and it's a waste of the employer's time having to sift through all of the applicants, when they have no interest in going for this job or wanting it at all, and it's just not practical. Why would somebody apply for a job 60 miles away, that's three hours a day?*" (Kirsty, South-West).

> "*At the time I didn't have any support from family or friends so any care that I needed to provide for my family and myself had to be provided by myself. I did have a driving licence at the time but didn't have a car. Obviously, I had to factor in public transport and the ability to get to places*" (Carrie, South-East).

4.3: "YOU'VE GOT THIS SORT OF PRIVATISATION THING": DISTRUST AND CONTRACTING-OUT

Another more specific, albeit less common, instantiation of the lack of perceived encapsulated interest expressed by some interviewees was their hostility to, and distrust of, the elements of welfare governance which had been contracted-out to private providers. In two instances, this related to participants who had been referred to the Work Programme, the contracted-out payment-for-results activation programme that existed between 2011-2017. However, only one of these participants raised issues that could be constructed as related to trust *per se*. Where there were more explicit trust issues, these related in a couple of instances to training programmes:

> "*(T)hey would transfer me over to a private training company. So,* strangely*, the private training company had set up offices right across from JCP*" (Logan, former care worker).
>
> "*(Y)ou've got this sort of privatisation thing (…) I was, I think mandated or at least obliged to go on a security guard course, which at my age, my health is a little wide of the mark (…) (T)his is a private company, and I'm told that they claimed £3700 for me being on this course (…) I think it suggests that it's not completely straight*" (Larry, 60).

However, the bulk of distrust of contracted-out services was levelled at companies contracted by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to administer Work Capability Assessments (WCAs). First introduced through the Welfare Reform Act 2007 to replace the previous Personal Capability Assessment, WCAs are used to determine eligibility for ESA and Personal Independence Payment (PIP), the replacement benefit for Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Claimants are assessed according to 17 descriptors pertaining to physical or mental capacities relevant to work. Each descriptor carries a specified number of points of which a claimant needs to reach a total of 15 to have conditionality reduced and for specific descriptors around mobility, continence, dexterity, capacity to understand risk, and coping with social situations needing to apply to have conditionality removed. Administration of WCAs was originally contracted out to Atos; a French I.T. multinational who co-developed a computer programme with the DWP called 'Logic-integrated Medical Assessment' (LiMA) to determine eligibility for ESA algorithmically.

For some interviewees, it was this algorithmic logic that was source of scepticism, with several describing how it took multiple assessments to reach an outcome they felt was commensurate with their condition. One example concerns an individual who scored zero points on his first WCA despite suffering from Parkinson's Disease and subsequently had to be reassessed. He described how the second assessment was

upstairs, “so if you can get in there you’ve probably failed by the time you’ve turned up” and that one of the descriptors was that “he could hear his name when called” because he “wasn’t telling him I was deaf. I have Parkinson’s. One of the few things that are still functioning on me is my ears”.

Whilst these remarks convey a facetiousness arising from deeply held frustration, they touch upon the serious problems many claimants have experienced with the LiMA system. Atos ended its contract with the government in March of 2014 as a result of reputational damage from being associated with the WCA (despite having been replaced by Maximus and Capita for WCAs, Atos continues to hold a contract for PIP assessments) (Warren et al. 2014) after precipitous increases in both the number of appeals against decisions and the proportion of successful appeals rising to almost half (Grover 2014).

While examples of claimants being frustrated with the process of assessment by contracted-out companies could potentially be considered examples of a lack of competence trust, the data here were quite clearly indicative of a lack of intentional trust, so very much part of the overarching theme of encapsulated interest. Interviewees were quick to describe their belief in the iniquities of using private companies to assess physical and mental fitness for work as indicative of motives not conducive to the welfare of claimants. At the most extreme end, this involved accusations that WCA companies lied to JCP about their physical capabilities by exaggerating the amount of physical social and self-care activities they undertake or inventing answers to questions not asked during assessment:

> “*(I)t’s just a way of tripping people up. The same with the assessment companies. The amount of lies and the amount of where they contradict*

> *themselves in the writing up of these reports -miss things out what you report- is absolutely diabolical and wrong*" (Alan, 43).

However, for most, it was the feeling that WCAs were not there to assess health but to find ways of denying ESA claims. One had read that companies contracted to perform WCAs were given performance-related payments if they kept the relative numbers going onto ESA or UC at appropriate levels; a charge not entirely without merit (Gjersøe 2016). He told me that:

> "*(W)hen you go to these sort of places like Atos, and you're there for your medical, there's people in the waiting area that are spying on you. As soon as you approach the building there's cameras on the outside of the building and they're spying on you. I noticed this because one time when I went for a medical a few years back I noticed it on the way the computer monitor was situated. Then there was the security guard and the receptionist was sort of sitting there noting down details of a certain person (…) When you walk up to these places, they're already watching you (…) If you're walking in with a stick, they're checking out how you're walking*" (Andy, divorced father).

This evidence more explicitly connects governance practices to a lack of intentional trust as encapsulated interest in two ways: perception of the functional purpose of the contracting-out as to deny claimants a fair assessment of their capacities and distrust stemming from the fact that there is private profit is being extracted from the process. Of course, it must be noted that while there was broad distrust expressed in contracted-out services, it was only in a few instances that specific aspects on contracting-out, such as profit extraction, were touted as drivers of the institutional distrust expressed in those services. In most instances, despite the contractors being named and thus interviewees demonstrating that they understood these services to have been outsourced, the way in which distrust in these services was spoken of was in similar terms as their broader distrust they felt in UC as a whole without specific reference to outsourcing of services as a driver of distrust.

4.4: DISTRUST IN INSTITUTIONS RATHER THAN INDIVIDUALS

Having established the overall finding that claimants interviewed here exhibited a lack of intentional trust in UC in the form of a perceived lack of encapsulated interest and that this manifested itself in terms both general and specific, the question turns to the level at which that distrust was aimed: at UC on an institutional level or at the individual level of the WCs. One of Hardin's initial works on encapsulated interest described it as a "street-level epistemology of trust" embedded in iterated, thick relationships (1993). In other words, it was initially conceptualised as a form of trust existing between individuals, before later becoming a framework applied whereby such relationships are "embedded in larger contexts that drive the analyses or their analysis (...) used to extrapolate to collective and institutional behaviors" (2004:6). This was especially important to establish given the points raised in part 2.2 and the way that the integration of labour market with social security policy created a microcosm of the citizen-state/institution relationship in the interpersonal claimant-WC relationship which could allow for the blurring of interpersonal and institutional forms of trust and potentially interesting dynamics between them.

While a number of participants had negative things to say about their WCs personally and spoke of their negative experiences in terms of their WCs actions, interviewees mostly apportioned blame for their poor experiences to systemic issues. Words used to characterise the system included "broken", "unworkable", or "unfair". Others blamed the government or Conservative Party for the problems of the system. When discussing WCs, several spoke in terms of there being a set routine that WCs had to stick to, with their WC having little discretion over how to do their job, even if their WC might personally be empathetic to them and their circumstances:

> "*I don't feel, having said that, that is the WC or CM[17]'s fault. They have to work within the rules and are put in a difficult position. They have to dole this out to people who can't afford their food. 100% structural*" (Pat, 59).
>
> "*I feel like the WCs can't actually use different rules for different people*" (Zoe, keen swimmer).
>
> "*They might understand where I'm coming from, but they've clearly got a script that they have to push*" (Emma, single mother).
>
> "*It's about being more compassionate, I think, and being less robotic. You know, as if they're following a script*" (Jeremy, South-West).
>
> "*I'm not saying they were bad people, but they were working within their guidelines to give me support*" (Rory, Scotland).

Taylor-Gooby (2008b) describes a feature of systems where management is oriented towards the meeting of targets such that any 'outward-looking' orientation towards the ethic of care is crowded out by the imperative to 'look upward' to managers and policymakers. This seemed to be reflected in the evidence. Participants spoke of the controlling influence of their WC's supervisors as limiting the inclination of some WCs to be more compassionate and flexible in offering assistance and understanding to them and that the way WCs are made to feel by management could have a tangibly negative effect on their demeanour and actions towards claimants. Occasionally, supervisors made appearances in anecdotes:

> "*They would say "It's not up to us to sanction you, it's my supervisor""* (Lindsay, unmarried).
>
> "*Their supervisors will be looking at them to make sure that all the people are actually seeking employment and showing that they are. So they've got them down their back because if they're not it'll look bad on them with the job they're doing*" (Richard, 35).
>
> "*On one occasion, one of the girls said to me -this is while I was still attending JCP-, "Just say as loud as you can what you're looking for" and she was implying that she was being listened to by her supervisors, yeah? So she couldn't be as nice as she might want to be (...) And she told me that there was pressure to*

[17] Case Manager.

sanction people. They were being too polite and all this kind of stuff" (Stewart, has tertiary qualifications)

In this way, participants' lack of institutional trust as perceived encapsulated interest not only can be tied to the performance-based nature of their CC but to an overly rigid system with limited discretionary space for WCs to develop empathetic and productive relationships with claimants. Any lack of interpersonal trust in WCs themselves appeared secondary to the lack of institutional trust in UC more generally.

Although negative experiences with WCs were near-universal, most participants had experience of multiple WCs and stated that interactions with some specific WCs countered the general trend of negativity. The trust literature does state that repeated interactions and knowledge of the other can produce trusting relationships over time and some participant testimony did provide evidence of a 'rapport effect' (Alford 2009; Kiser and Ostrom 1982; Ostrom and Walker 2003) whereby repeated interactions enhanced relationship quality.

Participants commonly highlighted the difficult working environment they felt their WCs had to contend with. Often, this was expressed through highlighting the brief nature of their meetings and the time and workload pressures WCs appeared to be subject to. A number of participants indicated that their meetings were "short and sweet" and quite often lasted "less than 10 minutes", down even to "just a couple" of minutes. Sometimes, this meant that meetings consisted merely of the WC going through the activity recorded on the claimant's journal and then confirming they were doing enough or telling them that they had to demonstrate greater effort. One individual said that he got "the impression of someone who is kind of busy, so you're being pushed through". Another attributed variability in the workload of respective

WCs when comparing his experience to those of people he knows, whose WCs apparently “bend over backwards” while he did not feel that he received similar treatment. Another suggested that the lack of time of WCs was a serious impediment to the system, believing that longer contact time with WCs could “help a lot more people find the right job rather than keep going round and round in circles”.

As well as time pressure, participants alluded to a lack of experience as being the problem. Some of the older respondents highlighted that their WCs were young and perhaps lacked some element of life experience that would help them to be more compassionate and better understand the lives of some of the older claimants they deal with. This sometimes bled into concerns about the relative levels of knowledge and understanding WCs possessed about the complex system they administered, either due to a lack of training, the complexity of the system they are being asked to administer, or the complex needs of claimants with health problems. In this way, while institutional factors seemed more salient determinants of trust or distrust than interpersonal ones, there is some evidence in these last examples where personal competence trust is a factor for people with specific or complex needs.

5: DISCUSSION

The primary argument I would offer in response to these findings is a critique of the specific form of contractualism taken in UC; that is to say that the use of performance-based contracts being preferred to the use of relational contracts. Such an argument is supported by the evidence presented here in the following ways. Firstly, the theoretical literature on the relationship between trust and contract argues that contracts are a means to allow a trusting relationship to develop where no *a priori* trust

exists between parties but that performance contracts emphasise the conflictual aspects of the relationship and inhibit the development of trust. This is exactly the dynamic suggested by the evidence. In the discussion of shared values, whether or not interviewees agreed with the premises of conditionality, they understood the arguments for it. As such, they understood that conditionality is touted as a means of behaviour modification for those who lack a work ethic and so is predicated on a starting assumption of distrust in claimants. Moreover, the lack of perceived encapsulated interest expressed by interviewees was related to what they saw as the intentionally unreasonableness of the conditions set out in their CC. The second source of support for this argument in the evidence is that the distrust interviewees expressed was levelled at the institutional level of UC and not the interpersonal level of WCs and the specific points made in so doing suggest that their preference was for a system predicated on the principles of relational, as opposed to performance-based, contract. The following section will develop these arguments more fully.

5.1: **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONTRACT AND TRUST**

The relationship between trust and contract is the subject of an extensive theoretical and empirical literature in management studies which applies theoretical perspectives in economics and law to case studies of contractual relationships. Issues addressed by this literature include the extent to which contract can be complementary or inhibitive to trust, whether their co-existence is necessary or redundant, whether one leads to the other, and identification of factors influencing the relationship in a particular direction. This literature has produced three overarching perspectives on the relationship between trust and contract.

One derives from classical contract theory and transaction cost economics literature (TCE) which views contract as a basis on which to build trusting relationships where they do not already exist. In this perspective, contracts limit the ability and incentives for opportunistic behaviour; allowing for the development of healthy, trusting relationships with reduced risk (*cf.* Boerner and Macher 2002; Lyons 1996; Malhotra and Murnighan 2002; Roxenhall and Ghauri 2004; Williamson 1975).

A second perspective, dominant in management studies, views trust and contract as negatively related. This perspective assumes a spectrum of mechanisms for governing relationships that has trust at one end and control, with contracts as a mechanism for exercising it, at the other (Knights et al. 2001). Here, contract is considered unnecessary if trust is an embedded *a priori* feature of the relationship or, at least, it diminishes the functional necessity to have rigid, overly regulatory contract stipulations (Bradach and Eccles 1989). In contexts involving a modicum of pre-existing trust, there is sometimes a preference for 'incomplete' contracts (Fehr and Gächter 2000; Fehr and Schmidt 2001; Hart and Holmström 1987; Molm et al. 2003) which recognise that not all eventualities can be contracted for so resolution procedures are specified for unanticipated disputes. Similarly, others write of 'umbrella agreements', or 'framework contracts' which delineate broad principles which are flexible yet ensure consistency in the nature of, and values underpinning, the relationship (Mouzas and Ford 2006, 2007; Mouzas 2006).

A third perspective, more common in the social sciences, views trust and contract as *in conflict* (Neu 1991). If trust negates the need for contract, then their use can signify distrust and potentially impede trust development. Granovetter (1985) argues that

formal contracts can downplay the socially embedded relationships and norm-based shared expectations underpinning social exchange; creating competition where consent and co-operation are sought and expanding opportunities for opportunistic behaviour, the avoidance of which is the purpose of both trust and contract (Goshal and Moran 1996). Similarly concerned with the erosion of the prosocial, Lyons and Mehta (1997) distinguish between a future-oriented and self-interested trust concerned with outcomes based on the *homo economicus* model and a retrospective and socially oriented trust concerned with process, treatment, values, and norms based on the *homo sociologicus* model. Their concern is that the former is dominant in real-world business contracts despite the latter producing stronger outcomes. Hunt and Nevin (1974) are also wary of power imbalances between contracting parties that provide the more powerful party with opportunities to shape the contract to their advantage and use coercive power to control the less powerful party.

5.2: UNIVERSAL CREDIT, INITIAL DISTRUST, AND PERFORMANCE CONTRACT

All three perspectives concur that contracts are mechanisms used when there is no pre-existing trust between parties. However, while the TCE perspective views contracts as a means to facilitate a trusting relationship, the management studies perspective sees this as possible only where rigid, performance-based contracts are eschewed for more flexible contracts and the critical social science perspective goes one step further in noting that performance contracts not merely inhibit trust development but can actively foster distrust.

Both of these premises are reflected in the evidence. It is quite uncontroversial to characterise CCs as ‘performance contracts’. Such contracts “constitute an

agreement between actors that establishes general goals and targets for the performance of the interaction" which is achieved "by using different types of incentive-based mechanisms for governing the actors' behaviours" (Camén et al. 2011:368**)**. This is exactly how CCs work.

It is also fair to say that the use of operant performance-related contracts as in British labour market activation is, in itself, a sign of distrust of claimants as it assumes that self-interest and fear of penalty rather than shared values or individual commitment are the only means by which claimants can be compelled to participate actively in social exchange (Taylor-Gooby 2008b). Under the professional-expert hierarchical model of the welfare state, it was assumed that the expert professional knew best with the claimant a passive figure. The shift to managerialism and operant contractualism in welfare governance is, in theory, based on the idea that consumers are rational (Taylor-Gooby 1999, 2009:67-111) but this has been accompanied by a parallel, 'New Paternalist' construction of claimants as feckless (Whitworth 2016). In this way, claimants are doubly distrusted: distrusted as rational actors with no commitment or values beyond self-interest (lack of intentional trust) or as feckless individuals in need of the strong hand of the state to guide them (lack of competence trust). Participants' attitudes to conditionality as expressed in the section on shared values are instructive here. Whether they agreed or disagreed with conditionality, they were aware that UC is a policy premised on a view of claimants as needing to be activated into job search through incentives and sanctions.

Molm et al. (2003) conducted a series of experiments which suggest that performance-based contracts can highlight the competitive and conflictual aspects of social

exchange as the monitoring and enforcement elements highlight potential inequalities of expectations, power, and outcomes. This research also suggests that unequal outcomes are more likely to be attributed to the self-interested negotiating behaviour of the other party. In turn, as awareness of the fundamental inequality of the relationship is heightened, the conflictual aspects of the exchange are brought to the fore and:

> "*the more likely it is that each will interpret the situation in ways that support his or her own interests: holding the other responsible for unsatisfactory outcomes, perceiving the other's behavior as dispositionally rather than situationally caused, and assigning negative traits and untrustworthy motives to the other*" (Molm et al. 2003:135).

Given that interviewees' distrust of UC was manifested in a perception of their compliance standards as inappropriate and unreasonably difficult to meet and that they were manifestly aware of the distrust of claimants underpinning benefit conditionality, it seems fair to surmise that the confluence of claimants' awareness of the initial position of distrust on which conditionality is premised with the perception of the performance stipulations in UC as unreasonable are factors in the distrust claimants express and so are related to the specific approach to contract taken as part of UC.

5.3: CONSIDERING THE RELATIONAL APPROACH TO CONTRACT

The argument that the performance-based approach to contract in UC highlights the conflictual aspects of the exchange, fostering distrust, is strengthened by the fact that interviewees also expressed preference for principles consistent with a competing vision of contract to performance-based contracts: relational contract theory (RCT). While classical contract theory treats all contracts as though they govern discrete exchanges where all terms and conditions can be pre-agreed (Macneil 1978; Morrison

and Robinson 1997; Rousseau 1989), RCT posits that, in reality, most contracts govern longitudinal relationships rather than discrete exchanges. As they govern relationships between subjects which are, by definition, dynamic, RCT advocates that contracts only define broad norms and principles governing a relationship and be suitably flexible to allow for discretion, understanding, leeway, and renegotiation as an interpersonal relationship develops organically over time (Gordon 1985; Macneil 1985; Palay 1985).

In addition to frustration at the perception of intentionally high compliance standards, participants expressed frustrations and views which I argue are consistent with a preference for a relational approach to contract rather than a performance-based one. These arguments relate to two specific tenets of RCT. One, that it advocates eschewing rigid performance-based contracts for flexible ones with wide scope for discretion (evidenced in interviewees' negative feelings towards the stipulations in their CCs and their feelings that WCs were not able to be flexible and empathetic with them due to the systemic nature of UC). Secondly, that it advocates such arrangements for the purposes of allowing productive interpersonal relationships to develop over time (which would be the outcome of allowing WCs to be more flexible and exercise more discretion based on interpersonal rapport and understanding of claimants as individuals).

RCT has made its way into social policy literature and could potentially offer some useful insights about how to improve service *delivery* when thought about in light of the preferences participants expressed for a system based on relational principles. Jayasuriya (2001, 2002) takes the position that contractualism ought to be predicated upon the construction of autonomy as a relational and contextual concept that sits at

the interaction between individuals and their environment. In this schema, claimants would not be treated as autonomous in terms of being divorced from their social context but understood as beings whose agency and autonomy is bounded, with expectations placed upon claimants and the supports offered them formed and continuously re-evaluated on that basis. Such an approach could assuage the potential for distrust stemming from a rigid performance-based approach.

Building on this, Vincent-Jones (2000, 2006, 2009) argues that welfare contractualism should follow a relational model based on the relational principles of reciprocity, flexibility, proportionality, and power. The evidence presented here demonstrate current failings on all four. The lack of intentional trust as encapsulated interest demonstrates that participants did not feel their experiences to be defined by reciprocity but rather by the desire to limit spending through moving individuals into any job as quickly as possible, regardless of suitability, or by finding cause to sanction them. The rigidity of the performance-based CC and the demands placed on claimants, despite those demands being experienced as inappropriate in a variety of ways, demonstrate a lack of flexibility. Finally, the inability participants expressed to exert their preferences and desires and the threat, and sometimes use, of sanctions demonstrate the lack of defined procedural means to ensure that power is used proportionally in an inherently unequal relationship. In this way, we can tie the intentional distrust participants expressed to the form of contract being used: a performance-based contract based on operant principles the use of which is predicated on distrust of the claimant.

Finally, Yeatman and Owler (2001:37) argue that standards of service delivery are "embedded within the service transaction" meaning that "the quality and the effectiveness of the service are not independent of how the service relationship is transacted". This, they ground in Kingdom's (2000:20) assertion that relational contracts form:

> "*a relationship between the parties which extends over time, which is concomitant with and integrates with the parties' other activities, which is more flexible, and which may be renegotiated in the light of the parties' changing circumstances*" (quoted in Yeatman and Owler 2001:38).

As the principles of relational contracting in commercial activities map onto the type of relationship WCs and claimants experience, then principles of relational contracting such as flexibility, holism, and person- and relationship-centricity could provide principles upon which to build service delivery that may better develop claimant trust, regardless of whether the contractual-conditional element were retained.

6: CONCLUSION

Whilst small-*n* case studies cannot be generalised, this paper provides evidence that institutional rather than interpersonal trust is more salient for welfare service users despite the logic of recent forms being to invert this. Under the hierarchical-bureaucratic mode of service provision, interpersonal trust and institutional trust were, in theory, insulated from each other. Trust in professionals' intentions, institutions, and corpus of knowledge meant that trust could be maintained despite poor experiences with individuals within the system and *vice versa* (Giddens 1990). The shift to the managerial mode was supposed to mirror private sector management by building trust on the basis of interpersonal trust between users and providers.

However, patterns more in tune with the theoretical expectations of the former system seemed to persist in this evidence with participants' expressing distrust in the institutions of the welfare state rather than in individuals delivering those services. Counterintuitively, this meant findings followed the theoretical expectations of trust generation in the hierarchical-professional model only with distrust, rather than trust, being the predominant outcome.

Somewhat paradoxically, it appears as though a lack of intentional trust at the institutional level is not, on the whole, accompanied by disagreement with the principles of behavioural conditionality. Conditionality may be a more efficacious source of political trust and electoral consent at the macro-societal level than as a trust-generating mechanism at the micro-level of delivery, although this does somewhat undermine the contractualist rhetoric of reciprocity surrounding activated benefit policies. Turning from contractualist rhetoric to contractualism in practice, this evidence suggests that the nature of contractualism employed as part of UC can undermine trust in the system. Participants were largely resentful of what they felt was the prescriptive and impersonal nature of the operant, performance-based approach of their CCs and seemed to lament how this inhibited a more relational approach based on allowing WCs to be more flexible to their circumstances.

Finally, it should be noted that these findings are the result of a process of abductive, exploratory research which tested the "pursuitworthiness" (McKaughan 2008:447) of theoretical propositions concerning the institutional trust of UC claimants, with theories about the approach taken to contract offered as conclusions offering the theory of best fit. I would suggest future research which starts from the position of

exploring the relationship between trust and contractualism as a worthwhile endeavour to test these preliminary conclusions.

PAPER 3: *THE NEW GOLDEN RULE? UNIVERSAL CREDIT, RECOGNITION, AND THE SELF AS WELFARE SUBJECT*

1: INTRODUCTION

Universal Credit (UC) is the latest iteration of labour market activation in Britain. Activation in the British context has involved the integration of social security and labour market policy. This means that eligibility is determined not administratively but interpersonally in meetings between claimants and their advisors (termed Work Coaches (WCs)) in the public employment service (Jobcentre Plus (JCP)). This shift has been legitimated by both Labour (Heron 2001; Heron and Dwyer 2002) and Conservative (Gibson 2015; Hickson 2013) governments by reframing social citizenship in communitarian terms (Carey and Bell 2022; Deacon 2002; Patrick 2012b, 2014; Sage 2012a) entailing a balanced exchange of rights and responsibilities between state and individual. Claimants are held individually responsible for meeting job search activity targets in order to derive their social rights and, in turn, the state is theoretically responsible for providing claimants the social right of an individualised programme of support for employment re-entry tailored to the claimant's idiosyncratic needs and employment goals (Sage 2012b:361).

This paper investigates the notion of reciprocity purportedly at the heart of this arrangement through claimants' affective experiences of welfare governance. It frames the exchange as one whereby claimants are required to perform a particular construction of the 'active welfare subject' (AWS) in order to access their social right to autonomy whereby the self, either as a diachronic identity with a right to preservation or as a set of preferences with a right to be expressed, is treated as the subject of welfare. The paper applies the framework method of thematic analysis

(FMTA) to data derived from semi-structured interviews with 33 UC claimants using an analytical framework derived from recognition theory. It asks the questions: '*What needs and goals do UC claimants express concerning their job search activities?*' and '*Do UC claimants feel that their needs, circumstances, and goals are adequately accounted for in meetings with their WCs?*'. It presents evidence to indicate that, whilst claimants exhibit reflexive and active desires to work, the impersonal and work-first nature of UC means that their working identities and skills and individual circumstances often go unrecognised during the process of their claim, undermining the reciprocity purportedly at the heart of the policy.

The paper will proceed as follows. First, the debates over the notion of the self as welfare subject and their relation to the notion of communitarian reciprocity at the heart of UC will be introduced. The theoretical framework of recognition theory, its praxis as participatory policy in the literature, and how this is transposed into an analytical framework for the empirical analysis will then be discussed. Analysis and discussion of findings are then provided before the paper is drawn to a close with conclusions.

2: THE NEW GOLDEN RULE AS AN EXCHANGE OF PERFORMED FOR RECOGNISED SUBJECTIVITY

Benefit conditionality, as exemplified by UC, has been justified using communitarian rhetoric detailing a balanced, reciprocal exchange of rights and responsibilities between state and individual (Carey and Bell 2022; Deacon 2002; Patrick 2012b, 2014, Sage 2012a). The Responsive Communitarian Platform makes explicitly clear that reciprocity is the central feature of the communitarian understanding of social justice

(Deacon 2002:75). Amitai Etzioni, arguably the foremost ideological influence on the communitarian turn in British welfare reform, describes this as the 'New Golden Rule': "Respect and uphold society's moral order as you would have society respect and uphold your autonomy" (1997: xviii) or, more elegantly, "If the government keeps its part of the bargain, then the claimant should keep theirs" (Deacon 2004:915). This exchange has been framed as the 'individualisation' of social rights whereby claimants are held individually responsible for 'upholding society's moral order' by meeting the conditions set out in their agreement with their WC (termed a 'Claimant Commitment (CC)) and, in turn, have their autonomy upheld and respected by receiving support tailored to their individual circumstances and needs (Van Berkel and Valkenburg 2007). This, I argue, can be thought of as an exchange of models of subjectivity whereby claimants are expected to perform the 'Becoming' construction of the AWS in return for realising their social right to have the self treated as the subject of welfare. The theory underpinning both sides of this exchange stem from critiques of the post-war welfare state (PWWS).

First, let us consider the side of the exchange concerning expectations on claimants. Under the new conditional regime of benefit policy, claimants are expected to "perform appropriate welfare subjectivities" (England 2023:2) to receive benefit. In this case, the required welfare subjectivity is based on what Wright (2016) terms the 'Becoming' model of the AWS. This model of claimant subjectivity stems from the New Right critiques of the PWWS as promoting passivity and dependence. In this schema, policy intervention which incentivises society's active work ethic is required to make claimants 'become' active based on the liberal assumption of the subject as a self-interested rational agent capable of expressing and exercising choice in response to

incentives (Deacon and Mann 1999:423-433; Le Grand 2003). On the proviso that claimants successfully perform a welfare subjectivity defined by taking responsibility for active job search, the state then assumes, according to theory, the responsibility of meeting the claimant's social right to an individualised programme of support for their labour market re-entry.

We can now turn to the issue of what is meant by an 'individualised programme of support', which forms the expectation theoretically placed upon the state in this exchange. Yeatman (2009:25-89) frames the current individualisation of social rights as an historical iteration located at the intercept of disparate intellectual traditions which valorise the individual as the subject of right. The PWWS was predicated on a form of social citizenship that recognised the individual as a unique source of subjectivity and social need and, therefore, of social rights. However, critics on both left and right noted that, while the PWWS recognised individual rights as deriving from subjectivity and particularised social need, this did not include recognition of the subjective 'self', either as site of subjective preference or as an organismic being with the right to preservation of its subjective identity, as the subject of welfare. In other words, although the PWWS was predicated on recognising subjectivity and human individuality (i.e. the existence of the self) as the moral source of social rights, this did not translate into policies that sought to preserve or recognise the individual's sense of self either in terms of their identity or preferences. As such, Yeatman defines individualised policies as being those which *do* facilitate such preservation of individual identity or expression of preference.

This notion of individualised policy being that which recognises individual identity or preference guides both the research question investigated here and the ways in which the analytical framework is operationalised. The first question, '*What needs and goals do UC claimants express concerning their job search activities?',* speaks directly to ascertaining what exactly it is that purportedly individualised policies ought to recognise in terms of need and preference. The second question, '*Do UC claimants feel that their needs, circumstances, and goals are adequately accounted for in meetings with their WCs?*' then seeks to ascertain whether the source of that subjectivity, the claimants themselves, feel that they are adequately translated into the content of policy.

3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1: RECOGNITION THEORY

Developed originally by Axel Honneth, recognition theory is a framework rooted in German idealism that has come to be a major force in ethical, social, political, and critical theory (Schmidt am Busch 2010). Honneth's aim was to create a "social theory with normative content" (Hardimon 1997:46) that provides both a critique of social structures and a vision of the 'Good Life'. The core of Honneth's vision of a good life is self-realisation (Hardimon 1997:53). However, as the self is inherently relational and given meaning intersubjectively, a necessary condition of self-realisation is that individuals can see their self-concepts recognised in the symbolic, representational, and material contexts they inhabit.

Recognition is widely utilised in debates concerning multiculturalism (Taylor and Gutmann 1992) and the relationship between identity politics and class-based

redistributive politics (Fraser 1989; Fraser and Honneth 2003; Young 1997). It has been applied in a variety of empirical contexts (O'Neill and Smith 2012), including some related to the present inquiry, such as poverty (Schweiger 2013), social exclusion (Schweiger 2015), participatory approaches to anti-poverty policy (Fragoso and Lippmann 2020), and social security policies (Cunha 2020).

Being both normative and critical, recognition theory concerns social structures, institutions, and the dynamics that their normative and ideological orientations reflect and create. However, recognition is also an affective state of individuals created relationally through intersubjectivity. Therefore, empirical analysis of individual affective experiences such as those presented here need to be tied in some way to institutional norms and practices where larger societal dynamics are played out (Schweiger 2020:147-151). Recognition theory is, therefore, an intuitive framework for analysing claimant experiences with their WCs as these meetings are, in effect, negotiations of status between individual citizens and the state (Brodkin 2013).

3.2: PARTICIPATION AS THE PRAXIS OF RECONGITION

Advocates of recognition-based politics and policies span the ideological spectrum but are united in their advocacy of participatory services as the means by which recognition ought to be given praxis in social policy through the shared influence of radical democracy theory. Critical recognition advocates (Fraser 2003; Lister 2002) advocate the "democratizing of the relationship between users and providers both collectively and individually" (Williams 2000:349) as a means of promoting a politics of "respect and recognition" (Lister 2013). Such theorists advocate empowerment of the welfare subject as "an active element in the social relations of welfare" (Williams

1999:69) with the perspectives and aspirations of the unemployed and those living in poverty reflected in policy.

"Democratising service delivery" through a 'new contractualism' which tailors support to user needs is also a central tenet of liberal-individualist recognition advocates (Yeatman 2002, 2007; Yeatman and Owler 2001). This contractualist position sits at the intersection of autonomist individualism and Young's (1997) recognition-based notion of being "seen" whereby contractualism is democratic only if the service user feels valued, respected, and accepted as an individual and if their autonomy is cultivated through sufficient provision of information and space to reflect, process, and strategise (Yeatman 2009:56-58).

Finally, communitarian theorists Gutmann and Thompson advocate for a 'Fair Workfare' (1996, 2004) consistent with principles of recognition-based social citizenship (Gutmann 2018). Welfare provision tied to productive activity is promoted as a means of avoiding the stigma of passive benefit receipt and as fair only on the proviso of the claimant's guaranteed access to opportunity goods which realistically allow transition into waged labour. This workfarist theory reconceptualises the welfare subject as independent and empowered as opposed to the feckless or free-riding welfare subject of Mead's (1986, 1992, 1997) workfarism.

Just as the research questions were developed with reference to the notion of individualised policies recognising the self as welfare subject, the centrality of participation as the praxis of recognition across the spectrum of recognition theorists informs the empirical operationalisation of concepts in the analytical framework. Each facet of recognition theory is tied to a feature of participatory service delivery. The data

were then analysed to identify whether or not those features could reasonably be adduced as instantiated in the experiences of interviewees.

3.3: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper operationalises Honneth's (1996, 2003) three forms of recognition -*respect*, *esteem*, and *love* (van Leeuwen 2007)- to suit the particularities of the research topic and answer the research questions.

Respect refers to the "equal moral accountability of the legal person and is expressed in the moral and legal right to personal autonomy" (van Leeuwen 2007:182). In other words, 'respect' refers to rights. Personal autonomy in the form of recognition of the self as the subject of welfare, either through preservation of the self or expression of preference, is the very social right which sits at the heart of the New Golden Rule: "Respect and uphold society's moral order as you would have society respect and uphold your autonomy" (Etzioni 1997:xviii). Therefore, rights did not form part of the the analytical framework as applied to the data, but rather the other forms of recognition are, in themselves, the social right which claimants purportedly possess in the rights-responsibility exchange with the state as expressed through UC. In this way, rights underpin the entire analysis.

Esteem concerns the ability to make valuable contributions to shared and personal goals using one's talents, skills, and knowledge (Graf and Schweiger 2013). Here, this is operationalised as *recognition of working identities and skills*. Participation's theorisation as the praxis of recognition has already been detailed, but in terms of operationalisation for empirical analysis, we must then consider features of participatory service delivery which have demonstrable congruence with these forms

of recognition. In this case, such congruence exists with features of co-productive participation.

Co-productive participation entered the lexicon in the 1960s through the 'Bloomington School' of political economy (Parks et al. 1981; Ostrom 1993, 1996) who first articulated the concept as simply when outside parties are involved collaboratively in service delivery with the delivering agency. Since then, co-production has undergone considerable concept stretching (Brandsen and Honigh 2015). Subsequent literature has utilised multiple working definitions of or, variably, discussed co-production as a concept parallel to, constitutive of, or constituted by other similar or related concepts (*cf.* Bovaird and Loeffler 2015; Loeffler 2021; Pestoff 2012; Pestoff and Brandsen 2006). Consequently, studies of co-production tend to be case-specific, incommensurable, ungeneralisable, and unsuitable for comparative or meta-analysis (Jo and Nabatchi 2016). This can cause problems in terms of operationalising the concept empirically. Another problem is that co-production can be defensibly argued to be an intrinsic characteristic of any service involving interaction between frontline workers and service users (Alford 2009; Fledderus and Honigh 2016). Labour market activation programmes are such examples as they rely on claimants planning and undertaking job search activities, drafting CVs, and potentially attending interviews, training, or work placements. Porter (2012), however, points out that whilst user input is a necessary feature of such services, there is a qualitative difference between perfunctory and passive user involvement and active and engaged user involvement.

For our purposes, we need only distil some of the core features of co-productive participation germane to the research questions and theoretical orientation of the

inquiry, of which two are relevant and applied here. One is the active involvement of service users in the process of service delivery (Lindsay et al. 2019; Nabatchi et al. 2017). In this context this means active claimant involvement in shaping the agreed-upon activities they must undertake and the employment ends towards which they are geared. Empirically, we should expect to see evidence of claimant experiences defined by a feeling of participation in a collaborative dialogue that reflects their goals and objectives for future employment and recognises the value of their previous employment in terms of its value, dignity, and the subjective identity it generates within them. This will satisfy the research questions which seek to ascertain the needs and goals which claimants have concerning their job search and whether they feel they are adequately reflected in the job search activities and strategies they formulate with their WCs. Furthermore, by emphasising identity as well as needs and goals, the inquiry also reflects the theorisation of the preservation of the self and not merely the expression of preference as a defining feature of individualised policies. The second feature of co-production relevant here is its asset-based nature (Boyle and Harris 2009; Lindsay et al. 2018a, 2018b, 2019; Pestoff 2009, 2019) whereby the approach "recognises that people have 'assets' such as knowledge, skills, characteristics, experience (...) which can be brought to bear to support their health and well-being" (Feeley and Mair 2013:6). The data were analysed for evidence that claimants felt that assets of this sort that they possess were recognised as part of their claim, also.

The appropriateness of this approach is further demonstrated when we consider that these core features of co-production, those which emphasise that services ought to "learn to work with people and not do things to them" (Burns 2013:31), are service

values *purportedly* at the heart of UC. Materials used to train WCs in how to conduct meetings with claimants instruct WCs to avoid "'telling the person what to do: it helps to build rapport which leads to more effective communication; it encourages the person to identify for themselves what they need to do, rather than being told" (DWP 2018b:54). WCs are instructed to use "active listening skills", and ensure they are "involving the claimant" (DWP 2018a:8) in developing a strategy and agreement based on the "claimant's specific circumstances" and the "claimant's specific needs" through using "understanding of the claimant, including rapport and relationship, (to) match the benefits to each claimant's needs" (DWP 2018a:12).

Love refers to the extent to which a person feels accepted and respected as a unique individual with particularised needs, desires, vulnerabilities, and perspectives in their interpersonal relationships (Huttunen 2007). 'Love' forms the Hegelian core of recognition theory through its relational and intersubjective ontology of the self whereby individual identity and subjectivity are developed, and their validity and worth affirmed and internalised, through relationships (Mark 2015). While love-relationships which develop identity and subjectivity occur in the private rather than civic or political sphere, it is broadly acknowledged by both Honneth and subsequent recognition theorists that the state plays a role in facilitating and protecting the basic conditions and outcomes of such intersubjective and relational processes (Iser 2019; Taylor 1994).

This position is evident in Owen's (2007) argument that the clear demarcation between Honneth's different forms of recognition and the different spheres in which they occur does not exist. As was noted previously, recognition theorists posit participation as its

praxis and a core tenet of this the rejection of the false liberal dichotomy drawn between the public and private spheres (Lister 1997:119-130). In his treatment of the role of recognition and reflexivity in the democratic civic space, Owen discusses Honneth's valorisation of love-relationships as stemming from their generation of 'self-confidence', which he uses in terms commensurate with ontological security. Starting from Honneth's acknowledgement that the "the freer from distortion and coercion" in the political and civic sphere love-relationships are "the more rights come to be shared" (Honneth 1995:176, quoted in Owen 2007:303), he argues that:

> *"as a practical relation-to-self is initially formed through the experience of love, the maintenance of self-confidence is interwoven into each and every trust relationship in and through which we experience ourselves as agents"* (2007:308).

In other words, recognition as love exists as part of the process of identity formation and the generation of ontological security, the maintenance of which is a constituent element of every relationship, public or private, where that identity is asserted by an agent. We can add to this Mark's (2015) discussion of the influence of Marshallian ideas of rights and citizenship on Honneth's work, with both social rights and recognition forming part of a social settlement which aims to cultivate and respect individual autonomy:

> *"(I)n order to be involved as morally responsible persons, individuals need not only legal protection from interference in their sphere of liberty, but also the legally assured opportunity for participation in the public process of will-formation"* (Honneth 1995:117, quoted in Marks 2015).

Consequently, it is evident that, although the state is not a participant in love-recognition relationships, it has a duty not to deny the identities which are formed from them. This stems from the fact that the purpose of social rights is to preserve autonomy, a fact explicitly reaffirmed in 'The New Golden Rule'. Moreover, as individualised policy support is that which recognises the self as welfare subject, either as preference or diachronic self, it stands to reason that, provided claimants are meeting their obligations, that recognition of broader, non-working identities is also a legitimate analytical focus. As such, this form of recognition is operationalised as *respect for individual circumstances*.

Such analysis both meets the research questions of determining claimants' needs and goals and ascertaining whether they feel they are adequately reflected in their job search strategies and activities and is congruent with the theorisation of individualised policies as being those which recognise the self as identity or preference. For example, Valkenburg (2007) identifies the growing flexibility of labour markets and family structures and the increasing reflexivity of individual and social life as key aspects of individualisation. Through these processes, social risk profiles become more individualised, and social needs become experienced as increasingly idiosyncratic and particularised (Beck 1992, 2000; Beck and Beck-Gersheim 2002; Beck et al. 1994; Standing 2009, 2011a). As such, labour market policy ought to reflect the participatory ideal of participation for self-development (Gould 1988:84) by creating a space for claimants to reflect on their needs, stage of life, and circumstances and facilitate 'strategic life-planning' (Giddens 1991) around them (Monrad 2020; Verschuere et al. 2012).

Empirically, this means looking for evidence that claimants' felt their individual circumstances, generally related to life stage such as marital status, caring responsibilities, age, or health were appropriately considered and accounted for in the process of formulating their required activities and job search strategies. Again, this is an appropriate standard as WCs are trained and encouraged to "encourage[e] the claimant to come up with their own ideas about what they want to do, why they should do it and how they are going to do it" (DWP 2018b:56) and facilitate claimants in "com[ing] up with the goals and steps to achieve themselves" (DWP 2018b:57). WCs are encouraged to use "coaching techniques and questions to gain understanding and involve the claimant" (DWP 2018a:19) by way of "involving the claimant in decisions about their future which helps gain their commitment, helping them to identify their goals and think for themselves" (DWP 2018b:55). This has the goal of enabling the claimant to "consider their situation and discover for themselves the changes they can make and how to make them" and to "discover the answers for themselves you reinforce the message that their opinions, knowledge, experience etc. are worthwhile" (DWP 2018b:58).

4: METHODOLOGY

4.1: METHOD

Semi-structured interviews with 33 current and former UC claimants were conducted in two phases between January-March 2021 (20) and February-March 2022 (13). Recruitment was conducted online though adverts placed on social media and the websites of advice centres and housing associations due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Interviews were conducted virtually by telephone with a £10 gift voucher offered as recompense.

Data were analysed using FMTA, an approach initially developed in the 1980s for the purposes of analysing qualitative data in social policy research (Ritchie et al. 2003; Ritchie and Spencer 1994). The procedure of FMTA usually involves the development of an analytical framework after the transcription, familiarisation, and coding phases of data analysis then applying that framework to subsequent analyses of the data. Subsequently, matrices are developed to plot the case/interview in rows against the summary of the data related to the interpretative themes generated during analysis in columns in the final phase of analysis (Gale et al. 2013).

My approach was slightly different to this in that because the inquiry was theory-driven, the analytical framework was developed *a priori* and so employed in the manner that Miles et al. (2014) describe as "conceptual bins": pre-determined categories into which data are sorted during the initial phases of coding and theme development. Interview questions were designed theoretically (e.g.: "Tell me about your work history"; "What sort of jobs were you looking for?"; "Describe a typical meeting at JCP"; "What was your input into the meetings?") and so some data were straightforward to code according to the framework. The semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that framework-relevant data appeared at other points in the interview and these were coded appropriately. After initial sorting of the data according to these theory-driven codes, analysis was entirely inductive.

An important point to make at this point concerns the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of FMTA. FMTA was originally designed for large-scale qualitative policy

research with the assumption of a team of multiple researchers. The utility of developing an analytical framework after initial data analysis to guide future coding and of using matrices to map the data therefore had three functions: to make it easier for a team of researchers to work on a large dataset collaboratively, to ensure coding reliability across coders, and to help establish causal patterns in the data. In this way, FMTA was developed as a 'coding reliability' approach to codebook-based TA whereby multiple coders can check each other's work and ensure their interpretations are 'reliable', 'robust', or 'valid'. In this respect, its development was part of the attempt to make qualitative interpretivist research in line with a positivistic epistemology and naïve realist approach to qualitative social research. This is based on the assumption that the codebook represents some form of objective and perfectly knowable reality which the coders are tasked with correctly sorting their data into through the coding process. My approach to the FMTA does not follow these assumptions, which are not inextricable from FMTA, which is an approach to TA compatible with a variety of assumptive worlds. Byrne (2021:1393) notes that FMTA, whilst a codebook approach, "typically forgo positivistic conceptions of coding reliability, instead recognising the interpretive nature of data coding". In this case, the framework consisted of only two items, after which the analysis was entirely inductive.

4.2: SAMPLE

Online recruitment allowed for recruitment of heterogeneous sample that could establish similarities and differences in data across disparate participant types (Patton 2002:109-110). This was reflected in the geographical spread of interviewees with participants coming from London (six), the South-West (five), the South-East

(four), the North-West (three), Yorkshire and the Humber (one), the West Midlands (one); Scotland (nine); Wales (three), Northern Ireland (2). The sample consisted of eighteen females and fifteen males ranging from ages 18-65.

Online recruitment allowed for recruitment of former as well as current claimants. Thirteen were no longer claiming UC. Four were in full-time work, five in part-time or agency work, three were self-employed, and three were in education (one of which was still claiming UC). Of those still claiming, seven have been classified as having Limited Capability for Work-Related Activity (LCWRA) and had their conditionality suspended since the start of their claim, two were classified Limited Capability for Work (LCW), one was also in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1: RECOGNITION OF OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITIES AND SKILLS

Work is said by some to be central to the formation of personal identity (Gini 2008; Rose 1999b:244). Recognition claims often constitute social esteem or status being granted to the roles and functions people perform in society generally and the waged labour market in particular (Honneth 2007:75-77, 2012:63-70). Honneth's conceptualisation of work is derived from that of Marx where labour is not merely instrumental, but an emancipatory and formative force through which people learn about their intellectual and creative capacities by seeing the products of their labour instantiated in the world (Smith 2009:48-50). Similarly, a consistent theme in research into self-expression through social roles is that individuals are often motivated to carry out duty-based service roles within larger social groups for the opportunities it affords them to develop

positive social interactions, relationships, and experience authentic self-expression (Bettencourt and Sheldon 2001).

Several participants in this research had extensive work histories in sectors and industries with public service and duty-based orientations. Such occupations included English teacher; biology teacher; teaching assistant; assistant in an special educational needs primary school; educational administrator; outreach worker for a children's centre; caring for children and young adults; care work with the homeless; doctor's receptionist; care work with senior citizens; nursery nurse; benefits advisor; nursing. For many of these individuals the employment they had undertaken, the roles they occupied, and services they provided had become sources of pride, self-production, personal fulfilment, and psychical identity. Many wished to continue working in similar roles, or at least within the same sector, but found that the 'work-first' nature of the system (Etherington and Daguerre 2015; Lindsay and Dutton 2013; Lindsay et al. 2007) meant that this went unrecognised in the process of their claim.

A crystalising example is Violet, a single mother of a ten-year-old. For the previous thirteen years, she has been self-employed as a home child carer. Violet sees caring for young people as her calling in life with her current service but the latest in a long string of jobs in the care sector. Violet places great value on the community-based nature of her work. When asked about her hobbies during the introductory questions to settle the interviewee, Violet said she liked to be "active in the community":

> *"I have been doing it all my life because I came out of school and I done family and community care (…) I was doing childcare and I was working with children with special needs (…) I've worked with children through to the end of their life (…) I worked with children with stomas. With children's nurses. So, it is all caring. It is all caring and it's all in the community. It's community work*".

The COVID-19 pandemic had a deleterious effect on Violet's business. With parents in her locality working from home or furloughed, demand for her services fell to around twenty hours a week, requiring her to claim UC. The conditions of her claim stipulated she bring her working hours up to forty per week. This was a source of consternation for her as it meant potentially giving up the twenty hours a week care work she was still doing and ceasing to be of service to the families she cares for. Repeatedly, she emphasised how families depended on her:

> "(*P*)*arents potentially need me during the day (…) (T)hey need me as and when. Parents need me throughout the day, they want me to work throughout the day, and it's like I can't do this as a full-time job. I can't meet the requirements of the families I support*".

Honneth's concept of esteem concerns the ability to utilise skills and to feel and be seen as valuable for the contribution one makes through work. This concept is operationalised in the analytical framework is as the co-productive service values of harnessing the assets claimants possess through dialogue, reciprocity, and negotiation. Assets such as "knowledge, skills, characteristics, [and] experience" (Feeley and Mair 2013:6). Violet has such assets, notably skills developed over a career, relationships in the community she serves, and a prosocial work ethic. Moreover in terms of identity, her work is of a form which meets social need and provides her with self-esteem. An approach based on recognising and utilising Violet's skills, assets, and preferences and which allowed for preservation of her subjectively felt working identity may perhaps have stipulated that Violet need only take up work that did not affect her current arrangements or acknowledged the contingent nature of her reduction in hours and sought to help her find new clients and made this the primary focus of her work-related activities.

Violet's experience is representative of other interviewees subject to in-work conditionality. Zihad from London, for example, had become a self-employed driver as the flexibility allowed him to manage a complex living situation. Zihad is studying English and maths at college for admission to university in pursuit of his long-held dream of becoming a nurse: "It was my passion to go into nursing (…) I've wanted to work in the healthcare sector for quite a while". Zihad is also caring for his sick three-year-old child and taking on additional responsibilities for assisting his wife, who is learning to speak English. Like Violet, Zihad's self-employment income was affected by the pandemic, forcing him to claim UC. Before this, he was, more or less, making ends meet and managing to reconcile work with his other commitments. After claiming UC, however, he found himself with "less money but more hassle" with constant pressure to find full-time work without regard to either his future plans or the complications he was experiencing with his family:

> "*I told them I'm doing part-time college because I want to get a good job and want to go into something. I have to do it and, with my wife, and they're like "Oh, no, you have to look for work*"".

Out-of-work claimants also expressed that their employment ambitions conflicted with the work-first nature of UC. One of the most commonly described problems was the lack of support for training opportunities. The UK's comparative lack of investment in training for claimants is well-documented (Berry 2014). The emphasis on cost-containment in work-first employment services is a commonly cited barrier to realising co-productive values in service delivery (Fuertes and Lindsay 2016). Interviewees described having their aspirations for training go unmet or being sent on what they perceived as useless and patronising training days, such as CV writing workshops, despite long histories of work experience and/or higher qualifications:

> "*When it comes to the face-to-face meetings, they're not really interested if you have qualifications (…) (Y)our work history and what you're looking for? Let's just say you don't feel valued*" (David, former hearse driver)

> "*(W)ith the work I had done before in security, she said I could have done my CCTV license exam (…) but the cost of the license wouldn't be provided by JCP (…) (T)he CCTV licence is a bit more expensive than the £220 that the standard door supervisor licence has and your licence only lasts you for three years. I was like "Look, I just don't have the money. Is there any way that JCP can fund that if I passed that exam?" and she's like "No, sorry. That just wouldn't happen". They're encouraging people to do these courses but if there's any extra costs after it, they're not helping people*" (Martin, former security worker).

> "*They were telling me things like "By the time you finish this course, you will be job ready". And I went "What do you mean 'job ready'?". I said, " I'm in my 60s, I've done all sorts of jobs. I'm job ready as soon as there's a job available". And they were going, "Oh no, you need to do these courses'"*" (Nicholas, holds a diploma).

> "*(T)hey suggested I go on a college course to find work. Now, as a postgraduate, I am not saying that I know it all but, as a postgraduate, I felt 'I have always worked, I do know how to look for work, and I don't really feel that I need to go to college to find more work or do a course to find another job'*" (Ash, postgraduate degree holder).

One man who had completed a course in computer literacy emphasised that he completed the course on his own initiative with no impetus or support from JCP. Similarly, a woman with eighteen years' experience as a qualified nursery nurse before developing health issues had inquired into basic I.T. training so she could try for an office job in education or children's services. At first, her WC had expressed support for this, but the idea was taken no further and her WC tried to move her into supermarket work which she felt was incompatible with her health problems. This woman spoke of the end of her career with children with a great sense of loss, noting that she had worked with children her whole life.

Pamela's case was similar. Pamela has over twenty years' experience in housing sector care work. Pamela had worked as a self-funded missionary with the homeless abroad and had opened homeless shelters as a volunteer. Due to underlying health

conditions, she decided she could no longer perform front-facing work. Desiring to stay within the sector to which she had dedicated much of her life and which gave her fulfilment, pride, and a sense of achievement and competence, she tried to get funding for a course that would allow her to do a home-based advisory job:

> *"I have always been in housing (…) for over twenty years. I have a lot of years behind me in that. Because now of this pandemic (…) I need to get something from home (…) I asked to take a housing law course -a new law came in in 2017- to get a good job (…) Shelter do courses for housing law but they are like £900 (…) I could get a good job from home but they said 'No' (…) People are ringing me up to do gateway jobs and if I had that housing training -they all ask for it- I could do those jobs if I had the update but I don't have it so I can't*".

Archibald, 65, is a trained nurse of several decades' experience. Nursing was something that satisfied Archibald's sociable and other-oriented nature and provided a sense of accomplishment and value:

> "*(H)aving a background in nursing, I was trying to apply for nursing jobs or social jobs that were to do with care where my skills could be transferable. I had also worked with drug addictions at a private hospital and as a psychiatric nurse. I felt a lot of my skills could be used (…) I'm a very sociable person. A lot of going to work was doing something I wanted to do. I felt I was contributing, certainly in my nursing. I saved people's lives (…) I was doing it because I wanted to do it, it wasn't extra money*".

Archibald took around five years out from nursing to become a full-time carer for his mother, who suffered from dementia. After her passing, his experience caring for her gave him a renewed sense of purpose for his profession and he returned to nursing and care work:

> "*I got quite a lot of fulfilment out of that because I knew I was treating the patients like I would've treated one of my own relatives, you know? And I certainly advocated for the patients*".

Archibald lost his nursing job due to a disciplinary issue which, when discovered by JCP, meant that he received a three-month sanction for becoming unemployed via dismissal. A tribunal later found that he was wrongfully dismissed but, due to

restructuring, was unable to return to his job. Archibald's sanction also meant he was unable to afford the £170 to renew his nursing registration:

> "*I had appealed to JCP to pay my nursing registration while I was sanctioned and they wouldn't do it. There was no other sources of funding available (…) as a result of that, I was deregistered as a nurse (…) even though I'd done the hours and all the rest of it that would have still allowed me to be registered (…) which I thought was very harsh (…) (W)hen I asked for help to pay my nursing fees there seemed to be no option for that (…) (T)hey kept promising that there was money available to go back to college even at my age. They were still saying 'Oh, there's still things you can do, you know?'. I just felt I'd been quite broken by the experience and my optimism had fallen by the wayside*".

Some experiences were less negative. Some interviewees had no firm preferences about the kind of work they were seeking or had no defined working identity, particular skills, or roles they were keen to continue, utilise, or undertake that they could potentially frame or structure their job search around. This is a notable limitation both of the methods and analytical framework employed here. While considering employment identities and preferences was germane to both recognition theory and theories of the individualisation of social policy, they were not always wholly applicable to the experiences of participants. This reflects the difficulties of using FMTA with an *a priori* analytical framework to data where selection criteria are broad. The confluence of the exigency of the COVD-19 pandemic necessitating online recruitment online and this inquiry forming part of a broader project with other analytical foci meant that selection was perhaps too broad to maximise the utility of this framework and method. I would contend, however, that the approach taken here is a wholly appropriate one for the subject matter, merely that future studies which may use take a similar one ensure that sampling is sufficiently purposive to maximise its utility.

During the matrix analysis stage of the FMTA process, I noted that **t**hese individuals tended to be either those now classified as LCWRA or LWC or those at either end of the age spectrum. At the younger end pertinent examples are a woman not long out of school looking for something to do to pick up some money; a student looking for some part-time retail work to supplement her income; and two recent graduates looking for temporary work while considering what to do next. At the older end are two sixty-year-old men. One formerly had a career teaching English but was of deteriorating health and was at the time of interview looking for any job compatible with his health state that he could get to provide him with some stimulating activity. Although he did detail spending extended periods applying for unsuitable jobs to meet his conditions and how this was a humiliating experience, he also said he had a sympathetic WC and his conditionality was eventually scaled down. The other respondent veered between saying he never wanted another job unless it was in his former profession of quality control but then also saying that he just wants to get back to work in whatever position. So it was difficult to accurately gauge his feelings.

Whilst not a universal experience across the sample, it must be noted that every interviewee who did express a sense of self or self-esteem related to a form of employment and a desire to work in a specific sector found their aspirations unrecognised. These individuals performed the subjectivity required of them: motivation for prosocial work of community value and assets in the form of valuable knowledge and accrued experience, pride, values, altruism, ethics, and skills. However, the lack of a participatory modality of service delivery congruent with co-productive values failed to adequately harness the potential of these people in a

process characterised by a lack of recognition of their skills, goals, and occupational identities. In terms of how we can understand what that means for the the reciprocal rights-responsibilities exchange this lack of a co-productive approach not only wastes vital sources of local human capital but also inhibits the realisation of social citizenship for claimants. Whilst claimants performed appropriate subjectivity, neither conceptualisation of the self as welfare subject appeared reified in practice. The denial of continuity of occupational identity might be said to be a denial of the self as welfare subject with a right to self-preservation. By turn, the inability to recognise the expressed will and goals that respondents considered reasonable may represent denial of the self as subjective preference.

5.2: RESPECT FOR INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Several participants described the feeling of being treated 'like a number' by their WCs, using a variety of expressions. One such expression referred to the expectations placed upon them. In these cases, they expressed being treated like a number as having their individual circumstances, needs, or situations not taken properly into account by their WC. Consequently, they considered the conditions placed upon them as unsuitable and unrealistic, creating the perception that they were being judged according to unfair standards which did not recognise their unique individuality, circumstances, and struggles:

> *"I would have liked some support and some comfort, some encouragement, because sometimes I think they're just there to treat you like a number whereas, actually, they seem to forget that you are actually a person and you might be struggling. And it might be that you've not achieved enough job applications that week but there might be other reasons. It might be that you're very unwell or depressed, or you've not actually found any jobs to apply for because they're just not suitable. You have to apply for a job within your capabilities and it's a soul-destroying exercise applying for a job that you know you're not going to get*

> *because you're not suited for the job. But they seem fixated on the fact that you have to apply for a set number of jobs per week just to meet their criteria*" (Melody, London).

In other cases, being treated like a number was spoken of in more general terms. Rather than interviewees describing mismatches between their personal circumstances and the job search expectations placed upon them, others spoke about it more in terms of a general anonymity. Here, the concept of being treated like a number was contrasted to being treated like a human or was described in terms of being a purely functional entity there to complete the procedural formalities of making a claim before leaving again. Sometimes, being treated like a number was not always expressed as an erasure of identity but as the external imposition of an identity. For example, one individual who repeatedly used the 'number' analogy in the sense of unfair judgements and expectations attributed this unfairness to the fact that:

> "*(T)hey've lost their job, they're just getting treated like a number, as an unemployed individual. And, you know, they might be hard-working people. They're desperate for work, but it's hard at the moment*" (Tanya, single parent).

Note that unfairness was specifically tied to the fact that an individual might be hard-working and possess the required work ethic and juxtaposed to the concept of an 'unemployed individual'. Whilst not directly using the number analogy, the term 'claimant' was also used in this way, implying that 'number', 'unemployed individual', or 'unemployed claimant' represent a specific type of subject or construct that comes with presuppositions about individuals in that category. In this case, 'claimant' and 'number' appeared to be used in terms analogous to Le Grand's (2003) concept of 'knaves': someone who lacked a work ethic and was claiming benefit largely through choice:

> "*You don't know whether you're going to be treated like a person or a number*" (Rebecca, London)

> *"I was just treated as another number, unemployed number (…) When you get categorised as 'a claimant', you feel that you're just another number amongst everybody else who's claiming*" (Jemimah, West Midlands).

> "*JCP, you know, they don't care. They just don't care (…) To them, you're just another claimant*" (Mike, Scotland).

These ideas of being just another number or just another claimant were particularistic expressions of the broader criticism of the impersonal nature of JCP as an institution and the lack of attention given to individuals and their unique lives:

> "*I think they probably see me as a bit of a square peg. There's a tendency, I think, to pull things down to a lowest common denominator so that pretty well anybody can-, jobs can be applied for on your side of the claim. If you're on the full job search, you find these things just to prove that you're seeking work*" (Theo, South-West).

> "*Cases should be looked into and their own unique circumstances. Not just a case of 'OK, we've got* x *amount of people that are claiming, we'll paint everyone with the same brush*'" (Charlie, Scotland).

> "*(I)t wasn't really talking to a person because the person was looking at the computer screen typing. I think it does need to be a bit more personal (…) it just doesn't feel very personal to the person"* (Meghan, South-West).

The systemic inadequacy of UC was a common theme and sometimes this was expressed by participants' desire for changes commensurate to a participatory and individualised approach whereby WCs sit with claimants and work out what they want to do with their lives and then help them achieve that goal, including helping source funding for up-skilling:

> "*It'd be good to have an encouraging place to come from, "Sit down, tell me about yourself. What do you enjoy?". You get a picture of a person and what they would be good at. You could ask them if they would like to do this or that (…) 'What do you want to do?' (…) You need to speak people and see where they want to go, they will stick at it and do it well. They need to invest in people more. If I ring up and say 'I would like to do that, can I do that course?' they should have a budget where they could if they are really trying to help me get to work, pay for a course or find out if there are courses in my area for free or for cheap"* (Jennifer, mother of university graduates).

> "*For their own self-esteem, I think a little bit more investment was made in that person, they might help to improve their quality of life and their well-being. Just by being sympathetic and helpful"* (Kylie, South-East).
>
> "*If the WC relationship was a bit more person-centred rather than, I dunno, if we had a more human conversation instead of 'you need to sign the CC' it might have helped me to understand a bit more when I was on UC (...) I think more of a person-centred approach, or a one-to-one person-centred approach to UC would be helpful*" (Seb, university graduate).

Others made the point by contrasting JCP with other organisations, especially welfare advice centres. Several interviewees spoke of using advice centres multiple times when JCP was not able to help them. One man in the North-East described JCP as "not in touch" with what he was doing and contrasted it negatively with a local advice centre which he characterised as more "personal and friendly" and whose staff knew him and his history.

Central to the concept of recognition as love is not simply recognition of the individual as a site of subjective experience, but of individual vulnerability (Schweiger 2020:5). Vulnerability has been said to be a universal feature of the human condition and the social and economic changes associated with the shift to individualisation have both intensified and differentially distributed vulnerability and the ontological insecurity that can accompany it (Beck 1992). One source of this increased and differentiated risk of vulnerability is the erosion of traditional family structure (Valkenberg 2007). Familial breakdown can be a source of great psychical injury (Chen et al. 2016) as well as creating material problems in the shape of insecurity of housing tenure (Shelter 2021), and complications for waged labour arising from changes to the familial division of care labour (Cook and Beaujot 1996).

Familial breakdown was a common topic across several interviews, and in all but one of these examples it was considered one of a set of interrelated causal factors leading to their claiming UC. All of the individuals for whom it was an immediate cause of their claim were women and, one individual excepted, the additional childcare burden assumed by the split was a direct cause of their need to claim UC. As one woman who had recently split with her partner of fifteen years told me:

> "*I've become a single parent. My child is four. He's just started school. I'm two months in. He's flying off the wall because he's angry because he's got no control over the situation. I'm emotionally already struggling with this and then I've got my WC pushing me to earn an extra £30 a month or something. And I was like, 'Can you just leave me alone? I can't actually cope at this point' (…) She was calling me in every month and saying I needed to look for jobs and yet I was super stressed at that point. I was like, so stressed at the point that I became a single parent, but there was no let up for it at all, there was no grace period (…) I could have done with just a little bit of time without the stress, just being given the benefit without being pushed to work (…) (B)e compassionate to people who've just become single parent or if their partner's just died*" (Natasha, in part-time work).

Fardifa was made redundant mid-divorce, becoming a single parent to a child with medical conditions, having to move house, and needing to shift from full-time to part-time work. She has a postgraduate degree in human resources and business management and had built a career in educational administration. She wished to stay in that sector because it meant having to undergo one less stressful transition while already experiencing ontological insecurity. She felt comfortable in a job where she had accumulated knowledge and skills and that moving into a different kind of job meant another stressful change when other aspects of her life which had been stable, dependable, and on which she had built her imagined future, were all in flux. Furthermore, the care needs of her son meant that she found it difficult to find work

that was amenable to her parental commitments, confining her to only temporary and part-time agency work:

> "*When you've always worked in a certain sector, and that's all your knowledge, that's how I felt comfortable (…) (A)t the time -because it was an extremely difficult time with the divorce, and the redundancy, and housing- I felt comfortable staying within that sector because that's where all my knowledge was*".

However, Fardifa found her WC unreceptive to her desire to stay working part-time in the same sector while she cared for her son. She found this insulting as she had always worked but was simply in a contingent position where she could no longer work full-time and required a period of time to work reduced hours and take care of her son and deal with her family situation. Nevertheless, she found that she was put under considerable pressure to find full-time work during her meetings and this added to her feelings of stress and insecurity.

The exacerbation of ontological insecurity was also something that was described in other interview narratives, even if not through the explicit use of the term. Pamela, who was introduced earlier, was in a similar position to Fardifa in that she experienced several negative life events in short order. She worked in a care home that suffered budget cuts leaving only two people to do the former work of eight. She turned to alcohol and suffered cardiac arrest with her marriage breaking down soon after, leaving her to care for the couple's five children. She has struggled with her health ever since but has never been able to get classified as LCW. The way Pamela discussed this was being treated 'the same as a twenty-year-old'; having the assumptive template of another individual misapplied to her.

Health issues were one of the most recurring issues that came up during the interviews with just under half of all interviewees suffering from a chronic physical or mental health condition. Whilst a couple of interviewees managed to get LCW, this was often after prolonged period when they were subject, in their view, inappropriately to full conditionality and only one such individual did not report having testy encounters with their WC over the impact that it had on their capabilities. These examples demonstrate one of the most consistent problems with the shift to conditional welfare: the expansion of groups to whom it is applied. The rollout of UC also brought with it the mandatory re-assessment of all individuals claiming disability benefits which expanded the notion of 'fitness to work' and resulted in a conditionality being applied to groups who previously would not have been subject to them (Gulland 2017). While there is a mechanism in place to reduce conditionality either permanently or temporarily, there are individuals who struggle to manage the competing demands of their body, their mental state, and their family and work lives. Again, we can think of this as a form of non-recognition that ignores idiosyncratic vulnerability and imposes a form of bureaucratic identity onto some claimants.

The previous section detailed instances whereby non-recognition results in abridgement of the social right to individualised policies which recognise the self as the welfare subject both in terms of occupational identity and employment preference. This section, however, demonstrates more explicitly and exclusively the abridgement of that right through the denial of the self as welfare subject in more personal terms. Claimants here have demonstrated considerable reflexivity through active consideration and awareness of their changing life circumstances in terms of health,

age, and roles within the family as well as of their own volition and desire. Reflexivity that in principle ought to be encouraged and built upon through JCP in an exercise of strategic life-planning.

6*:* CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to understand the 'New Golden Rule' underpinning the individualisation of social rights in Britain and how it is reified in practice through analysis of claimant experiences with JCP while claiming UC. The legitimatory basis of this new settlement is the communitarian ethic of personalised rights exchanged for personal responsibility given praxis through an exchange of performed subjectivity of the AWS for recognition of the self as welfare subject. The paper has investigated this exchange using recognition theory. It has presented the argument that the unifying element across the spectrum of perspectives within recognition theory is belief in participatory public services. To this end, evidence of features of participatory service delivery congruent with elements of Honneth's tripartite framework of recognition were searched for in the interview testimony of UC claimants. This has been used to draw conclusions about the reciprocity of rights and responsibilities in UC by considering whether claimants who perform the requisite subjectivity have their social right to individualised service provision through treatment of the self as welfare subject, either through preservation of identity or expression of preference met in practice.

The evidence presented here indicates that some claimants experience being subject to individualised responsibility but not necessarily treated reciprocally as the subject of individualised right. Experiences often involve the non-recognition of skills they have accumulated and the identities they have developed through years of work or are

attempting to develop. They also often involve the non-recognition of the different life challenges and sources of ontological insecurity claimants face in terms of their age, health, or changing family status. This lack of recognition means that whilst claimants might embody the AWS framed as their end of the exchange, they are not always treated reciprocally as individualised welfare subjects with the right to identity preservation. Experiences can also involve a lack of access to funding or training opportunities, or the compulsion to look for unsuitable and undesired jobs. In this sense, the lack of recognition means they are often not treated as individualised welfare subjects with the right of choice, despite conforming to the required framing of the AWS. This suggests that, for several individuals interviewed here, the reciprocity that supposedly underpins the legitimation of their being held responsible for job search activity goes unrealised.

Whilst some of the evidence suggested less negative experiences, it is important to consider what the knock-on effects could be of a social citizenship legitimated by reciprocity rather than status which is not experienced as reciprocal by many citizens. Suboptimal outcomes are one issue. Certainly, the quality of job search activity decreases when the activities are not congruent with an individual's sense of self or expressed will (Grant et al. 2011). However, as Seglow (2020:140-141) notes:

> "*Honneth repeatedly says that legal rights and duties are reciprocal, he does not consider that the latter, as well as the former, might be a source of self-respect (…) the distinct dimension of self-respect which comes from meeting morally justified duties and entitlements: its source is the reflexive awareness that we are moral agents in a world we share with others (…) self-respect's focus is the self-consciousness of being a responsible agent able to deliver on her social obligations, the same syndrome which undermines it – paucity of economic opportunity – is also a source of diminished self-esteem*".

In this respect, negative experiences of non-recognition in the context of reciprocal social obligations and rights may come to erode individuals' sense of themselves as legitimate rights-claimers. This is surely a worrying development for any advocate of a communitarian ethic emphasising the ties that bind.

PAPER 4: *THE LIMITS OF GOVERNMENTALITY? CLAIMANT EXPERIENCES OF SELF-DETERMINATION AND COERCION IN JOBCENTRE PLUS*

1: INTRODUCTION

Universal Credit (UC) represents the latest iteration of conditional welfare governance in Britain. Part of a longer-term reform trend towards behavioural conditionality, UC works on the operant principles of behaviourism: unemployment is framed as a behavioural failing of individuals which can remedied with an appropriate structure of work incentives and penal sanctions (Jones et al. 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Standing 2011b). Under this rubric, benefit sanctions for failing to comply with job search conditions set out in a contract-like agreement (the 'Claimant Commitment' (CC)) in meetings between claimants and their public employment service ('Jobcentre Plus' (JCP)) caseworkers ('Work Coaches' (WCs)) have increased in scope, severity, and incidence to historically unprecedented levels (Adler 2018; Webster 2023).

This intensification of conditional and punitive policies has reinvigorated the critical literature on social security as a means of coercive social control. Whilst this literature has made numerous empirical and theoretical contributions to our understanding of the *telos* of coercive social policy on the macro-level, it has not treated coercion as a dynamic phenomenon occurring at the level of the individual when their behaviour or motivations are altered by the threat of sanction (Grant 2012:49) in a systematic and theoretically guided way. Nor have micro-level studies like street-level bureaucracy or lived experience of welfare reform.

This paper seeks to add to the critical literature by studying the dynamics of coercion as experienced by UC claimants using self-determination theory (SDT) as an analytical

framework that captures how coercion, either as stigma, pressure, or threat of sanctions, acts upon their job search motivations and behaviours. Analysing semi-structured interview data gathered from 33 UC claimants using the framework method of thematic analysis (FMTA), it asks '*What motivations do UC claimants have for seeking work*?' and '*How are claimants' existing motivations supported or amended through their dealings with JCP?*'.

Evidence is presented that claimants' job search motivations are often autonomous. They seek stimulation, self-improvement, and self-realisation. They also experience institutional and social stigma as a coercive pressure that, on this evidence, seems not to affect their motivations or behaviours but does serve as a method of internalisation of the values of conditional welfare. Efficacious coercive pressure comes through the intersection of economic need and the fear of sanction, which serve to both change motivations and behaviours. These findings build on the existing critical literature by providing a theoretically driven account of coercion as a dynamic process whereby different coercive pressures play different roles in securing compliance.

In so doing, the paper makes three contributions. Firstly, it presents a more theoretically driven and dynamic picture of the operation of coercive social policy than offered by previous studies. Secondly, by situating the analysis within the analytical niches between current macro- and micro-level analyses, it brings both together by validating elements of both analyses. Finally, it makes theoretical contributions by more fully developing SDT for use in empirical social policy research.

The paper begins with a review of the critical literature on the social control function of social security; highlighting its theoretical and empirical contributions across a variety

of sub-literatures and detailing how this paper develops and contributes to it. The theoretical framework of SDT and its application as an analytical framework are then explained before empirical findings are presented and discussed. The paper finishes with a short conclusion section.

2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Social rights and waged labour have always been conjoined in the British welfare state. The foundational document of Britain's post-war welfare state argues that claimants:

> "*should be required, as a condition of continued benefit to attend a work or training centre (...) as a means of preventing habituation to idleness and as a means of improving capacity for earnings*" (Beveridge 1942, quoted in Fletcher 2015:337).

T. H. Marshall, whose notion of social citizenship is often presented as the comparative point of departure for modern benefit conditionality, argued that social rights carry obligations (White 2000) with paying taxes and social insurance contributions -of which waged employment is a necessary condition- the most obvious and immediate amongst them (Marshall 1950:78). However, the qualitative and quantitative nature of welfare conditionality has changed. Qualitatively, claimants are required to demonstrate active job search activity rather than simply to take up opportunities sourced on their behalf by the employment service. Quantitively, sanctions are at historically high rates of incidence with higher average duration (currently almost three months) than previous conditional benefits (Adler 2018; Webster 2023).

This expansion of punitive measures has reignited scholarly discussion of social security as social control. While "a sound historical base is lacking, or is restricted to too short a scale, in much social policy analysis" (Sinfield 1978:149), the critical social policy literature has made invaluable contributions to the understanding of social

policies as historically iterative and recursive phenomena based on generated dependencies and control (Fletcher 2015; Fraser and Gordon 1997; Koch and Reeves 2021). Industrial modernity created modern notions of poverty and unemployment as externalities of cyclical labour markets. Social security policies developed to mitigate these externalities by incentivising waged labour, smoothing consumption patterns, and stabilising demand (De Schweinitz 1943; Himmelfarb 1984). However, they also served to legitimate capitalism, support capital accumulation, and allow for the moral and economic regulation of workers though their capacity as a poverty distribution mechanism (Alcock 1989; Dean 1995; Dean 2012; Gough 1979; Korpi 1983; Offe 1982; Novak 1988; Piven 2010; Wiggan 2015). Eligibility criteria allow for regulation of both social need (Bradshaw 1972) and those experiencing it (Dean and Taylor-Gooby 1992; Piven and Cloward 1972), especially when eligibility assessment occurs through in-person meetings. Peter Townsend argued that "means-tested schemes have to be conditional on behaviour and upon the readiness of potential recipients to submit themselves to test" and that the "function of the schemes is as much to control behaviour as to meet need" (1979:823) in a way that exposes claimants to "unconscious, if not conscious, manipulation by staff on behalf of society and its approved values" (1979:824).

The critical literature has made numerous invaluable empirical and theoretical contributions to our understanding of coercive potential and practices in social policy. Nevertheless, there remain gaps between three branches of this literature -the literature theorising the *telos* of coercive social policy, the street-level bureaucracy literature, and the lived experience of welfare reform literature- which this paper

attempts to fill. In so doing, it will make the additional two contributions of tying together both macro-level and micro-level perspectives in the literature and more fully developing SDT as a theoretical framework in social policy analysis.

Let us consider first the literature theorising the *telos* of coercive social policy. Contributions here have mostly come from the Anglo-Foucauldian school, such as Dean's (1991) historical analysis of social security as social control as moving from the repressive to the disciplinary (Foucault 1977). Dean and others (Fletcher and Wright 2018; Whitworth and Carter 2014) have emphasised processes of surveillance in terms of both the quasi-homeostatic enforcement of norms in everyday social interactions and of literal surveillance in appropriate social and political contexts. Others have characterised reforms as tutelary (Fletcher and Flint 2018), punitive (Dwyer (2018), abusive (Wright et al. 2019), violent (Cooper and Whyte 2017, 2018; Grover 2010, 2019; Redman and Fletcher 2021), and purposefully stigmatising Mills and Klein (2021). Others still have employed Wacquant's (2008, 2009, 2010) notion of the 'centaur state' to describe policies taking a collaborative approach to capital but a coercive and punitive one towards labour, especially reserve labour (Fletcher 2013; Fletcher et al. 2016; Fletcher and Wright 2018; Povey 2017; Rodger 2012).

While making invaluable contributions to the theorisation of the *telos* of coercive social policy, these studies, by virtue of analysing macro-level principles of design, intent, and approach, miss what Foucault describes as the 'witches' brew' of actual practices (Brady 2011). Monolithic conceptualisations of the state, where central directives translate directly into ground-level practice, are also, arguably, outdated (Flint 2016; Measor 2013; Marwell 2016). To this end, Schram et al. (2009, 2010) call

for bottom-up analyses employing ethnographic methods -specifically of caseworker practices- to develop a 'phenomenology of governmentality'.

Caseworker practices and their role as implementers, interpreters, and *de facto* creators of policy is the central focus of street-level bureaucracy theory (Lipsky 1980). This perspective centres the confluence of design and framing with bottom-up responses to everyday administrative problems in the working experiences of caseworkers themselves (Lowndes 2005). Central directives are often inadequate to deal with the complexities of claimant needs. Consequently, decisions are often based on subjective social and moral assumptions about clients and with limited information (Lipsky 1976; March and Olsen 1989, 2007; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003, 2012; Zacka 2017). Street-level bureaucracy studies come mostly in three forms. One typologises the roles caseworkers play on a spectrum of deontological rigidity to empathetic flexibility (Rice 2013). Another documents heuristic devices by which caseworkers categorise clients and base their decisions (Harrits 2018; Jonsson 1998; Millar 1991; Nguyen 2020; Thoren 2008). Street-level studies of JCP and contracted-out activation services in Britain have usually taken these approaches (Cole 2007; Considine et al. 2018; Fletcher 2011; Fletcher et al. 2009; Fuertes and Lindsay 2016; Kaufman 2019; Rosenthal and Peccei 2006a, 2006b, 2007). A third type -the 'interaction styles' or 'advanced implementation study' literature (DeLeon 1999; Hupe 2014)- developed initially by May and Winter (1999, 2000) categorises caseworker *strategies* rather than *roles* (Durose 2011; Toerien et al. 2013, 2015) often, but not exclusively, using matrices or indices from large-*n* survey data to typologise caseworker strategies (Behncke et al. 2010; Bloom et al. 2003; Bruhn and Ekström

2017; Riccio and Hasenfeld 1996; van Parys and Stuyven 2018; Weatherall and Markwardt 2010).

While street-level bureaucracy studies do capture caseworker practices, they do not necessarily advance the understanding of coercion as a dynamic process in a satisfactory way. This is because the focus on caseworker practice overlooks the fact coercion is a phenomenon internal to the individual subject to it, occurring when external pressures alter their pre-existing motivations of behaviours (Grant 2012; Narayanan 2021; Rodger 2008). As street-level bureaucracy studies can only inform us about caseworkers' application of external pressures, they are, in effect, also studies of the *telos* of coercive social policy, merely at the micro- rather than macro-level.

There is a third branch of literature, the growing literature on lived experiences of welfare reform (Speed and Reeves; Wright and Patrick 2019) which does discuss experiences of coercion (Wright 2016) and the negotiation of labour market precarity and workfare programmes (Ray et al. 2009). Again, this literature makes invaluable contributions but as they investigate lived experience with broad terms of reference and develop analytical themes abductively, they are limited in terms of studying coercion in social policy in an empirically and theoretically sophisticated way as they do not work with an overarching, theoretically driven analytical framework of coercion as the explicit focus of the research.

This paper makes a first contribution to the critical literature by locating its analysis in the niches between these three literatures which remain underexplored. By analysing claimant experiences of coercive practices at the micro-level, it captures the dynamics of coercion in a way that both the macro-level *telos* and street-level

bureaucracy studies are unable to capture. Situating the analysis in the spaces between macro- and micro-level literatures, allows the paper to make a secondary contribution of tying the findings of research at both levels together. In fully developing an analytical framework to study coercion, the paper makes a third contribution of more fully developing and utilising SDT for analysis in social policy.

3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1: SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

Developed by social psychologists Deci and Ryan (1985, 1991), SDT developed in response to behaviourism's focus on operant conditioning (Skinner 1953) as the primary mechanism regulating and explaining behaviour (Sheldon and Williams 2003:13). Instead, SDT sees individuals as inherently capable of proactive behaviour with the capacity to act upon or control both internal (e.g. emotions, thoughts) and external (e.g. social or environmental) forces on their actions. While the behaviourist subject is passive, merely responding to external stimuli, with behaviour reducible to operant response, SDT's subject is active and possesses a wide range of behavioural motivations. Of course, SDT does not go so far as to claim unbounded autonomy or capacity to resist forces influencing choice and behaviour. We are all constrained to greater or lesser degrees by biological, psychological, and contextual factors. Rather, SDT taxonomises human motivations on a spectrum of autonomous (or self-determined) motivations to controlled motivations based on the style, process, and perceived locus of causality of behavioural regulation (Table 2).

SDT is an appropriate theory for the present purposes for three reasons. One is its development as critique of operant behaviourism with a multidimensional empirical

and theoretical understanding of human behaviour. Behavioural conditionality operates from operant behaviourist assumptions: individuals can be induced to seek and take up work provided an appropriate structure of incentives and punishments is in place. Secondly, SDT assumes basic human needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence and a variety of behavioural motivations ranging from most autonomous to most externally controlled. This spectrum mirrors the dual conceptualisation of activation from personalised support for autonomy-promotion to policing through coercion and control (Barbier 2001; Taylor-Gooby 2008; Torfing 1999). Just as this paper investigates claimants' job search motivations and how their behaviours and motivations are either facilitated or altered through their dealings with JCP, SDT's focus is how contextual factors interact with motivations to shape outcomes; affect the quality of throughputs; or facilitate, inhibit, or promote different behaviours and motivations. Indeed, SDT is a common framework in sociological and psychological studies of unemployment and job search in terms of psychical damage and effects of motivation type on job search quality (*cf.* Vansteenkiste and Van den Broeck 2014; Fryer and Payne 1986; Jahoda 1982; Warr 1987).

Thirdly, motivation is an analytical framework already used, although underutilised, in academic social policy research. Grant (2012) discusses Titmuss's *The Gift Relationship* (1970) from an SDT perspective, arguing that incentives can 'crowd out' intrinsic motivations and erode altruistic solidarity, a topic discussed from a social citizenship perspective by Dean (1998) and Edmiston (2017), although not within an SDT framework. Others (Burby and Paterson 1993; Winter and May 2001) have studied motivations to comply with regulations enforced through face-to-face meetings:

whether those motivations are *normative* (i.e. internalisation of the regulation's value); *social* (i.e. social pressure or the interpersonal nature of enforcement); or *incentive-based/calculated* (i.e. operant). Intrinsic motivation is a working concept in labour market policy studies, albeit nominally and not within a systematically applied SDT analysis. Wright and Patrick make two references to 'intrinsic motivations' to work in their meta-synthesis of longitudinal studies of the lived experience of conditionality in Britain (2019:602/603) but SDT is not mentioned. Similarly, Fledderus and Honigh (2016) discuss how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation affect co-production in Dutch activation services. SDT is not explicitly mentioned here either, although one SDT paper is cited. Marston and McDonald (2008) also discuss intrinsic motivation with reference to Australian activation services' efficacy in promoting employment motivation in claimants. However, this is set within a self-efficacy theory framework (Bandura 1976, 1986, 1997) and not an SDT framework. There is, therefore, scope to consider the application of STD to understand claimant experiences and potentially offer a novel window on the micro-levels dynamics of coercion in British social policy.

3.2: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The most self-determining/autonomous form of motivation is *intrinsic motivation*: behaviours undertaken for reasons stemming from the task itself being rewarding, challenging, or self-developmental (Amabile et al. 1996; Deci 1975). Intrinsically motivated behaviours are undertaken because they are pleasurable, interesting, or engaging and are characterised as intrinsically regulated with an internal causal locus.

Intrinsic motivation stands in contradistinction to *extrinsic motivation*: behaviours undertaken for reasons external to the task itself. For our purposes, two elements are

important to remember. One is that claimants are usually not intrinsically motivated for job searching activity itself, but rather for the potential reward of finding employment. The second is that not all forms of extrinsic motivation are considered controlling. Extrinsic motivation is divided into four different styles of behaviour regulation, two autonomous and two controlled motivations (Ferguson et al. 2015). As such, empirical findings are discussed here in terms of autonomous and controlled motivations, subdivided into the two forms of regulation comprising those overarching motivational types, with intrinsic motivation to work folded into discussion of autonomous motivations to undertake job search activities.

The most autonomous form of motivation is *integrated regulation*: extrinsic motivations congruent with one's wider needs, goals, and values and thusly fully assimilated into the self-concept. Motivation is still extrinsic as it is not directly related to the task itself but some wider, extrinsic benefit. However, the locus of causality is internal. The other form of autonomous motivation is *identified regulation*: motivations stemming from what the individual consciously values, identifies with, and regards as personally valuable or important to them.

Controlled motivations come in two forms, also. One is *introjected regulation*: motivation based on the desire to avoid guilt, anxiety, shame or to promote ego enhancement through pride and contingent self-esteem. The second is *controlled regulation*, the form of motivation most associated with coercion. This describes behaviours undertaken on operant logic, based on pursuit of external incentives or to avoid punishment.

Table 2: *Overview of Self-Determination Theory* (Adapted from Ryan and Deci 2000:72)

MOTIVATION	**INTRINSIC MOTIVATION**	**EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION**				**AMOTIVATION**
REGULATORY STYLE	**INTRINSIC REGULATION**	**INTEGRATED REGULATION**	**IDENTIFIED REGULATION**	**INTROJECTED REGULATION**	**EXTERNAL REGULATION**	**NON-REGULATION**
PERCEIEVED LOCUS OF CAUSALITY	Internal	Internal	Somewhat Internal	Somewhat External	External	Impersonal
RELEVANT REGULATORY PROCESSES	Interest, Enjoyment, Inherent Satisfaction	Congruence, Awareness, Synthesis with Self	Personal Importance, Conscious Valuing	Self-control, Ego-involvement, Internal Rewards and Punishments	Compliance, External Rewards and Punishments	Nonintentional, Nonvaluing, Incompetence, Lack of Control
	DEGREE OF MOTIVATIONAL/REGULATORY AUTONOMY					
	GREATER ‹----------› LESSER					

As evident in Table 2, above, amotivation also forms part of the SDT framework but this dimension was irrelevant to the data and so does not form part of the discussion. Rather, the empirical discussion is based around the four modes of regulation comprising 'external motivation' as found according to the hybrid deductive-inductive (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006) coding process whereby data were initially coded into these four categories with each category then analysed inductively to develop themes within them, as described more fully below.

4: METHODOLOGY

4.1: METHOD

Data were gathered from 33 semi-structured interviews with UC claimants conducted in two phases between January-March 2021 (20) and February-March 2022 (13). Due to COVID-19 restrictions, recruitment took place through adverts placed on advice

centre and housing association websites and social media. Interviews were conducted via telephone. Participants received a £10 gift voucher for their time.

Data analysis employed FMTA using the five-part procedure outlined by Goldsmith (2021). The first stage, 'data familiarisation', involved listening to the interviews, transcribing them, reading the transcripts, and initial coding and theme development. The second step was framework identification. This involved an iterative process whereby a working analytical framework was developed from *a priori* concepts and themes guiding the initial theoretical reasoning behind the inquiry as well as themes developed inductively through the initial phase of coding and theme development. These themes and concepts were then "grouped, ranked, or otherwise ordered (...) as necessary to move from simple description to conceptual abstractions" (Goldsmith 2021:2065). For this paper, that involved finding a framework of motivation and behaviour which both fitted the interpretative themes developed during the first stage of coding and allowed for a dynamic discussion of the interplay between the different themes and forces of analytical import.

The framework guiding the original direction of the study was that of Winter and May (2001) and their research on the motivations to comply with regulations enforced through face-to-face meetings[18] based on working hypotheses of what different compositions of or interactions between normative, social, or calculated motivations might signify analytically. These theoretical assumptions guided the development of the interview protocol and the first write-up of findings utilised this framework. However, the analysis that this framework enabled did not allow for a full exploration

[18] See Section 3.1

of all of the codes interpreted in the data. For example, as the Winter and May framework only looks at motivations arising within the regulatory encounter itself, there was no room in the framework to properly explore participants' pre-existing motivations for job search. Also, discussing the influence of the claimant-WC relationship as 'social motivation' was not illuminating as the influence of the WC relationship on motivation was minimal[19]. Furthermore, the evidence of normative motivation (internalising the rationale and purpose of the regulation) is framed in Winter and May's work as positive, whereas in this data it was negative. Furthermore, the May and Winter framework is categorical and descriptive so provided limited scope for discussion of modifications in motivation or behaviours in a directional sense between forms.

Framing the data within an SDT framework solved all of these problems. Its placing of motivation on a spectrum of most autonomous to most controlled allowed pre-existing motivations and for directionality of travel as motivations and behaviour did or did not change to be brought into the analysis. Furthermore, the concept of introjected regulation allowed for discussion of the internalisation of the normative values of conditionality and UC in a more sophisticated way, in terms of different forms of stigma as coercive power, which related the findings more closely to the literatures the inquiry intended to speak to.

Having decided on this framework, the final analytical processes of 'indexing', 'charting', and 'interpretation' were able to proceed. In this case, 'indexing' involved going back to the data and applying the SDT framework; 'charting' involved using

[19] See Section 5.3

NVivo's case classification feature to map out what each participant expressed as regards each element of the framework and its constituent sub-themes, and then finally interpreting findings and their wider relevance and insight.

It is important to note, however, the limitations of this research design. Time pressures and the disruption of JCP practices wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic during which fieldwork took place precluded the use of a longitudinal research design (Neale 2015; Neale et al. 2012). Given that the subject matter involves how the experience of the potentially coercive pressures of UC affect claimant motivation and behaviour over time, such an approach would have been appropriate and potentially provided insights into the dynamics of these changes in a way that this design could not. The inability to pursue a longitudinal design does not fatally undermine these findings as the changes to motivations and behaviour described by participants here are, by definition, temporally consequent to their initial motivations. Nevertheless, future studies taking a similar approach should attempt to follow a longitudinal design where possible.

4.2: SAMPLE

As recruitment occurred online, a heterogeneous sample was able to be recruited (Patton 2002:109-110), meaning that themes spoke to a sense of the 'shared typical' (McIntosh and Wright 2019; Wright and Patrick 2019) between claimants exhibiting a wide range of characteristics and circumstances. It consisted of eighteen females and fifteen males aged between 18-65 with a wide geographical spread. Participants came from London (6), the South-West (5), the South-East (4), the North-West (3), Yorkshire and the Humber (1), the West Midlands (1); Scotland (9); Wales (3), and Northern Ireland (2). Online recruitment also allowed for recruitment of former as well as current

claimants. Thirteen were no longer claiming UC. Four were in full-time work, five in part-time or agency work, three were self-employed, and three were in education (one of which was still claiming UC). Of those still claiming, seven have been classified as having Limited Capacity for Work and Work-Related Activity (LCWRA) and had their conditionality suspended since the start of their claim, two were classified as having Limited Capability for Work (LCW), one was also in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1: AUTONOMOUS MOTIVATIONS (INTEGRATED REGULATION)

The respondents in this study did not undertake job search activity for its inherent pleasure -although one interviewee did state it is, at least, a way to pass time that provided focus- but rather as a means to find work so it cannot be described as intrinsically motivated. Previous social policy studies utilising the language of SDT have tended to talk of the role of 'intrinsic motivation' for tasks such as job search (Marston and McDonald 2008; Wright and Patrick 2019) or co-production (Fledderus and Honigh 2016), when job search is in, reality, autonomously motivated through integrated or identified regulation. One of the contributions of more fully developing SDT as analytical frameworks as done here is that we can conceptualise motivation in a more sophisticated and accurate way. Nevertheless, motivations to work, or undertake specific types of work, may be intrinsic to the nature of that work. As such, while job search motivations are examples of integrated regulation -as the end to which it is a means is fully integrated with the individual's self-concept, goals, and

values- and ought to be described as such, we can still think of such motivations in the same terms as intrinsic motivation.

Vallerand (1995, 1997) proposes three forms of intrinsic motivation: for stimulation, gaining knowledge, or a sense of accomplishment. Interviewees in this study exhibited all three motivations, often in significantly overlapping ways. With the exceptions of those whose medical conditions meant they were no longer looking for work and two individuals who were entering retirement, every interviewee was either in work (full-time, part-time, or self-employed), actively desired work, or was in education with a long-term employment goal in mind. Gaining skills and educating oneself involves all three kinds of intrinsic motivation. Accordingly, interviewees who were in, desired, or have undertaken past education or training described motivations for their activities which combined all three intrinsic motivations:

> "*I didn't have my GCSE in maths and English but it is something that I really, really wanted to do. That's how I started off into adult education; so I could get some qualifications and do something that I really want to do. You know, have passion, and really want to do in life (…) I am also studying my basic computing*" (Hasan, London).

> "*I decided to go back to college to try and better my education. It took four years (…) the highest-level was an HND[20] in sports coaching. I also got an HNC[21] in computing*" (Darren, prostate cancer survivor).

> "*I am a huge video game nerd (…) I'd like a job as a cybersecurity analyst or ethical hacker (…) I am a full-time cybersecurity student at college*" (Ellie, 19).

> "*Get a job, that is all I wanna do. I do try to improve me chances of getting employment, i.e.: going on an ITQ[22] level one course in doing Excel, Word, and PowerPoint*" (Mark, former toolmaker).

[20] Higher National Diploma.
[21] Higher National Certificate.
[22] Information Technology Qualification.

Others were not currently in education but were graduates with work histories related to their studies, had plans to enter university once existing care commitments abated, wished to enter training conducive to employment in a desired sector in which they had previous experience but faced cost barriers, or had undertaken training to improve their employment prospects.

Needs for stimulation and accomplishment were evident in other ways. Several interviewees had done, or were doing, volunteer work. One suffered from multiple age-related medical conditions so faced difficulties finding appropriate work. He finds it "difficult to be, you know, 'post-work' or whatever I am. I'm not really ready for it to be forced on me by my health (…) (I)f you took the conditionality out of it, I would still be applying for jobs". He was involved with community volunteering doing hospital runs, moving furniture, and garden clearances but was finding this increasingly difficult to manage. Alongside this, he helped man the carpark at his local football club. This was discussed more in terms of stimulation and social interaction but other interviewees spoke about volunteering in ways that demonstrated a sense of pride and accomplishment. One described volunteering whenever possible for Britain's second-largest lifeboat charity, taking especial pride in her fundraising activities given that the charity receives no government funding. Several volunteered in charity shops such as Barnardo's and the British Heart Foundation. Another placed daily phone calls to lonely people and volunteered on a Saturday morning as a community ambulance driver.

Two had found work through volunteering. One found part-time work in a special educational needs primary school through volunteering in a primary school and a Sure

Start Centre. Another had studied politics to master's level but graduated unsure of what he wanted to do next. He started volunteering at a local refugee help centre and described it as:

> "*a perfect blend of, like, my interests in politics and policy and actually practically helping people (…) So I started volunteering there and really loved the work and it ended up I walked into a job about six months later. I've been working there ever since*" (Eoin, 26).

One point of note is the marked differences expressed as regards the reactions of WCs to volunteering. Mostly, it was discouraged as a potential time-use rival to job searching. Some expressed that it was encouraged in the past when they claimed benefits replaced by UC, but not when claiming UC. A few from more popularly sympathetic or non-problematised groups such as those with reduced conditionality due to health conditions or recent graduates expressed that their WC encouraged or, at least, did not discourage it.

Finally, a common source of integrated regulation was familial and parental responsibilities. This constitutes integrated regulation as motivation is two degrees removed from the activity but stems from a fully integrated feature of the individual's self-concept: the role of parent. One single mother of a nine-year-old son was claiming UC after a period on Income Support. She described difficulties making ends meet, how her UC claim began while recovering from COVID-19, and how fortunate she felt to survive and recover from it as she needed to work to support her children, something she expressed specifically in terms of roles:

> "*Thank God I am still alive to take care of my family (…) I am all things in one. I'm a dad, I'm a mum. I'm everything to my son*".

Others expressed motivations in terms of their role as provider or being able to be present in their children's lives:

> "*I wanted to make sure that my son had healthy, nutritious food. (…) I focused on him lots (…) (M)y child is thriving. These are my priorities*" (Jill, former parental peer-supporter).

> *"I was single, so obviously I had to be home to a certain extent to be there for the kid (…) It's not that I wasn't willing to work, it's just that I was willing to work around my family"* (Jackie, mother of two).

> "*Five children I've got now, the eldest being sixteen soon and the youngest being seven. I struggle to find employment which would allow me to still see the children*" (Kyle, former van driver).

These examples demonstrate that the 'passive' conceptualisation of claimants underpinning behavioural conditionality is often inaccurate. Far from being passive and requiring motivational change, interviewees here displayed autonomous motivations, aspirations, goals, desire for self-improvement, and a capacity for reflexivity about the barriers they face and their needs regards achieving their goals.

5.2: AUTONOMOUS MOTIVATIONS (IDENTIFIED REGULATION)

Participants often expressed multi-layered motivations whereby the same overarching autonomous motivation comprised elements of both integrated and identified regulation. Notably, familial motivations were described both in terms of role-fulfilment or realising identities as parents or providers (realisation of the self-concept, therefore integrated regulation) and of *storge* and their aspirations for their children's futures or life projects (pursuing an external goal of value, therefore identified regulation).

> "*I worry about my children. Every day I wake up and I'm thinking of my children (…) I want them to have a bright future. Whatever I can do, I just want the best for my children"* (Sam, London).

> "*(M)y daughter's doing her masters. That is one thing I am pleased about (…) because my daughter is at uni I need to pay for her to be here, as well. She has had to pay £1500 for the house she is in and £9k bloody fees*" (Jan, London).

One man described his motivation in terms of inculcating a work ethic in his children and a desire they learn the value of ambition and goal setting. To this end, he described wanting to progress and have a senior role in a company. Another interviewee discussed her motivation in terms of achieving financial independence after splitting from her son's father:

> "*I just want to show my children that you need work for a living and to try and, like, engage and steady your career. Make sure you progress in the future (…) I'm starting a degree in business management and accounting this October with the Open University. So, yeah, within the next ten years, I would hope I'd be in a senior role*" (Jerry, 35).

> "*I've done it now. I've achieved it. I needed to earn money in a steady job, a certain level, so that I could buy my ex out of the mortgage and I did it. That was a huge prize for me*" (Kathy, 35).

In another example, familial motivations were expressed not from a parent's perspective, but that of a child. This individual had been in prison for four years and described being in such a desperate position upon release that he had to move back into his mother's house. He described his situation as "paying me way, the best I can" but felt under constant pressure to make sure he was "earning his keep" by contributing to food bills in order to "maintain this personal family relationship".

It is important to note the comparative lack of motivations congruent with identified as opposed to integrated regulation. I contend that this demonstrates the contributions made here by the fuller development of SDT as an analytical framework. For one, as mentioned in 4.1, by using an ordinal spectrum of forms of motivation from least to most autonomous, it gives a sense of not just a description of how coercion operates, but of its intensity. For example, we might consider coercion altering behavioural motivation from identified to introjected regulation to be of a less intense form than

coercion altering behavioural motivation from integrated to introjected regulation and even less intense than coercion altering behavioural motivation from integrated to external regulation. By establishing here that claimant motivation not only starts from a position of autonomous regulation, but tending towards the most autonomous forms possible, this establishes a base from which to understand not just the nature, but also the intensity of any coercion perceptible in the evidence.

Having established this, analysis can then move to potential sources of controlled motivation whereby the external operant pressures exerted on claimants might potentially alter their behaviours or motivations.

5.3: CONTROLLED MOTIVATIONS (INTROJECTED REGULATION)

Introjected regulation refers to motivations related to "contingent self-esteem", "to avoid guilt or anxiety", "attain ego enhancements such as pride", or to "maintain feelings of self-worth" (Ryan and Deci 2000:72). Stigma and shame are two of the most commonly cited features of unemployment and benefit recipience (Tyler 2020; Walker 2014). Mills and Klein (2021) argue the stigmatisation of benefit receipt is a purposive feature of policy design to deter potential claimants and incentivise intensification of claimants' job search activities. A recent report suggests that, of those who delayed take-up of UC for a month or more, 27% did so because of the stigma attached to claiming benefits (Baumberg Geiger et al. 2021). This next section analyses whether stigma also serves as an efficacious coercive means of changing claimant job search behaviour or motivation.

Analysing the data though the lenses of shame and stigma created interpretation issues within the SDT framework. Introjected regulation describes the motivation of

avoiding shame, guilt, stigma, or receiving short-term amounts of contingent social approval. However, avoidance of shame is not *ipso facto* externally imposed. If individuals can be autonomously motivated towards the goals of achievement, accomplishment, stimulation, self-actualisation etc., then it is entirely possible they can feel shame or guilt for being unemployed in an entirely self-directed way. Such is the premise of SDT's application in the studies of unemployment and job search described earlier: humans are intrinsically motivated to meet basic needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence which unemployment stifles, and they flourish when contextual factors facilitate those autonomous motivations rather than stifle or crowd them out with controlled ones.

SDT's placing of motivations on a spectrum of autonomous to controlled accounts for this. The causal locus for introjected regulation is described as mostly, but not fully, external. So this ambiguity does not compromise the concept's heuristic value but does require that researchers be judicious in their application of it. Here, I applied Baumberg et al.'s (2012a) tripartite framework of stigma as an interpretative standard to the data. It models stigma as *personal* (a person's own feeling that claiming benefits is shameful); *social* (the feeling that claiming benefits is considered shameful by society and confers lower social status); and *institutional* (stigma experienced through the process of claiming benefits). Of course, these forms of stigma are non-discrete, they coalesce and interact. For the purposes of identifying where stigma was a potential source of introjected regulation -an external, controlling influence- I only did this when expressions of shame/shaming were tied to social or institutional stigma.

This made it possible to disentangle whether feelings of shame or guilt were internal or external. Several interviewees spoke of previous employment and its positive effects on their wellbeing and self-esteem. They often expressed nostalgia, as is common in claimants (Garthwaite 2015), about previous jobs or autonomous motivations to find work which contrasted with their experiences of unemployment. Such examples I interpreted as internal and the expected negative affect arising from loss of social contact, routine, sense of usefulness or purpose, and material living standards. However, where feelings of shame or stigma were discussed in conjunction with negative experiences with WCs (institutional stigma) or tied to popular stigmatising narratives about claimants (social stigma), these were interpreted as potential evidence of introjected regulation.

Several interviewees spoke of experiences of institutional stigma in JCP:

> "*(Y)ou're made to feel like a second-class citizen because you're in JCP*" (Anne, 48).
>
> "*I felt very judged (…) I felt like trash*" (Lia, London).
>
> "*He didn't like unemployed people. He was really horrible (…) I don't know how he had a job in JCP when he didn't even like unemployed people*" (Denise, South-East).
>
> "*They are nasty people in JCP. They are harsh people. (…) (T)hey always pick those advisor who can be really harsh and aggressive (…) They choose those person who can be really aggressive and a bully*" (Oli, student).

Such findings resonate with interview-based studies with JCP caseworkers evidencing their stigmatising views of some claimants. The nature of casework means front-line staff subjectively construct claimants into positive or negative moral categories based on the claimant's attributes, behaviours, or perceived attitudes. Claimants can be negatively constructed by caseworkers as 'wasters', 'unemployable/useless',

'nutter/numpties', 'hoity-toity/snotty', or 'at it' (Wright 2003). Dunn (2013; *cf.* Marston 2013; Wright 2013) presents evidence that JCP caseworkers feel between a quarter and a half of claimants do not want to work and a dependency culture exists among the unemployed (Dunn et al. 2014). Such institutional stigma is a commonly described phenomenon in experiential studies of benefit claimants (Wright and Patrick 2019) and several interviewees here detailed shaming experiences with their WCs.

However, this experience of stigma did not seem to have a tangible effect on work motivations or job search behaviours. When asked whether the positivity or negativity of the WC relationship influenced their motivations or job search routines, interviewees overwhelmingly eschewed a direct yes/no answer and restated their autonomous motivations for work and their frustrations at their experiences. On the few occasions someone did answer the question directly, any apparent influence on motivation or behaviour was negligible or demotivating:

> "Researcher: *Does your relationship with your WC in any way affect either your job search activities or your motivation to find work*? Participant: *No, I wouldn't say so*" (Bob, former roofer).
>
> "*Not really. You have got to do it whoever the coach is (…) They write it all in the notes in the computer whoever the coach is. You can't get away with anything*" (Livia, Yorkshire and the Humber).
>
> *"(W)hen they're rude to you, or judge you, then it really does not push you. That's really bad to say, but it just doesn't push you"* (Trudy, charity shop volunteer).

While these findings cannot be generalised beyond this sample, they suggest that, while institutional stigma is a coercive pressure that can serve as a source of negative affect, in terms of changing motivation or behaviour it is a potentially blunt instrument. This finding was reinforced by the more positive WC experiences described. Some interviewees expressed that, on some occasions, they were fortunate enough to have

a sympathetic WC but that this was a sporadic occurrence as their WC was constantly changing:

> "*It's an advisor lottery as to what your experience is*" (Barbara, former pub manager).
>
> "*You see a name on the booklet, and you're thinking 'Oh, who am I getting in two weeks' time?' and hoping that it is somebody you like*" (Mariah, former market researcher).
>
> "*I had a different one every time, and I can't remember seeing the same person*" (Nadine, South-West).
>
> "*I think I can't even remember her name and that's what I mean about the WC constantly changing*" (Glen, suffers from sciatica).

A few discussed positive experiences in terms of personal rapport (Alford 2009; Kiser and Ostrom 1982; Riccio and Hasenfeld 1996). For one, her WC had gotten to know her over time. For another, his WC had served other claimants with similar health issues as he and had developed an understanding of the difficulties he faced. The most common positive references to WCs concerned demeanour. Certain ones were described as "chilled", "nice", "understanding", "encouraging", "let you get on with it", or could be flexible about rescheduling meetings. However, whenever positive experiences were recounted, the positivity stemmed from a WC who did not apply pressure or signposted them to services or opportunities they might not have been aware of. Much like the way negative WC experiences involved stigma but not changes in behaviour or motivation, positive WC experiences involved being allowed to get on with life and pursuing their own ends without pressure rather than inculcating changed motivations or behaviours.

Experiences of social stigma were also expressed:

> "*(T)here's a very negative view still about people who don't work. They call you, y'know, lazy people who just sit on their arses and get everything they want and*

> *that's not true. People don't know everything about you*" (Eldrydd, former teacher).
>
> "*I made some friends when the kids were little and they look down on me now because I'm a jobseeker (…) They look down their noses at me*" (Liz, works part-time).

Sometimes, this stigma seemed internalised, with some saying they felt like "an embarrassment" or that they were receiving "charity". At other times, it was expressed through stigmatising views of other claimants:

> "*Probably the people who are going to do the things that get sanctions don't give a damn about the threats whereas you've got other people like me who want to do everything above board*" (Kate, single parent).
>
> "*You've got so many people who don't want to work and come up with these excuses*" (Penny, degree in Early Years).
>
> "*(W)e've got, let's just say 'neds', that go into JCP (…) (W)hen you're sitting in the waiting room there's the usual, sorta, jakeys*" (Eric, Scotland).
>
> "*The people that should be forced into work, they're not being forced into work (…) There's people that flaunt the system and they blatantly do it, they've done it all their life, and they know exactly how to do it*" (Darren, former hospital porter).

Here, anger at their treatment was expressed not in terms of a universalistic belief that claimants should not be treated as such, but that they as individuals should not be treated as such because they are 'deserving' claimants. Although there were notable exceptions, the overwhelming majority belief across the sample was that conditionality and monitoring were perfectly legitimate practices in general, and UC in particular a legitimate programme, but that their treatment as an individual constituted unfairness. This defensive assertion of one's deservingness by way of contrast with 'Other' claimants chimes with findings in other studies of benefit stigma (Batty and Flint 2013; Chase and Walker 2013; Garthwaite 2014; Patrick 2016; Shildrick and MacDonald 2013).

The critical social policy literature discusses how both the details of and discourse around social policy reform have created the perception of a 'claimant class' that partitions those in need of state assistance into categories of deserving and undeserving (Dean 1991:65-88; Jensen 2014; Jensen and Tyler 2015; Jordan 1973; Hills 2015; Howard and Walker 2000; Okoroji et al. 2020). The gradual erosion of the ranks of the deserving though stigmatising discourse is framed as a mechanism whereby welfare state retrenchment and increasingly conditional policies can claim popular support. So, while institutional stigma seemed to have no discernible efficacy as a means of coercion in the claimants interviewed here, the wider social stigma in which it is nested did seem to operate as an effective means of internalising the ethics of conditional benefit within claimants.

5.4: CONTROLLED MOTIVATIONS: EXTERNAL REGULATION

Lastly, the analysis turns to the most controlled form of motivation: external regulation. This is the form of regulation most associated with coercive operant pressure and refers to motivations and behaviours undertaken to avoid penal sanction. Here, I discussed with participants their experiences of conditionality: how much it was discussed in the exchanges with WCs and how it affected them. A number of interviewees described their experiences in language suggesting an experience that felt penal or judicial. Sometimes this involved references to the apparatus of totalitarian states or ill-ease at the presence of security guards in JCP:

> "*JCP is like going in front of bloody magistrate's court (…) They're just German guards behind the bloody gates in* The Great Escape" (Will, North-West).

> "*They might as well be the* SS*, for all I care. They kill people. No, I'm not joking, they do. They are torturing people. You might as well call them the* SS*. I'm not joking (…) Benefit is a killer*" (Donald, former pub security).

> "*It was never a very positive experience going there. There was always security on the door, which made me nervous*" (Charlie, first-aider).

> "*It was very official. That was the first time that I saw a security man at the door of JCP. So I had to get past the security man, prove I had an appointment*" (Bertie, hobbyist magazine contributor).

Most commonly, interviewees described feeling there was a presumption of guilt and they were being "interrogated" accordingly. Rather than a productive discussion about their ongoing job search, the issues they were facing, and the supports they might need, interviewees often felt meetings were exercises in "justify(ing) your existence for the last two weeks" and demonstrating they are not defrauding the system. This feeling of being on the defensive was expressed as a general sensation that "they're always trying to trip you up" and that "(t)hey are really, really, judging you on those interviews". Sometimes this was achieved by asking questions that pressed the double negative, such as "'are you sure that you're not doing work that you're not declaring?' and 'You sure you're not doing work that's unpaid? You sure you're not doing volunteering work?'". A common expression was that people felt 'pressured' in meetings:

> "(*P)ressure… it's just, like, their main thing to try and get you straight into employment and it doesn't matter how*" (Ant, former labourer).

> "*I just feel like it's 'Get to work, get to work, get to work' all the time and you are like 'just let me get on' (…) You have got so much pressure, I have personally myself, other people might not be in that situation. Well, I feel pressure (…) They are not helping people achieve their goals, it is all pressure*" (Lynne, single parent).

> "*I just find them a bit callous and uncaring and unsympathetic sometimes. It's the way they put pressure on you to drop it, you know, like when you're in the middle of, like, moving house with two kids on your own. It's hard work*" (Mhairi, 50).

Here there was substantial evidence of effective coercion, as individuals started to discuss how their job search came to be motivated by fear of being sanctioned rather than from the more autonomous forms they have described previously. This finding

must be considered in terms of the capacity of the SDT framework to capture intensity of coercion: interviewees exhibited the most autonomous forms of motivation to seek work. As such, the evidence of coercion coming from the most controlled forms of motivation suggest the most intense forms of coercion:

> "(*T)hey would always say about sanctions (...) I was petrified when I had to go to my appointment at JCP"* (Holly, gym member).
>
> *"There's always that sort of fear behind it that you're going to get knobbled and you haven't done enough, whatever you've done (...) So far, I've survived"* (Patrick, former teacher).
>
> "*I was always on edge, you know, if I hadn't done enough*" (Kim, previously employed in civil society projects).
>
> "*It's used as a threat to motivate people (...) I was absolutely petrified and didn't sleep for ages (...) It did threaten me, because ultimately they sanctioned me and my benefits were reduced*" (Karragh, former pre-school worker).

While the fear of sanction was a notable driver of external regulation and efficacious source of motivational coercion, this has to be considered in light of the most common source of controlled motivation expressed across the sample: poverty and economic need. While various proximate causes for claiming UC were described including familial breakdown, reductions in hours for the self-employed, redundancy, attempts to reconcile employment with health conditions or care commitments, all shared the direct cause of economic need:

> "*It's quite tough keeping up financially, so I applied (...) I was really finding some ways to, you know, keep my income a little bit more sustainable*" (Aarne, self-employed photographer).
>
> "*(T)hat is what made me do it. We needed the money*" (Carla, Wales).
>
> "*My motivation is to try get out of poverty*" (Keith, South-East).

However, for many, their poverty and intense economic need was not alleviated by claiming UC:

> "(*M)y rent is £1,600. I have £649 every month and they pay me UC only £1,825. And my rent is £1,600. Only £225 left for four people food. I'm struggling so much*" (Tracey, works part-time in a special educational needs school).
>
> "*We've got all the prices of everything going up and, you know, the benefit doesn't seem to go up at all (…) They can't even cover my full rent*" (Danny, guitarist).
>
> "*This whole UC thing has made my life worse, basically. I go from week-to-week and come the end of my payment cycle, I'm lucky if I've got, say, £0.30 left. And that's if I really, really scrimp and save and don't spend anything else on what I would call essentials*" (Ross, suffers from generalised anxiety disorder).

For others, their predicaments were drastically exacerbated by being sanctioned:

> "*They were sanctioning me so they were only giving me £110 a month to live off and I had my whole house to pay for*" (Murron, Scotland).
>
> "*(T)hey sanctioned me and my benefits were reduced. At that point, I probably couldn't have afforded all of my outgoings*" (Katt, single parent).
>
> "*I was sanctioned and was living on £42 a week. For three months*" (Stu, Scotland).

For several participants, financial insecurity and the fear of sanction coalesced not just to precipitate changes in their motivations, but in their behaviour. Many described started to apply for jobs that they knew were unsuitable, would not be able to take-up, re-applying for jobs they already applied and were rejected for, or simply falsifying job search activity to comply with their conditions:

> "*Volunteering was helpful because I could always put it up to 17.5 hours and not have to fabricate as much for the job search side*" (Ralph, former volunteer).
>
> "*I was just banging them in to make it look as if I was actually applying*" (Dennis, South-West).
>
> "*I was mostly fabricating this. I really had to stretch to make it work*" (Malcolm, Scotland).

These findings speak to the second contribution of this paper: that, in situating the analysis in this niche between the limitations of the macro- and micro-level critical studies, it is able to tie the two together by demonstrating how the arguments of both

are instantiated in this evidence. Fletcher (2015) has argued that the intensity of the increase in penal and coercive benefit policies such as UC has given the impression of rupture with past practice and obscured continuities in British benefit policy. Particularly, he argues that current behavioural conditionality is an historical iteration of the use of social psychological approaches to the treatment of unemployment which flourish during periods of economic crisis when cost-containment becomes an over-riding priority (*cf.* Jones et al. 2011, 2013a, 2013b). Similarly, Mills and Klein (2021) situate 'destitution' by design' as an historical iteration of using affect as a means to control marginal populations. Koch and Reeves (2021) talk of 'state-sanctioned insecurity' whereby benefit inadequacy and sanctions replicate the insecurity of the market for cost containment and Grover (2019) of recommodification through retrenchment and inadequate social security provision.

I would contend that the evidence provided here can be thought of as being indicative of the individual-level arguments offered by Fletcher and Mills and Klein (i.e. unemployment is diagnosed as a behavioural/psychological issue of individuals remediable by policies designed to produce negative affect) and the more political economic arguments of Koch and Reeves and Grover coalescing in the experience of the participants. That negative affect (i.e. the fear participants expressed) generated by insecurity is used to coerce claimants (i.e. change their motivations and behaviours). So these three factors -economic need, fear, and benefits which do not alleviate that need- are not necessarily efficacious in isolation, but in tandem.

This is reinforced when we think back to arguments about institutional stigma made in section 5.3. Institutional stigma was common but not ubiquitous and appeared to be

an ineffective coercive tactic. While institutional stigma might have been an ineffective coercive pressure affecting motivation and behaviour, there was evidence of social stigma being an effective strategy whereby claimants can be reconciled to the values of benefit conditionality and to the use of sanctions. In this way, while institutional stigma might be an ineffective means of producing behavioural and motivational change in claimants, the social stigma in which it is nested can be thought of as an enabling condition for more effective forms of coercive pressure (i.e. retrenchment and the threat of sanction), which *do* affect behaviour and motivation through intensification of job search and altering motivation. In this way, different forms of coercive appear to play different, albeit complimentary, roles.

Of course, it must be remembered that coercive power is:

> "*not something that can be held, owned or transferred but is instead an intrinsically relational and diffuse 'capillary' power that operates through decentred networks and relationships, simultaneously both shifting between and affecting agents within those networks*" (Whitworth and Carter 2014:109).

As such, we must recognise that the threat of sanction was not a constant presence. A minority expressed that they "don't recall too much discussion about sanctions", that they have "never been frightened with them", or they were "not usually discussed". Even for those who described extremely negative experiences, there were times when they expressed the potential for positive interactions and experiences, demonstrating that coercion is a dynamic phenomenon. The most direct form of coercion, of threat, was not always present, nor was institutional stigma. However, the potential for threat to be leveraged is enabled by a structurally generated insecurity which both forms the underlying context of the power resources-based claimant-WC relationship and is,

itself, enabled by the macro-level coercive pressure of social stigma against the unemployed.

6: CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to build on and compliment previous studies of coercive practices in conditional welfare governance in Britain. It has attempted to build on the macro-level studies of coercive policy design by investigating how these policies are experienced by those subject to them. It has attempted to build on and compliment street-level studies of coercive caseworker practices by studying coercion as a phenomenon acting on the behaviours and motivations of individuals subject to those practices rather than those enacting them. Finally, it has attempted to build on and compliment studies of claimant experiences by grounding their testimonies of affect, positive and negative, in an overarching theoretical framework that captures the dynamics of autonomy promotion and coercion which define the claimant-WC relationship.

In terms of the first research question, regarding the motivations claimants have for seeking work, the overall impression was one of commonality within diversity. This sample were a diverse group of individuals: teenagers just starting their working lives through to those approaching retirement age; those who had come to claim UC through familial breakdown, redundancy, ill health, and educational transition; those who had been unemployed for a long period of time through to those for whom it was a novel or cyclical phenomenon. Within this diversity, there was a commonality of autonomous motivation for seeking work. The claimants interviewed here were uniformly reflexive and possessed both personal goals and autonomous motivations

to pursue them: for stimulation, accomplishment, to learn, for pride, and to provide for their families. However, both the diversity of these claimants and the autonomous nature of their motivations to seek and gain work are incongruous with a programme of conditional benefits premised on a unitary conceptualisation of who claimants are: passive individuals who seek maximum reward for minimum effort requiring incentives and coercion to motivate them.

In terms of the second question, concerning how claimants' motivations and behaviours were affected by different forms of coercive pressure, a dynamic picture whereby different forms of coercive pressure act in different ways, and with varying levels of efficacy, was evident. Institutional stigma, while commonly experienced, appeared to be an ineffective means of changing claimant motivation and behaviour through introjected regulation. However, participants' expressions of social stigma of the unemployed and broad agreement with the principles of punitive and conditional benefit policies suggest that stigma plays in a role in the overarching architecture of coercive benefit policy as a means of generating acceptance of such policies. Successful coercion in the form of altered claimant motivation and behaviour was evident through the confluence of structurally generated economic need, exacerbated by benefit inadequacy, working in tandem with the threat of sanctions. While the threat of sanction was not experienced by all participants, and not constantly by those who did experience it, the structurally generated need which enables it was a constant presence.

This last fact demonstrates how these findings both validate the literatures to which this research speaks, as well as contributing to them. Governmentality analyses may

be limited in only being able to detail the *telos* of policy rather than the dynamic, micro-level experience of it but the core tenets of these analyses were borne out by this analysis. The finding that effective coercion through fear of sanction did not serve to increase job search quality but only to create fear and either falsified or inappropriate job search is congruent with studies highlighting the abusive and ineffective nature of conditionality. The role of stigma in securing acceptance of coercive policies also validates studies talking of processes of 'normalisation'. Just as street-level bureaucracy theory studies can capture coercive caseworker practices but not the dynamics of coercion with those to whom they are applied, the basic binary between rigid enforcement styles and empathetic flexibility was reflected in the interviews. Finally, these findings suggested a 'shared typical' of coercion with other claimant experience studies, contributing to them explication of coercion's dynamic nature.

CONCLUSION

1: SUMMARY

This conclusion paper details how the materials presented in the four papers coalesce to answer the research question and satisfy the research aims and objectives outlined in the introduction. It will proceed as follows. The remainder of this opening section will detail the empirical and theoretical contributions made by both the thesis as a whole and the four constituent papers individually. The next section will summarise and discuss the findings of the papers with reference to the main research question. The succeeding section will discuss the findings in relation to the broader research aims of the thesis. There will then be a section of critical reflections on the research process, potential limitations, and recommendations for future research. Finally, there will be some general conclusions and reflections about the thesis as a whole.

2: CONTRIBUTION OF THESIS

This thesis is a contribution to the research on the lived experience of social citizenship in Britain. It studies lived social citizenship through the lens of claimant experiences of Universal Credit (UC). UC is the latest iteration of a general trend whereby social citizenship has become increasingly based on behavioural conditionality rather the traditional conditionalities of means, need, or category (Clasen and Clegg 2007). This change has been framed in terms of a communitarian morality of balanced and reciprocal rights and duties between state and individual (Carey and Bell 2022; Deacon 2002; Patrick 2012b, 2014; Sage 2012a) with the conditions placed on individual claimants legitimated through the use of welfare contracts. Welfare contracts are used because contracts are seen as both reciprocal and consensual

(Eichenhofer and Westerveld 2005; Freedland and King 2005; Freedland et al. 2007; Paz-Fuchs 2008; Miscampbel 2014). Given the centrality of reciprocity to communitarianism, reciprocity in the British welfare system has been given thorough treatment in the politics and social policy literatures (Ellwood 1988; Gutmann and Thompson 1996; White 2000, 2003a, 2003b). However, consensuality has not. As such, this thesis asks the research question **'***How do UC claimants experience consensuality in their dealings with Jobcentre Plus (JCP)?'* and applies it to interrogate semi-structured interview data from 33 UC claimants using four dimensions of consensuality -voluntariness, understanding, authenticity, and non-coercion- as an analytical framework. This question was investigated in the service of satisfying the research aims of '*exploring how the ethical framing of social citizenship is given praxis in the experiences of citizens*' and '*discovering how and in what ways the lived experience of citizenship does or does not map onto the premises of its ethical legitimation'*.

The thesis makes contributions to the British lived social citizenship literature in several ways. Empirically, it contributes to the growing literature which views citizenship "from below" (Patrick 2017) and studies consensuality as an affective dimension of lived social citizenship whereas previous literature has focused on affective dimensions such as the ways in which welfare reforms have affected citizens' perception of themselves as citizens or their normative views of the concept of social citizenship itself (Dean 1998a, 1998b; Dean and Melrose 1996, 1997, 1998; Dwyer 2002; Edmiston 2017; Hudson et al. 2016). It also studies the performed dimension of citizenship in terms of the praxis of its underlying moral and ethical premises in

experiences of governance whereas previous literature has focused on performed dimensions of citizenship such as how reforms have affected the everyday lives of citizens interacting with the welfare state often with an emphasis on coping (or lack of coping) mechanisms (Andersen 2019; Dean and Melrose 1996, 1998; Koch and Reeves 2021; Wright 2011; Dean and Melrose 1996, 1998 Patrick 2016, 2017; Reeve 2017). The thesis makes theoretical contributions to the literature by using consensuality as the analytical framework binding its constituent papers and operationalising various dimensions of consensuality for use in empirical research.

The decision to focus on the praxis of citizenship ethics in the lived experience of claimants was taken as part of the research objective of '*bridging the gap between the theoretical and empirical literatures in social policy by doing empirical research which operationalises ethical frameworks*'. The increasing specialisation of political and social research can cause research within sub-fields to become siloed with little potential for cross-pollination of ideas or techniques. Political theorists often discuss ideas abstracted from real-world policy or as historians of thought. Likewise, policy research increasingly privileges quantitative methodologies analysing policy outcomes and effects in a manner divorced from the fundamentally moral nature of social policy (Mead and Beem 2005:1-10).

While there are excellent normative, theoretical, and qualitative studies of social policy and social citizenship (Hale et al. 2004; Hale 2006; Patrick 2012a, 2014, 2016, 2017; Reeve 2017; Wright 2016), these studies have not attempted to take ethical or normative claims and operationalise them for empirical study although they often base normative critiques on empirical data. Rather they have critiqued the

inappropriateness of design (Andersen 2019; Patrick 2011a, 2011b; 2014); inaccuracy of popular discourses (Patrick 2016, 2017; Wright 2016), ethical foundations (Dean 2007, 2012; Dwyer 2010; Koch 2021), or outcomes of changes to the social citizenship settlement (Anderson 2019; Dean 1998, 2004; Dean and Melrose 1996, 1997; Edmiston 2017, 2018; Reeve 2017). This thesis actively tries to bridge theoretical and empirical literatures by operationalising ethical claims for empirical research.

In addition to the contributions of the thesis as a whole, the constituent papers make a number of theoretical and empirical contributions individually. Starting with theoretical contributions, Paper 2 is novel in its utilisation of theories of the relationship between trust and contract from management studies and sociology to analyse potential sources of claimant distrust in UC. Paper 3 operationalises recognition theory for empirical research in this context by tying its component analytics to observable practices in participatory policies in an original way. Paper 3 makes a further theoretical contribution by framing the nature of the social citizenship exchange between state and individual as expressed through UC as not one merely of rights and responsibilities, but of models of subjectivity also. Paper 4 makes a theoretical contribution by more fully developing and utilising self-determination theory (SDT) as an analytical framework than had previously been the case in social policy literature.

Papers 1 and 2 also made individual empirical contributions. Paper 1 made an empirical contribution as previous studies of UC with vulnerable populations have focused on different populations and covered different issues to this paper, such as: digital exclusion amongst the homeless (Harris 2020); the effect of UC on housing

insecurity (William et al. 2022). There have been studies of vulnerable populations subject to conditionality, but these have tended to focus on policies such as Jobseekers' Allowance (Reeves and Loopstra 2017; Stafford 2012), Incapacity Benefit or Employment and Support Allowance (Garthwaite 2014; Garthwaite et al. 2014; Manji 2017; McNeill et al. 2017; Patrick 2011a, 2012a; Patrick and Fenney 2015); or focus on elements of the claim like the Work Capability Assessment rather than dealings with JCP or with a specific focus on UC (Baumberg 2018; Baumberg et al. 2015; Day and Shaw 2022; Gjersøe 2016; Warren et al. 2014). None have investigated the idea of vulnerable groups being made part of UC and subject to the same processes of liberal subectification as non-vulnerable claimants and investigating their experiences purely on that basis. Paper 2 made an empirical contribution by studying social trust at the level of the service user in the context of activated labour market policy in the UK. Previous trust-based service user studies of social policies in the UK have been confined to health and social care whilst trust as an analytic in the social policy literature has tended to focus on macro-scale issues of institutional design, solidarity, political preferences, or issues of societal acceptance or compliance with specific policies.

3: FINDINGS REGARDING MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION (*How do UC claimants experience consensuality in their dealings with JCP?)*

3.1: VOLUNTARINESS

Voluntariness is a key element of the informed consent literature due to its liberal emphasis on autonomous decision-making, self-determination, and self-government. For medical intervention or research participation to be ethical, patients or

participants must consent to it voluntarily. This is based on the Kantian principle that humans are sites of subjective moral reasoning and, as the only source of moral action is free will, must never be treated as a means to an end. Human subjects must, therefore, consent to any procedure applied to them through autonomous and voluntarily exercise of agency (Delany 2005:41-45).

Just as voluntariness is a necessary condition of consent in the ethics literature, the primary underlying assumption for the shift towards welfare contractualism and behavioural conditionality in Britain is the re-framing of unemployment as a voluntary condition arising from behavioural deficiency. The Conservative-led government which introduced UC have framed benefit recepit as a "lifestyle choice" which the pre-UC benefit system has "allowed and encouraged" (Osborne 2010). In pointedly communitarian language, they have described the post-war welfare state as being built "when there was a stronger culture of collective responsibility" which "the welfare system has helped to erode". In their view, "people were not just allowed to do the wrong thing, but were actively encouraged to do so" and it has "become acceptable for many people to choose a life on benefits" (Cameron 2012a). UC was offered as a corrective to this, whereby "life on the dole is not an option" because with UC "you will get unemployment benefit but only if you go to the JobCentre, update your CV, attend interviews and accept the work you're offered (...) no more something-for-nothing" (Cameron 2014).

Construction of unemployment as a voluntary condition and the attendant behaviourism (Harrison and Hemingway 2014; Jones et al. 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Standing 2011b; Stoesz 1997; Wilkins 2013) upon which UC is designed are

inextricably linked to the dominance of the 'Becoming' model of the active welfare subject (AWS) (Wright 2016). This model constructs benefit claimants as, for reasons of incompetency or vice, in need of operant incentives to make them 'become' active and take personal responsibility for searching and transitioning into paid employment. Framed thus, conditionality of social rights is legitimated by benefit receipt being, in essence, a voluntary decision (i.e. an exercise of autonomous agency) reached through reflexively calculating that claiming results in the optimal balance between maximising utility and minimising effort.

Paper 1 explored issues of voluntariness in two ways. It analysed the experiences of claimants traditionally considered vulnerable with claiming UC, a policy which assumes liberal subjectivity: a disembodied and structurally unencumbered subject exercising voluntary agency. It also explored the different forms of agency those claimants exhibited related to their claims. The paper presented evidence that such claimants often found UC and its administrative procedures and expectations difficult to understand and comply with. The deficit model assumptions about claimant subjectivity in UC's design meant claimants with physical or mental health conditions often faced battles getting their conditions and supports calibrated to reflect their felt needs. This sometimes resulted in sanctions as claimants struggled to meet the expectations placed on them and/or the exacerbation of health conditions. These findings were framed in terms of 'administrative burden': social, psychological, and affective costs service users experience engaging with onerous administrative systems.

Regarding agency, the paper presented evidence that claimants often exercised agency related to their claim. However this was generally not in terms of asserting preference or need, but in accessing outside assistance with the processes of their claim from advice centres, professionals, and, increasingly, claimant-led social media groups. In some cases, claimants became active in helping other claimants through voluntary activities and involvement in online groups from which they themselves had sought help or new ones they themselves had started.

To relate these findings to the research question, we must consider them in terms of broader critiques of liberal constructions of the subject such as the AWS and notions of contractual consent predicated upon it. Contractual consent assumes a disembodied, asocial, and rational consenting subject capable of making autonomous, voluntary, informed choices then realising those choices though meaningful action. Corrigan (2003) describes this as the 'empty ethics' of informed consent liberalism: a liberalism based upon a non-existent subject divorced from either structural or embodied impediments to the exercise of autonomy and agency. In reality, it is impossible to disentangle individuals from their social, economic, and historical context and even less so when we consider the interaction between embodied vulnerability and social context. Liberalism's assumptive model of subject autonomy is a fiction. This is the crux of the 'relational autonomy' school of thought which argues that processes that assume and valorise autonomy must be sensitive to the structural and embodied factors which facilitate or constrain it and adjust procedures and expectations accordingly (Lomelino 2015; Sisti and Stramondo 2015).

However, some theorists go further in their critique. Building on feminist theories of vulnerability (Assiter 2013; Butler 2014; Fineman 2008; Kuronen et al. 2020), Hewer (2019:288) argues that we ought not to think of a liberal or relationally autonomous subject, as this still valorises the fiction of liberal autonomy albeit in more sophisticated terms, but in terms of a 'vulnerable subject'. This construction of the subject does not defer to a fictional autonomy but rather to epistemic expertise of affective and cognitive experiences of particularised embodiment. Rather than a liberal, deficit model of the subject working backwards from the assumption of unimpeded rational and voluntary agency, the vulnerable subject works forward from the assumption of universal vulnerability. This is important to remember given the examples in Paper 1 of individuals who were able to engage with the system productively and in a way that met their needs despite vulnerability. This reflects the point made by the Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC 2013a) that we must differentiate between the ideas of vulnerability and risk. Vulnerability is a concept more akin to hazard, it is a source of potential negative outcomes. However, risk is the probability of a negative outcome. Not all hazards are risky, nor are all people belonging to vulnerable categories necessarily at particular risk. Furthermore, the attempt to help vulnerable individuals to fully participate in society, and especially the labour market from which many are often excluded, is a laudable aim and one which is an explicit aim of user movements such as the disability rights movement (Barnes 1992; Heenan 2002). This further emphasises the potential benefits of a construction of the welfare subject based on recognising the universalism of vulnerability to the human condition, starting from the assumption of identifying vulnerability, then

appraising risk rather than a deficit model construction assuming liberal subjectivity and unencumbered capacity to exercise voluntary agency.

The argument I propose from the findings of Paper 1 is that claimants often experience the voluntariness dimension of consensuality as fundamentally abridged by the embodied and structurally constituted nature of their need[23]. This precludes their capacity to exercise the requisite autonomous agency to assume voluntary and consensual relations in their dealings with JCP. Furthermore, these normative ontological critiques of liberal subjectivity move beyond the normative and into the practical as the problems experienced by claimants in this research mirrored the issues raised in the theoretical critiques. That is to say that policies such as UC which assume disembodied, rational agents and place high administrative burdens on those with structural and/or embodied vulnerabilities to demonstrate otherwise, are susceptible to placing heavy affective burdens on those people also. This can, in turn, lead to the exacerbation of vulnerability in terms of physical or mental health (Cheetham et al. 2019; Dwyer et al. 2020; Mahase 2019; Walton 2018; Williams 2021) or social exclusion for migrant and non-white populations (Platt 2007:91-94).

3.2: UNDERSTANDING

Voluntariness as a condition of informed consent is underpinned by the necessity of information disclosure sufficient to understand the agreement to the consenting party. Simplification of the benefit system and improved communication between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and claimants have been “central tenets”

[23] This point can be expanded to include the discussion of Paper 4, which discussed benefit and retrenchment as purposive design features of the social security system to recommodify labour and incentivise low-paid work. Material need is not just structurally generated but, in this case, an active policy.

of UC as a means of improving take-up, clarifying work incentives, reducing fraud and error, and clarifying behavioural conditions and sanction (Summers and Young 2020). In other words, to make information easier to access and the system easier to understand.

Evidence presented in Paper 1 suggests that many claimants still find it difficult to access the information they require concerning the procedures of UC and to understand what many felt was a complex system. Some claimants' unawareness that provision of medical notes does not result in suspended conditionality in and of themselves was a very specific and common example of this problem. There were some exceptions to this trend in the shape of people with a high level of administrative capital. Claimants with experience of bureaucratic systems generally, benefit systems in particular, or possessing a high level of education tended to find information easier to access and the system more user-friendly. However, this was often as a result of seeking out information themselves rather than effective communication and provision of information on the part of JCP and those individuals still expressed the opinion that UC could be simpler and information easier to access. Consequently, several participants described having to access outside assistance as part of their claim. Some received help from knowledgeable members of their extended community network, their Macmillan nurse, sheltered housing association, elected representatives, and (most often) through dedicated benefit advice centres and online peer support groups.

I argue that these findings suggest claimant experiences of the understanding dimension of consensuality are often defined by inefficacious provision of information.

This leads to a contractual relationship defined by informational asymmetry and unequal immediacy of need that cannot be reasonably described as consensual. Although not all participants experienced anxiety and struggle related to accessing information and then understanding and interacting with the system, the procedural standard of informed consent is full disclosure of relevant information coupled with a mechanism for checking understanding (Faden and Beauchamp 1986:305-330). Communication between the DWP/JCP and claimants has long been a problem created by the diversity of claimants, multiple channels of communication, system complexity, and diffusion of responsibilities for different aspects of social security between different government departments. Nor has the DWP created an effective strategy to combat these issues (SSAC 2013b). Evidence presented here suggests that, until this changes, many claimants will face significant obstacles, unnecessary affective burdens, and have to rely on being able to access 'outside' assistance to navigate the process of claiming. All of which runs counter to the idea that sufficient information is provided to make a substantive claim to consensuality in the JCP-claimant relationship.

I would also contend that understanding as a dimension of consensuality in the context of welfare contractualism is not limited to mere understanding of procedural particulars but is extended to the underlying political nature of the relationship. The ethics literature concerning consent in medical and research contexts notes the difficulties of defining sufficient understanding in environments where such epistemic inequality exists as between physicians or researchers and consenting subjects regarding the technicalities and specifics of what is being consented to (Ahlin

2017:17). UC claimants have a different relationship to the state than individuals requiring medical intervention or consenting to participate in research do to physicians or researchers. They are citizens of a democratic polity with rights of participation in the deliberative processes whereby the social citizenship settlement is contested and formed. The individualisation of consent that welfare contractualisation entails must then have a standard of understanding as comprehension both higher than in medical or research settings and qualitatively different to it. I argue this comes in the form of trust, which I conceive of as understanding and accepting the substantive nature of the exchange. I argue this for three overlapping reasons.

One relates to the function of welfare contracts themselves. Freedland et al. (2007) describe four functions or purposes of welfare contracts: two codifying and clarifying the *specificities* of the rights-responsibility exchange between claimant and state, and two clarifying its *nature*. Of the first type, one is the *declaratory educational* function whereby the specific activities the claimant is agreeing to undertake are clarified and codified. The other is to *support a framework of provision for personalised help*. The state's supposed contractual obligation is provision of personalised support for claimants to help develop employability and welfare contracts clarify these arrangements, also. Of those that clarify the nature of the exchange, one function is to *highlight the reciprocity of the relationship*. Contracts are theoretically mutual agreements conferring reciprocal duties on all parties, not dictates of one party to another. As the power to impose obligations and sanctions on claimants is statutory, welfare contracts function theoretically to create mutuality. Firstly, by delineating personalised service provision; creating obligations for the state. Secondly, by

ensuring claimants cannot be sanctioned arbitrarily. The specification of activities the claimant must undertake is not just declaratory and educational for the claimant but defines the scope of potential sanctionable infringements. Seen thus, welfare contracts bring mutuality to the inherently unequal statutory relationship between state and individual. Finally, welfare contracts serve to *legitimise conditionality*. Conditionality may be seen as illegitimate by both claimants and public absent a mechanism for claimant acceptance of responsibility. The process of internalisation and legitimation of conditionality involves governing the arrangement such that it entails elements of mutuality and consensuality (Eichenhofer and Westerveld 2005; Freedland and King 2005). In this way, welfare contracts seek to mobilise individual psychological legitimation (i.e. consent) (Freedland and King 2005:121) via information exchange highlighting both the procedural particulars *and* reciprocal nature of the arrangement between claimant and state. As such, understanding of procedural particulars bleeds into the notion of shared understanding about the substantive nature of the arrangement (i.e. the former exists to generate trust in the latter).

Another reason is that understanding as comprehension of disclosed relevant information overlaps with trust in a more general sense. Informed consent as an imperative of ethical procedure is touted as a means of generating trust with full disclosure of relevant information a means to its achievement (hence the operative nature of 'informed'). However, while disclosure, consent, and trust are related, demarcation between trust and informedness cannot be made clearly, either substantively or sequentially. For instance, consenting subjects have to trust disclosed information as well as understand it, so informedness does not precede

trust but succeeds or is concurrent with it (Calman 2002; Molyneaux et al. 2005). Taken further, we can distinguish between informed consent and information-based consent, which are often conflated, whereby informed consent refers to consent given subsequent to information disclosure and information-based consent to consent given on the basis of disclosed information (Kongsholm and Kappel 2017). Information disclosure is insufficient to conclude the information has been either understood or formed the basis of consent. Consent is therefore generated on a heuristic basis partly involving comprehension of disclosed information and trust in the disclosing institution or individual (Kasperbauer and Schwarz 2019). Similarly, while information disclosure is insufficient for trust, it is a necessary condition for trust as otherwise agreement is based on mere blind faith (Grimes 2008). As such, when considering the research question concerning consensuality as an affective experience of contractual welfare governance, we should consider understanding as both comprehension of the procedural and trust in the substantive.

Another reason is historical. Informed consent as an imperative in medical and research ethics stems from attempts to redevelop institutional trust after abuses of the paternalistic paradigm preceding the consent paradigm (Hewer 2019). As such, the purpose of informed consent is, theoretically, to empower consenting subjects by making the basis of the legitimacy of the exchange their trust-based consent rather than the paternalistic beneficence, and therefore discretion, of the expert. The entire purpose of information disclosure and the understanding dimension of consent is that it facilitates trust (Delaney 2007; O'Neill 2001; Varkey 2021). The two are inextricable. Similarly, Paper 2 outlined the evolution of the managerial model used in British

welfare service delivery. This entailed a shift from the bureaucratic, professional, expert and hierarchical model of the post-war period to a managerial mode. Just as informed consent developed in research and bioethics as a more active and subject-centred way of generating trust than the paternalistic approach, the managerial mode of service delivery in the British welfare state developed as a client-centred departure from the expert, professional, hierarchical mode of delivery.

Evidence presented in Paper 2 suggests that claimants often lack intentional trust in UC based on perceived lack of encapsulated interest. Many expressed a belief that the purpose of UC was to contain costs by setting unreasonably high compliance standards, resulting in sanctions, or to disincentivise claiming by intentionally making the process difficult. This distrust stemmed not from a lack of shared value orientation with the principles of UC as most participants were supportive of behavioural conditionality. Rather, I postulated that this distrust stemmed from two sources related to New Public Management (NPM) reforms to labour market policy. One was the contracting-out of services and operations to the private sector which was viewed variously as signifying that cost containment was being prioritised over claimants' needs or that profit was being taken from public services in an inappropriate manner. The second was the approach to contract taken in UC. Firstly, because the CC was seen as having unreasonably high and intentionally difficult stipulations (i.e. its nature as a performance contract with intense monitoring and high penalties for non-compliance). This argument was strengthened by attribution of blame at the governmental level and that the discretion of WCs to get to know claimants personally, develop empathy with them, and be of greater assistance to them was hampered by

the proscriptive nature of UC. In other words, because they were unable to administer the CC in a manner closer to a relational contract, which has more flexibility and merely provides a framework in which an interpersonal working relationship can develop productively. Having already laid the conceptual groundwork of how trust is a prerequisite of consensuality, it is self-evident that these results preclude the notion that claimants experience their dealings with JCP as consensual in the sense that they have a positive and consensual understanding of the nature and purpose of the exchange they have entered into.

3.3: AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is a conceptual ideal associated primarily with existentialist philosophy (Kernis and Goldman 2006:288-293) concerning whether individuals are able to act in accordance with their subjectively felt identity (Harter 2002). Some informed consent theorists argue for an 'authenticity condition': that in order for true consent to be given, what is being consented to must reflect the consenting party's authentic desires, beliefs, values, or goals. Opponents of an authenticity condition in biomedical ethics argue against it on the grounds that a need for an authenticity is context-dependent and inappropriate for most clinical settings (Faden and Beauchamp 1986:262-273) or that authenticity is insufficiently theorised and difficult to identify empirically (Ahlin 2018). Advocates of an authenticity condition, however, propose two reasons for the necessity of such a condition. One is that, where normativity is involved in any decision-making process affecting a consenting subject in a substantial way, it is imperative that the normativity guiding those choices ought to, to some extent, be that of the consenting subject (Berghmans 2011). The second concerns is that authenticity

is a necessary condition of informed consent where the consenting party is competent to provide input into the deliberative processes of agreement as a safeguard to their autonomy in cases where intersubjective disagreement exists between parties (White 2018).

I contend that these arguments in favour of the authenticity condition are persuasive in the context of the development of job search strategies and formulation of a CC detailing mandatory job search activities. Advocates of an authenticity standard of consent in the biomedical ethics literature argue that clinical practice ought to be a patient-centric process, with consultation and co-decision guiding development of any treatment plan (Katz and Capron 2002; Kerridge and Mitchell 1994). Britain has traditionally employed a relatively liberal policy on occupational mobility requirements (Eidsvaag 2014) and WCs are, as discussed in Paper 3, instructed during training to involve claimants in decisions about their job search strategy and agreed activities. As such, the condition is contextually appropriate.

There are some caveats and broader considerations to this which I ought to deal with before proceeding. Firstly, it is a point well-taken by critics of the authenticity concept that authenticity is not unidirectionally positive. People can authentically wish to do things which are transgressive or harmful (Djuve and Kavli 2015; Jongman-Sereno et al. 2019). Consequently, an unqualified authenticity condition may be difficult to defend given the political and social consensus surrounding the contributory basis of British social citizenship. My personal normative position on social rights echoes that of Dahrendorf (1988): that liberty is a condition whereby rights can only be abridged or curtailed for engaging in prohibited behaviours and cannot be made conditional on

being compelled to positively engage in mandated behaviours in the private sphere. As such, I think behavioural conditionality is *ipso facto* a violation of rights and liberty. Nevertheless, as the Communitarian Responsive Platform makes clear, a programme of conditional social rights requires popular support and democratic legitimacy which, at present, I fully accept that it has.

As such, I recognise fully the pragmatic good sense and intellectual logic in the argument made by Lister (1997a:33-39/190-194, 1997b) when she calls for a 'critical synthesis' of liberal and communitarian approaches to the welfare state. Lister argues that it is not unreasonable for society to decide democratically to place some kind of formalised contributory obligation on its citizens. The question is a matter of what those conditions are, who they apply to, and how we recognise individual and group differences in such a way that we do not place unreasonable or unjust expectations on individual citizens. Here, I think the arguments put forward by Deacon (2002:75) are instructive. Communitarians employ a Benthamite logic in arguing that conditionality is merely the formalisation in the civic space of the natural reality of a relational and interdependent social ontology. This, in effect, suggests that there are two layers to obligation: the societal-level layer whereby citizens have obligations to society in the abstracted sense and an individual-level layer whereby individuals are responsible for specific instantiations of obligation. In this way, I do not think it unreasonable *ipso facto* to concede to an authenticity condition applying only to the individual-level layer. That such a condition only applies on the proviso that an individual accepts their contributory obligations in the general sense and demonstrates willingness to meet them.

This is, of course, what the 'New Golden Rule' itself purports. The issue taken in Paper 3 was not directly with the principle of reciprocity, but with the fact that the individuals interviewed were compliant and performed the required subjectivity but did not receive their social right to individualised provision that recognises the self as welfare subject either as preference or diachronic identity with a right to self-preservation. In effect, Deacon's justification of communitarian conditionality on the basis that "(i)f the government keeps its part of the bargain, then the claimant should keep theirs" (2004:915) was inverted and not being met. The claimants interviewed were keeping their part of the bargain, but the government was not keeping theirs. In situations where this is reversed and clamant authenticity is transgressive to society's agreed-upon principles of obligation at the societal-level layer, it is not egregious to suspend the authenticity condition at the individual-level layer.

There is a second consideration, which is whether an authenticity condition is a means towards ends of realising rights in the negative sense (i.e. authenticity as a means of providing insulation against dominating power) or the positive (i.e. authenticity as a means of facilitating better policy outcomes). Clearly, the arguments presented in Paper 3 attest to the former. However, as for the latter, my position is more, although not wholly, agnostic. The literature which studies co-produced employment services certainly claims positive outcomes from such an approach. However, these tend to come in the form of 'enhanced social capital', increased user satisfaction, or more flexibility to innovate in response to user needs (Lindsay et al. 2019); outcomes which are either somewhat nebulous or hard to measure. Actual labour market transitions and long-term employment outcomes do not appear to play a part in this literature. We

also know from years of review evaluations of active labour market policies (ALMPs) that they have negligible positive effects on macro-level outcomes as these tend to be driven by broader economic factors, with a lot of the perceived successes of ALMPS attributable to deadweight and displacement effects (Bredgaard 2015; Breidahl and Clement 2010; Calmfors et al. 2002; Kluve et al. 2007; Martin and Grubb 2001). Of course, by contrast, there is more compelling evidence that 'work-first' systems, which are more conditional and involve less claimant input (thus are further from the authenticity ideal), do tend to have better short-term transitional outcomes but worse long-term outcomes in terms of earnings, unemployment recidivism, and poverty (Etherington and Daguerre 2015; Griggs and Evans 2010). It would seem defensible to suggest, then, that employment services closer to the authenticity ideal, in addition to being more socially just in the negative rights sense, are preferable to those further from it in terms of reducing harmful outcomes. It is in this sense that my view is not wholly agnostic. However, we should not overstate the aggregate macro-level impacts of ALMPs as the most significant long-term determinants of labour market performance are structural and demand-side, not individualised and supply-side as ALMPs are.

Authenticity is a theoretical framework not yet employed in social policy research, although it is implied as normatively valorised and desirable in various iterations of liberal theory through its emphasis on autonomy in either utilitarian, Kantian, or capabilitarian terms. It is also a core -though not uncontested (Dalacoura 2002; Oldfield 1990:17-19)- idea in communitarian literature (Cohen 2000; Lehman 2002; Taylor 1991). Recognition theory was chosen as an analytical framework which could

capture authenticity for a number of theoretical and empirical reasons. Empirically, recognition encapsulates the core elements of authenticity as operationalised for research in fields such as psychology and labour sociology. Studies researching authenticity are derived either in whole (Barret-Lennard 1998) or in part (Goldman and Kernis 2002; Kernis 2003; Wood et al. 2008) from the 'person-centred' model of psychology as developed by Rodgers (1961) whose tripartite authenticity model consists of primary experience, outward behaviour, and symbolised awareness. 'Primary experience' is the extent to which the subjectively felt experience of the self correlates to the subjective internal image of the self, with more congruence meaning more authenticity, less self-alienation, and increased well-being. In other words, it means self-knowledge of one's desires, motives, values, and comparative strengths and weaknesses. 'Outward behaviour' concerns our ability to behave and express ourselves in a manner consistent with our goals, values, beliefs, thoughts, and emotions. 'Symbolised awareness' concerns the ability of individuals to integrate social norms and mores into their sense of self so that they can function adequately as social beings whilst retaining their sense of authentic living.

Taken together, we can reasonably adduce that the core of authenticity can be described as the satisfaction of our basic needs for both autonomy and a sense of relatedness (Lenton et al. 2013). It entails both our capacity to live in ways consistent with our subjectively felt identity and our ability to retain that sense of self in social interactions and relations which bound our autonomy through recognition of that authentic self by the other. In Paper 3, this is captured both though both the *recognition*

of working identities and skills and *respect for individual circumstances* aspects of the analytical framework.

Paper 3 presented evidence that individuals expressing a strong sense of occupational identity often find that the work-first nature of UC does not recognise those identities in a variety of ways. One is that they are forced to look for forms of work different to those in which they are skilled or feel a vocational calling. For some, this took the form of being made to search for full-time work rather than part-time work compatible around existing work commitments in their chosen field or ongoing training and education in that field. For others, it took the form of being unable to access financial support for training programmes or licences required to practice their profession. Some participants did not express a strong sense of occupational identity, with these individuals tending to come from opposite sides of the age spectrum. For example they were young people, often students or recent graduates, looking for short-term or part-time work to supplement their income or tide them over in a transitional period between finishing education and starting down a career path. Similarly, some more senior participants expressed no real fixed preference over job type, merely desiring physically manageable work. Whilst this meant that not all participants experienced non-recognition of their occupational identities and demonstrated the limitations of the theoretical and methodological approach of Paper 3, it is important to note that every participant who did assert for the recognition of an occupational identity had such an experience.

Returning to the more senior participants who did not express an occupational identity and so did not experience non-recognition in that sense, many experienced non-

recognition in other ways. For example, having to search for jobs incompatible with their physical condition. This formed part of a larger theme in the data where participants expressed the non-recognition of their individual circumstances such as changing family circumstances and childcare needs, and a more generalised sense of not being seen as a person but simply as a 'number' or 'claimant' rather than an individual with particularised need and subjectivity.

These findings were discussed in terms of 'The New Golden Rule' of "Respect and uphold society's moral order as you would have society respect and uphold your autonomy" (Etzioni 1997:xviii); the communitarian 'contract' underpinning welfare conditionality in Britain. This was framed in terms of an exchange of performed for recognised subjectivity. Claimants were expected to perform the 'Becoming' model of the AWS though being active and reflexive in trying to attain employment. In return, claimants' social rights should be realised in terms of individualised support and tailored conditions. In terms laid out by Yeatman (2009) this could either mean the self being treated as the subject of welfare through recognition of preference or continuity of diachronic identity. Evidence presented in Paper 3 suggests that, although participants expressed reflexivity, motivation and an active approach to finding work, the non-recognition of the self as either preference or diachronic identity preservation undermines the purported reciprocity of the exchange.

Non-recognition of occupational identities and skills means that claimant experiences cannot be said to be consistent with a standard of authenticity as non-recognition of this kind precludes the ability of claimants to live in ways consistent with subjectively felt identity. Similarly, the non-recognition of of individual circumstances is

inconsistent with authenticity in that in that it involves a lack of recognition by the other in a situation where autonomy is bounded.

3.4: NON-COERCION

Perhaps the most straightforward element of consent is the non-coercion condition. Consent cannot exist in contexts wherein the consenting party is coerced. However, coercion is a difficult thing to adequately operationalise. The problem is conceived of by legal scholars as the "Paradox of Coercion" (Narayanan 2021). This refers to the fact that coercion is a change in behaviour or motivation caused by the desire to avoid penalty but even drastic intensification of the punitiveness of the penalty does not necessarily affect motivation or behaviour. This is because behavioural motivations are multiform and the reason an individual does not exhibit a behaviour may be because they simply have no desire to rather than to avoid punishment. As such, to understand the dynamics of coercion as experienced by UC claimants, we need to understand their motivations and behaviours and whether and in what ways these are altered in response to what stimuli they are exposed to in their dealings with JCP.

Paper 4 demonstrated that claimants were generally motivated by autonomous forms of motivation: for stimulation, to gain knowledge, for achievement, and in order to meet the responsibilities of family relationships. Evidence was presented of the differential effects of different forms of coercive pressure on these motivations and associated job search behaviours. Evidence suggested that claimants experienced institutional stigma in their meetings with their WCs but that had little effect on their job search motivations or behaviours. However, the broader social stigma against

unemployment in which institutional stigma is nested was an efficacious means of developing support for behavioural conditionality.

Where there was evidence of efficacious coercion, it came through the twin avenues of material need, exacerbated by benefit inadequacy, and the threat of sanction. For many participants, this precipitated motivational change as fear and anxiety became motivating factors in their job search. It also precipitated behavioural change as many started to apply for inappropriate jobs or to fabricate job search activity so as to meet their conditions. Of course, this was not a unanimous experience. A small minority of participants had relatively relaxed and straightforward experiences with their WCs, others did not respond to the coercive pressure exerted on them, and those who did feel pressure and coercion did not feel it in every meeting or with every WC. As such, it seems like coercion is a resource always able to be mobilised and something that all participants had had explained to them and of which they were always aware, but not a perennial experience constantly applied and felt.

Although procedural coercion was overwhelmingly but not always experienced or efficacious, where it was experienced there can be no claim at all to describing these experiences as consensual. Moreover, one must consider that material insecurity as an intentional feature of system design as a method of incentivising work, recommodifying labour, and pricing labour into the low-wage end of the labour market in effect means the basic design of UC is one which relies on coercive logic (Grover 2019; Koch and Reeves 2021; Mills and Klein 2021). So, while the micro-level dynamics of interpersonal coercion between WCs and claimants are complex, the macrolevel dynamic of coercion shapes the entire relationship and adds substantive

impediments to an experience of consensuality to supplement the procedural ones as and when they are experienced.

4: FINDINGS CONSIDERED WITH REFERENCE TO RESEARCH AIMS

Having discussed the findings of the paper with reference to answering the main research question, we can turn to considering these findings with reference to the broader research aims of '*exploring how the ethical framing of social citizenship is given praxis in the experiences of citizens*' and *discovering how and in what ways the lived experience of citizenship does or does not map onto the premises of its ethical legitimation*' so as to understand what they tell us about contemporary social citizenship in Britain.

4.1: NO RESPONSIBILITY WITHOUT CONSENSUALITY

If the communitarian responsibilisation of claimants is achieved and legitimated at the individual level through contractual consent, the mechanism whereby "we consent to the imposition of certain duties upon ourselves (…) connected to (exchanged for) legal rights to some good or performance from the other contracting party" (Bix 2018:222), a lack of consensuality in UC claimants' lived experience of contractual welfare governance undermines the entire ethical basis of conditionality and potentially abridges the notion of social citizenship.

This is demonstrable through Bonvin's critique of responsibilisation. Bonvin argues that activation policies rely on a simplistic view of responsibility. A view which simply equates responsibility with accountability without consideration of the thick ethical substance of responsibility and the necessary conditions required for an individual to assume responsibility for something. Bonvin invokes Sen to argue for "two necessary

preconditions of responsible behaviour: adequate means and power to act and real freedom to choose one's way of living" and that:

> "*Without the substantive freedom and capability to do something, a person cannot be responsible for doing it. But actually having the freedom and capability to do something does impose on the person the duty to consider whether to do it or not, and this does involve individual responsibility*" (Sen 1999:284, quoted in Bonvin 2008:368).

Without consensuality, there can be no assumption of responsibility. Deacon (2004, 2005) invokes Selznick (1998) to contend that conditionality is justified on the basis that citizens' responsibilities emanate from a mutually constitutive social ontology rather than purely from civic association (i.e. that responsibilities exist as a function of living with others in a society so welfare conditionality is simply codifying and enforcing them in the civic sphere). Even accepting this premise, it does not follow that individuals are responsible for the specific conditions set out in their CCs, which are supposed to be tailored individually, if the process of formulating and governing them lacks consensuality. Of course, we cannot make generalising statements about the experiences of all UC claimants and, by extension, universalise arguments about the social citizenship in which they are nested. However, these findings present evidence that the *imparfaite* nature of implementing governing principles means that, in practice, some UC claimants have a lived experience of citizenship inconsistent with the ethics of liberal contractualism. Furthermore, as the lack of consensuality fails to confer responsibility upon the consenting subject, such experiences are also inconsistent with a communitarian, responsibility-centric morality.

4.2: THE SPATIAL, INTERSUBJECTIVE, AND PERFORMED DIMENSIONS OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP

I also argue that the observed lack of consensuality as an affective phenomenon is instructive about the spatial (at what level), intersubjective (between whom), and performed (how rights-claims are made) elements of citizenship. Here, I suggest considering the arguments of Nilssen (2014), Sage (2012b), and Freedland and King (2005). Nilssen (2014) argues that contractualism has macrodemocratic and microdemocratic dimensions. At the macrodemocratic level, contractualism serves in theory as a means of depoliticising and destigmatising the welfare state. By framing social citizenship on reciprocal and contractual principles, it imbues the welfare state with a perception of justice and legitimacy which ought to "avoid the worst effects of a workfare strategy, where the unemployed were often blamed for their predicament" (Sage 2012b:359). Decentralised implementation alongside supposedly individualised and personalised provision can be used to create the impression of a lack of hierarchised control with the legitimacy of the arrangement supposedly given praxis through individualised consensuality at the micro-level. In turn, the theoretical basis for the microdemocratic dimension of contractualism is that it can be used "as a way of democratizing service production (…) by shaping an opportunity for clients to influence the content of social policy through the contracting process" (Nilssen 2014:38).

The findings of this research contradict this. In Paper 4, social and institutional stigma were key forms of coercive pressure participants described experiencing. Furthermore, the distrust expressed by claimants in Paper 2 was aimed at what they

felt was a lack of discretion at local level and that WCs are required to be coercive and unempathetic due to the strong control exerted by the political-administrative centre. Such feelings are well-founded evidentially. Traditionally, the British welfare state has involved a wide scope for discretion and, while much of this has been lost (Walker 2016), the shift to the personal adviser model instituted since the creation of JCP in 2002 was, in theory, to promote flexibility and best allow for fair and personalised administration of an operant policy (Considine et al. 2018). The reality, by contrast, has often been that JCP staff have, in practice, had their discretion limited by high caseloads, time pressure, and an "architecture of standardisation" (Newton et al. 2012:3, quoted in Wright 2013:831) of standardised algorithmic procedures, and tight monitoring of job performance shifting priority to compliance with centralised targets (Fletcher 2011; Fuertes and Lindsay 2016; Grant 2013; Meers 2019)[24].

Neither do the findings of Paper 3 provide much evidence of a participatory microdemocracy. Rather, we might be best placed to think of the consensual basis of welfare contractualism in terms described by Freedland and King (2005:121):

> "*(L)egitimation may be of two different kinds, which we evoke by distinguishing between a collective political aspect and an individual psychological aspect. Collective political legitimation consists of securing acceptance -at a macro level and as a matter of public policy- of the imposition of requirements and responsibilities upon the clients of public services, such as requirements or responsibilities on the part of clients to make themselves more employable. Individual psychological legitimation consists of securing acceptance -at a micro level and on the part of the clients themselves- of the imposition of the requirements and responsibilities placed upon them. In particular, it consists of securing a readier acceptance of those requirements or responsibilities by the clients because they perceive those requirements or responsibilities as part of a mutual agreement which has some form of consensus built into it*".

[24] As well as evidence in academic research, see also journalistic investigations of the working lives of WCs supporting this claim (Butler 2015; O'Hara 2015; Pring 2022; Hurynag 2023).

In other words, contractual consent as legitimator of conditional social citizenship is given praxis at the macrodemocratic level of collective politics rather than the microdemocratic level of individuals (the spatial dimension). It occurs between governments and the electorate and between claimants and in-work taxpayers rather than between claimants and WCs (Whitworth and Griggs 2013:128) (the intersubjective dimension). Lastly, it occurs at the ballot box rather than inside JCP (the performed dimension). This is evidenced in Paper 2 where most participants said they distrusted UC despite sharing the overall value orientation towards conditionality and in Paper 4 which discussed social stigma as a means of securing acceptance of behavioural conditionality. Such findings must be considered in the context of those of the wider lived citizenship literature in Britain. In particular, the work of Edmiston (2017, 2018) who provides evidence that self-perception of social citizenship status is differentially conceptualised by affluent and disadvantaged citizens. Affluent citizens tend to see their citizenship as earned and realised while disadvantaged citizens are often not able to fully internalise their citizenship status and see it as undermined by a lack of waged productive contribution, even despite other forms of social contribution. Similarly, we have seen from Dean (1998a, 1998b, 2004) how conditionality erodes claimants' self-perception as citizens and can erode social solidarity. We can think of the findings of these studies as the results of the differential macrodemocratic and microdemocratic politics of citizenship of which the findings of this thesis are also part.

4.3: A NON-COMMUNITARIAN SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP

A key tenet and advantage of qualitative research is that of emergent design. This refers to the approach's "built-in flexibility so that the study design is attuned to the needs of the research context" (Given 2016:58). In practical terms, this means that elements of research design may be reactively adapted at any stage of the process. What is important is that the researcher "learn(s) about the problem or issue from participants and engage in the best practices to obtain that information" (Cresswell and Poth 2018:47).

In this thesis, I developed my research question as part of the 'hourglass' of research design. I started with a broad topic comprising interlinking themes (social citizenship, welfare reform, conditionality, contractualism, policy delivery, user experience, activation, individualisation) and distilled them into a defined research question, something concrete to be investigated and answered. However, the question is a means to an end. The answer to it ought to illuminate a wider set of issues that allows the analysis to expand again. For this thesis, the purpose of the question was to meet the research aims of '*exploring how the ethical framing of social citizenship is given praxis in the experiences of citizens*' and *discovering how and in what ways the lived experience of citizenship does or does not map onto the premises of its ethical legitimation*'.

As originally conceived, my research puzzle considered whether UC claimants' lived experience of conditional and contractualised social citizenship were consistent with the moral and ethical premises used to justify it. Purportedly 'communitarian' duties imposed on claimants are claimed as just via the liberal ethic of contractual consent

through consensuality in the process of developing, enacting, and enforcing them. As such, how consensuality is reified affectively in UC claimants' lived experience should be instructive as to the condition and nature of contemporary British social citizenship.

Just as with Papers 1 and 2, my approach to data analysis was abductive. As part of the process of developing my analytical frameworks, theorising my findings, analysing the data, and developing my conclusions, I was recursively moving between literature and the data and thinking constantly about both. This involved reading communitarian literature: primary, secondary, and discussion of the influence of such ideas on politics and policy. One of the advantages of abductive research is that, while theory-driven, it is not beholden to analytical framework or existing theory so findings and theorisation which do not fit analytical frameworks are welcomed as part of the process of discovery (Thompson 2022). During this process, it became clear to me that there were other ways in which the lived experiences of UC claimants were inconsistent with a social citizenship based on communitarian morality beyond a lack of consensuality. As such, with respect to fulfilment of my research aims, it would be remiss not to discuss them here.

4.3.1: WORK-FIRST UC vs PROSOCIAL WORK

The findings of Paper 3 provide insight into how the communitarian and liberal elements of UC can potentially conflict with each other in practice. The valorisation of labour market attachment over prosocial work, for example, could be said to represent liberal practices crowding out communitarian values. Communitarians value participation in public-facing, community-based work with a prosocial orientation (Etzioni 1997:82; Plant 1998:30, quoted in Dwyer 2010:28). Walzer's critiques of

Rawls's liberalism and Nozick's libertarianism in *Spheres of Justice* (1983) are rooted in their shared view that a universal account of justice is derivable with reference to social goods. As social goods exist to meet social needs recognised on a socially constructed, and therefore culturally embedded, distributional logic (Bradshaw 1972) needs are not facts, but *values*:

> "*We are (all of us) culture-producing creatures; we make and inhabit meaningful worlds. Since there is no way to rank and order these worlds with regard to their understanding of social goods, we do justice to actual men and women by respecting their particular creations (...) by insisting on the meaning of social goods among themselves. Justice is rooted in the distinct understandings of places, honours, jobs, things of all sorts, that constitute a shared way of life*" (Walzer 1983:314, quoted in Sacks 1997:166).

Therefore, the provision of social goods is the praxis of democratically determined civic morality**.** Consequently, "instead of aiming at neutrality, one of the duties of a society is to protect its own character (...) as the evolving joint creation of its citizens" (Sacks 1997:165). By comparison, the market as a morally neutral space for the pursuit of private desiderata (Hewitt 2000) fosters the "retreat of individuals into the private sphere" (Sacks 1997:167). It is this concern about the erosion of the communal fostered by liberalism that forms the basis of the communitarian advocacy of a state which promotes moral virtue and which state support for prosocial employment is promoted as a means of opposing.

Many participants in this research had jobs with such a prosocial orientation, including: English teacher; biology teacher; teaching assistant; assistant in an special educational needs primary school; educational administrator; outreach worker for a children's centre; caring for children, young adults, the homeless, or senior citizens; doctor's receptionist; nursery nurse; welfare advisor; and nursing (both in training and qualified). As detailed in Paper 3, all who sought support to continue in such

employment had their ambitions frustrated by the work-first orientation of UC. Similarly, Paper 4 emphasised the voluntary work undertaken by many participants, including: doing community-based research; welfare and access advocacy through a student association; volunteering at charity shops, with Citizens' Advice, a refugee advice centre, a lifeboat charity; and assisting community activities, including visitations. Whilst some participants' WCs supported their volunteering, this was limited to the more highly educated or those with reduced conditionality. Often, these prosocial activities were discouraged as they could take away time from job search. In this way, the broader liberal project of prioritising speedy labour market transitions taking precedence over supporting individuals with an altruistic outlook, whose identities are formed in relation to the prosocial work they do, and who have skills and experience that could be utilised in 'community work' whereby democratically designated social goods are supplied to the community can be argued as inherently anti-communitarian.

Moreover, communitarian thought posits professions as a form of community (Kukathas 1996:83-86). Professional communities have shared notions of purpose, morality, ethics, and demarcation between a public and private sphere. Kukathas uses the scholarly community as a demonstrative example. It shares notions of purpose and common good (i.e. to generate, preserve, and disseminate knowledge); of morality (i.e. against plagiarism, falsification of findings, or ethical standards of research with human participants); and demarcation of the communal and private spheres (i.e. religious or political beliefs of members or their dietary habits). A core communitarian idea is that of 'constitutive identity' whereby "individuals and communities are

constitutive of one another“ (Etzioni 1995b:17) and “society role and person are closely congruent; indeed, roles are constitutive of personal identities” (Selznick 1995:123). Sullivan (1995:173-174) traces the communitarianism of Alasdair MacIntyre from de Tocqueville’s idea of “socially sanctioned patterns of purpose” comprising “patterns of normative, sanctioned interaction themselves, which worked through daily life to shape the imagination and character of the citizens”. MacIntyre argues that human beings require a relational sense of identity formed in a shared cultural environment intelligible only though social action with recognised social meaning. He emphasises purposive activities with instrumental value that also generate identity and reify citizenship by deriving “their significance and value from the goods realized in the practices constitutive of playing these roles” (Sullivan 1995:174). Framed thusly, non-recognition of these occupational *identities* as described in Paper 3 is represents the denial of a specifically communitarian form of citizenship sitting at the point of confluence between the relational ontology of self and the realisation of social goods in the manner as described by Walzer. The liberal, first-work orientation of UC can work against a communitarian morality of citizenship not just by denying to some the opportunity to continue a career in giving praxis to civic morality but by separating them from a community representing part of their constitutive identity.

Of course, we must bear in mind the limitations of the evidence. As the empirical discussion of Paper 3 makes clear, there were individuals who did not express such an occupational identity and others who left prosocial work for their own reasons and that this represents a limitation of both the framework method used to interrogate the data and the analytical framework itself. However, the experiences participants detailed

during the interviews do draw attention to extant phenomena which bear consideration. As such, I would contend that, if policymakers are serious about instituting a labour market policy which both makes efficient use of the skills and work motivations of its citizens and promotes an active citizenship ethic based on duty, then a coherent policy on how to support such claimants and utilise their skills and motivations would be a prudent course of action.

4.3.2: DISTRUST OF CONTRACTING-OUT AND COMMUNITARIAN CRITIQUES OF NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Another potential source of antagonism between the liberal and communitarian elements of UC evident in the experiences of participants described to me is the distrust they expressed in certain aspects of NPM reforms as they experienced them. Communitarian theorist Henry Tam is critical of the proliferation of NPM ideas into public service delivery as he argues that they imbue public services with a superficial rhetoric of democratic empowerment and consumer sovereignty while subverting them to “atomistic private interest” (2019:4-8). These critiques converge around the institution of JCP. Cole’s (2007) historical analysis of the development of the public employment service in Britain has argued that JCP represented an attempt to imbue the institution with the accoutrements of the high street, with brightly coloured décor, institutional branding, private browsing of job search machines, and the language of customer service, even to the extent of referring to claimants as ‘customers’. Tam’s critique speaks to the findings of Paper 2, the core focus of which was the reorientation in managerial ethos towards notions of consumer sovereignty through NPM reforms. One of the findings of that paper was that the contracting out services such as training

and work capability assessment to private providers was a source of claimant distrust in UC.

Communitarian philosopher Michael Sandel argues that "one of the most striking tendencies of our time is the expansion of markets into spheres of life traditionally governed by non-market norms" (2009:265). Further, he argues that the most fateful change characterising what he calls the 'Era of Market Triumphalism' is "the expansion of markets, and of market values, into spheres of life where they do not belong" (2012:7). I would contend that we can understand this finding of Paper 2 in such terms. To be clear, I am not making a normative critique about NPM reforms or commenting on their miscibility with communitarian ideas. What I am claiming is that we can reasonably characterise the views expressed by participants in terms commensurate with Sandel's views as described above. Participants expressed moral ideas about the appropriate role of private organisations and private profit in public services and the confluence of these ideas with their experiences of public service operations contracted to the private sector then generated in them distrust of the motives of UC.

4.3.3: RELATIONAL vs INSTRUMENTALISED SERVICES

Paper 2 also argued that claimant distrust in UC was driven in part by the approach to contract taken in UC: a one-sided performance-based one stipulating expectations on the claimant. This was perceived as evidence that the purpose of UC is to intentionally make compliance difficult. The conclusion that the type of contractual administration entailed in UC was a source of distrust was strengthened by that distrust being directed at institutions and not necessarily at WCs. While almost all participants

detailed negative experiences with WCs, this was largely attributed to the nature of UC itself and even those especially strident in their criticisms admitted exceptions to this general trend. Such findings should be considered alongside those of Paper 3 surrounding claimant perception of their unique experiences and circumstances not being appropriately translated into a personalised programme of support. Claimants expressing these sentiments expressed a desire that UC were more personal and took a holistic view of claimants as organismic beings with subjective experience, need, and preference. This evidences the assumption that, without the "infrastructure of standardisation" (Newton et al. 2012), WCs could utilise the organic relationship development processes of face-to-face interaction to develop rapport with, and knowledge of, claimants. This kind of rapport defined what positive experiences participants did describe. In this way, claimants expressed a preference for a service based on relational principles allowing for the organic development of productive relationships over one based on contractualised instrumentalism. I would argue that there is congruence between the experiences described by participants and broader communitarian critiques of liberal contractualism.

Communitarians believe that a properly ordered society "cannot be merely a congeries of contractual relationships among self-interested individuals" (Spragens 1995:38) but an organic entity defined by reciprocal relationships. This stems from much modern communitarian thought's roots in Durkheimian functionalist sociology (Levitas 1998:178; Prideaux 2001, 2002; Sacks 1997:161). Prideaux (2004:128) argues that Etzioni's contemporary communitarian philosophy "continues to reiterate the thoughts and impressions he had gained during his functionalist days as an

organisational theorist in the 1950s and 1960s" only with his earlier micro-theories of organisations "transposed to fit a macro-theory about the perceived ills and remedies pertinent to contemporary 'mainstream' society". Etzioni's argument is that when social relations are instrumentalised and reduced to individual use-value, social cohesion and morality decay. Similarly, Hale (2006:123-124) characterises the thought of British communitarian philosopher James Boswell as based on a reading of Durkheim which posits that community solidarity must be predicated on social relationships which are free and spontaneous and so have value. This stands in contradistinction to contractual solidarity between atomistic individuals. In this view, contractual relationships *cannot* be organic. For Boswell, Durkheim's argument that "contract is a truce, and very precarious; it suspends hostility only for a time" is accurate. Boswell sees contract not only as indicative of no pre-existing trust but as a means of artificially creating balanced reciprocity where parties follow assumptions of negative reciprocity (Sahlins 1972) trying to maximise benefit and minimise contribution or effort at the expense of the other.

This notion of contract as a truce is the core of the theoretical perspective concerning trust and contract proffered as the theory of best regarding the evidence presented in Paper 2. This perspective matches Granovetter's (1985) which argues that formal contracts can downplay the socially embedded relationships that define social exchange and that this creates space for distrust, competition, and antagonism where consent and co-operation ought to exist. It also is consistent with Molm et al.'s (2003) argument that performance contracts emphasise the conflictual and competitive aspects of social exchange.

4.3.4: DEFENSIVE SOCIAL CAPITAL

The term 'social capital' was originally coined by Jane Jacobs (1961) to refer to informal economic networks that exist between producers, trailers, and consumers. Over time, its usage has come to refer more broadly to the productive resources that are generated by social relationships (Coleman 1988, 1990). This valorisation of relationality as a productive force makes the concept popular among communitarians who have shifted its locus away from market-based relationships to productive resources embedded organically in localities and community relationships. Communitarians conceive social capital as "a form of trust that is created outside of the marketplace and is consumed but not replenished by commercial relationships" (Meadowcroft and Pennington 2008:121).

While much of the evidence presented in this thesis demonstrates how UC can be considered non-communitarian, there was some evidence that UC actually seemed to facilitate lived experiences commensurate with communitarian morality. Paper 1 detail how claimants often accessed sources of social capital for assistance in the process of their claim. Some then became producers of social capital themselves by volunteering in advice centres or becoming active in online peer support groups for other claimants. This is a finding which would seem to be something of which communitarians would approve. However, it was a fundamentally defensive reaction to UC. Individuals who had struggled with or had to fight the system in some way wanted to ensure that they could help other people in a similar situation. I find it interesting that only real evidence of UC actively facilitating forms of living

commensurate with communitarian ideals appeared to be as a defensive reaction to UC, rather than a positive development supported and facilitated by it.

4.3.5: INHIBITING RATHER THAN INCULCATING COMMUNITARIAN CITIZENSHIP

I would argue that the majority of participants were already living lives consistent with core communitarian citizenship ideals. Many worked or were in training in prosocial professions which themselves exemplify constitutive communities and which give praxis to civic morality through provision of social goods. Some who could no longer work in such prosocial organisations wished to make other kinds of contribution to their communities and those in education sought to make such contributions in the future. Many participants were or had been volunteers. As Arthur and Bailey (2000:37) note, citing Norton Garfinkle's (1998:10) assertion that family is the "first community" and O'Neill's (1994:4) that "(f)amilies make communities; communities make states", the family is central to communitarian thought as the ultimate organic and solidaristic institution. Several interviewees were motivated to find employment by internalised needs and desire to fulfil the duties of familial roles and relationships. Many utilised local networks of support and volunteered their time as a source of such support. While we cannot generalise from this sample and assume this is the case with every claimant across Britain, this is evidence of ways in which an already existing performed and intersubjective lived experience of communitarian citizenship can potentially be hindered by UC, a policy programme purported to inculcate one.

We can think of this in similar terms to how Wright (2016) conceptualises the differences between the 'Becoming' and 'Being' modes of the AWS, as discussed in Paper 1. The welfare subject of UC is ontologically and epistemologically liberal:

rational, reflexive, disembodied, asocial, atomised, and in need of operant structures to move them from passivity to activity. In this dichotomy, the 'Being' model is the riposte which highlights the limits of liberal constructions of subjectivity. Individuals are active but their agency in the social relations of welfare is constrained by structural factors, including social services assuming liberal subjectivity that lack genuine participatory opportunities. I argue that we can also conceive of a 'Becoming' and 'Being' dynamic of communitarian citizenship. UC is framed as a means of taking people who are not communitarian citizens but the mere passive rights-holders of the liberal worldview who can become communitarian citizens through state enforcement of community morality tied to social rights. The evidence presented here suggests that claimants often already are communitarian citizens and that UC may actually be a hindrance to their enactment of it in some ways.

Also of note regarding these findings is how the analytical landscape of the lived citizenship literature relates to the symbiosis between the spatial, intersubjective, and performed dimensions of citizenship. Kallio et al. (2015:714) talk of 'alternative citizenships' whereby agency in the relational world is exercised to enact citizenship away from the formalised procedures of state, especially in contexts where people lack status, rights, or access to civic practices. The evidence presented here suggested a spatiality of communitarian citizenship away from state institutions. People performed their communitarian citizenship in workplaces, the home, their place of education, and spaces in which they volunteered. It was intersubjectively constituted in face-to-face dealings with clients of prosocial organisations in which they worked and through relationships with friends, relatives, and colleagues. Their

direct interaction with the state in the formalised spaces associated with citizenship, where they were to be 'become' communitarian citizens though the intervention of UC, was where their experience of a citizenship commensurate with such notions, was often abridged.

5: SOME CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH

5.1: COVID-19 PANDEMIC

It is important to discuss the impacts which the COVID-19 pandemic had on this research. The pandemic was ongoing throughout both fieldwork periods with full lockdown and closure of JCP offices throughout the first and offices variably open and closed under 'Plan B' restrictions during the second. Despite the scale and significance of the pandemic, it is not discussed substantially in the standalone papers which may appear, *prima facie*, a lacuna. As such, it is appropriate while reflecting on the research process to clarify that the pandemic was not discussed because it was not a prominent analytic theme relevant to the research questions. In the papers utilising the framework method, the pandemic did not appear in the data in a way analytically relevant, germane to, or within the conceptual scope of the analytical frameworks used. Nor did it feature in the data used for the papers using abductive reflexive thematic analysis in a manner exhibiting the logic of "patterns of shared meaning underpinned by a central organising concept" (Braun and Clarke 2019:1) and, therefore, of an analytically relevant theme.

This is not to say that the pandemic did not appear in the data whatsoever. Some participants mentioned the material benefits of the £20 uplift in effect between March 2020-September 2021. This spoke to the theme of voluntariness and the problems that

contractualism's assumption of liberal subjectivity presents related to structural and embodied limitations to true voluntariness. The pandemic represented an embodied vulnerability pushing people toward claiming benefit synergistically with structurally generated material need. However, Paper 1 covered issues of agency and variegated individual capacity to navigate the system using human capital theories, pushing such discussion of the pandemic outside the core themes and arguments of the paper. Other participants mentioned that their meetings were temporarily conducted via telephone and their frequency and conditionality scaled down. As a temporary exigent measure, this was only ever mentioned in passing and discussions were almost wholly focused on periods where this was not the case.

These two factors mean the lack of substantial discussion of the pandemic, despite it being a major ongoing event while the research was conducted, is not an omission of substantial import.

5.2: ONLINE RECRUITMENT AND SAMPLING

One area where the pandemic presented a potentially substantial limitation on the research was its necessitating online recruitment through advertisements. This approach did have benefits in that it meant that I was able to interview former as well as current claimants and resulted in my having a heterogenous sample that could potentially demonstrate commonalities of experience across reasonably disparate participant types. However, online recruitment and remote interviewing can potentially exclude people lacking access to digital resources (Partlow 2022). Echoing concerns of potential 'digital exclusion' from the benefit system through the move to a 'digital by design' system (Ball et al. 2023), Paper 1 found that people often struggled

to access correct information or engage adequately with the online systems. It is a reasonable concern, therefore, that, whilst online recruitment allows one to cast a wide net in terms of geography and participants with differing circumstances, it also carried exclusionary potential.

5.3: SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Consequently, future research asking similar questions or investigating similar phenomena ought take a different methodological approach. All studies are limited by circumstance and design choices so different studies making different choices can be insightful and useful in different ways. It would be worthwhile to conduct case studies of specific JCP offices, perhaps in a comparative sense with offices serving very different locations to see how locality may affect claimant experiences in a way my geographically disparate sample did not allow for. Such an approach may use in-person recruitment and therefore generate different perspectives and insights into UC, JCP, and the lived experience of social citizenship and avoid the potential exclusionary pitfalls of online recruitment.

Similarly, it might be worth looking at claimants with specific characteristics rather than through the maximum variation sample lens. Paper 1 looked at 'vulnerable populations' without really differentiating between those groups. This was fine for the purposes of the paper, as the salient analytical themes cut across different types of vulnerability. For example, both those with health conditions and those from BAME and migrant backgrounds or who had English as a second language all found the system difficult to understand and navigate, sought to access sources of social capital to help them with their claims, and in turn tried to become producers of social capital.

However, this masks the fact that there will be experiences unique to these different subgroups and sub-groups within sub-groups that could provide a wealth of both intellectually interesting and practically useful discovery.

It may also be interesting to undertake a more longitudinal study with a small sample of purposively selected claimants using a method like interpretative phenomenological analysis. The constraints of both time and the pandemic precluded me from doing multiple interviews over a period of time and, whilst this does not invalidate the findings of this research, it does mean that the dynamic nature of the lived experience of social citizenship as it unfolds was not captured. The interview data related to longitudinal periods of time but the notion of time as an analytic or dynamic experiences over time as an object of study is something that I was unable to capture fully (Neale 2015; Neale et al. 2012).

In terms of topics for future research, the findings of Paper 1 whereby claimants became producers of social capital by starting, moderating, or being active in online support groups for fellow claimants presents a potentially fruitful avenue for exploration. Citizenship is often conceived of in geographical terms of locality, nation-state, supranationalism, or diaspora so this online form of citizenship could represent an interesting topic of study to contribute to the British lived social citizenship literature. Digital citizenship has tended to be conceived of in terms of the internet as a resource for accessing information that facilitates civic processes such as voting, or for citizenship education (Beam et al. 2018; Nisbet and Scheufele 2004; Starkey and Savvides 2009; Gil de Zúñiga and Valenzuela 2011). However, the internet has also been posited as a potential new public space which can allow for new avenues of

political organisation, expression, and citizenship activities (Johns 2014). Chiu et al. (2015:504) have argued that "online community citizenship" is driven by a "social support mechanism" which "transfers the effect of online social support first to self-efficacy, self-esteem, and subjective well-being, and then to citizenship behavior" and a "social identity mechanism" which "relates the perceived external prestige and distinctiveness of online support communities to community identification and, in turn, to citizenship behavior". This finding of a form of 'digital communitarianism' is a notion which could be an interesting avenue for future research. An interview-based study which looks at the kinds of interactions and activities that occur in these groups, the motivations and experiences of their members, founders, and moderators as well as the social/communal dynamics of the groups is something I would be interested in undertaking in the future and which I am in the early stages of developing and conceptualising.

6: FINAL THOUGHTS

The title of this thesis speaks to the notion described in the introduction of the 'activation' of labour market policy being coterminous and inextricable from the activation of social citizenship. Britain has moved towards ALMP, but what of the 'active' citizenship that goes with it? In one sense, 'active' speaks to the reconceptualisation of citizenship as more than a status, but as lived and enacted by individuals in a social world that is inherently political. In another sense, 'active' is a core concept in the moral and ethical constructions of British social citizenship that UC attempts to straddle. Communitarian citizenship morality valorises responsibility and duty which require action and activity. The liberal-contractual citizenship ethic is

active in the sense that consensuality requires active engagement and participation in the procedures, and therefore content, of social policy. In UC, communitarian duties are assumed through the action of liberal consent. The confluence and interaction of these different ideas of activity -as consent leading to assumption and as the enactment of duty- and how they are experienced by citizens in their dealings with the state have been the intellectual puzzle guiding this research.

The overarching impression I gleaned from the evidence presented here was of a lived social citizenship that was active in neither a liberal nor communitarian sense. The lack of affectively experienced consensuality inhibited claimants from actively shaping and taking ownership of their job search strategies and activities and therefore did not fulfil the liberal-contractual ideal. It was not active in the communitarian sense, either, as the lack of consensuality has the substantive effect of undermining claims to the responsibilisation of claimants, meaning UC is not inculcating duty or responsibility. Moreover, it appeared as though it was the conditionality of social rights, the core feature of contractual benefit reforms purportedly making them communitarian (Dwyer 2010:68-73), that was the prime mover in inhibiting realisation of communitarian ideals in the citizenship experiences of UC claimants.

Birnbaum (2015:33) argues that communitarian citizenship is:

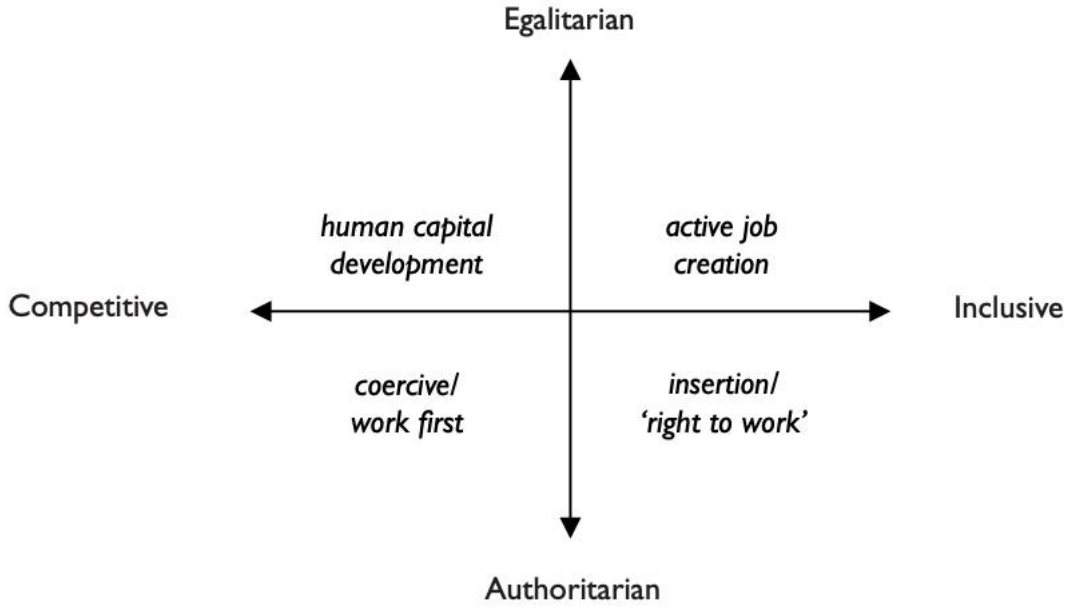
> "*an ethos of social duty and responsibility, serving to cultivate a cooperative disposition to define and develop one's own projects and interests in a way that remains compatible with (and conducive to) the long-term common good*".

While this may include waged labour, not all productive contributions involve waged labour. Communitarian citizenship envisions a cohesive, solidaristic, and vigilant

political community of engaged and able citizens. This precludes a situation where citizens may feel compelled to “trade away their freedom from domination” and thus communitarian citizenship must start from a position of robust basic social rights that provides a platform of stability from which citizens can then “support the complex infrastructure of a sustainable and flourishing political community, rather than focus narrowly on the world of paid work”. This is consistent with Oldfield’s (1990) communitarian notion of citizenship being a status unrelated to rights whereby one realises their citizenship through civic engagement but a lack of such engagement does not forfeit rights. Citizenship is an elevated status to be encouraged but not one which trades off against social rights, as this would undermine the notion of rights altogether.

Nor need a system where basic social rights are not subject to behavioural conditionality fold back into the passive amoral liberal state communitarians critique. This is evident if we consider Dean’s heuristic taxonomy of welfare-to-work regimes (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Taxonomy of Welfare-to-Work Regimes (Dean 2007:582)



Dean associates the 'competitive' quadrants with contractualism and its emphasis on markets and supply-side labour competition. The inclusive quadrants are framed in communitarian terms through the "inclusive potential of labour processes and the shared responsibilities or loyalties associated with labour participation" (Dean 2007:17) and promoting "the 'insertion' of those who have been excluded into the labour market; to give effect to their right and their moral obligation to work" (Dean 2007:19). As such, the state can retain a moralising communitarian authoritarianism that actively enforces duty without individualising risk. Rather, it could facilitate autonomy in terms akin to those described by Jayasuriya (2001, 2002) with the power of the state harnessed to provide opportunities for prosocial contribution (Etzioni 1997:82). A communitarian morality of social citizenship is not inextricably linked to contractualised behavioural conditionality. A social citizenship where the state ensures basic rights and actively creates opportunities for engagement in socially

valuable (and not necessarily, but potentially contingently waged) labour is arguably more consistent with this vision. This was the case with respect to the individuals interviewed here who overwhelmingly found that conditionality merely created negative affect, ineffective job search, distrust in the benefit system, and prevented them from realising their goals, especially where prosocial work was involved.

This speaks to a wider point about how conditionality ought not to be thought of as an enabling condition of communitarian social citizenship via contract, but an inhibiting condition to a communitarian social citizenship which utilises consensual principles of service delivery. Despite the data gathered here overwhelming supporting these critical conclusions, we can still learn from the minority of the data that suggested some contingent positivity where claimants did manage to interact positively with UC and their WCs. There is nothing wrong with making consensual principles the guiding ones of service delivery (Vincent-Jones 2000, 2006, 2009; Yeatman and Owler 2001), however that is not a basis for building the ethical basis of social citizenship. Principles of delivery are always *imparfaite* and subject to the messiness of real-world implementation. When consensuality is the basis of service delivery, failings of that standard merely become areas of improvement for the service. When they become the basis of the social citizenship settlement and are fundamentally tied to the substantive realisation of social rights, falling below that standard creates denizenship. In order to realise a social citizenship based on procedural consensuality in implementation, claimants require a backstop of social rights to assert themselves. Only then can they be substantively responsibilised and able to fulfil the communitarian vision of citizenship:

"*Communitarian societies provide the social foundation democracy requires by fostering communities, rather than atomized individuals, and by relying largely in voluntary order*" (Etzioni 1997:51).

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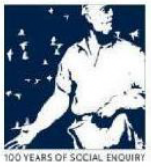
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APPENDIX 1: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY AND INTERVENTION
Barnett House, 32 Wellington Square,
Oxford, OX1 2ER, United Kingdom
www.spi.ox.ac.uk

Alistair Leitch
Department of Social Policy and Intervention
University of Oxford

SPICUREC1a__18_020

25th October 2019

Dear Alistair,

STUDY OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT CLAIMANT EXPERIENCES WITH JOBCENTRE PLUS

Your application for research ethics approval in connection with your research project has been considered by the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for Ethical Approval.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards and DREC approval has been granted.

If any revisions to your research methodology are made subsequent to this approval, these must be detailed in writing and submitted to DREC immediately.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jamie M. Lachman
Chair of DREC

Point of contact: ethics@spi.ox.ac.uk | +44 (0) 1865 280734
General enquiries: tel. +44 (0) 1865 270325

APPENDIX 2: AMENDED ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER

Department of Social Policy and Intervention
University of Oxford

Barnett House, 32 Wellington Square,
Oxford, OX1 2ER, United Kingdom
www.spi.ox.ac.uk

Alistair Leitch
Department of Social Policy and Intervention
University of Oxford

SPICUREC1a__18_020 Amendment

23rd October 2020

Dear Alistair,

STUDY OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT CLAIMANT EXPERIENCES WITH JOBCENTRE PLUS

Your application for research ethics approval in connection with your research project has been considered by the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for Ethical Approval.

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If any revisions to your research methodology are made subsequent to this approval, these must be detailed in writing and submitted to DREC immediately.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Jamie Lachman
Chair of DREC

Point of contact: ethics@spi.ox.ac.uk | +44 (0) 1865 280734
General enquiries: tel. +44 (0) 1865 270325

APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY AND INTERVENTION
32-37 Wellington Square
Oxford
OX1 2ER





Research Supervisor: Professor Mary Daly
mary.daly@spi.ox.ac.uk (01865 280553)

Primary Researcher: Alistair Leitch (DPhil Student)
alistair.leitch@spi.ox.ac.uk

STUDY OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT CLAIMANT EXPERIENCES WITH JOBCENTRE PLUS

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Ethics Approval Reference: SPICUREC1a__18_020

1. ***What is the purpose of this research?***

The stated aim of Universal Credit is helping people who are unemployed back into work, or who are in low-paid work into better-paid work through a service that is personalised and tailored to the claimant's individual circumstances and needs. The achievement of this goal is attempted through a process called 'coaching'; where Jobcentre Plus staff assist claimants in working out what the best courses of action are to get them back into work.
This study investigates how well this does or does not work in practice.

This study hopes to answer the following questions:

- *'How much do claimants understand about Universal Credit?'*
- *'How useful are Jobcentre Plus staff at informing claimants about their responsibilities and obligations as a Universal Credit claimant?'*
- *'To what extent do claimants feel the actions they are required to take are realistic, fair, and/or are tailored to their specific needs?'*
- *'How positive and useful are claimants' relationships with their Work Coaches?'*
- *'In what ways do claimants feel the system could be improved upon in terms of being more sensitive to, and reflective of, their needs?'*

2. ***Why have I been invited to take part?***

You have been invited to participate because you are/have been a claimant of Universal Credit and are/were a member of a conditionality group which require regular contact with Jobcentre Plus. (Work-Focused Interview, Work Preparation Group, and All Work-Related Requirements).

3. ***Do I have to take part?***

No. You can ask questions about the research before deciding whether or not to participate. If you do agree to participate, you may withdraw yourself from the study at any time, without giving a reason, by advising the researchers of this decision.

4. *What will happen to me if I take part in the research?*

If you are happy to take part in the research, you will be asked to attend a single interview. The interview will last around an hour and can be arranged at a time of your convenience and can be broken up into smaller chunks if that suits you better.
The interview can be conducted in a number of was at your convenience:

1) Over Skype or other calling program of your preference (Bear in mind we can just do a voice call, we do not have to do a video call if you would rather not)
2) In person (except in situations where Coronavirus restrictions apply)
3) Over the telephone

At the start of the interview, I will ask you to confirm that you have read the Participant Information Sheet and Consent form and agree to participate.
It is my intention to audio record the interviews in order to write an anonymous transcript afterwards. Once the interviews have been transcribed, the audio recordings will be deleted. If you do not wish to have your interview recorded that is perfectly fine.

5. *Are there any potential risks in taking part?*

There are no potential risks to taking part.

6. *Are there any benefits in taking part?*

Participation will afford you the opportunity to have your say about your experiences claiming Universal Credit, to lend voice to any concerns you have, or to highlight particular successes you feel ought to be more widely known. There will be no direct benefit, but you will have a chance to have your say and to have your thoughts, feelings, and opinions, published in academic research which will be in the public domain and with the guarantee of complete anonymity. This may, in turn, lead to more direct benefits.
I also compensate my interviewees with a £10 gift voucher.

7. *What happens to the data provided?* [1]

The information you provide as part of the study is the **research data**. The research data will initially take the form of the audio recording of the interview. The recording and transcript will be saved on a laptop accessible only to me. This laptop will be encrypted by the University of Oxford's Information Security Team, whose guidelines are compliant with both the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Any research data from which you can be identified (in this case, the audio recording of the interview), is known as **personal data**. It does not include data where the identity has been removed (anonymous data). In this case, the audio recording will be erased as soon as a transcription of the interview has been made. All transcriptions will be wholly anonymised and stored on the encrypted laptop. The anonymised transcripts may be seen by the primary researcher's academic supervisor for academic purposes related to writing up the research.
The consent form which you will sign before participating will also contain personal data (your name and signature). This data will be held in storage space at the Department of Social Policy & Intervention which is specifically designated for that purpose. Due to coronavirus restrictions, physical signing of a consent form is unnecessary. I will keep a record of our conversation where you consented and these same rules will apply.

[1] Please refer to CUREC's Best Practice Guidance on Data Collection and Management (BPG 09)

Your responses will be fully anonymised. I have no need to record your name, date of birth, or any other identifying characteristics. Only the audio transcript can identify you. The typed transcript will be held in secure storage space at the University of Oxford and the audio recording will be deleted as soon as the interview has been transcribed.
We would like your permission to use direct quotes. Remember that all quotes will be fully anonymised using false names and/or numeric codes.
You also have the right to review the transcripts, but not amend them. You can also have your interview deleted permanently on request, no questions asked, with no repercussions of any kind.
All research data and records will be stored for at least 3 years after publication or public release of the work of the research. We may retain and store your personal data for an additional period of time as necessary for the purposes of the study, and for further research.

8. ***Will the research be published?***

The University of Oxford is committed to the dissemination of its research for the benefit of society and the economy and, in support of this commitment, has established an online archive of research materials. This archive includes digital copies of student theses successfully submitted as part of a University of Oxford postgraduate degree programme. Holding the archive online gives easy access for researchers to the full text of freely available theses, thereby increasing the likely impact and use of that research.

The research will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be openly accessible. Academic journal papers based on this research are also likely to be published, subject to peer review. However, interviews are anonymous and you will not be identified in any publication arising from participation.

9. ***Who is organising and funding the research?***

The research is being conducted by myself, Alistair Leitch, a doctoral student in social policy at Oxford University. The research is supervised by Professor Mary Daly of Green Templeton College, Oxford. The research is funded through the Department of Social Policy and Intervention's Centenary Scholarship.

10. ***Who has reviewed this study?***

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (Reference number: SPICUREC1a__18_020).

11. ***Who do I contact if I have a concern about the study or I wish to complain?***

a) For studies reviewed by a University research ethics committee only:

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please speak to the relevant researcher (07523044751) or their supervisor (01865 280553), who will do their best to answer your query. The researcher should acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how they intend to deal with it. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the relevant chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter in a reasonably expeditious manner:

Chair, **Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee**; Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD

12. Data Protection

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data, and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the study.
The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that we perform in the public interest.
Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/compliance/gdpr/individualrights/.

13. Further Information and Contact Details

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

Alistair Leitch
Department of Social Policy and Intervention
32-37 Wellington Square
Oxford
Oxfordshire
OX1 2ER
Tel: 07523044751
Email: alistair.leitch@jesus.ox.ac.uk

APPENDIX 4: CONSENT FORM

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY AND INTERVENTION
32-37 Wellington Square
Oxford
OX1 2ER

PI: Professor Mary Daly
mary.daly@spi.ox.ac.uk (01865 280553)
Primary Researcher: Alistair Leitch (DPhil Student)
alistair.leitch@spi.ox.ac.uk (07523044751)

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM for 'STUDY OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT CLAIMANT EXPERIENCES WITH JOBCENTRE PLUS'

CUREC Approval Reference: SPICUREC1a__18_020

Purpose of Study: This research aims to investigate and understand the experiences Universal Credit claimants with Jobcentre Plus. Three aspects of the experience in particular will be investigated. The first is the extent to which claimants are fully aware and understanding of their obligations and responsibilities at each stage of the claiming process and how their understanding and awareness is aided by their interactions with Jobcentre Plus staff. The second is the way claimants are motivated through their experiences with Jobcentre Plus to comply with and complete the actions agreed during their meetings with Jobcentre Plus staff. The third is the extent to which claimants were aided in achieving their goals through interactions with Jobcentre Plus staff.

1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	☐
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, and without any adverse consequences or academic penalty.	☐
3	I understand that research data collected during the study may be looked at by designated individuals from the University of Oxford where it is relevant to my taking part in this study. I give permission for these individuals to access my data.	☐
4	I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.	☐
5	I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.	☐
6	I understand how this research will be written up and published.	☐
7	I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.	☐
8	I consent to being audio recorded	☐
9	I understand how audio recordings will be used in research outputs	☐

10	I give permission to be quoted directly in the research publication anonymously	☐
11	I agree to take part in the study.	☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL TEMPLATE

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

AGE:

LOCATION:

HOBBIES/INTERESTS:

FAMILY:

WORK HISTORY/SKILLS:

HOW LONG CLAIMING UC / HOW DID YOU COME TO CLAIM UC:

UNDERSTANDING QUESTIONS

U1: HOW DID YOU MAKE THE INITIAL CLAIM?

U2: HOW DID YOU FIND THIS PROCESS?

U3: HOW WAS YOUR FIRST WC MEETING?

U4: WHAT IMPRESSIONS DID YOU GET ABOUT WC/JCP/UC?

U5: WHAT WERE YOUR SOURCES OF INFORMATION?

U6: DID JCP EXPLAIN WHAT CONDITIONALITY GROUP ARE YOU IN?

U7: DID JCP EXPLAIN THE FIVE REASONS YOU CAN INCUR SANCTION?

U8: WAS THE LOGIC OF THE SYSTEM CLEAR (PURPOSES, EXPECTATIONS, ACCESS TO INFO, CONDITIONS)?

U9: WAS THE ONLINE SYSTEM EASY TO USE?

U10: WHAT DO YOU FEEL IS THE PURPOSE OF JCP/WCs/UC?

AUTHENTICITY QUESTIONS

A1: TELL ME ABOUT LIFE BEFORE UC (WORK, FAMILY, SOCIAL LIFE)

A2: WHAT APPEALED TO YOU/DID YOU ENJOY ABOUT PREVIOUS JOBS?

A3: WHAT SORT OF JOBS DO YOU WANT/WERE YOU LOOKING FOR?

A4: WHY? WHAT DID YOU SEEK TO ACHIEVE/GAIN FROM SUCH WORK?

A5: DID JCP/WC HELP DEVISE A STRATEGY FOR ATTAINING THESE JOBS (WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?)?

A6: DO YOU FEEL AS THOUGH YOUR SKILLS ARE VALUED? (WHY? IN WHAT WAY?)

A7: DO YOU FEEL AS THOUGH YOUR DESIRES/OPINIONS/AMBITIONS ARE VALUED? (WHY? IN WHAT WAY?)

A8: WHAT ARE/WERE YOUR MEETINGS LIKE?

A9: ARE YOU LISTENED TO? WHAT IS YOUR INPUT?

A10: ARE YOU LOOKING FOR THE JOBS YOU WANT?

NON-COERCION QUESTIONS

C1: WHAT ARE YOUR MOTIVATIONS FOR SEEKING WORK?

C2: HOW IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR WC?

C3: HOW DOES YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR WC AFFECT YOUR MOTIVATION OR ACTIVITIES?

C4: HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SANCTIONED? (WHY? WHAT HAPPENED?)

C5: ARE SANCTIONS DISCUSSED OR MENTIONED FREQUENTLY IN MEETINGS (HOW DOES THIS MAKE YOU FEEL?)?

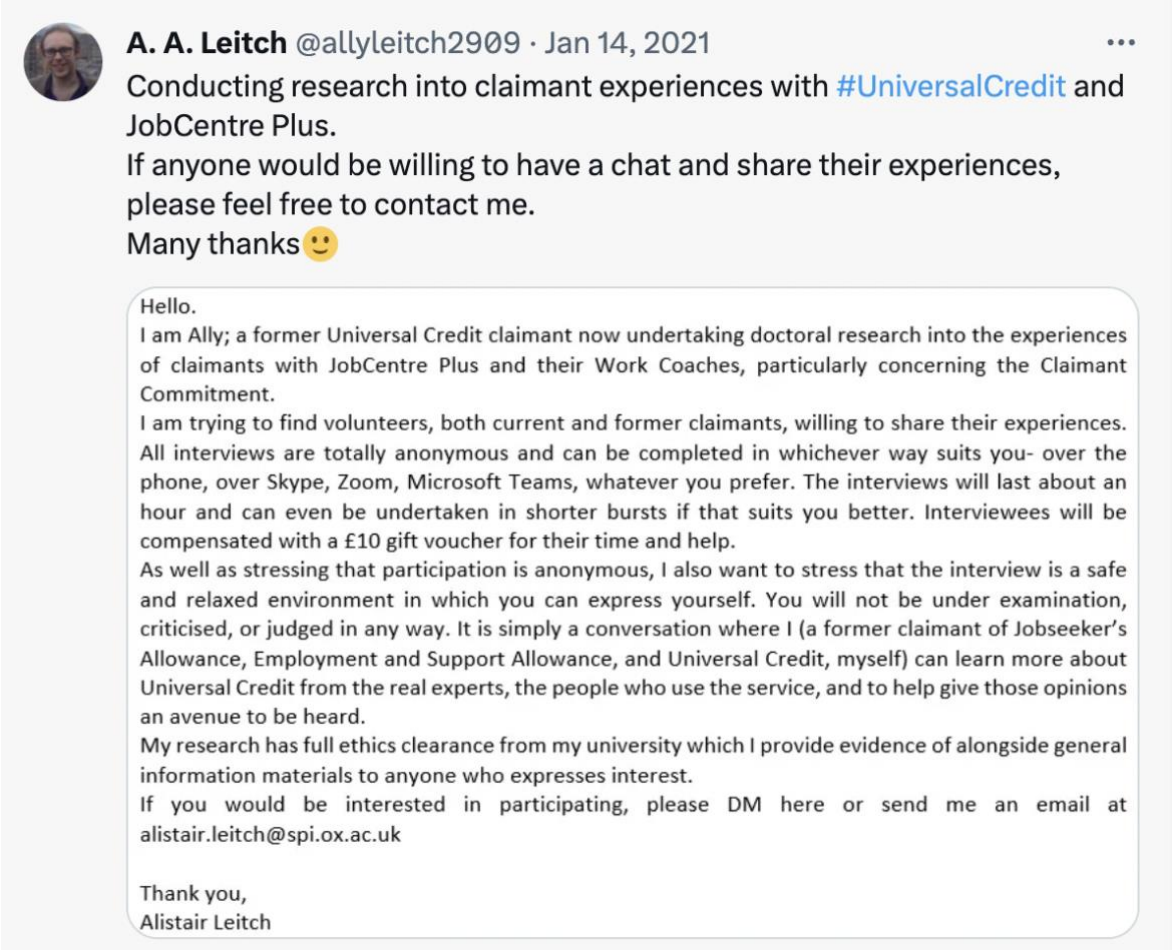
C6: HOW DOES THIS AFFECT YOUR MOTIVATIONS/ACTIVITIES?

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT UC/CONDITIONALITY?

ANY OTHER POINTS?

APPENDIX 6: RECRUITMENT ADVERTS[25]



A. A. Leitch @allyleitch2909 · Jan 14, 2021

Conducting research into claimant experiences with #UniversalCredit and JobCentre Plus.
If anyone would be willing to have a chat and share their experiences, please feel free to contact me.
Many thanks🙂

Hello.
I am Ally; a former Universal Credit claimant now undertaking doctoral research into the experiences of claimants with JobCentre Plus and their Work Coaches, particularly concerning the Claimant Commitment.
I am trying to find volunteers, both current and former claimants, willing to share their experiences. All interviews are totally anonymous and can be completed in whichever way suits you- over the phone, over Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, whatever you prefer. The interviews will last about an hour and can even be undertaken in shorter bursts if that suits you better. Interviewees will be compensated with a £10 gift voucher for their time and help.
As well as stressing that participation is anonymous, I also want to stress that the interview is a safe and relaxed environment in which you can express yourself. You will not be under examination, criticised, or judged in any way. It is simply a conversation where I (a former claimant of Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, and Universal Credit, myself) can learn more about Universal Credit from the real experts, the people who use the service, and to help give those opinions an avenue to be heard.
My research has full ethics clearance from my university which I provide evidence of alongside general information materials to anyone who expresses interest.
If you would be interested in participating, please DM here or send me an email at alistair.leitch@spi.ox.ac.uk

Thank you,
Alistair Leitch

[25] Note that the names of the social media groups I posted recruitment adverts into have been redacted for confidentiality purposes.

Alistair Andrew Leitch

27 January 2021 ·

Hello.

I am Ally; a former Universal Credit claimant now undertaking doctoral research into the experiences of claimants with JobCentre Plus and the extent to which Work Coaches engage them in a genuine reciprocal dialogue about their lives, circumstances, and aspirations.

I am trying to find volunteers, both current and former claimants, willing to share their experiences. All interviews are totally anonymous and can be completed in whichever way suits you- over the phone, over Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, even over an Instant Messenger, whatever you prefer. The interviews will last about an hour and can even be undertaken in shorter bursts if that suits you better. Interviewees will be compensated with a £10 gift voucher for their time and help.

As well as stressing that participation is anonymous, I also want to stress that the interview is a safe and relaxed environment in which you can express yourself. You will not be under examination, criticised, or judged in any way. It is simply a conversation where I (a former claimant of Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, and Universal Credit, myself) can learn more about Universal Credit from the real experts, the people who use the service, and to help give those opinions an avenue to be heard.

My research has full ethics clearance from my university which I provide evidence of alongside general information materials to anyone who expresses interest.

If you would be interested in participating, please send me an email at alistair.leitch@spi.ox.ac.uk or DM me.

Thank you,

Alistair Leitch

Alistair Andrew Leitch

23 February 2021 ·

I'm Ally; a former Universal Credit claimant now doing doctoral research into the experiences of claimants with JobCentre Plus. I'm researching three topics- sanctions; whether claimants feel their lives, circumstances, and aspirations are properly respected by Work Coaches; and the complexity of the system.
I am trying to find volunteers, both current and former claimants, willing to share their experiences. It is basically just a phone conversation where I ask some you some questions and give the real experts, people who use the service, the chance to air their views so I can learn from them.
My research has full ethics approval from my university and I provide full information, consent, and ethics materials to anyone who expresses interest. All participants are given a £10 gift voucher for their time, as well. Just like, leave a comment, or send me a message if you'd be interested in chatting.

Best wishes,
Ally

Alistair Andrew Leitch

2 March 2021 ·

I'm Ally; a former Universal Credit claimant now doing doctoral research into the experiences of claimants with JobCentre Plus. I'm researching three topics- sanctions; whether claimants feel their lives, circumstances, and aspirations are properly respected by Work Coaches; and the complexity of the system.

I am trying to find volunteers, both current and former claimants, willing to share their experiences. It is basically just a phone conversation where I ask some you some questions and give the real experts, people who use the service, the chance to air their views so I can learn from them. I am primarily looking to speak to men at present as they are underrepresented in my sample right now.

My research has full ethics approval from my university and I provide full information, consent, and ethics materials to anyone who expresses interest. All participants are given a £10 gift voucher for their time, as well. Just like, leave a comment, or send me a message if you'd be interested in chatting.

Best wishes,
Ally

Alistair Andrew Leitch

1 February 2022 ·

I'm Ally; a former Universal Credit claimant now doing doctoral research into the experiences of claimants with JobCentre Plus and trying to give the real experts, the people who use the service, a chance to air their views and learn from them.
I am trying to find volunteers, both current and former claimants, willing to share their experiences. It is just a phone conversation where I ask you some questions about your experiences. All participants are given a £10 gift voucher for their time, as well.
I am primarily -although not exclusively- looking to speak to men at present as they are underrepresented in my sample right now.
My research has full ethics approval from my university and I provide full information, consent, and ethics materials to anyone who expresses interest.
Just like, leave a comment, or send me a message if you'd be interested in chatting.
Best wishes 🙂