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A Sleight of Hand? The Problematisation of Youth Unemployment in Ireland 2008-2014

A thesis presented

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Abbreviations

ALMPs - Active Labour Market Policies

AnCo - An Chomhairle Oiliúna

CSO - Central Statistics Office

CC - The Construction Corps

CEU - Council of the European Union

CDS - Critical Discourse Studies

COYU - Commission on Youth Unemployment

CnaG - Cumman na nGhaedhal

DSP - Department of Social Protection

DFI - Disability Federation of Ireland

ESRI - Economic and Social Research Institute

EC - European Commission

EPL - Employment Protection Legislation

EPO - Employment Period Order

EU - European Union

EURES - European Employment Services

EYG – European Youth Guarantee

EYGIP – European Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan

FÁS - Foras Áiseanna Saothair

FF - Fianna Fáil

FG - Fine Gael

GFC - Global Financial Crisis

HCT - Human Capital Theory

IGO - Inter-governmental Organisation

INOU - Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed

JSA - Jobseekers' Allowance

JSB – Jobseekers' Benefit

JLC – Joint Labour Committees

OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

NYCI - National Youth Council of Ireland

NGO – Non-governmental Organisation

NEET - Not in employment, education, or training

PLC – Post-Leaving Certificate course

RTÉ - Raidió Teilifís Éireann

SF - Sinn Féin

SE/I - Social Exclusion/Inclusion

SP - Social Partnership

TASC - Think-tank for Action on Social Change

TD - Teachta Dála [Members of Parliament]

UA - Unemployment Assistance

UWM - Unemployed Workers Movement

VTOS – Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

WEP - Work Experience Programme

WPR - What's the problem represented to be?

WNL - We're Not Leaving

YEA - Youth Employment Agency

YWI - Youth Work Ireland

YU Rate - Youth Unemployment Rate

YU Ratio - Youth Unemployment Ratio

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Abstract

This PhD thesis presents the results of a research project investigating youth unemployment's representation as a policy problem in Ireland during the period of 2008-2014. It focuses on two policies explicitly targeted at the young unemployed:

- ❖ The introduction and expansion of reduced rates of Jobseekers' Allowance for those aged 18-25 in successive Social Welfare and Pensions acts between 2009 and 2013.
- ❖ The development of an implementation plan for the European Youth Guarantee in Ireland in 2013.

The project interrogates the assumptions at play within these policies, the proposed alternatives, and the extent to which these policies were contested within Irish policymaking, politics, and the media.

The study uses a critical policy analysis methodological framework developed by Bacchi (2009) entitled 'What's the problem represented to be?' combined with research tools and methods developed within the field of Critical Discourse Studies. The data analysed was collated from three fields: policy literature produced by international and domestic actors prescribing policy responses in the Irish context; the Irish parliamentary system; and Irish print, televised and social media. This research was further supplemented by an archival investigation examining the problematisation of youth unemployment within Irish policy between the 1930s and 1990s.

The project finds the hegemonic approach, among authorities in Ireland and international organisations such as the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, located the problem of youth unemployment at the level of supposed deficiencies of young people themselves, while backgrounding or silencing alternative problematisation(s) of the prevailing social and economic institutions and processes. Furthermore, it is apparent that the qualities attached to the young unemployed were used to legitimate austerity measures whose effects are, in fact, harmful for both these young individuals and the wage-earning population as a whole. The archival investigation offers insight into the genealogy of the problematisation of youth in the Irish context, and reveals a strong continuity in the perceived object of measures nominally targeted at 'youth unemployment' and those periods wherein it has been constructed as a 'problem'.

While the research conducted did unearth attempts to contest these policies, they are for the most part weak and partial critiques of the dominant framing of the problem; or in some cases championed the young unemployed at the expense of other more favoured targets for austerity. By accepting the terms of debate in which the focus was on 'youth' rather than unemployment part of the equation, many nominally oppositional actors ultimately accepted the contention that it was the qualities of these youths that explained their condition. Alternatively, this study opens a space for a framing in which unemployment and underemployment can be appropriately critiqued as a product of economic and social structures rather than as an individualised failing or a 'natural' outcome for marginalised groups.

Born to live and lie and die in embers of a cold old fire nobody remembers/

They hand the ashes back to me down the button factory, we're cattle at the stall

- 'Cold Old Fire' by Lankum (2014)

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview

The **global financial crisis** [GFC] pushed an estimated 28.4 million people worldwide into unemployment between 2007 and the end of 2012 (ILO 2013:16). This collapse in demand for labour was replicated in Ireland. Comparing employment figures between 2007 Q3 and 2014 Q3 reveals 240,000 fewer people were in work (McDonnell and Farrell 2016:63). Across Europe, young people were disproportionately impacted by this downturn. Indeed, in some countries, young people struggled to transition to the labour market even before the crisis (Scarpetta et al. 2010; Rueda 2014). In Ireland, while general unemployment increased from 4.4% to 15.5% between 2008 and 2012, the youth unemployment rate grew from 8.6% to 30.8% during the same period (Eurostat 2020b). This figure would be higher were it not for mass emigration from Ireland. Based on ***Central Statistics Office*** [CSO] data, one estimate calculated a negative net migration figure of 143,000 Irish citizens and 10,000 foreign nationals between April 2009 and April 2015 (Glynn et al. 2015:6). Of those leaving, just under 40% were estimated to belong to the 16-25 age group and 70% in their twenties (Glynn et al. 2015:9).

In this context, those classified as unemployed and aged 16-24, the 'young unemployed', were centred in policy literature and political rhetoric (Fergusson and Yeates 2013). In Europe, inter- and intra- national organisations and academic commentators called for an urgent policy response to youth unemployment (Scarpetta et al. 2010; Bell & Blanchflower 2011; ILO 2013; O'Reilly et al. 2015). Prominent political figures also highlighted youth unemployment as a area for action: European Commission [EC] President Manuel Barroso described it as a 'plague' (EC 2013); European Central Bank [ECB] President Mario Draghi claimed it threatened both 'productivity' and 'democracy' (BIS 27/9/2017); and Irish finance minister, Michael Noonan, suggested it had put 'wind beneath the wings of every extremist in Europe' (thejournal.ie 17/2/2014). In response, the European Youth Guarantee [EYG] was launched in 2013. It required European Union [EU] member states to develop plans to ensure young people would receive either a 'good quality' offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship, or a traineeship within four months of leaving education or becoming unemployed (CEU 2013).

Since the EYG was launched, research has questioned whether the resources dedicated to it and the policies implemented in its name have lived up to the initial hype (Cabasés Piqué 2016; Rodríguez-Soler and Verd 2018; Tsekoura 2019). Others go further and suggest that the framing of youth unemployment as cause célèbre post-GFC legitimised actions that undermined the working conditions and welfare rights of young and old alike (Fergusson and Yeates 2013; Sukarieh and Tannock 2015; Crisp and Powell 2017; Threadgold 2020).

This study seeks to contribute to this broader debate by zeroing in on two specific Irish policy initiatives between 2008 and 2014, which were introduced explicitly in the name of 'youth unemployment' and were targeted at those who were between the minimum school leaving age of 16 and 25-years old as per the official definition of 'young'. These measures are:

- Reductions in the ***Jobseekers' Allowance*** [JSA] rate payable to the young unemployed introduced in successive budgets in 2009 and 2013. The first of these measures targeted new claimants aged 18- and 19-years old (SW and P Act 2009a). Later that year, a second Act expanded these aged-banded rates to all new claimants aged 24 and younger (SW and P Act 2009b). In 2013, a further Act deepened these reductions and added a new reduced rate for those aged 25 (SW and P Act 2013).
- The ***European Youth Guarantee implementation plan*** [EYGIP] developed by the Irish ***Department of Social Protection*** [DSP] (DSP 2013b). This plan formed part of the extensive 'Pathways to Work' reformation of the Irish social protection system and developed a specific activation[1] response targeting the young unemployed.

As will be explored throughout this thesis, these policies were not welcomed by all, with opponents claiming they were under-resourced or punished those targeted rather than helping them. Indeed, Murphy (2020), reflecting on the experience of young people in Ireland between the GFC and the current Covid-19 pandemic, offers a scathing overview of what she considers the 'manifestly unfair' direction of employment and welfare policy:

> *We saw corrosive intergenerational distributional outcomes in housing policy leading to the phenomena of 'generation rent' and 'generation stay at home', lower wages and pensions for young public sector entrants, an expansion of sanctions and poor-quality labour market programmes including the discontinued JobBridge. There were controversial age-related reductions in social welfare payments for young people and derogatory political discourse targeted at young people to justify these cuts, while younger people became vulnerable to homelessness.* (Murphy 2020:232)

This study seeks to intervene in the controversy around these policies. It adopts the ***What's the problem represented to be?*** [WPR] approach to policy analysis to do so (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). By critically interrogating how youth unemployment was represented as a problem within Irish policy and politics between 2008 and 2014, the study contributes to the local debate on Irish social protection's turn post-GFC and the international literature on youth unemployment within employment and welfare policy.

1.2 Rationale and objectives

1.2.1 Why was this study undertaken?

The motivation for this research project emerged from both academic and personal engagement with employment and welfare policy in the aftermath of the GFC. This section

[1] 'Activation' or 'Active Labour Market Policies' are terms commonly used to describe a set of social policies that seek to get the unemployed and other out-of-work populations into paid employment in the formal labour market. See Section 3.5.3 for an overview of the literature on these policies origins and forms.

explores the impetus for the study by contextualising it within the existing literature and my engagement with the research area.

One unintended side effect of the intensive reforms implemented within the Irish social protection system since 2008 has been the proliferation of research examining welfare policy and the lived experiences of those policies. The methods employed and topics explored are varied and rich: analysis of the high politics driving policy decisions made during this period (Murphy 2014a; 2016; Dukelow 2011; 2015; Hick 2018); use of field research and ethnographic methods to interrogate the experience of unemployment and welfare receipt in a time of increased conditionality (Boland and Griffin 2015b; Finn 2019; Whelan 2021a; 2021b; Doyle forthcoming); examination of the discursive strategies employed to communicate these reforms (Devereux and Power 2019; Meade and Kiely 2020); and analysis of specific reforms such as those targeting lone parents, the privatisation of employment services, and the targeting of 'welfare fraud' (Millar and Crosse 2018; Wiggan 2015a; Gaffney and Millar 2020).

Conversely, while 'youth unemployment' was topical in Irish political and media discourses during this reformation process, it continues to be a relatively understudied issue. The research conducted in Ireland has typically been quantitative in character, making use of large-scale datasets to answer questions about which factors are correlated with experiences of youth unemployment and/or whether the interventions taken reduce its likelihood and/or duration (e.g. Smyth 2008; Kelly et al. 2012; Kelly and McGuinness 2015; Doris et al. 2020). Such research exhibits the widespread tendency to treat policy 'problems' such as youth unemployment as external to the process of policymaking (Bacchi 2016). It is founded in a technocratic narrative about the policymaking process in which:

> *there are actors called governments, they confront problems and make choices, which are then enforced with the coercive power of the state.* (Colebatch 2005:14)

Such an understanding elides the contested nature of 'problems' and the process by which specific framings rise to the top of the policy agenda. Remarkably, the predominant tendency within policy studies rarely acknowledges the contested nature of problems in their analysis. Instead, tending towards a 'rationalistic' and 'positivist' account of the policy process, within which the researcher is positioned as a neutral observer capable of providing an objective analysis (Stone 2012). As explored in the next section, this approach often reproduces rather than challenges what we know about the policy problem under investigation.

To date, there has been limited research taking an alternative qualitative research approach to youth unemployment and fewer still that have taken an explicitly critical stance regarding it. Only a few examples have been uncovered by the literature review informing this study. Yeager and Culleton (2015) used focus groups to investigate generational differences in the experience of unemployment during this period. Papadopoulos (2016a; 2016b) conducted comparative research examining the relationship between institutional setting and discourses mobilised within the Greek and Irish contexts in response to youth unemployment. Finally, going further back, a master thesis from Coakley (1986) investigated the Irish debate about youth unemployment during an earlier period of economic recession and mass unemployment and emigration. Each of these studies offers valuable insights into this topic. However, their relative isolation within the corpus also clarified the need for more research of this type.

Furthermore, this is not just a trend in the Irish literature on youth unemployment. The literature review outlined in Chapter Three revealed a robust international academic and policy consensus around a restrictive conceptualisation of the causes and consequences of youth unemployment and possible responses to it. However, it should be noted that dissenters were also found (Fergusson and Yeates 2013; Sukarieh and Tannock 2015; Crisp and Powell 2017). Meanwhile, the lessons from earlier work focusing on the historical roots and shifting representations of this policy issue seem to have been forgotten in mainstream literature (Casson 1979; Rees and Rees 1982; Mungham 1982; Solomos 1985; Coakley 1986; Griffin 1993). It is within this academic context that this project sets out to address, refresh and complement the literature on this topic.

This project has also emerged from a long-standing personal interest in labour-market and welfare policy in Ireland and Europe. Having made one's transition from education to work in 2011 at the height of the post-GFC crisis, the 'precarious' employment experience - temporary and part-time contracts interspaced with periods of unemployment - provoked an interest in labour and welfare policies shaping it. The direct spark was an experience of an 'internship', which in practice proved to be a full-time minimally supervised [and paid] position, despite the connotations of training and apprenticeship the role's title conveyed. What's more, this role and its conditions were not an isolated incidence within this workplace but one of many such positions, each performing essential tasks, receiving minimal training and a sub-minimum wage, and being replaced year on year with fresh interns. This experience combined with other factors: the timely release of Perlin's (2012) critique of internship culture; the controversy sparked by the Irish state's JobBridge internship scheme [Section 2.4.2.2]; and an abortive attempt at establishing a network of fellow 'interns' which brought us into contact with the ***We're Not Leaving*** [WNL] campaign group [Section 2.4.3]. They all began an interest in the relationship between state policy and workplace experiences that has lasted to the present day.

In 2014-2015, this interest was pursued academically during a research Masters in Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona. It was there that I developed an interest in ***Active Market Labour Policies*** [ALMPs] and their role in current welfare policy. This topic formed the focus of my thesis for that degree, one which conformed to the 'rationalistic' and 'positivist' bent identified above and sought to explain, using an institutionalist theoretical framework, why some countries, most prominently Denmark, invested heavily in ALMPs following the crisis while others, such as Italy, had reduced expenditure in that area. However, by the end of that project, I felt like I had been asking the wrong questions. I began the project wondering why some countries embrace ALMPs and others do not. By its end, I questioned how these policies are considered such a public good in and of themselves? I felt the need to investigate the foundations of the activation turn further, thus forming another rationale for this project and the critical approach taken within it.

1.2.2 What does it mean to be critical?

As established above, this study adopts a 'critical' stance. It is crucial to specify from the outset what this stance entails and why it was deemed necessary. Simply put, the term 'critical' articulates the distancing of this work from what can be considered the dominant approach by which policy is studied – here, the influence is taken from the post-structuralist approach to policy analysis as provided by WPR. However, this study also seeks to set itself apart from specific trends in how Irish political and economic developments are discussed and framed – the influence here is more in terms of a critical political economy of a heterodox and Marxist perspective.

This researcher's position is that the methods adopted in policy studies should be conscious of the unequal power relations of the societies within which the research is taking place and actively strive to avoid reproducing them. Griffin (1993) illuminates the consequences of failing to do this regarding youth unemployment, with her research identifying the prevalence of a 'victim-blaming' viewpoint in both academia and policy that stigmatises young unemployed individuals as 'problem-people' and the communities they live among as 'problem-communities'. Intentionally or not, such research with a 'top-down' perspective finds itself aligned with a state-project seeking to govern and manage these populations in line with the dominant political and economic interests (Quan 2017). Tyler's (2020:20-21) recent work on stigma provides an alternative template for what a critical research project rejecting this dominant orientation should set out to do. A researcher should 'look up' at powerful actors to interrogate how the representation of 'youth unemployment' is implicated in 'processes of power and profit' (Paton 2018 cited Tyler 2020:20) and 'look back' at the historical record to better understand how contemporary constructions of 'youth unemployment' are entangled with historical legacies of inequality.

Furthermore, this study heeds the advice of Sukarieh and Tannock (2015) to be very wary when approaching topics that have the category 'youth' attached to them. Their advice is to instead focus on what is 'at stake for whom' in foregrounding 'youth' and inter-generational relations and backgrounding other social categories and relations – for example, those of class, gender, and race. In other words, the focus in this study is on how making 'youth' the problem changes the way we look at unemployment and the policy responses it requires. The WPR framework for policy analysis provided the most suitable research strategy to pursue this goal. Its fixation on tracing the roots of the way we represent policy problems and their effects rather than the purported 'problem' itself conformed to the ethos of this study. A further reflection on this critical stance within the field of policy studies is presented in Section 4.2.

Since the Celtic Tiger boom of the 1990s, mainstream narratives of economic and political life in Ireland have tended to rely either explicitly or implicitly on the assumptions of modernisation theory (Kirby 2010). Proponents of this modernisation thesis, who can be found in the academy, politics, and the media[2], portray Ireland's path since independence as

2 The clearest examples of such a worldview can be found in the works of pop economists writing on the eve of the GFC most notably Coleman (2007) 'The Best is Yet to Come' or McWilliams (2011) 'The Pope's Children'.

a linear journey from a 'backward' protectionist economy and the insular society of the 1930s to the 'modern' globalised economy and liberal society of the present. This viewpoint typically assumes that contemporary Ireland is the product of a modernising process that involved a clean:

> *movement from the traditional to the modern, that this is progressive and beneficial to all, that it takes place through elites imbibing modern values such as individualism, entrepreneurship and achievement-orientation, and that accepting technology and advice from outside Ireland, particularly through the influences of foreign direct investment and membership of the EU, serves as the principal means to spur modernisation.* (Kirby 2010:88)

The influence of modernisation theory often leads analysts to place undue attention on the agency exercised by individual members of state elites as 'great men of history'[3], and to overstress the level of discontinuity in terms of the contemporary practices of the state and cultural and political norms. In addition to this, there is a tendency among Irish scholars to fall prey to an epistemic nationalism that fails to adequately locate Ireland in terms of global geopolitical and economic shifts and to represent 'Ireland' as a unitary bloc within which all have a shared interest and experience of life (Beatty 2016).

In contrast, the perspective taken by this study rejects this framing in favour of analysis that focuses on the 'internal' balance of power between social classes and the 'external' influence of Ireland's uneven process of integration within a capitalist world-system (Coakley 2012:189-192). The scaffolding for this perspective has been formed drawing on those who have sought to analyse the historical path of capitalist development in Ireland drawing on the assumptions and methods of critical political economy (O'Hearn 2001; Kirby 2010; Coakley 2012; McCabe 2013; McDonough 2018). From these foundations, the repeated experience of mass unemployment and emigration can be theorised not as the natural outcome of Ireland's 'backwardness' but as being determined by global economic trends combined with local class relations – with emigration forming a stabilising pillar of these relations (Mac Laughlin 1994). This aspect of the study comes to the fore in Chapter Two, which examines how youth unemployment arose as a policy problem in earlier periods of economic crisis and again post-GFC - and the internal and external factors that drove it.

1.3 Research objectives

The adoption of the WPR framework means the central objective of this project is to critically interrogate how youth unemployment was represented as a problem in Irish policy and political discourse between 2008 and 2014. WPR delineates a clear set of research goals that include the excavation of: the key features of how youth unemployment was represented by contending social actors during this period; the forms of knowledge and assumptions at play; the historical roots of these assumptions; and the strategies by which they were

3 The near cult of personality around the late T.K Whitaker or as the Irish Times (11/1/2017) dub him 'the architect of modern Ireland' being a prime example of this.

disseminated and contested. The project sets out to disrupt the 'taken for granted' in how youth unemployment is represented as a problem in Irish society and broader social policy.

The key aims are to:

- Investigate the forms of knowledge that shaped how youth unemployment was talked about and their origins.

- Develop an understanding of continuity and discontinuity in how youth unemployment was treated as a policy problem compared with earlier periods in Irish history.

- Explore what issues were ignored by the policies implemented and better understand the contestation strategies adopted by those who opposed them.

- Produce a critical analysis of how the power relations at work in Irish society impacted the representation of youth unemployment as a policy problem and their effects on those targeted.

1.4 Structure

This chapter formed the introduction. It provided the background, aims and objectives, and rationale for this research project. It is followed by eight further chapters.

Chapter Two provides a historical overview of youth unemployment as a policy problem in the Irish context and provides the background on those policies examined by this project. It identifies a series of points of continuity in terms of the economic conditions that have historically led to the emergence of youth unemployment as a problem in Irish policy and the strategies adopted by the state in response to it.

Chapter Three is a literature review. It surveys the mainstream and critical literature on youth as a period in the life course, the history of youth unemployment as a policy problem, and its place within contemporary welfare discourses and policy.

Chapter Five examines the problematisation of youth unemployment by policymaking institutions. It is based on an examination of a sample of policy documents, or grey literature from between 2008 and 2014, produced by the ***Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*** [OECD] and the European institutions on the international level, and from the civil society organisations the ***Disability Federation of Ireland*** [DFI], the ***Economic and Social Research Institute*** [ESRI], ***National Youth Council of Ireland*** [NYCI], ***Youth Work Ireland*** [YWI], and ***Think tank for Action on Social Change*** [TASC] on the Irish domestic level. These documents are then benchmarked against the Irish Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan produced by the Department of Social Protection (2013b).

Chapter Six analyses the problem of youth unemployment as produced in Irish parliamentary-politics. The entry point for the research in this chapter is provided by three separate ***Social Welfare and Pension*** [SW and P] Acts introduced to the Irish houses of the Oireachtas between 2009 and 2013 that restricted the JSA rate payable to the young unemployed. Analysis for this chapter encompasses the legislation itself, the Dáil debates that preceded their signing into law, and press releases and speeches from the Ministers of Social Protection related to this process.

Chapter Seven turns to the dissemination of the problematisation of youth unemployment in the media and attempts to resist it**.** The entry point for this chapter is provided by the announcement of the last tranche of reductions to Jobseekers' Allowance and of the first details of the Irish iteration of the EYG on the same day, 15 October 2013. The chapter follows the discussion of both these practices within the media until the signing into law of the bill enacting the cut on 16 November 2013.

Chapter Eight discusses the findings of the study in relation to the national and international literature examined during this research project. In doing so, it returns to the research objectives raised in Section 1.3 to address the question of just how youth unemployment was problematised between 2008-2014?

Chapter Nine concludes the study. It briefly summarises the thesis and reflects upon the merits and limitations that have become evident during the research process. It then presents the contributions and implications of this study and identifies areas for further investigation. It closes with a brief reflection upon how the findings of this study relate to the recent re-emergence of youth unemployment as a pressing policy issue in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter Two: Youth unemployment and the Irish state 1930-2014

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the context for this study. It charts the emergence of youth unemployment as a problem for the Irish state in the aftermath of the GFC and presents the policies adopted in response. To do so, it takes a long-term view, beginning by examining two earlier periods of 'crisis' where youth unemployment rose to the top of the political agenda during the 1930s-1950s and 1970s-1980s. This historical overview presents continuities and divergences in how this policy issue has emerged and been addressed.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. Each follows a similar structure divided between background of the crisis in question, the policies adopted by the state in the name of youth unemployment and, following Hirschman's (1970) typology, the strategies of 'exit' or emigration and 'voice' or protest exercised by those rendered surplus during these periods of crisis.

Section 2.2 looks at the period during and after the Second World War [1939-1945] when the problem of youth unemployment first provoked policies at the highest levels of the Irish state. **Section 2.3** covers the period between the 1973 Oil Crisis and the late 1980s when youth unemployment again rose to the agenda of policymakers. **Section 2.4** turns to the more contemporary period that is the focus of this study. It provides an account of the economic boom that preceded the 2007/2008 GFC before turning to that crash itself and the policies that form the object of this research project.

2.2 Youth unemployment before, during and after the Second World War

This section explores the emergence of youth unemployment as a policy problem in the early years of the Second World War. It begins by providing an overview of the protectionist economic direction and limited social policies established by ***Fianna Fáil*** [FF] during the 1930s and the crisis faced at the end of that decade in the form of the Second World War [Section 2.2.1]. Attention then moves to the emergence of 'youth' or 'juvenile' unemployment as a war-time problem of state concern that sparked the creation of labour camps in 1940 and a commission of inquiry in 1943 [Section 2.2.2]. The section concludes with a look at how deep economic crisis, mass emigration and protest by the out-of-work failed to keep this policy problem on the agenda in the 1950s [Section 2.2.3].

2.2.1 Background to the 1940's crisis

'Juvenile unemployment' was a growing public concern in the 1920s (Irish Independent 24/4/1929; Coakley 1986). However, it was primarily taken up by local authorities and religious and voluntary organisations[4] rather than being the object of measures directed from the higher levels of the state (Coakley 1986). This first decade of Irish independence under ***Cumman na nGhaedhal*** [CnaG] was marked by an austere fiscal and political conservatism and a laissez-faire attitude towards social issues (Dunphy 1995; McCabe 2013). Worklessness, poverty, malnutrition and starvation were widespread among the rural and urban poor alike (Lee 1989). The abject conditions found in inner-city tenements were particularly infamous (Lee 1989; Lucey 2015; Buckley 2015). Though invisible in those accounts focused on high politics, the urban working-classes and unemployed were far from passive in the face of these circumstances. The ***Unemployed Workers Movement*** [UWM] established in 1926, engaged in street demonstrations, marches, and other forms of civil protest (Johnston-Kehoe 2009). The introduction of a work-test in 1929 prompted a new level of mobilisation by the unemployed, and state repression in response to stone-throwing and window breaking at UWM organised protests (Johnston-Kehoe 2009). Lucey (2015:66) shows that 1932 was a high point for political activity by the unemployed, with thousands marching in protests in Dublin, Wexford, Roscommon, and Donegal that year to voice anger over the lack of meaningful unemployment relief, the implementation of a work-test, means-testing and relief-in-kind policies.

CnaG's rightist orientation, their disavowal of the interests of domestic industrial capital, their social and political exclusion of the rural poor and urban working-class and amelioration of their ranks via emigration, all paved the way for FF's electoral victory in 1933 on a 'national-populist' programme (Allen 1997; Dunphy 1995; Delaney 2000). In response to the demands of rural and urban working-class sections of its support, FF introduced a series of measures that expanded social protection and benefited sections of these classes: the *National Health Insurance Act 1933*, the *Widows' and Orphans' Pensions Act 1935*, and the *Conditions of Employment Act 1936* (Dukelow and Considine 2017). The *Unemployment Assistance Act 1933* extended relief to uninsured smallholders and agricultural labourers and other previously unprotected categories of workers for the first time (Cousins 2003; Dukelow and Considine 2017).

The introduction of a new constitution *Bunreacht na hÉireann,* in 1937, signalled FF's achievement of political hegemony (Dunphy 1995). This document copper-fastened the dominant role of the Catholic Church in the governance of youth through education and broader social policy (Sargent 2014; Buckley 2015). It also codified the reactionary gender politics of this period and relegated women to a 'distinctly subordinate position' (Dunphy 1995:208; Dukelow and Considine 2017). Most notably, through its explicit emphasis on a family structure centred around the male-breadwinner model in Article 41.2, and a call for the State to 'endeavour' to protect citizens from 'avocations unsuited to their sex, age or strength' in Article 45 (Cited in Dukelow and Considine 2017:39). Dukelow and Considine (2017:38) contextualise these articles as 'cementing' a push by FF to restrict women's access to the workforce in response to male unemployment. For example, 1932 saw the introduction

4 One example is the Mount Street Club [1934] a charity established by members of Dublin's employer class and the Catholic Church to provide education and works for the young unemployed and the wider out-of-work population (Somerville-Large et al. 2013)

of a marriage bar forcing retirement on married women working within the civil service or as teachers, and in 1936 legislation was introduced granting the Minister of Industry the power to restrict the numbers of women working in specific sectors (Dukelow and Considine 2017:38).

A key promise of the 1933 election campaign was to reverse the outward flow of migration by increasing employment. In government, FF embarked on a protectionist economic strategy that both pursued this goal and responded to the geopolitical challenges of the time. The political cover for this developmental strategy came soon after FF took power in 1932. The refusal to pay land annuities to England developed into an 'economic war' in the form of tit-for-tat imposition of tariffs between the two countries (Lee 1989). This was complemented by state developmental policies seeking to develop the industrial sector through protectionism and access to credit (O'Hearn 2001: 116-119). Research on the outcome of these policies reveals them as having some success in this initial period with a 7.3% annual growth in manufacturing output between 1932 and 1939 (O'Hearn 2001:118). The most substantial development was seen in the production of textiles, paper and other goods manufactured for the local market (Allen 1997; Ferriter 2010). This industrial expansion, combined with public employment schemes, sheltered workers and their families somewhat from the impact of the Great Depression (Ferriter 2010). However, a key factor enabling the initial success of these industrial policies was the availability of cheap labour - particularly from those whose work was devalued due to their age and/or gender (Allen 1997). Department of Industry and Commerce data reveals the overall proportion of workers aged younger than 18 growing from 6% in 1926 to 10% in 1936 (Allen 1997:41).

FF was neither a 'developmentalist' nor a 'social democratic' party. It was internally divided on economic matters, with the fiscally conservative inclinations typified by Finance Minister Seán MacEntee often coming into conflict with the vulgar Keynesianism associated with Minister for Industry and Commerce Seán Lemass (Lee 1989; Ferriter 2010). Once in power, there was no confrontation with financial interests, nor in the end, did the land redistributions and agricultural reforms introduced by FF pose a severe or sustained threat to embedded agricultural interests (Dunphy 1995; McCabe 2013). Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the Department of Finance continued to be dominated by two 'arch-conservative' civil servants – Joseph Brennan and J.J. McElligot. These figures were instrumental in ensuring finance was the dominant Department, following the precedent set by the UK (Lee 1989; McCabe 2018). Thus, the protectionist turn was only half-heartedly adopted. It ultimately failed to develop the manufacturing sector to a level where it could compete with foreign producers or develop more heavy industry in labour- and capital-intensive sectors (O'Hearn 2001)[5]. The economy was never as closed or insular as one might presume from contemporary portrayals[6] of this period - by the 1950s, exports were between 66% and 70%

5 O'Hearn (2001) identifies a parallel between this developmental strategy and the import-substitution industrialisation [ISI] route taken by Latin American states during and following the Second World War. The parallel extends to their eventual demise following crises defined in terms of 'capital deepening, trade deficits and insufficient exchange earnings' – as experienced in Ireland in the 1950s (O'Hearn 2001:197).

6 Contemporary mainstream discourse casts protectionism as an utter failure and emblematic of Ireland's then 'backwardness'. An example of this can be found in the work of McWilliams (2011: 229) who blithely reduces

of Irish GDP, consisting primarily of livestock destined for the British market (McCabe 2013:104). It increasingly became clear that while FF was keen to appeal to the small farmer and labourer as voters, it also actively sought to confine 'this constituency within a national project which self-consciously eschewed class polarisation' (Bew et al. 1989:78).

By the late 1930s, the limits of this strategy came into sight when live register figures rose dramatically due to a combination of drops in employment, the scaling back of public works, and the barrier to outward migration posed by new border regulations and recessionary conditions in the US (Cousins 2003; Buckley 2015). The outbreak of the Second World War compounded matters; despite the policy of neutrality, the economic consequences were severe. Unemployment increased due to the impact of shortages on industry, the flow of remittances from the diaspora abroad diminished, and migration was curtailed severely in the initial years. However, more worrying for policymakers was the potential return of migrants from Britain to join the ranks of the unemployed (Buckley 2015: 38). The fear this sparked evokes what Meeus (2013) theorises, based on the Romanian experience post-GFC, as a moment of 'double pressure' wherein domestic welfare institutions reliance on migration as a 'safety valve' come under increased pressure when economic or geopolitical conditions preclude that option for the out-of-work.

2.2.2 Policy response during the 1940's crisis

At the outbreak of the conflict, a Wartime Economy Committee was established and promptly proposed severe cuts to social spending and measures described by one source as 'indirect social engineering' (McCarthy 2004 cited in Buckley 2015:37). This included cutting ***unemployment assistance*** [UA] in rural areas to push labourers towards an ongoing tillage campaign. While the more severe measures were rejected, the government's strategy was ultimately focused on driving down the numbers reliant on UA and other payments. They adopted a two-pronged approach, relying on ***Employment Period Orders***[7] [EPO] which denied payments to wide swathes of the unemployed in certain areas and/or times of the year, and the development of a labour service (Cousins 2003:90). During this same period, youth unemployment rose to the top of the political agenda. By the winter of 1940, the Connaught Telegraph was warning of the threat posed by 'Eire's 76000 idle youths'. This figure was based on calculations by an unnamed 'specialist in juvenile welfare' who warned the consequences could be seen in 'juvenile' crime and 'demoralisation' (Connaught Telegraph 12/10/1940). The content of public commentary and that of the policies introduced suggest such fear focused primarily on male youths rather than the young population as a whole – this reflected

the period to a 'strict diet of protectionism and self-sufficient rhetoric'. Such a diagnosis is more revealing about the present than the past, spurred from a need to legitimate contemporary practices by casting them as 'modern' and 'open', rather than offering insight into what drove the developments of the previous period.

7 EPOs were frequently deployed between 1935 and 1971. They typically removed eligibility to UA to men in rural areas who were without dependents and under 50. While marketed as promoting harvesting work, critics cast it as a revenue saving measure that also sought to push young men to emigrate from rural areas (Feeney 1971). A clumsy attempt to resurrect it in 1971, after several years of non-use, initially resulted in the 'accidental' removal of access to UA to those living in urban areas as well (The Irish Times 8/4/1971). The controversy and protest this provoked saw the policy discontinued the following year (Walsh 1974:78).

broader gendered trends in how this social issue was treated across Europe and North America [Section 3.3].

The establishment of a labour service for young men aged 18-25 under the command of the Irish Defence Forces, the ***Construction Corps*** [CC], formed the major component of the response to youth unemployment. The idea of a labour service and labour camps to combat unemployment among urban young men had been in circulation since the mid-1930s. ***Fine Gael*** [FG] leader, Eoin O'Duffy, made an early proposal for such a project in 1934 (Evans 2007:20). Such a measure was in keeping with the trend established by other European and North American governments (Devane 1942; Ryan 2007). A paper presented by Irish civil servant Thekla Beere (1939) details experimentation with Labour Services in the US, Netherlands, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland, Germany and UK. Of these, the Civilian Conservation Corps in the US was regarded as a shining example, with frequent references to it appearing in government correspondence of the time (Cousins 2003; Evans 2007). This example also had resonance in media coverage seen in an editorial in the Irish Press on the eventual launch of the CC in Ireland:

> *In the US... the Civilian Conservation Corps... has been an outstanding example of what can be done by voluntary organisation of the workless and what they can contribute to their fatherland.* (Irish Press 3/10/1940a)

The first attempt at a labour service was established in April 1940 by the ***Office of Public Works*** [OPW] in Clonast Bog near Portarlington, County Laois. This pilot scheme targeted male 'youths' aged between 18-25 who were registered at the Dublin Employment Exchange and had been unemployed for most of the 12 months preceding (Department of the Taoiseach 1940:4). Those signed up to the scheme were to receive a minimum of 4 shillings a week, with reductions made for bed and board, and more to be paid contingent on effort (Allen 1997:67). An OPW memo to the Department of the Taoiseach (1940) reveals this endeavour was not a success. Very few were convinced to move to the camp, and there were high levels of absenteeism, desertion, and other forms of resistance among those who did[8].

The memo itself is quite defensive and blamed factors including the 'monotonous' nature of the work involved, the pathological 'childishness and irresponsibility' of young urban working-class men, and the agitation of the UWM, which organised protests and boycotts of this scheme (Department of the Taoiseach 1940). The UWM had quite an impact despite its small size and association with politically marginal communist and radical republican elements (Ó Drisceoil 2005:267; Allen 1997). The organisation's targeting with state repression further underlined this – it was made illegal for several months in 1940 (Ó Drisceoil 2005:267).

8 The memo reveals 1035 men were viewed as potential recruits for the scheme. Of these, 253 were deemed medically fit and agreed to attend. However, only 173 travelled to the bog. Of these, 82 are reported as deserting with the majority leaving within the first week, 16 were dismissed for 'deliberate slacking', and 11 were released from service to join the Army or for unstated reasons. This left 64 in the scheme after 3 months of operation (Department of the Taoiseach 1940).

Despite this pilot's failure, the decision was made to establish the CC. Lessons were learned, and it was moved from the remit of the Minister for Industry and Commerce Seán Lemass to the Department of Defence. Both De Valera and McElligot's influence can be seen in the political and economic strategies pursued, which adeptly combined co-optation and coercion (Evans 2007). Private consultations took place with high-level representatives from both the trade union movement and the Labour party. Their acquiescence to the scheme was granted - providing it was designed to not adversely impact their members (Ó Drisceoil 2005; Evans 2007). However, this failed to defuse all opposition as recruitment in 1940 triggered further protests in Dublin and Cork (Evans 2007). Labour party figures such as Owen Sheehy Skeffington continued to view it as a strikebreaking initiative (Evans 2007). Fellow party members leafleted labour exchanges against the Corps and were arrested for their efforts (Allen 1997:68). At least two men were interned during the war for their role in disturbances related to the CC and other initiatives (Johnston-Kehoe 2009).

Upon its launch, the CC sought to recruit between 2000-3000 men from the Dublin area (Irish Press 3/10/1940b). While political opposition was stifled through co-optation and repression, economic coercion in the form of withdrawal of UA access sought to counter any reluctance among young men to sign up (Cousins 2003). Despite this sanctioning mechanism, the initial enlistment drive fell short of this, with only 700 of 3000 places filled by April 1941 (Cousins 2003:93). By 1941, recruitment to the scheme had been extended to all urban areas with populations over 1000. A response to a Dáil question in November 1941 shows a refusal to join the Corps was used as grounds to withdraw UA not just in the main urban centres but all around the country (Corish Dáil Debate 20/11/1941).

Those recruited were initially designated to be building structures for usage by the regular army. Training and instruction aiming to improve CC recruit's employability and conduct were to be delivered alongside this work. In practice, the work was often closer to the example set by the Clonast Labour Camp, i.e., turf cutting and land reclamation (Evans 2007). The training provided primarily focused on promoting literacy and developing skills for roles in the armed forces- e.g. cooks, drivers, orderlies, or clerks. Living and working conditions experienced by those recruited to the Corps were often quite arduous and generally failed to live up to the glowing promises provided by media coverage or recruitment leaflets that accompanied its launch (Ó Drisceoil 2005; Evans 2007). The memoirs of former recruit Brian Behan (1964) are less than complimentary of what he termed the 'Destruction Corps' and summarised as a 'Hitler Youth idea dreamed up by De Valera' (Behan 1964:32). For him, the initial benefits offered by the CC of country life and relative security soon wore thin:

> *Long before the end of my two years' service, I was sick to death with the Corps. The novelty of an assured three meals a day soon palls and seems a poor exchange for freedom.* (Behan 1964:36)

This disjuncture between the promises and reality of the CC perhaps explains the prevalence of strike action and other forms of resistance among those who did join it and other public works schemes during the war (Ó Drisceoil 2005; Evans 2007). A dramatic example took place in 1947, one year before the winding-up of the Corps, when a group of recruits in Naas set fire to the huts in which they had been accommodated (Evans, 2007:29).

Between 1940 and 1948, 17,000 were invited to sign up to the CC (Cousins 2003:94). Of these, only 2400 did and at least 7500 had UA access revoked (Cousins 2003: 94). Cousins (2003) suggests policymakers would not have seen this as a total failure, as moving the workless off UA was the priority.

From 1943-1951, a ***Commission on Youth Unemployment*** [COYU] investigated the causes and potential responses to youth unemployment among those aged between 14 and 20 of both sexes. COYU was composed of figures from clergy, employer organisations, trade unions, and the Departments of Agriculture, Education and Industry and Commerce. As well as youth unemployment, the Commission made proposals regarding: the conditions of work in which young people were engaged in terms of their 'spiritual and physical welfare'; their acquisition of skills; and further measures for the promotion of 'religious, intellectual and physical development' of young people (COYU 1951: vi). This body took eight years to deliver its final report in August 1951, and there was some contention between participants, as the dissenting opinions in the report indicate (COYU, 1951: 51-54). While it does not overtly arise in the report, the secondary literature clarifies that in 1944 a conflict arose between McQuaid and the then Minister Lemass over the former's reluctance to handle submissions to the Commission from Protestant sources. Despite threatening to resign, the archbishop eventually relented (Cooney 1999: 169-171).

The practices proposed by the Commission reflected the values of the time [Section 3.3.2] and were wide-ranging with proposals for: the expansion of agriculture and rural industry; expansion of education to age 16; reformation of the curriculum including the introduction of physical education and provision of vocational guidance; provision of educational and recreational facilities for young people in urban areas, and reforms of working conditions (COYU 1951:25-44).

The COYU's (1951:19;42) discussion of curriculum reform in the secondary system clarifies the gendered assumptions underpinning the report. It proposes courses in 'Manual Instruction' for boys - based on the understanding that those males leaving school at 16 were destined for 'some form of manual work' (COYU 1951:19). Conversely, it proposed their female counterparts should study 'Domestic Science' to prepare them for their 'natural vocation - the care and management of a home and children' (COYU 1951:19). An appended statement by Louie Bennett, a trade unionist and former suffragette who refused to sign the final report, criticises what she termed the 'little understanding of the modern girl' shown by her colleagues in the Commission and raised concerns about the 'exodus of girls to seek employment in other countries' (COYU 1951:51). However, while she advocated further participation of women in the workforce and education, her most concrete proposals focused on the 'present acute shortage of domestic help' and the need for further measures to train and accredit young women to work in this field (COYU 1951:51-52).

There is little evidence that the government of the time had an appetite for enacting such broad reforms. Seven years later, a memo from the Minister of Education indicates that their department agreed in principle to raise the school leaving age but postponed this act to a later date (Department of the Taoiseach 1958). Otherwise, this memo proposed no action or deferral on each proposal to reform the education system until such a time as financial pressures had lessened.

2.2.3 Exit and voice during the 1940's crisis

Starvation once again! /once again no bread, no butter, no tea, no sugar /Starvation once again!'

- Sung by women protesting unemployment in Dublin in 1957 (Quoted in Johnston-Kehoe 2009:66)

A reluctance to implement wide-ranging reforms in part reflected new developments in Irish society that had pushed youth unemployment off the political agenda of state elites. Key amongst these was the massive exodus of young men and women to the building sites, hospitals and other workplaces in the UK during the later years of World War II and the post-war rebuilding efforts (Lee 1989; Allen 1997). Glynn et al. (2015:4) cite a net figure of 400,000 people emigrating throughout the 1950s – with women having a much higher rate of migration than men (Dunphy 1995:208; Delaney 2000). At least some leading political and business figures saw this outward flow as a positive development (Lee 1989). A senior official in the Finance Ministry, J.J McElligott, was recorded by a fellow civil servant as arguing strongly for a laissez-faire attitude to emigration to the UK in 1942:

He claims that it provides a safety valve against revolution, that the resulting inflow of ready money — he put it as high as £100,000 or £150,000 a week - did a great deal to relieve distress and maintain economic activity, and that it would be contrary to sound social ethics and inequitable to prevent the poor man from marketing his most valuable asset - that is to say his labour - in the best market. No doubt, a further argument, which Mr McElligott was not so indelicate as to mention is the saving in unemployment assistance which results to the exchequer! (Quoted in Lee 1989:227).

By the 1950s, the limits of the state's protectionist strategy had become all too visible. Further industrialisation would have required measures that went against the interests of the established fledgling industries and/or imposed a more significant tax burden on the landed and banking classes (Dunphy 1995; McCabe 2013). The result was a 'blockage' wherein, despite having considerable resources in terms of capital and labour, the country remained unable to develop infrastructure and industry (McCabe 2018). This decade saw a revival of the unemployed movement in the urban centres of Dublin and Cork by out-of-work craftsmen and their families, communist and republican activists, and trade unionists (Kilmurray 1988; Johnston-Kehoe 2009; The Irish Republican and Marxist History Project 2013). Though they won some concessions, including relief for the unemployed, and successfully elected one of their leaders, Jack Murphy, to the Dáil in 1957, this movement ultimately could do little to reverse the political inertia and economic malaise that defined the decade (Allen 1998; Johnston-Kehoe 2009).

2.3 Youth unemployment and the oil crisis

This section explores the re-emergence of youth unemployment as a target of state policy following the Oil Crisis of 1973. It begins with the political and economic shift towards foreign direct investment [FDI] during the 1960s [Section 2.3.1]. The expansion in employment and social policy this strategy enabled came apart amid the global economic crisis of the 1970s. By the end of the decade, a range of measures was introduced in response to youth unemployment [Section 2.3.2]. The final section looks at migration and protest in response to unemployment during this period and the establishment of a political consensus around retrenchment and neoliberal reforms by the end of the decade [Section 2.3.3].

2.3.1 Background to the 1970's crisis

1958 is typically positioned as a turning point in Ireland's economic fortunes post-independence (Lee 1989). State elites turned away from the protectionist policies of the preceding decades towards a strategy of ***industrialisation by invitation*** [IBI] (O'Hearn 2001). Having failed to induce development through its limited interventions, the state sought to attract FDI to do the job on its behalf. In opening the economy, policymakers hoped to increase employment and develop indigenous manufacturing through learnings made from foreign ***multinational corporations*** [MNC] and the broader modernisation of the Irish economy (O'Hearn 2001). Once again, this developmental strategy was pushed by FF in alliance with key figures within the Civil Service (Lee 1989). Most credited of the latter was T.K Whitaker, whose 'Economic Development' report is typically positioned as initiating this shift (Lee 1989:342-348; Irish Times 11/1/2017). Global factors also stimulated the turn to IBI. The new world order established after the Second World War meant that Ireland could position itself as a 'dependent export platform for mainly US companies that desired access to the European market' (O'Hearn 2001:199).

In its initial stages, IBI proved highly successful at its goals of attracting investment and increasing employment. GDP grew at an annual average of 4.4% between 1960 and 1973 and 4.9% between 1973 and 1979 (OECD 1999 cited in Dukelow and Considine 2017:44). This growth led to knock-on improvements in living conditions and welfare provision by the state (Dukelow and Considine 2017). There was a significant shift in social policy during this period, with state provision expanding greatly (Dukelow 2011). Gross expenditure on social welfare rose from 6.5% in 1973, to 10.5% in 1977, with benefits rates increasing by 125%, housebuilding rising by 50%, and expenditure on healthcare almost threefold (Bew et al. 1989: 115). Following the publication of the *Investment in Education* report in 1965, measures were introduced to extend schooling and promote technical skills to match the demands of the new economic activity in Ireland. These included the introduction of free secondary education, increased investment in community schools and regional technical colleges, and grants for higher education (O'Connor 2011:219; Dukelow and Considine 2017:48).

During this same period, many formal barriers to female labour market participation were overturned in response to economic and political pressures (Mahon 1994; Dukelow and Considine 2017). In 1973, the marriage bar in the civil service was removed (Dukelow and Considine 2017:49). The Employment Equality Act of 1977 and the Maternity Act of 1981 further advanced women's rights within the workplace (Mahon 1994; Dukelow and Considine 2017). In 1985, the Irish government extended this to welfare policy, ending discrimination against married women within the rules governing access to UA and the payment rate and duration of Unemployment Benefits (McCashin 2019:159). These legislative changes facilitated increased participation by women within the workforce - Mahon (1994: 1286) calculates the female share of the workforce grew from 26.4% in 1961 to 32.4% by 1987. However, Mahon (1994) makes clear that women's entry into the labour market continued to be shaped and limited by ‘patriarchal state policy’ – most notably in terms of a taxation policy that continued to favour the ‘male breadwinner’ ideal and a refusal to invest in public childcare. Education policy and training also helped reproduce gendered and class-based inequalities. While women's participation in further education grew - those from working-class backgrounds continued to be left behind (Mahon 1994). This trend was particularly reflected in the low rates of participation by women in youth unemployment schemes and a lack of training support for early school leavers (Mahon 1994: 1293)

There was a broad political consensus about the shift in economic and social policy. Even the formerly conservative FG took a somewhat social democratic turn in government with Labour from 1973-1977 (Ferriter 2010). Integration into the OECD [1961] and European Economic Community [1973] also subjected Ireland’s economic and social institutions to external scrutiny and resulted in policy recommendations. Furthermore, there was the ‘demonstration effect’ of the welfare state and accompanying consumption patterns in the UK and a large Irish diaspora to communicate its benefits to their homeland (Fahey 1992). Together the measures taken surpassed the proposed solutions to youth unemployment made by COYU in 1951. However, they did not prevent it from becoming a problem on the national level once more.

This model of growth came apart amid the global economic downturn of the late 1970s. Stagnant international demand combined with vulnerabilities in this model triggered a deep crisis. In practice, the hoped-for stimulation to indigenous enterprise spurred by this arrival of foreign capital failed to manifest (O’Hearn 2001). The exception was ancillary services MNCs required to set up in the country, such as the construction of manufacturing plants and offices and legal and financial services (O’Connor 2011; McCabe 2013). In other words, while this growth strategy was successful for a time, its primary beneficiaries in Ireland were those engaging in middleman economic activities (McCabe 2013). Conversely, the domestic manufacturing industry established during the era of protectionism came apart due to the increased international competition, rising wage expectations from employees, and the economic turmoil of the late 1970s and 1980s (O’Hearn 2001). These factors prompted a massive growth in unemployment that was compounded by poor economic conditions in traditional destinations for Irish emigrants such as the UK (Dukelow and Considine 2017: 51)[9]. In response, the state adopted a multi-pronged labour market policy response: job creation schemes focused on local authority projects; training of the unemployed; loans or grants or training to encourage entrepreneurship; and employment subsidies to employers (Breen 1988).

9 Again, the conditions faced here resemble a ‘double pressure’ (Meeus 2013). The demographic increase that had followed the economic growth of the 1960’s exacerbated this. Growth in population was accompanied by net immigration to the country for the first time since the establishment of the Free State. By 1982, it was estimated that 48% of the Irish population were under 25 (The OECD Observer 1983:20).

2.3.2 Policy Response during the 1970's crisis

Between 1978-1986, youth unemployment once more rose to the top of the policy agenda and was the object of practices by the state. Contemporaneously, it was also a pressing topic across the Global North [Section 3.3.3]. The OECD Observer (1983:20) estimated a 109% increase in the numbers of under-25-year-olds registered as unemployed between April 1979 and April 1982 - from 20,600 to 43,100. This figure was a conservative estimate as those under 18 years had no access to benefits and thus had no incentive to register. Factoring this in, they speculated the actual figure of out-of-work youths in 1982 was 67,000 (The OECD Observer 1983:20).

Table 1 Policy Responses to Youth Unemployment 1977-1995

Title of Scheme	Description	Dates in Operation
Employment Incentive Scheme	Direct subsidy to employers. Targeted at school leavers but primarily at the long term unemployed. The subsidy was doubled for LTU participants aged over 25 (Breen and Halpin 1989; Lehmann and Walsh 1990).	1977-1995 (c)
Work Experience Programme	Training scheme/Indirect subsidy to employers. School leavers received a payment from the Department of Labour in return for participation in a 24-week work placement in private enterprises. (Breen 1988)	1978-1988
Teamwork	Job creation scheme targeted at under-25s that provided work placements in community projects. In 1984 it was combined with other schemes and rebranded the Community Employment Programme.	1983(c)-1994
Jobsuss	Television programme aired on RTÉ and produced with the support of AnCo and the YEA. Aimed at providing career guidance and information about the opportunities offered by entrepreneurship and community enterprises. (Kenyon 1986)	1984

Table 1 details the policy measures targeting youth unemployment during this period. The ***Work Experience Programme*** [WEP] established in 1977, was the flagship scheme (Breen 1988). Though it was marketed as a 'training programme' for school leavers, in practice, it operated as more of a 'temporary job creation scheme' (Breen 1988). The focus on the issue reached a zenith in 1981, with the establishment of the ***Youth Employment Agency*** [YEA] by Minister of Labour, Liam Kavanagh, during a short-lived FG and Labour coalition government [30 June 1981 – 9 March 1982] (Breen 1988). The Labour Party had made the establishment of the YEA a campaign promise in the 1981 elections. The act establishing the agency also legislated for the imposition of a Youth Employment Levy of 1% on the earnings of all of those in employment or in receipt of other forms of income. The organisation's activities were also funded from monies allocated from the European Social Fund (Kavanagh Dáil Debates 25/11/1981). Opposition parties at the time viewed this response as a cynical ploy that consolidated pre-existing schemes under the YEA remit meaning the levy was primarily being used to fund the existing measures - rather than a significant new policy departure as portrayed by the government (Dáil Debates 25/11/1981).

Figure 1 Advertisement for the WEP in 1978

Source: (The Irish Times 4/10/1978)

Kenyon (1986) gives a snapshot of the scale of YEA activities in 1984. That year, the agency funded 150 community groups with financial grants made to 74 of them, loans were provided to 530 young people seeking to set up businesses, 1150 were provided with an 'Enterprise Allowance' in lieu of unemployment benefits, 2000 attended training workshops of at least six months duration, and wage subsidies of 60% were paid for 60 marketing and 80 scientific or engineering positions in small companies. This report presumably focuses only on a part of the initiatives funded by the agency. A YEA report from that year showed 52,000 young people taking part in training, work experience and temporary job programmes in 1984 (Armstrong 19/6/1985).

Several studies conducted near the end of that decade criticise the efficacy and equity of these measures. Lehmann and Walsh (1990:54-55) identified issues of labour market distortions [Section 3.5.3.2] driven by each of the employment schemes it examined, including the: WEP; Employment Incentive Scheme; Enterprise allowance scheme; Teamwork; and the Social Employment Scheme. The WEP came under more fire by Breen (1988), who argued some employers were using the scheme as a 'free trial' for potential employees rather than as a training scheme, and that it was not well-targeted towards those facing the most difficulties securing employment. He concludes that it ultimately was counterproductive due to the nature of the crisis:

When faced with an oversupply of labour, employers will become more selective and introduce criteria in their recruitment policies … when work experience is required not because of any change in the nature of the work young people are seeking but because recruitment criteria have changed, one must question whether government policy should be directed towards providing that experience. (Breen 1988:442)

Such critique was matched on the opposition benches of the Dáil, where it was argued the scheme was poorly targeted and was being exploited by employers to displace paid work (Yeates 30/9/1987). A 1980 letter to the Irish Times from a representative of the Irish Union of School Students defined the WEP in the following terms:

Free labour for the bosses and a paltry £20 for a forty-hour week on which the worker must subsist. And that's only for the "lucky" ones who get a job. (Nic Liam 29/5/1980)

2.3.3 Exit and Voice during the 1970's crisis

When the people hear his haunting tune/ They pack and leave their homes/ They fear of revolution/ The pied piper gets the dole.

– 'The Pied Piper' by the Saw Doctors (1992)

By the close of the 1980s, the WEP and other schemes targeting the young unemployed were wound up, and the YEA was amalgamated with the training bodies ***An Chomhairle Oiliúna*** [Ano] and the Manpower Service to form a new authority an ***Foras Áiseanna Saothair*** [FÁS]. High levels of unemployment persisted - including amongst the young. However, the problem of 'youth unemployment' had slipped off the national agenda as the attention of policymakers had shifted to the 'long-term unemployed' (Breen 1988). The decline of traditional Irish industries, such as textiles and agriculture, disproportionately hit older workers (Girvin 1984). Just two years after the YEA's establishment, the OECD (The OECD Observer 1983:20) noted that the 'praiseworthy and largely successful efforts to favour young people' conversely resulted in 'negative effects on older workers'. Indeed, the ratio of youth unemployment to general employment cited in the same report was much more favourable than that found in other Western European countries at the time[10].

Another reason for this shift in focus was the re-opening of the 'safety valve' with an estimated net outflow of more than 200,000 people between 1982-1993 (Courtney 1995:68). Compared to the 1950s, there was a composition shift in the education level and geographical origins of those who left. This shift mirrored ongoing demographic changes, including the democratisation of education and increased urbanisation (Mac Laughlin 1994; Glynn et al. 2015). As in the 1940s-1950s, there was naturalisation or even an overtly supportive attitude towards this departure in the state' and business elites' discourses. Coakley (1986:166) cites multiple sources within academia and business reacting positively to this solution to increased unemployment. Of these, Gerry Smyth of the Irish Management Institute went further and was more explicit than most:

> *Let us be positive towards emigration, organise for it, foster favourable attitudes towards it, prepare people for it, have a minister of state for emigration.* (Smyth 1983:18)

Smyth (1983) proposed the Minister of State's role would be to establish initiatives to condition young people's attitudes towards emigration and better educate them of the options available in countries and sectors that were not traditionally the destination of Irish emigrants. Political and media discourses focused on high-educated and middle-class emigration, combined with representations of it as a 'choice' and providing 'opportunity, globalised career structures and "skilling-up" abroad' (Gray 2002:10-11; Mac Laughlin 1994). A 1978 speech, given by the founding director of both the CSO and ESRI, Roy C. Geary, clearly demonstrates this attitude:

> *Emigration was a bad thing for the Irish in the past mainly because the vast majority were uneducated and untrained. The word with its bitter associations, is surely a misnomer nowadays; let us change it to "mobility of labour", especially in relation to our EEC membership. I am firmly of the opinion that all should be educated and trained up to their so natural ability and that… work abroad is better than idleness at home.* (Geary 1978:2-3)

In 1987, such a framing was echoed by Foreign Minister Brian Lenihan Snr in an interview with the magazine Newsweek:

> *What we have now is a very literate emigrant, who thinks nothing of coming to the United States and going back to Ireland and maybe on to Germany and back to Ireland again . . . We shouldn't be defeatist or pessimistic about it. We should be proud of it. After all, we can't all live on a small island.* (Quoted in Glynn et al. 2015:5)

Mac Laughlin (1994) attacks this narrative as obscuring the fact that most emigrants belonged to the same marginalised rural and urban working-class groups that had traditionally taken the boat. Contra their representation of emigration as an opportunity to 'climb the social

10 The ratio was calculated at 2.4 times the figure for 'adults' vs 3.7 in France, 3.4 in Sweden, 4.3 in Norway and 3.8 in Italy. (The OECD Observer 1983:20)

ladder' most were, in his terms, 'literally climbing ladders' – working in construction and other 'unskilled' sectors of the economy in the US and UK (Mac Laughlin 1994:69).

Protests about unemployment were common throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with mixed results regarding the level of mobilisation (Allen 1998). Unemployed Centres were set up around the country - often by the out-of-work themselves (Kirby 1988; Allen 1998). Unemployed action groups from Dublin, Waterford, Cork and elsewhere organised the 'People's March for Decent Jobs' in 1982 and 1983 (The Irish Times 29/4/1982; Gralton 1983). 1987 saw a high point of activity, the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed [INOU] was founded, followed by an ultimately successful campaign against the Jobsearch scheme[11] (Allen 1998). Despite this, the memoirs of one of the founders of the INOU – Mike Allen – is notable for its deep pessimism about the capacity for agitation by the unemployed in this period, concluding that 'stigma, fatalism and isolation have taken deep hold in the communities that suffer unemployment' (Allen 1998:129).

Allen (1998) emphasises ideational factors including: the stigma attached to unemployment; the transitoriness of the category; and the isolation of the unemployed. In the academic literature, such factors have been argued to severely limit the 'political opportunity structure' for mobilisations by the unemployed and similarly marginalised groups (Royall 2007). However, Allen (1998:118-122) focuses on unemployment as a form of 'identity' in itself, thus eliding the fact that previous mobilisations such as those in the 1950s drew heavily on ties of craft, kin, political affinity, and community[12] rather than purely on the out-of-work status of participants. The decomposition and disintegration of the traditional urban working-class neighbourhoods in Dublin, as a corollary of the economic and social developments from the mid-twentieth century onwards, should not be ignored as the major obstacle here (Girvin 1984; Drudy and Punch 2000).

As what Dukelow (2011) terms the 'lost decade' of the 1980s dragged on, the political equilibrium shifted away from Keynesian crisis response strategies towards monetarist principles and austerity policies. National deficit reduction became the prime target in governance, meaning increased borrowing or inflation was to be avoided at all costs (Dukelow 2011). This policy turn meant demand could not be stimulated by increased spending but only by improved 'competitiveness'. However, there was limited space for action in this direction either:

11 This was a program by AnCo which interviewed long-term unemployed people to dissuade 'fraud' and place them in training or employment schemes (Breen 1988:441). Critics such as INOU argued it was an overt attempt to force the unemployed off the state coffers and eventually saw it scaled down and discontinued (Allen 1998:137-139).

12 For example, Johnston-Kehoe (2009:79) argues the mobilisations of the late 1950s were spearheaded by already organised construction workers following the collapse of their industry. Mobilisation in 1971 by the Gaeltacht Civil Rights movement in response to the EPO that year offers another example of how secondary ties other than that of a shared 'unemployed' identity form the foundation for such political action (Irish Times 21/5/1971; Madden 2017).

…given an already extremely low level of tax on manufacturing output and high investment subsidies, competitiveness with other countries could be improved only by a very restrictive incomes policy. (The OECD Observer 1983:22)

In other words, 'competitiveness' could only be increased by exerting downward pressure on wages. As the 1980s progressed, this was enabled by the erosion of the power of labour due to the congruence of various factors including: declining industrial production; persistently high unemployment; growth in the services sector; and a decline in trade union membership (Allen 1997).

In short, economic dynamics in Ireland mirrored the neoliberal turn elsewhere across the globe [Section 3.3.3]. However, the development of détente both on the political and labour relations fronts ensured that this was a 'supply-side revolution with a social-democratic face.' (Tansey 1998:49). The Tallaght Strategy[13] of 1987 secured collaboration between a FF-Progressive Democrat coalition and the FG opposition. The 1987 establishment of a ***Social Partnership*** [SP][14] ensured the compliance of the larger trade unions. This accord involved severe retrenchment focused on health, education, and public housing expenditure (Dukelow, 2011). From the perspective of trade union leadership, these concessions were justified as preferable to a Thatcher style confrontation between their membership on one side and the state and employers on the other. Though the SP did ensure social peace between these actors, the trade unions failed to provide the establishment of a deeper agreement; thus, it lacked the 'institutional underpinnings of superficially similar regulated arrangements in other European/Nordic countries' (McDonough 2018:25). Alongside these measures, the existing developmental strategy intensified and developed towards a dynamic that would eventually spur the Celtic Tiger boom.

2.4 Youth Unemployment and the Global Financial Crisis

This section covers the 2008 and 2014 period examined by this study. Section 2.4.1 charts the birth of the Celtic Tiger boom [2.4.1.1] and its ultimate demise amid the GFC of 2007/2008 [2.4.1.2]. The recession that followed saw the young unemployed become the target of state policy once more [Section 2.4.2]. Measures introduced were divided between austerity measures [Section 2.4.2.1] and activation measures [Section 2.4.2.2]. The section closes by examining the trends of exit and voice during this period [Section 2.4.3].

2.4.1 From boom to bust

2.4.1.1 Celtic Tiger

Boyle and Wood (2017) describe the Celtic Tiger as 'Janus-Faced' in that we can subdivide it into two periods. Firstly, the supposed 'good tiger' from 1993-2000 when expansion was

13 This was a policy adopted by FG in which it decided not to oppose the economic policies of the FF-PDs minority government in the Dáil. McCann (2011) provides a succinct summary of these policies as acting 'to prioritize tax cuts, rationalize public spending, reduce borrowing and increase investment to open up competitiveness for Irish companies and companies willing to set up in the south.'.

14 This was a tripartite agreement established between the state, employer groups and the major trade unions with two goals in mind, the moderation of wage increases, and peaceful industrial relations (Teague and Donaghey 2015).

driven by ***Information and Communication Technology*** [ICT], Pharmaceutical and Biotechnology MNCs. These companies became responsible for a massive proportion of Irish GDP – directly accounting for 85% of economic growth between 1995 and 1999 (O'Hearn 2001:38). This boom was typically attributed to endogenous factors that attracted FDI, such as the improved level of education among Ireland's young workforce, the wage restraint and flexible labour policies enabled by the SP, and the generally stable macroeconomic environment achieved via the austere fiscal policies of the late 1980s (Tansey 1998).

More critical reflections emphasise the introduction of a lowered corporation tax and special reliefs for MNCs during the 1980s and the establishment of the Irish Financial Services Centre [IFSC] in Dublin as a base for the globalised expansion of finance that followed the collapse of the Eastern Bloc (McCabe 2013). The post-war role as a bridge between North American MNCs and Europe deepened (O'Hearn 2001). What Boyle and Wood (2017) term the 'bad tiger' describes the period from 2000 onwards; the aftermath of the 'dot com crash' saw financialised asset price inflation in the property sector become the main driver of growth. While endogenous explanations, such as provided by Tansey (1998), have some credibility in terms of the first wave of growth in the 1990s, corporate welfare appears to have been the more enticing factor for foreign capital in the longer run (Gottheil 2003; McCabe 2013). This newfound wealth was to have stark consequences for the domestic balance of power, social policy, and the country's demographics.

The neoliberal direction of economic policy was compensated by a dramatic expansion of government social expenditure. The SP provided scope for ongoing consultation in policy matters between the state, trade unions and employer groups; as time went on, it increasingly involved the community sector (Murphy 2012; O'Connor 2016). In politics, the 1990s were marked by a series of coalition governments which reflected a softening of antagonisms between parties and increased cooperation (Dukelow 2011). The Good Friday Agreement of 1997, which ended the conflict in the North, also contributed to this. Increasingly, FF and FG began to gradually resemble each other in that they both sought to gain 'cross-class support and operate in a populist mode' (Dukelow 2011: 410). Investment in areas like education, health and social protection was substantial; however, the policies pursued continued to have the uneven and ad hoc features of earlier periods (Dukelow and Considine 2017: 64-68; Millar and Crosse 2018). During this period, Murphy (2012) gives an image of the Irish welfare regime as a 'frozen landscape' with substantial stability in institutions, interests and ideas, resulting in little policy change and strong continuity between 1986-2010 (Murphy 2012).

Despite an expansion of state expenditure and increased attention paid to social issues, those such as Kirby (2010) and O'Hearn (2001) argue growth during this period had a highly inequitable class character and served to exacerbate rather than resolve the problems of poverty and inequality. Kirby (2010) points to an increasingly polarised labour market, increased regional disparities, and educational inequalities as investment focused on later education levels rather than primary and secondary. Furthermore, Kirby's (2010:55) calculation of a decline in wage share from 71.3% of GDP during 1981-1990 to 55.4% during

2001-2010 suggests economic growth translated into more profits for MNCs rather than more income for the average working adult in Ireland.

At the same time, the national unemployment rate was low both for the general population and for the young. In 2006, on the eve of the GFC, the general unemployment rate stood at just 4.8% and the youth unemployment rate at 8.8% (Eurostat 2020b). In this tight labour market, the old trend of outward migration gave way to inward migration towards Ireland. This change was not just driven by returned émigrées as in the past but included immigration from outside the Anglophone sphere, especially after Poland, Hungary, and six other countries from Central and Eastern Europe joined the EU in 2004 (Gilmartin 2015). Women's labour market participation also grew massively – between 1994 and 2006, the total number of women in work increased by 90% compared to 53% for men (Dukelow and Considine 2017:60).

2.4.1.2 The Crash

Ultimately, Ireland's position as a hub for global finance, and the domestic economy's reliance on a housing bubble for growth and employment, proved to be a double-edged sword (McCabe 2013; McDonough 2018). The bursting of a property bubble in the US in 2007/2008 reverberated worldwide (Murphy 2014a). The consequences of this crash on the US level quickly translated into significant and sustained upheaval within the Irish economy. A FF-Greens coalition decision in September 2008 to guarantee €440 billion of private debt held by the Irish banking sector proved to be disastrous (Allen and Boyle 2013; Murphy 2014a). The debt burden it imposed was compounded by increased unemployment spurred by the collapse of the property market and stagnant international demand (Drudy and Collins 2011; Murphy 2014a).

The lasting consequence of this bailout was the transformation of what had been a private banking crisis into a sovereign debt crisis, a dynamic mirrored across the peripheral countries of the Eurozone typically described as the PIIGS [Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Spain] (Coulter and Arqueros-Fernández 2020). In 2010, Ireland became the recipient of an €85 billion 'bailout' overseen by a Troika of the ***International Monetary Fund*** [IMF], the ***European Commission*** [EC] and the ***European Central Bank*** [ECB] (Murphy 2014a). The ***Memorandum of Understanding*** [MOU] that oversaw this deal intensified an austerity push begun by the FF-Greens coalition through two separate budgets in April and November of 2009 (Dukelow 2015).

The MOU pursued 'austerity' and 'competitiveness' through public expenditure retrenchment, privatisation and labour market reforms (Kinsella 2012; Murphy 2014a; McDonnell and O'Farrell 2016). Commentators have compared the terms of this deal to the 'structural adjustment programmes' imposed throughout the Global South (McDonough, 2018: 19). The coming of the Troika spelt the beginning of the end for the FF-Greens coalition after a crushing defeat in the February 2011 General Election. A FG-Labour coalition was formed, one which proved highly committed to implementing the conditions of the MOU - despite contrary indications before the election (Dukelow, 2015; Murphy, 2016). As Dukelow (2015) argues, the Troika found itself 'pushing against an open door'. Dukelow and Considine

(2017:71) calculate that between 2008-2014 austerity measures equivalent to 18% of GDP were implemented, with 33% of this achieved by tax increases and 66% by reductions to expenditure.

There was also a return to the 'competitiveness' strategies of the 1980s (Allen and O'Boyle 2013; Collins and Murphy 2016). Research from McDonnell and O'Farrell (2016:68) identify a two-pronged 'internal devaluation' strategy by which the Irish state introduced policies aiming to reduce wages and labour costs. Firstly, the indirect method conducted through the targeting of the public sector with reductions of pay and conditions, the introduction of an employment embargo and increasing reliance on outsourcing. This directly sought to achieve austerity targets but also sought to induce a knock-on effect on labour costs in the broader economy. Secondly, a more direct strategy through a series of policy measures revising Ireland's wage-setting mechanisms downwards. The decision to reduce the minimum wage from €8.65 p/h to €7.65 p/h in 2010 is one example - though the new FG-Labour government partially reversed this measure in 2011. More lasting were the decisions following a 2011 ruling by the high court of the unconstitutionality of *employment relation orders* made by ***Joint Labour Committees*** [JLC]. These were bodies that, between 1943-2011, had held the powers to regulate pay and conditions in specific sectors such as contract cleaning, catering, and hotel work. The legal instrument introduced to address this court finding, the *Industrial Relations Act 2012*, removed many of the powers held by JLCs, reduced the number of sectors covered by employment relation orders, and thus was regarded as an unequivocal push in a 'pro-employer and anti-worker direction' (Mc Donnell and O'Farrell 2016:69).

2.4.1.3 Austerity and Activation in the Social Protection System

Even before the GFC, the Irish state had been under pressure from the OECD to reform aspects of its social protection system – such as a perceived lack of conditionality attached to income supports for lone parents and the unemployed (Millar and Crosse 2018:114; Martin 2015:9; Mahon 2009). The aftermath of this crisis meant more people than ever were reliant upon it. CSO (2009:2) data shows that the number of people registered for income supports increased from 240,217 in September 2008 to 423,639 in September 2009. This increase meant further budgetary pressure for the state; social protection expenditure grew from 18.1% of GDP in 2007 to 25.2% by 2010 (Eurostat 2018 cited in Gaffney and Millar 2020: 74). Thus the DSP became a critical target for retrenchment and reformation in the eyes of both the officials and technocrats representing the Troika and their Irish counterparts among the local political elites and senior civil servants (Hick 2018; Cousins 2016).

Unemployed people in Ireland have access to two forms of income support; the **Jobseekers' benefit** [JSB] or the JSA. The JSB is a' flat-rate payment for the short-term unemployed' who have made the requisite social insurance contributions and have proof of availability for work and job-searching (Griffin 2015:111; McCashin 2019). The JSA is a means-tested payment for those whose JSB entitlement has expired - or who did not have enough contributions to qualify in the first instance (Griffin 2015; McCashin 2019). While the maximum rates were equivalent for both payments, the JSA rate payable is deductible dependent on the assessment of means, including properties or other assets possessed and spousal income.

Unemployed young people relied disproportionately upon the JSA as they tend to have less work experience and thus lack the required contributions for the JSB. There was no age differentiation in JSA rates payable before the crisis. However, those aged 24 and younger claiming while living in the parental home were subject to an additional 'benefits and privileges' test, which made further deductions depending on parental income, rent and mortgage costs, and family size (INOU 2008:10). The reliance of young unemployed people on JSA intensified following the GFC. While 64.8% of those in this age group on the live register were JSA claimants in September 2008 - that figure grew to 73.4% by September 2009 (CSO 2009: 2). The equivalent figure for the entire Live Register only increased from 50.73% to 53.4% during the same period (CSO 2009:2). Genderwise, these same CSO (2009:2) figures show when all age groups are included in the analysis, men on the live register relied more on the JSA both before and immediately after the GFC - 56% of men and 40% of women in September 2008 compared to 58% of men compared to 44% of women in September 2009. However, figures were more equivalent for young people, with 73.6% of young men and 73.1% of young women on the live register applying for the JSA in September 2009 (CSO 2009:2).

The reformation of Irish social protection in line with these domestic and external pressures began properly in 2011 with the coming to power of the FG-Labour coalition. Reflecting on the measures pursued by this government at an Oireachtas Committee in April 2016 the Assistant Secretary-General John McKeon of the DSP boasted that they were:

> *arguably the largest single public sector reform initiative over the past ten years, the delivery of employment and activation services to jobseekers is now unrecognisable from that which prevailed up to 2011.* (McKeon 2016)

In the foreground of these reforms was an intensification of the activation regime. This process began in 2011 with the establishment of Intreo as a new 'one-stop shop', bringing together all employment and income services under the same organisation. At the same time, a new ALMP regime was developed, targeted at those who in the policy jargon of the time were deemed to be the 'furthest from the labour market' – whose ranks included those classified as long-term unemployed, the young unemployed, and lone-parents (Millar and Crosse 2018; Finn 2019).

More backgrounded but perhaps more consequential was the simultaneous deployment of the 'stick', which saw measures reducing the generosity and eligibility of income supports available to these groups accompanied with increased behavioural conditionality, including the extension of the usage of sanctions. The generosity of payments was reduced repeatedly through a series of austerity budgets. The introduction of age banded maximum JSA rates in 2009 and 2013 as examined in the following section. Budget 2010 and 2011 saw direct reductions in the rate of payment of JSB and JSA for all claimants (Citizens Information Board 2020). McCashin (2019:173-175) details other measures introduced such as the shortening of JSB duration and the increasing of social insurance contributions needed to access it. The *2010 Social Welfare Miscellaneous Act* raised behavioural conditionality requirements on both the JSB and the JSA. The powers available to DSP staff to sanction those in receipt of them were significantly boosted. As shown in Table 2 below, this resulted in a dramatic increase in absolute terms in the numbers of people receiving reduced penalty benefits rates following sanction by DSP staff. Finn (2019: 109) offers two explanations for this growth in the use of sanctions. Firstly, before 2010 there was a reluctance to apply sanctions as officials only had the 'nuclear option' of removing all benefits rather than reduced payment rates. Secondly, he points to the ways sanctions became increasingly 'embedded' as a practical instrument within the social welfare architecture.

Table 2 Application of Penalty Rates by DSP staff by year

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
No.	353	1,471	3,179	4,969	6,115	9,565	13,503	12,380

Source: Adapted from Doherty (Dáil Debates 17/12/2019)

The implementation of austerity and activation in the social protection system was accompanied by an ideological offensive that constructed specific populations including migrants, young people, public sector employees and lone parents as 'scapegoats' who were to blame for the country's economic misfortune (O'Flynn et al. 2014). One element of this push was the repeated announcements of policy measures and media campaigns targeting what was described as 'welfare fraud', which served to construct welfare claimants as a fraudulent and undeserving section of society (Devereux and Power 2019; Gaffney and Millar 2020). Meade and Kiely (2020) identify these discourses as merging into a distinctive brand of populism, which centred the Irish middle class, or 'squeezed middle' as 'us' and the true victims of the economic downturn. At the same time, those directly impacted by state austerity policies were stigmatised and constructed as an internal other or 'them' (Meade and Kiely 2020; Whelan 2021b).

2.4.2 A national problem once again

Before the GFC, those policy measures targeting the problem of 'youth unemployment' primarily engaged with it as a localised problem rather than a national one. Sargent (2014:87) offers an overview of two new initiatives established during this period. Both sought to preventively target 'disadvantaged' young people within the education system. Early Start, established in 1994, was funded by the Department of Education and Skills to promote the education and development of pre-school children as a preventative measure seeking to reduce their school failure rates (Sargent 2014:87). The Schools Completion Programme, established in 2002, targeted those aged 4-18 deemed at risk of prematurely leaving the formal education system, with the establishment of 82 projects and school completion officers appointed in those locations designated as 'disadvantaged' (Sargent 2014:87).

These were matched with an infrastructure of activation policies and schemes that can be understood as targeting 'youth unemployment' or 'early school leavers', as evident in Table 3 below. These were schemes with localised provision aiming to provide compensatory education for those who had left the mainstream education system before the Leaving Certificate. These 'second chance education' schemes did not target 'youth unemployment' per se with the ***Senior Traveller Training Centres*** [STTC] and ***Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme*** [VTOS] not having upper age limits (Department of Education and Science 2008:32).

Table 3 Pre-GFC Policy measures targeting youth unemployment and early school leaving

Title of Scheme	Description	Dates in Operation
Youthreach	Compensatory education scheme targeted at early school leavers aged 15-20.	1988-Present
Senior Traveller Training Centres	Compensatory education scheme targeted at adult members of the Traveller ethnic minority.	1974- 2012
Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme	Vocational and compensatory training scheme targeted at those on income supports and aged 21 or older.	1989-Present
Back to Education Initiative	Part-time education course targeted at early school leavers in employment and/or on income supports.	2001-Present

In these years before the onset of the GFC, Ireland had a relatively low level of unemployment among those aged 16-25 compared to the European average. This fact holds if we measure the ***youth unemployment rate*** [YU Rate] as in Fig A or the ***youth unemployment ratio*** [YU Ratio][15] as found in Fig B in Appendix II. The downturn reversed this trend. The YU Rate more than doubled in four years from 13.5% in 2008 to a high point of 30.8% in 2011 (Eurostat 2020b). The critical factor in the initial stages was a collapse in those industries that disproportionately hired those under-25: construction, retail, and accommodation and food. Figure A in Appendix IV offers more insight into the sharp drops in the numbers of under-25s recorded as employed in practically all sectors. However, most attention at the time was paid to the fate of those engaged in the construction sector (Boland et al. 2015). Construction experienced a dramatic collapse, with a near 80% drop in the numbers employed - 41600 in 2008 Q3 to 8300 in 2011 Q3 (Eurostat 2020a). Other sectors that were major employers of the under-25s also saw sharp drops. Retail was the worst in absolute terms with 34,400 fewer people recorded working in the sector or a 35.4% drop during the same period (Eurostat 2020a). Tens of thousands of jobs were also lost in the services, and accommodation and food sectors, with a respective decline of 25600 and 18100 employed in each (Eurostat 2020a).

15 The youth unemployment rate divides the number of those aged 16-24 who are unemployed by the total active population of that age category. Whereas the youth unemployment ratio divides the unemployed population by the entire population. As in many countries a large section of this age group is still in the education system and thus inactive the latter can often be a more reliable indicator of the level of youth unemployment. [Section 3.5.1].

2.4.2.1 Austerity and young people

The most extensive policy targeted at those unemployed and under-25 served to reduce the resources and income supports available to them. Table 4 offers an overview of one of the most prominent measures in response to increased youth unemployment, the introduction and expansion of age-banded JSA rates in a series of budgets between 2009 and 2013.

The FF-Greens coalition government began this process across two austerity budgets in 2009. The initial measure reduced the maximum weekly payment for new 18- and 19-year old claimants to €100 and was communicated as aiming to incentivise them towards further education and training; exemptions from this reduced rate were provided for those participating in Youthreach, STTC full-time courses, BTEA at Second level or Post Leaving Certificate levels, and FÁS training courses (Citizens Information Board 2020). The 2010 Budget in December 2009 expanded the €100 per week rate from 18-21 years old and introduced a new maximum rate of €150 for those aged 22-24 (Citizens Information Board 2020).

Table 4 Maximum JSA payable by age following each budget.

Age	Supplementary Budget 2009	Budget 2010	Budget 2014
26+	€204.30	€196	€188
25	€204.30	€196	€144
24	€204.30	€150	€100
23	€204.30	€150	€100
22	€204.30	€150	€100
21	€204.30	€100	€100
20	€204.30	€100	€100
19	€100	€100	€100
18	€100	€100	€100

Source: Own construction using data on Citizens' Information board website (Citizens Information Board 2020)

The FG-Labour coalition continued this practice following their coming to power in 2011. In fact, in their first budget, they attempted to apply a similar approach within the Disability Allowance, including raising the age of eligibility for this income support from 16 to 18 and introducing a reduction in the rate of payment to same level as the JSA for those under-24 (Wayman 24/1/2012). However, the government was forced to back down from this measure in the face of protest by ***Non-governmental Organisations*** [NGOs] representing people with disabilities and the embarrassing re-emergence of a video of Taoiseach Enda Kenny promising not to introduce such policies during the election campaign earlier that year (Wayman 24/1/2012).

Exemption from reduced rates for those participating in training courses was pared back to a new maximum of €160 per week in the 2013 Budget introduced in December 2012 (Citizens Information Board 2020). The final expansion of these measures came in Budget 2014, which extended the maximum JSA rate of €100 per week to all between 18-24 years and reduced the rate payable to those aged 25 to €144 per week (Citizens Information Board 2020).

In the intervening years, a quantitative study by Doris et al. (2020) examined the impact of the first set of JSA reductions on unemployment duration using data from the Jobseekers Longitudinal Database. The study found it served to shorten unemployment durations by more than a year for those 18-years-olds targeted versus their 18-year-old peers who signed on before the reduction's enactment (Doris et al. 2020:923). To this author's knowledge, there has been no research of the scale of that study investigating the extension of this measure to the much broader age group impacted by further reductions in the winter of 2009 and 2013. However, an ILO report examining exit rates to employment for those aged 24 and younger following the December 2009 JSA reduction found its impact was 'negligible at best' (Walsh 2016:21-22). Furthermore, even the positive findings of Doris et al. (2020) were qualified with a disclaimer:

> *…it is possible that a benefit cut of this magnitude had negative consequences, reducing the ability to consumption smooth and increasing claimants' dependence on family members. This in turn may have led to increased pressure on low-income families. For those without family support, there is anecdotal evidence of an increase in homelessness affecting those whose benefits were cut.* (Doris et al. 2020:924)

Van Lanen's (2020) research into the experience of disadvantaged urban youth in Cork and Dublin reveals the difficulty of clearly evaluating the lived effects of these and other austerity measures. Familial support has served to mask from public view the extent to which 'everyday austerity' has resulted in increased exclusion and deprivation among this section of the population (Van Lanen 2020).

The JSA rate reductions were nominally an incentive for the young unemployed to engage in further education and training (Hanafin, Dáil Debates 22/4/2009). Thus, it is important to note that young people's capacity to do so was adversely impacted by a series of measures introduced alongside them. In repeated budgets, education and training for young people and the young unemployed were the targets of austerity measures in the form of both expenditure cuts and increased charges (Murphy 2014b). Appendix I of this thesis compiles austerity measures that impacted income supports for those under-25 and their access to further education. The latter resulted in reductions in the number of training places available and cuts to the funding directed towards education schemes and further education institutions. Notably, this included cuts made to schemes such as STTC, VTOS and Youthreach, which the JSA age-bands were simultaneously seeking to incentivise claimants towards (Hanafin Dáil Debates 22/4/2009). At the same time, repeated hikes in what was to become the Student Services Charge and cuts to the Student Support Grant increased the economic hardship of those young people who did go on to study at the third level. Between 2006 and 2013, the real value of public expenditure per student in higher education declined from €11000 to €8000 per student (Mercille and Murphy 2015:378).

2.4.2.2 Activation and the young unemployed

Youth unemployment was also targeted via the expansion of the activation regime post-2011. Table 5 presents schemes that were either explicitly targeted at those aged 18-24 or unemployed 'graduates'[16]. As was done with the other periods surveyed by this chapter, it is crucial to interrogate the design and eligibility of schemes or policy before defining them as a response to 'youth unemployment'. An examination of media coverage and academic literature discussing Jobbridge[17], a flagship scheme of the FG-Labour coalition, clarifies why this distinction is necessary. The scheme has popularly but erroneously been presented as a response to youth unemployment by both its proponents and opponents (Leeson 2011; Arlow 2019). However, unlike post-EYG successors such as First Steps and Youth Employment Support Scheme, JobBridge was open to the general unemployed population and until 2014 did not reserve places for the young unemployed. An Indecon (2016:7) evaluation of the scheme shows 27.6% of the participants were within the official definition of young unemployed as being aged 16-24, whereas 30% of the participants were 35 and older.[18]

Between the years 2009-2013, measures in response to youth unemployment primarily took the form of internship schemes targeted at 'graduates'. This trend began with the Gradlink and Work Placement Schemes in 2009. The former was established by the Irish Business and Employers Confederation for its members. FÁS administered the latter, and while open to the general population, most places were reserved for the 'young unemployed' and 'graduates'. One of the apparent motivations behind such schemes was to keep university educated unemployed people in the country during this recession (Arlow 2019). Gradlink was the model for the JobBridge scheme introduced by the DSP in 2011 (Arlow 2019). In April 2013, the EC issued a recommendation for an EYG, which obliged the Irish state to establish an implementation plan in response [Section 1.1]. The emphasis within this plan as established by the DSP later that year was to reserve places on existing schemes such as JobBridge, Tús and Gateway[19] for those under 25 (DSP 2013b). Once again, it is important to note that the content of these schemes was not designed with the young unemployed in mind. The initial plan was to introduce participation in such schemes as a condition for receiving JSA among the younger age group, with the imposition of penalty rates on those who failed to comply (DSP 2013b).

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16 'Graduates' are assumed to denote a group that for the most part would have fallen with the understanding of the 'young' age-group of 16-24 as typically established within policy.
17 Jobbridge was a national internship programme involving both the public and private sectors with the aim to: 'provide those seeking employment with the opportunity to gain work experience, maintain close links with the labour market and enhance their skills and competencies through an internship opportunity thereby improving their prospects of securing employment in the future' (Indecon 2013:i).
18 An earlier 2013 report gives a figure of 29 % of participants aged under-25 (Indecon 2013:9).
19 Tús and Gateway are temporary employment schemes, the former placing the unemployed at work with community schemes and the latter with local authorities (DSP 2013).

The EYGIP also provided for some new schemes that were both targeted at and designed for the 'young unemployed'. The Ballymun Youth Guarantee Pilot Scheme was the first of these and had 739 participants during its operation. This scheme was operated with the assistance of local employment agency the Ballymun Jobs' Centre based within the targeted neighbourhood. The project followed a graduated level of intervention determined by the assessed level of difficulties facing an individual in accessing paid employment in terms of: literacy, numeracy and educational level achieved; previous work experience; and whether the person was facing other forms of obstacles in the form of addiction issues, access to housing etc. (Devlin 2015). An independent report (Devlin 2015) commissioned into the programme found that while it had proven successful in the targeted area, the approach implemented was not replicable nationwide due to the cost and local particularities. This view was echoed by the government of the time (Varadkar Dáil Debates 24/1/2017).

Table 5 Policy measures targeting youth unemployment or graduates 2008-2019

Title of Scheme	Description	Dates in Operation
Work Placement Programme (WPP)	Internship scheme administered by FÁS. It was partially targeted at the 'young unemployed' as places were reserved for those aged 18-25 and graduates.	2009 – 2016
Gradlink	Internship scheme that was targeted at graduates and operated by IBEC for member organisations.	2009-2011
Pathways to Work-Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan	The plan produced by the Irish government in response to the European Youth Guarantee. The direct action was to reserve places for young unemployed on existing activation programmes, including TÚS, JobBridge and Gateway. This plan provided increased conditionality for the young unemployed and announced early details of First Steps and Jobplus Youth which were formalised in 2014.	2013
Ballymun Youth Guarantee Pilot Scheme	A services and training pilot scheme in the Ballymun area of Dublin.	2013-2014
First Steps	Internship scheme targeted at unemployed people aged 18-24 with no experience of work.	2015- 2018
JobPlus Youth	Youth targeted strand within the JobPlus Employment Subsidy Scheme.	2015-Present
Youth Employment Support Scheme	Internship Scheme targeted at under 25s who are long-term unemployed or face barriers to employment.	2018-Present
Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme	Training Scheme that involves a boot camp operated by the defence forces alongside employability training.	2016- Present

Other schemes that were first set out in the EYG implementation plan were announced in 2014 but only enacted outside this project's scope. The First Steps internship scheme is one example of this – another internship scheme in the vein of JobBridge but limited to the under-25s. Other schemes were implemented outside the period examined by this project but are worth mentioning, such as the Youth Employment Support Scheme, a redesign of the First Steps scheme, and the Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme. These schemes operated on a tiny scale, especially considering the numbers of young unemployed people during this period. Parliamentary questions inquiring about uptake on the First Steps scheme reveal a very small roll-out, with 55 participating in April 2016 (Humphreys Dáil Debates 6/4/2016) and 75 in 2017 once the scheme had begun to be wound down (Doherty Dáil Debates 14/12/2017).

2.4.3 Exit and voice in the wake of the GFC

> *I don't have a job, and that's not right, but you should take a look at the FÁS website… [Shite!]*
>
> - 'All the boys on the dole' by T.P.M (2015)

The reformation of the social protection system and the targeting of austerity measures on the unemployed provoked much less resistance than the imposition of new direct or indirect charges and taxes (Finn 2019:127). Typically, this is argued to reflect the disorganised state of oppositional institutions at the onset of this crisis (O'Connor 2016; Adshead 2018; Finn 2019). The parliamentary left was weak and divided (Finn 2019:105; Adshead 2018). The largest trade unions had subscribed to the neoliberal consensus during the Celtic Tiger years[20] and were left in 'disarray' following the collapse of SP in 2010 (Finn 2019:105; Papadopoulos 2016b). O'Connor (2016) notes that community groups and NGOs found themselves in a weak position due to a dependent relationship upon the state cultivated during the boom period. Royall (2017:83) identifies this dynamic at play within INOU arguing that its 'cautious stance and ambiguous responses to austerity were a result of long-established relations of dependency with public authorities and with the trade union movement.' Yeager and Culleton's (2015) focus group study examining generational differences in the experience of unemployment reveals a potential obstacle in mobilising the young unemployed. They found a lower level of empathy and politicisation among young unemployed participants (Yeager and Culleton 2015: 39). They explained this disparity in terms of the novelty of the situation for this cohort, whereas their elders had the experience of previous recessions to 'contextualise' it (Yeager and Culleton 2015: 40).

There was some contestation of the policies introduced targeting the unemployed. JobBridge became a focus point for protest and negative media coverage. Outrage was frequently expressed both in the print and social media over advertisements for internships by public and private organisations which were deemed to be exploiting the scheme. Two oft cited examples include an advert for shelf-stacking internships with the supermarket chain Tesco, and the revelation that interns were providing training for the unemployed on

20 The post-GFC turn towards austerity provoked a volte face in trade union policy towards a Keynesian position (Papadopoulos 2016b:505).

workshops run by a private company contracted by the DSP (thejournal.ie 16/9/2011; Gartland 18/1/2015). Both far-left political parties and trade union activists began to target the employers using it. The ***Scambridge*** campaign organised by the Socialist Party and a separate campaign ***Work Must Pay*** initiated by the youth wing of the trade union Unite both organised protests and online actions against this scheme, as well as picketing those businesses who used it (Coughlan 6/12/2013; The Flame 2014).

This pressure brought increased media focus on issues raised about the scheme. These included 'the lengthy duration of its placements, the replacing of paid jobs with intern positions, and questions over their vetting and appropriateness' and the role of the scheme in institutionalising internships in sectors where few were found before (Lalor 2013: 31). The Indecon report (2016: 16) evaluating Jobbridge suggests these accusations were not without foundation: it estimates a level of deadweight of 75.6% and a job displacement level of 29.1%[21]. The discontinuation of the scheme was announced alongside the publication of this report (O'Dwyer 22/10/2016).

Between 2013-2015 the campaign group WNL sought to mobilise young people around the impact of austerity on their lives on 6 areas: unemployment, working conditions, emigration, education, housing, and mental health (Mannion 2014; Finn 2019). In October/November 2013, the group sought to contest the extension of the reduced rates for young people on JSA that were announced as part of the Budget 2014 [Section 2.4.2.1]. The strategy of contestation pursued by the group was media orientated with the staging of photo stunts in addition to more traditional tactics including protests and lobbying of politicians (Mannion 2014). In addition to this, they organised a Young People's Assembly in November 2013, which published a Youth Charter outlining a series of demands on issues related to the six themes (Holland 9/11/2013). Their attempt to challenge further cuts to the JSA for under-25s ultimately failed despite garnering media attention and the support of Trade Unions, the Union of Students of Ireland, and Youth NGOs such as Spunout.

Looking at the wider swathe of measures introduced by the DSP between 2008-2014, there are at least three clear cases in which resistance was mounted ranging from mass mobilisations to civil society actions. Firstly, the successful mass mobilisations in October 2008 by Old Age Pensioners and NGOs working on OAP issues which forced the then FF-Greens government into a retreat on attempts to abolish the universal access to medical card for the over-70s (Javornicky 2019). The record set by this mobilisation is argued to have protected this group from direct attacks on other benefits such as free travel and pension rates (Javornicky 2019:206-207). As discussed in Section 2.4.2.1, in 2011 disability rights NGOs mounted a media campaign that forced the government to back down on its attempts to extend age-banded rates of payment to the Disability Allowance as well as raising the age of eligibility for the payment to 18 (Wayman 24/1/2012). Finally, while not forcing a dramatic policy reversal as in the other two cases, grassroots campaign groups such as Single Parents Acting for the Rights of Our Kids [SPARK] and the NGO One Family contested the reformation

[21] See Section 3.5.3.2 for a discussion of the literature on these potential labour market 'distortions' produced by ALMPs

of the One-Parent Family Payment and the stigmatisation of lone parents by government and media alike (Millar et al. 2019).

The 'safety valve' opened once more during this period, with CSO figures calculating net emigration of 143,000 Irish nationals and 10,000 foreign nationals between the years 2009-2015 (Glynn et al. 2015:6). Their data reveals a continuity in that 70% of those leaving were in their twenties, that remote rural areas were overrepresented, and that the key destinations were the UK, Australia, US, New Zealand and Canada (Glynn et al. 2015:7-9). However, in terms of the level of education, there was a strong shift in the composition of those leaving with university graduates forming 62% of the 25-34 cohort in the migrating population versus 47% of the same cohort in the general population (Glynn et al. 2015:1). There was also a shift compared to earlier period in which male emigration outpaced female emigration in a ratio 56:44 between 2009-2015 – the study attributes this to the collapse of the male-dominated construction sector (Glynn et al. 2015:8).

Emigration continued to be naturalised or even encouraged by practices and inactions on the state-level and in the public discourses which surrounded them. In 2013, controversy arose over the DSP advertising positions overseas to welfare claimants (Phelan 26/10/ 2013). Among the Irish political elite, earlier comments of Brian Lenihan Snr quoted in Section 2.3.3, were echoed by figures such as Tánaiste Mary Coughlan and Minister for Finance Michael Noonan, who described increasing emigration as young people leaving to 'enjoy themselves' or as a 'lifestyle choice' (Glynn et al. 2015:13). As will be seen in Chapter Six and Seven, the move to reduce JSA for the young unemployed was widely seen by opponents as seeking to encourage emigration. Fehrer (2020:165-168) supports these assertions arguing that post-GFC both Irish and Portuguese authorities sought to encourage their surplus population to leave via 'deliberate and explicit policy' (p.166).

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter contextualised and historicised the repeated emergence of youth unemployment as a policy problem for the Irish state. A pattern was identified in terms of the forces driving the emergence of this problem: breakdowns in developmental strategies; an inability to contain the growth in unemployment: the impediment of emigration acting as a 'double pressure' (Meeus 2013). There is historical precedent in Ireland for the predicted destabilising effects of this pressure - one factor driving the political and social upheaval in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was the obstacle to migration imposed by global economic depression and geopolitical factors such as the First World War (Fitzpatrick 1984; Mac Laughlin 1994).

These trends were shaped both by the class character of Irish economic and social life and the ongoing legacy of its subordinate and peripheral position in a capitalist world-system (O'Hearn 2001; Coakley 2012; McCabe 2013). As a small open economy, Ireland has always been highly exposed to external shocks. Its ability to manoeuvre away from this position towards a state-developmentalist direction has been constrained by domestic class relations and the global balance of power (O'Hearn 2001; McCabe 2013). Traditionally, the Irish state has relied on mass emigration as the [mostly unspoken] solution to stagnant domestic demand for labour. It has repeatedly adopted a crisis orientation to the surplus population when this safety valve has been blocked; since the 1930s such crises coincided with a rise of youth unemployment to the top of the policy agenda. A broadly similar constellation of external shocks and internal constraints resulted in youth unemployment becoming a national problem following the economic crisis of 2008-2014.

An examination of the practices deployed during these previous periods of crisis identified two key state strategies. The first strategy involves the denial and restriction of income support available to superfluous populations. This strategy could be seen in the removal of income supports for the rural out-of-work through EPOs between the 1930s and 1970s [Section 2.2.2] or initiatives such as Jobsearch in the 1980s [Section 2.3.3]. This combination of increased policing and withdrawal of support resemble what Davies et al. (2017: 1270) term 'violent inaction' to describe policies 'which seek to govern through the calculated withholding of the means to live'. The second set of strategies involved measures to keep the young unemployed occupied and/or address a perceived deficit of behaviour, skills and experience among them. This includes a series of schemes ranging from the CC of the 1940s [Section 2.2.2] to the WEP of the 1970s/1980s [Section 2.3.2]. Often, such initiatives have been experienced differently by those targeted, as seen with repeated accusations across the decades that these policies undermined the position of workers and facilitated their exploitation by employers. Indeed, there is a long history of agitation and protest concerning unemployment and state actions or inaction in relation to this issue.

Examining these state practices and their reception revealed a gendered dimension to how authorities and public discourse have dealt with youth unemployment in Irish society. The secondary literature and the archives reveal a clear focus on young unemployed men over their female counterparts in both word and deed [See also Section 3.3].

This blend of strategies holds as much for the 2008-2014 period. The chief practice identified was the introduction and extension by successive governments of age-banded rates, which dramatically reduced the generosity of the primary income support open to the young unemployed – the JSA. The secondary level of response by the state was the introduction of reserved places for young people within the existing activation schemes and a series of small-scale internship and training programmes designed for the under-25s. As discussed in Section 8.4.1, these policies had limited success in their stated goals; however, as the next chapter will explore, their presuppositions are deeply rooted in the contemporary academic and policy literature.

Chapter Three: Youth Unemployment and Social Policy

3.1 Introduction

This chapter forms the literature review, which engages the 'mainstream', and 'radical' or 'critical' literature on youth, youth unemployment and ALMPs. In making a distinction between 'mainstream' and 'radical' it follows Griffin's (1993:3) usage of the former as a descriptor for the 'perspective which presents those causal stories which are used to justify hegemonic discourses', and the latter as 'formed through theoretical, political and methodological critiques of the mainstream'. Both are understood as 'sets of discourse' that are interlinked and in dialogue with each other rather than existing as truly distinct frameworks. The chapter is divided into three main sections, each relating the international literature to that produced within the Irish context.

Section 3.2 begins by examining and unpacking youth as a concept to understand why youth unemployment is treated as a particular policy problem. The contemporary mainstream literature on 'youth' is found to understand it as a crucial period of transition in an individual's lifecycle and argues it is undergoing a 'crisis' in the face of economic and social shifts across the Global North. Conversely, the critical literature focuses on 'youth' as a socially constructed category that is constantly in flux (or 'crisis') and shaped primarily in line with the preferences and prejudices of dominant social and economic actors.

Section 3.3 examines the emergence of youth unemployment as a specific policy problem at the turn of the last century and traces its history up until the neoliberal turn of the 1970s. It looks at the threads of continuity and discontinuity in the diagnosis and prescribed cures. It finds continuity in the form of explanations that identify the young unemployed themselves as the problem but also a clear shift from the 'demand-side' to the 'supply-side' of the economy from the 1970s onwards.

Section 3.4 identifies three welfare discourses crucial for understanding how youth unemployment is represented in current policy. These are the theories of welfare dependency and the underclass, social exclusion and inclusion, and human capital. It examines the history and content of each of these theories in turn before looking at what they have to say about youth unemployment.

Section 3.5 looks at the contemporary policy and academic literature and sets out to answer three questions. How do we measure youth unemployment? What causes it? And what is to be done? **Section 3.6** provides a conclusion summing up the key points from this chapter.

3.2 What is youth?

This section begins with the mainstream understanding of 'youth-as-transition', which treats the journey between childhood and adulthood as a series of crucial milestones [Section 3.2.1]. This viewpoint is firmly embedded within the social sciences and policy circles and assumes that deviance from the 'normal' transitional pathway is consequential for the well-being of individuals and broader society (Rindfuss and Brauner-Otto 2008; Bell and Blanchflower 2011; Scarpetta et al. 2010; Eurofound 2014). Conversely, the critical literature treats youth as a socially constructed category and focuses on the assumptions and relations of power at play in how we describe it [Section 3.2.2].

3.2.1 Youth as transition

Researchers across the social and biological sciences define 'youth' or 'adolescence' as a distinctive and critical period in an individual's life-course, for them youth is a:

> *…formative, transitional period from childhood to adulthood involving biological, cognitive and psychological change that contribute to young people reappraising themselves and their relationships to their social worlds.* (Lalor et al. 2007:19)

For demographers, and the wider social sciences, this 'transition to adulthood' is defined in terms of five normative events or 'milestones' across an individual's life-course: completion of education, leaving the family home, attaining secure employment, marriage, and parenthood (Model et al. 1976: Billari and Liefbroer 2010). In mainstream research and policy literature, it is widely accepted that disruptions faced along this pathway can have lasting effects upon an individual (Model et al. 1976; Bell et al. 2007; Mills and Blossfield 2009; Billari and Liefbroer 2010; Eurofound 2014). This is particularly the case when it comes to experiences of unemployment by young people, with effects theorised in terms of adverse impacts on an individual's career trajectory and physical and psychological well-being [Section 3.4.3.1]; and on the social level in terms of increased welfare dependency among the working-age population [Section 3.4.1.1] and social anomie or exclusion [Section 3.4.2.1].

It is increasingly assumed that the transition to adulthood is becoming a more difficult and drawn-out affair or is even in crisis. Demographers such as Billari and Liefbroer (2010:73) identify a shift from the 1950s onwards across the Global North from an 'early, contracted and simple' transition towards one that is:

> *…late, because many events occur rather late during young adulthood… protracted because the timespan between the first and the last transition – typically leaving home and entry into parenthood or marriage – is relatively long… complex in that relatively many events occur during young adulthood and that some of these events even are repetitive.* (Billari and Liefbroer 2010:73)

Labels used to diagnose this shift vary from 'postponement' and 'prolongment' to 'de-standardisation' and 'individualisation' (Walther 2006; Aassve et al. 2006; Bell et al. 2007;

Billari and Liefbroer 2010)[22]. This general trend towards increased complexity is argued to stem from a variety of sources including: lifestyle pluralisation and shifts in the prevailing sexual mores (Giddens 1991); economic globalisation (Mills and Blossfeld 2009); an extension of educations duration (Walther 2006:121; Bell et al. 2007); and increased participation of women in higher education and the workforce (Walther 2006).

Beyond these explanations, this trend has been commonly linked with the increased 'risk' or 'precarity' engendered by the prevailing labour market and economic conditions – most notably the increasing difficulty in securing stable employment (Beck 1992; Standing 2011). This 'increasing uncertainty' has resulted in individuals adopting strategies such as postponing life events, remaining in school, engaging only in flexible relationships, and taking on multiple roles (Mills and Blossfield 2009:113). Many individuals follow 'yo-yo' or 'boomerang' transition pathways where they temporarily achieve milestones only to find themselves relying once more on familial financial or housing support (Burn and Szoeke 2016). This reliance by young people upon the resources of kin for their living expenses and shelter long into adulthood has also commonly been termed a 'failure to launch' (Bell et al. 2007).

Fears about obstructed youth transitions became pronounced following the GFC. Deteriorating living and working conditions among younger generations further reduced the scope for a smooth transition to adulthood as inscribed in societal and cultural expectations. The transition from education to work is at the heart of this with growing youth unemployment levels emerging as a particular point of concern for European researchers and policymakers alike (Scarpetta et al. 2010; Kelly et al. 2012; González Pandiella 2013; Aassve et al. 2013). A touted correlation between growing institutional and economic obstacles to smooth transitions and a drop in European fertility levels have made it a particular policy issue of interest (Rindfuss and Brauner-Otto 2008; CEU 2013; Eurofound 2014).

3.2.2 Youth as socially constructed

Critical literature on 'youth' tends towards social constructivism and emphasises the 'role of socio-political processes on shaping forms of knowledge' (Bacchi 2009:33; France 2009). Such texts historicise and deconstruct 'youth' by revealing it as: the product of profoundly normative ideas and assumptions (Devlin 2006; France 2009; Bacchi 2009) [Section 3.2.2.1]; a governmental tool wielded by powerful actors (Griffin 1993; Threadgold 2020) [Section 3.2.2.2]; both intensifying and obfuscating power relations along the lines of class, gender and race (Solomos 1985; Griffin 1993; Hall et al. 2013; Sukarieh and Tannock 2015)[Section 3.2.2.3].

3.2.2.1 Historicising youth

The 'discovery of youth' as a concept describing a transitional stage between childhood and full adulthood is typically traced to the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation in the US, the UK and other emerging capitalist powers that unfolded during the 19th century

22 It should be noted that there is strong differentiation in terms of timing across regional and national contexts, a pattern that is typically explained in terms of institutional frameworks, socio-economic structures, and cultural and ideational factors (Walther 2006; Aassve et al. 2013).

(Sukarieh and Tannock 2015). Before this period, there was little evidence of the understandings of 'childhood', 'youth' and 'adolescence' found today (Bacchi 2009). By the start of the 20th century, 'youth' had strongly emerged as an object of research within the nascent fields of criminology, psychology and psychiatry (Bacchi 2009:58; France 2009). G. Stanley Hall [1904], a psychologist from the US, is typically credited with the 'discovery' of adolescence and youth (Devane 1942; France 2009). More accurately, he synthesised the various contemporary discourses circulating around the concept (Griffin 1993).

Hall [1904], for his part, constructed adolescence as a period of 'storm and stress', a tumultuous individual experience rooted in biological and psychological determinants, with far-ranging reverberations for society in terms of crime and other deviant behaviours (France 2009). His work drew on various discourses emerging around the topic of youth in the late 19th century including: biological determinism focused on the role of puberty; eugenics and race science; and fears about the potential social threat posed by the urban working-classes (Griffin 1993). The influence of Hall in the Irish context is evident in the form of Fr. Richard Devane - a Jesuit[23], social reformer and pioneer in the field of youth work- who cited Hall's work extensively (Devane 1942). Contemporary mainstream analysis of 'youth-as-transition' continues to associate this period between childhood and adulthood with instability or crisis - though it has shifted away from the crude biological determinism and overt class contempt found in this earlier period (Griffin 1993; Ruddick 2003). By the early 20th century, youth-specific institutions began to emerge, such as borstals and reformatory schools in the UK and Ireland and voluntary organisations including the Boy Scouts [1908] in the United Kingdom, and their Irish equivalent Fianna Éireann [1909] (Devlin 2010; Sargent 2014).

The biological and social sciences were decisive in constructing 'youth' as a category of concern for the state, business interests and wider civil society (Griffin 1993). Practices and discourses promoted by these disciplines involved both negative and positive orientations that treated youth either as a problem to be solved or a resource to be nurtured (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015). The Great Depression saw a highpoint in the negative framing of youths as social threat, or positively as a resource to be exploited by the nation, as reflected in the widespread trend across Europe of youth movements and labour camps that can be found in contexts as diverse as the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, Romania and Ireland (Devane 1942; Haynes 2008; Field 2016). An Enright et al. (1987) paper, examining how 'adolescence' has been treated over time in the field of developmental psychology in the US, shows how negative and positive framings of youth can oscillate in line with political and economic imperatives. During economic downturns, they found that this field portrayed 'teenagers' as 'immature, psychologically unstable, and in need of prolonged participation in the educational system'. In contrast, war-time periods saw a focus on the 'psychological competence of youth' and criticism of extended participation in education (Enright et al. 1987 cited in Sukarieh and Tannock 2015:23).

23 The Catholic Church has been the prominent organisation historically in Irish social policy [Section 2.2]. Its role in both governing and interpreting the problems of youth deeply shaped state and civil society approaches (Devlin 2010; Sargent 2014). See Beatty (2019) for a critical survey of Devane's output and influence.

3.2.2.2 Youth as a governmental tool

Critical analyses, drawing on structuralism and post-structuralism, argue that conceptualisations of 'youth' and 'young people' found in 'expert' and 'lay' circles are laden with the assumptions and objectives of the society in which they are located (Griffin 1993). From its inception, 'youth' has been made to do 'ideological work' on behalf of political and economic elites, allowing them to make 'general claims about the state of society and the economy' and to articulate 'fears about the present and hopes for the future' (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015:4).

The framing of youth as a crisis period has long been associated with a distinctive combination of paternalistic concern and moral panic[24]. A typical negative framing of '*youth-at-risk'* positions them as a population in need of intervention and correction by the state and other policymakers. Bessant and Watts (1998) identify a repeated positioning of young people in Australia as 'victims of change' or 'sources of misrule'. This pattern where 'young people' are positioned within the dominant discourses of policy and research either as 'victims' or as 'problems' can be found in most Anglophone countries (Cohen 1997; Griffin 1993; 1997). Irish research into media stereotyping of youth identifies this negative framing at work here:

> *The dominant categories of news story are those portraying young people in roles of deviant or criminal… and victim… Irish news stories tend in the vast majority of cases to portray young people either as being a problem or as having problems.* (Devlin 2006:65)

The prevalence of these negative framings could lead critical researchers to assume their role is to advance a more positive framing. However, such an objective can often prove misplaced. Sukarieh and Tannock (2015) highlight how 'positive' individualised framings of young people as 'entrepreneurs' and 'consumers' are also used to advance elite policy agendas and commercial interests. In more recent years, both the negative framing of *youth-at-risk* and positive framings of *youth-as-affluent* or *youth-as-entrepreneurs* have been deployed by political elites and employers alike in justifying sub-minimum wages for young people and reduced welfare rights (Klein 2000; Threadgold 2020). Therefore, when it comes to condemnations and celebrations surrounding youth - and especially when they come attached to prescribed interventions - it is crucial to interrogate both the 'taken-for-granted' assumptions at work and the social relations upon which these assumptions stand.

3.2.2.3 Youth, Gender, Race and Class

The critical literature on youth argues that its construction reflects particularised class interests and historical local and global inequalities of gender and race (Griffin 1993). Rather than being a universal category, youth is often a colonising lens (Griffin 1993; Sukarieh and Tannock 2015).

Framings of class, race and gender have long been intertwined with practices and discourse which form 'youth' as a social category. Hall et al. (2013) and Solomos (1985) provide clear examples of how representations of youth, race and class combined to produce

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24 Indeed, the concept of 'moral panic' was popularised by Cohen (2011) in relation to a perceived threat to social order posed by youth subcultures that emerged in the mid-20th Century.

moral panics about young black men in the UK and positioned them as a social problem to be fixed. Conversely, Griffin (1993:44), in her survey of the transition to work literature, notes a comparative lack of concern about young women in research and policy alike as 'their primary allegiance is still expected to lie in family life and the domestic sphere'. In both public and academic discourse, young men - especially working class and racialised young men - tend to be framed as an active social threat and young women as passively 'at-risk' (Griffin 1997). Devlin's (2006) media study finds evidence of class-based and gendered framings at play in the Irish context, with young men described in terms of criminality or deviance and young women as being vulnerable or at-risk. At the same time when a 'youth' lens is attached to marginalised groups, it generally serves to background the structural reproduction of inequalities. It lends itself towards a 'victim-blaming-thesis' which operates:

> *to apportion blame for conditions of exploitation and oppression to those who occupy subordinated positions, whether this is attributed to the supposedly 'inadequate' characteristics of individuals, 'deviant' family forms or 'deprived' cultures.* (Griffin 1993:34)

This classificatory violence works to constitute these populations of 'youths' as stigmatised or abject figures. In the process, it helps legitimatise the practices of exclusion and increasing material inequality that they have fallen afoul of (Tyler 2013; 2020). Indeed, Sukarieh and Tannock (2015) argue this ideological role explains why youth has become so prominent since the neoliberal shift in global capitalism [Section 3.3.3]. Meanings ascribed to 'youth' also reflect deep global inequalities in terms of the production of knowledge. Griffin (1993:4) warns researchers of 'academic cultural imperialism' in discussions of 'youth' as concepts produced in the US and British academic fields are exported elsewhere to regional and national contexts where they have limited relevance. This process has intensified with 'youth' at the centre of narratives produced and disseminated by MNCs, ***Inter-governmental Organisations*** [IGOs] and NGOs (Ruddick 2003).

Therefore, it is crucial for researchers working with topics framed as a question of 'youth' to be conscious of the structural factors and relations of class, gender and race that are backgrounded by the deployment of this ever-expanding and flattening concept. For example, returning with this critical eye to the demographic and labour economics literature on the 'transition to adulthood' [Section 3.2.1] reveals a series of deeply normative assumptions about gender and class. The discourses they promote are not aimed at all youths but focus on those following paths deviating from the 'invisible norm' built around the myths of the economically self-sufficient [white, bourgeois and heterosexual] family unit (Griffin 1993;1997).

3.3 Youth unemployment as a social problem

This section engages with the literature on youth unemployment as a social problem with a history. It draws out the critical changes in how its causes and consequences have been described. It charts the emergence of 'youth unemployment' as a distinct social problem by the turn of the last century in the UK and Ireland and its explanation in terms of shortcomings of industrial capitalism and the young unemployed themselves (Casson 1979; Rees and Rees

1982; Griffin 1993) [Section 3.3.1]. In the depression period of the 1930s, youth unemployment provoked a significant response, and its negative impact was conceptualised as a collective 'demoralisation' and 'delinquency' (Devane 1942; COYU 1951; Rees and Rees 1982; Mungham 1982) [Section 3.3.2]. The post-war Keynesian pact saw the problem recede from the agenda. The focus shifted to economic demand across the Global North only to re-emerge once more from the 1960s onwards as part of the neoliberal focus on the 'supply-side' [Section 3.3.3].

3.3.1 Emergence

The mid-to-late 19th century in the UK saw a perceived concentration of large numbers of out-of-work urban youths become identified as a problem of public concern (Mungham 1982). The condition of these 'idle youths' was viewed as rooted in individual failings and deficiencies (Griffin 1993). However, by 1910 concern shifted towards what was described as a problem of 'juvenile' or 'youth' unemployment. This shift was significant as it marks the emergence of youthful unemployment as a social problem rather than an individualised failing[25] (Mungham 1982; Griffin 1993)

Between the late 19th century and the First World War, 'blind alley' occupations became identified as a growing problem within British society (Rees and Rees 1982; Casson 1979). Research by social reformers such as Beveridge [1909], Tawney [1910] and Rowntree and Laskell [1910] all directed further attention to what was categorised as a 'boy-labour' problem by which school-leavers:

> *…were being attracted by relatively high wages into employment requiring little or no skill, only to be dismissed as they reached their eighteenth birthdays… and replaced by new school-leavers.* (Rees and Rees 1982:15)

The poor training these occupations offered, meant employment was difficult to find once dismissed (Casson 1979: 9-10). In response, from 1910 onwards, 'Advisory Committees for Juvenile employment' were rolled out across England and Wales and Scotland. By late August 1911, the inaugural meeting of the 'Dublin Advisory Committee for Juvenile Employment' was held. This new body was connected to the Labour Exchange in the city and was staffed by figures representing the Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Dublin Trades council. It was tasked with registering and monitoring 'boys and girls', advising them and their parents on their 'choice of employment' and promoting continued education (The Irish Times 29/8/1911).

3.3.2 Demoralisation and delinquency

Youth unemployment became a serious topic of concern across the Global North during the economic depression of the 1930s resulting in the first significant initiatives targeting it (Casson 1979; Rees and Rees 1982). Fears of a breakdown in social discipline, an abandonment of the work ethic and increased levels of crime and political unrest were

25 These structural and individualised framings tend to be blended together in expert and popular discourses right up to the contemporary period (Griffin 1993:65).

particularly acute during this period. They were often described using the collective term 'demoralisation' (Rees and Rees 1982). Within this perspective, youth unemployment was primarily regarded as an ***urban*** problem and primarily as a problem of ***young men***. Secondly, the consequences were understood as psychological and/or spiritual demoralisation leading to increased ***delinquency*** and ***political disorder***[26]. This demoralisation paradigm understood youth unemployment to be a deleterious condition through:

> *…a literal deterioration in their physical capacities but more fundamentally by preventing the inculcation of the stability and disciplines of the work ethic and by stifling the growth of appropriate aspirations and self-esteem.* (Rees and Rees 1982:17)

This diagnosis was pathological, and the causes and consequences were described in a psychological or even religious register. Those youths afflicted by this condition were perceived as more likely to engage in immoral, criminal and politically subversive behaviours as a result. Echoing Victorian concerns with the impact of urban life, large 'demoralised' youth populations were understood as a source of psycho-social contagion:

> *…the young unemployed were not simply a danger to themselves – bad enough though this was – but also threatened because of their supposed capacity to touch and corrupt more orderly and conforming youthful minds.* (Mungham 1982:32)

Evidence of the influence of this demoralisation paradigm is strong in the Irish context and was promoted by the Catholic Church in particular. Devane (1942) refers to the 'social menace' posed by young unemployed and the fears of their becoming 'unemployable'. The final report produced by the COYU (1951) makes repeated references to demoralisation among the young urban working classes. It describes them as having 'nothing to do and all day to do it' (COYU 1951:3). A 1940 government report on the Clonast labour camp [Section 2.2.2] explicitly identifies the 'demoralising' influence of city life:

> *Their faults are those of childishness and irresponsibility. They are quicker and smarter than the country boys but inferior in social sense. It is essential that the psychological factor in their makeup should be fully studied and taken account of - as the solution of this large problem… lies in finding the means of effectively appealing to the apparently unspoilt essential good qualities in them.* (Department of the Taoiseach 1940:6-7)

Measures adopted in response to this threat sought to manage and control the out-of-work through the creation of labour camps, the extension of formal education and other initiatives to keep them busy, and endeavours to reduce the incidence of youth unemployment itself (Rees and Rees 1982). In Ireland, the emphasis was primarily on the first of these options with the establishment of the CC [Section 2.2.2].

26 One factor driving this response were the mass movements of unemployed workers that developed across Europe and the US, including in Ireland [Section 2.2.1] both South and North of the border (Farrell 1980; Piven and Cloward 2012).

3.3.3 From ‘demand-side’ to ‘supply-side’

Between the Second World War and the 1973 Oil Crisis, Keynesian economic policies and a social compact based upon the family wage and welfare state was found across much of the Global North (Cahill and Konings 2017; Cooper 2017). This period also saw exponential growth in industrial output across the Global North and parts of Latin America and Asia (Harvey 2005). Such trends were replicated to a lesser extent in Ireland [Section 2.3.3]. The economic orthodoxy of this era blamed ‘deficient demand’ for unemployment – during downturns, the state stimulated this demand through counter-cyclical spending and public employment schemes (Mitchell and Muysken 2009). Expanding industry and changing policy ideas about education resulted in an extension of the average period spent in school (Dukelow and Considine 2017:245-246). Combined, these factors led to a temporary dissipation of the pre-War fears around youth unemployment – only for it to ‘re-emerge’ in the 1970s[27] (Atkinson and Rees 1982:1; Casson 1979).

The Oil Crisis and stagflation crises prompted a rapid shift towards a set of economic and social policies that are typically gathered today under the catch-all concept of ‘neoliberalism’[28] (Harvey 2005; Dardot and Laval 2017; Cahill and Konings 2017). Fiscally the new normal centred ‘monetarism’ – a strategy to control inflation by reducing state spending and halting or reversing wage growth (Cooper 2017:25-66). Retrenchment and reformation of the welfare state became a shared drive across the Global North, motivated both by the austerity imperatives of monetarist fiscal strategy and the new policy common-sense as diffused by experts in the employ of think-tanks and IGOs (Bonefeld 2002; Harvey 2005; Cahill and Konings 2017). These policies, and the concurrent widespread de-industrialisation, have been linked to a secular trend of ‘stagnant wages, falling labour shares of income, declining labour-force participation rates and jobless recoveries after recessions’ (Benanav, 2019:30) across both Global North and South (Harvey 2005).

A new neoliberal interpretation of unemployment emerged - based on the work of those such as Friedman (1977) and Phelps (1967). The preceding Keynesian orthodoxy was recast as unsustainable and irresponsible. Instead, societies would have to learn to ‘accept under-employment to drive down the expected rate of inflation to the requisite point’ (Phelps, 1967: 256). Furthermore, the unemployment rate was argued to be determined by ‘the effectiveness of the labour market, the extent of competition or monopoly, the barriers or encouragements to working in various occupations’ (Friedman, 1977:458). These ‘supply-

27 Section 2.3 examines the re-emergence of youth unemployment as a policy problem in Ireland during this period.

28 ‘Neoliberalism’ is a highly contested concept with some rejecting its utility in the first instance (Dunn 2016). It is important to be cautious of those accounts that focus on ‘fundamentalist neoliberal doctrine’ over the actual process by which such policies have been diffused (Cahill 2014). Neoliberal policies take a context-specific character depending on ‘complex relationships between neoliberal ideas, institutions and changing patterns of class relations in the capitalist world economy’ (Cahill, 2014:12). Sometimes neoliberal policy prescriptions fail to embed. When they do their content typically shifts in line with (often opportunistic or unexpected) political alliances or compromises on the local level (Springer 2010; Krzyżanowski 2016; Gago 2017).

side' ideas locate the problem at the feet of the unemployed themselves or as a consequence of state regulation 'distorting' the labour market (Papadopoulos 2016b).

3.4 Contemporary welfare discourses and youth unemployment

This section explores the contemporary welfare discourses surrounding youth unemployment pertinent to how the problem is framed in the Irish context.

Firstly, the ***welfare dependency*** and ***underclass*** lens as diffused by the North American and British 'New Right', which understands youth unemployment and other forms of 'welfare dependency' as a pathology that is the product of deficient culture and perverse incentives (Gilder 1981; Mead 1989; Murray 2008; Kildal 2009) [Section 3.4.1]. Secondly, theories of ***social inclusion*** and ***exclusion*** [SE/I] as developed in French sociological thought and diffused by the EU since the 1990s. These position the young unemployed and other 'excluded' groups as 'at-risk' and in need of intervention (Levitas 1998; Bradshaw 2004; Moran 2006; Eurofound 2012) [Section 3.4.2]. Finally, ***Human Capital Theory*** [HCT]. Its conceptualisation of the ***scarring effect*** has become widely deployed in both academia and policy circles to describe the individual economic impact of youth unemployment (Ellwood 1982; Mroz and Savage 2006; Bell and Blanchflower 2011) [Section 3.4.3].

3.4.1 Dependency and the underclass

The theorisation of a 'dependency culture' and/or a societal 'underclass' emerged in the US in the 1960s and 1970s from the coalition of social conservative and neo-liberal thinkers and politicians commonly termed the 'New Right'. This alliance sought to adapt conservative politics to the challenges posed by the civil rights, feminist, and welfare rights movements, which had put the question of racial, gender and wider social inequality firmly on the public agenda (Piven and Cloward 2012; Cooper 2017). This New Right challenged the structural critique posited by these movements with theories that emphasised 'cultural' explanations for social ills including poverty, family breakdown, and youth unemployment. Proponents such as Gilder (1981), Mead (1989) and Murray (2008) argued that the generosity and permissiveness of the welfare state engineered a dependent condition that perpetuated unemployment and poverty and any reforms needed 'to focus on changing the behaviour of welfare recipients rather than providing employment opportunities' (O'Connor 2001:221)

'Welfare dependency' was often explained in ***pathological terms*** and as ultimately rooted in values and attitudes transmitted within the family unit and community (Mead 1989). Alternatively, it was presented in economic terms as a rational response to ***incentives to fail*** and ***moral hazards*** produced by the welfare state's institutional framework (Gilder 1981; Murray 2008). Proponents argued that the prevailing system had created an 'underclass' defined both in terms of poverty and 'dysfunctional' behaviours such as 'difficulties in getting through school, obeying the law, working and keeping their families together' (Mead 1989:22). Cooper's (2017:9) exploration of the American New Right demonstrates how the foundation for this alliance was a shared goal to 're-establish the private family as the primary source of economic security and a comprehensive alternative to the welfare state'. This objective was reflected in the recurrent ***slippage between individual responsibility and familial responsibility*** within the practices and discourses advocated by this movement

(Cooper 2017:71). These theories were actively exported across the Anglosphere by public intellectuals and associated think-tanks (Taylor-Gooby and Dean 1992; O'Connor 2001).

Of course, the fear that generous welfare provision would lead to the subsidy of idleness by the industrious and the existence of stigmatising explanations for worklessness predates by quite a bit the ideas of the New Right[29]. What these thinkers achieved was to repackage older assumptions in line with contemporary scientific discourses and social trends. For example, Fraser and Gordon (1994:325) note how advocates played with the psychological and medical undertones of 'dependency' to associate it with 'addiction'- in other words conflating welfare receipt with drug use. They helped fuel moral panics both over purported fraud and abuse in the welfare system, and increased crime, social disorder and delinquency by the young unemployed across the Euro-Atlantic sphere in the late 1970s (Golding and Middelton 1982; Hall et al. 2013). Such panics often took racialised or gendered forms, focusing on lone parents, migrants, or other minority groups (Golding and Middelton 1982; Bullock et al. 2001; Chunn and Gavigan 2004; Lundström 2013).

Moran (2006) argues that these 'underclass' discourses are more codified in Ireland than other Anglophone countries thanks to their intertwining with 'social exclusion' discourses [Section 3.4.2]. She found Irish policymakers would express their policies targets in spatialised terms as 'disadvantaged' areas or communities rather than a population (Moran 2006:187-189). This indirect style appears to have shifted post-GFC with explicit behaviouralist and stigmatising rhetoric and policies targeted at welfare recipients, asylum seekers and other minority groups (O'Flynn et al. 2014; Devereux and Power 2019; Gaffney and Millar 2020).

3.4.1.1 Dependent youths?

Unemployment, and youth unemployment, is viewed within this framework as a condition transmitted across generations and the product of a welfare system that produces disincentives to work or 'unemployment traps'. Such ideas have become embedded within economics and social policy and in the indicators and policy recommendations of IGOs such as the OECD (Kildal 2009; Garret 2018). The EU and Irish politicians, policymakers and researchers emphasise what they term 'household joblessness'- defined 'as people under the age of 60 living in a household where nobody is in employment' - as 'a major risk factor for poverty and welfare dependency' (Watson et al. 2015:xvii). Another example is the 'replacement rate', which gauges the proportion of unemployment benefits an individual will receive against the average income if in work (OECD 2020). The prescribed response to this diagnosis of unemployment is the establishment of 'behavioural modification' and 'make work pay' strategies within the welfare system such as 'stricter eligibility criteria, lowering of benefit levels, subsidising the work of low-income earners and activation programmes' (Kildal 2009:16).

The empirical claims and causal explanations offered by proponents of 'dependency culture' have been repeatedly attacked (Taylor-Gooby and Dean 1992; O'Connor 2001; Gans

29 See for example Dean's (1991) work on the demarcation between the deserving and undeserving poor in Britain from the 16th century onwards. Evidence of a similar trend can also be found in research on the Low Countries during the same period (Michielse and van Krieken 1990).

2011). The critique focuses on several points including: a lack of empirical evidence supporting any 'transmission' of dependency within families or communities (Taylor-Gooby and Dean 1992; Shildrick et al. 2012); the erasure of alternative explanations focused on macroeconomic trends and structural inequalities (Taylor-Gooby and Dean 1992; O'Connor 2001); the gender and class relations inherent in constructing certain forms of dependence as problematic while simultaneously encouraging dependency on wage-labour (Fraser and Gordon 1994; Garrett 2018); and the stigmatisation and harming of those targeted with these discourses (Tyler 2013).

In the case of explaining youth unemployment, the concepts of 'intergenerational transmission of welfare dependency', 'household joblessness' or 'work poor families' are examples of the influence of these discourses[30]. O'Reilly et al. (2015) - a joint paper by several labour economists and sociologists on youth unemployment's characteristics across Europe – note a series of weaknesses identified by the literature on familial transmission theories, including a failure to 'adequately acknowledge the role of structural economic inequalities', a 'lack of evidence on distinct attitudes among the unemployed' and 'exaggerated claims about the pervasiveness and persistence of joblessness in households and communities' (O'Reilly et al. 2015:7). Quantitative and qualitative research carried into the existence of 'families where three generations have never worked' in the UK[31], found that it was rare to find families where even two generations had not worked, and furthermore, that 'families experiencing long-term worklessness remained committed to the value of work and preferred to be in jobs rather than on benefits' (Shildrick et al. 2012).

3.4.2 Social inclusion and exclusion

The concept of 'social exclusion' is commonly attributed to the French politician René Lenoir who first applied it in 1974 to encompass people with mental and physical disabilities and those he termed the 'socially maladapted' (Quoted in Castel 2003:396; Ryan 2007). Diagnosing groups as 'excluded' marked a shift in French social policy away from universally or widely targeted measures towards narrowly targeted policies focused on 'specific groups and certain zones of social space' that deployed 'specific strategies in their direction' (Castel 2003:395). The concept has become increasingly pervasive across Europe (Levitas 1998; Garrett 2018). SE/I proponents argue targeting policy this way reflects a more holistic theorisation of how poverty and inequality occur compared to the preceding 'homogenising' model (Bradshaw 2004).

The SE/I paradigm was adopted by the EU in the 1990s, primarily due to the efforts of the French President of the EC, Jacques Delors [1985-1995] (Garret 2018). During this same period, European Social Democrat parties became concerted proponents of this model - the UK Labour party under Tony Blair being one prominent example. The SE/I paradigm has had limited success transferring in the Global North beyond the EU (Bradshaw 2004). Following the Blairite embrace of SE/I, the sociologist Levitas (1998:7) developed a typology distinguishing between 3 distinct 'discourses' operating within this framework. Each differs in

30 See for example Eurofound (2012), Watson et al. (2012), Watson et al. (2015) and O'Reilly et al. (2015).

31 As identified in anecdotes by policymakers and politicians in that context (Shildrick et al. 2012).

how the ‘included’ and ‘excluded’ groups are constituted and how inclusion can be achieved. These differences were argued to reflect implicit divergences in their visions of society. SE/I’s ***social integrationist*** discourse associates ‘inclusion’ primarily with participation in paid work and argues for ‘integration’ via work as the solution. ***redistributionist*** discourse emphasises poverty as the critical driver of exclusion and proposes increased benefits and expansive citizenship rights in response. ***moral underclass*** discourse adapts the ‘underclass’ theory [Section 3.4.1] to the SE/I framework and promotes behavioural modification of the excluded. Levitas (1998) found the SID formation to be predominant on the European level but noted that the usage of the concept (or not) varies significantly from one national context to another.

Since the 1990s, SE/I has been critiqued by a range of academic and political commentators. Criticism mainly focuses on how this framework depoliticises the economic processes and social structures that produce ‘exclusion’ in the first place. By doing so it enables the repackaging of old behaviouralist and victim-blaming assumptions. Adopting a sociological register, the social exclusion discourse avoids the ‘normative thrust’ of the welfare dependency thesis, but also those critiques of domination and subordination as forwarded by the left - instead casting ‘exclusion’ as a question of mere ‘unintended effects’ (Ryan 2007: 23; Saris et al. 2002). SE/I limits itself to identifying the population deemed to be ‘excluded’ or ‘at risk’ thereof and managing or containing these populations to reinforce the existing order (Ryan 2007). This paradigm thus treats poverty, worklessness, and marginalisation as the outcome of a process without a subject. Little attention is paid to who or which groups in society are driving and benefiting from this exclusion process. The effects of exploitation and domination - such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness - are presented as problematic rather than these relations themselves (Allen 2000:36-37; Levitas 1998). Umney (2018:128) underlines this point, arguing that ‘exclusion’ from the means of supporting oneself – whether through lack of work, education, or stable support networks - is far from a marginal phenomenon within global capitalism. Exclusion is, in fact, integral to capitalist societies’ day-to-day functioning (Dussel 2008; Umney 2018).

In the Irish context, there was a concerted reframing of all forms of social disadvantage as ‘social exclusion’ during the Celtic Tiger period (Allen 2000; Moran 2006; Ryan 2007). The SP formed between state, employers, trade unions, and the ‘third sector’ [Section 2.3.3] provided the leading site for constructing this paradigm and ensured it was diffused to practically all areas of Irish social policy (Ryan 2007). By 2002, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern had adopted ‘social inclusion’ as a ‘key priority’ of Irish poverty reduction and welfare policies (Department of Community, Social and Family Affairs 2002:1). The National Economic Social Council, a body with representatives from the state, employer bodies and trade unions, emphasised SE/I in their publications (NESC 1999; 2005). The third-sector also embraced this paradigm, with many NGOs and charities adopting its rhetoric to frame their activities and goals (Saris et al. 2002; Moran 2006).

Moran (2006), adopting the Levitas (1998) typology, set out to diagnose the features of SE/I in Ireland and identified several distinctive features. Namely, a social integrationalist style emphasis on ‘inclusion’ through paid employment which she argued resulted in a conflation of economic objectives and social justice (Moran 2006). This aspect was combined with a 'moral underclass' focus on excluded groups' responsibilities' that required them, as Levitas (1998) put it, to 'perform' their inclusion as overseen by civil society organisations (Moran 2006). A redistributive style focus on increased re-allocation of resources was pushed by some actors but was subordinate (Moran 2006). Saris et al. (2002:185) categorised the adoption of the SE/I paradigm by Irish policymakers as a step away from moralised framing of poverty towards an 'ecological' one focused on environmental causes. Conversely, Moran (2006) suggests that Irish SE/I discourse is better understood as entangling these spatialised and the pre-existing moralised framings. Furthermore, Moran (2006) and Ryan (2007) detected the predominance of 'economic efficiency' and 'competitiveness' within this framework over 'social justice' questions.

3.4.2.1 Excluded youths?

SE/I treats youth unemployment as a question of identifying specific populations and locations 'at risk' of being excluded from the labour market and/or education system and developing tailored preventative responses. On the European level, the policy focus has been placed on those not in employment education or training [NEET]. This sub-population of youths has been deemed the most 'problematic' among the young unemployed (Eurofound 2012:1).

NEET first emerged as a concept in research in the UK in the 1980s and was deployed within Blair's 'Social Exclusion Unit' (Bradshaw 2004; Mascherini 2019). Since 2010, it has been central to the European approach to youth issues and youth unemployment, such as the *Youth on the Move* initiative (EC 2010), the EYG and other policy papers in response to the 'NEET Crisis' (Eurofound 2012; CEU 2013). It has also been codified by the EU Labour Force Survey [EU-LFS] in the form of a 'NEET rate' indicator to enable progress monitoring in member states and comparison between them (Eurostat 2020e). The influence of this paradigm can also be detected in OECD texts responding to youth unemployment following the GFC (Scarpetta et al. 2010)

Concepts such as 'youth at risk' and NEET have been faulted for homogenising a diverse population and negatively framing them (Yates and Payne 2009; te Riele 2012). NEET has been argued to flatten the experiences of a heterogeneous group that have 'different life situations and have very different characteristics, risks and issues' (Yates and Payne 2009:342). In practice, the term is often purely used as shorthand for the 'most vulnerable and the population most at risk of being socially excluded' (Mascherini 2019: 509). This trend is evident in Scarpetta et al. (2010:19), an OECD working paper, which uses the NEET rate as a proxy for a group they term 'youth left behind' defined as those who 'tend to lack a diploma, come from an immigrant/minority background and/or live in disadvantaged/rural/remote neighbourhoods.' Furthermore, in the classic 'moral underclass' style, it has been deployed in a derogatory sense by the media and political actors to denote a population deemed behaviorally deficient and not wanting to work or engage in education[32] (Mascherini 2019).

32 It is worth also noting that in recent decades there has been a proliferation of stigmatising terms targeting 'inactive' young people including generación ni-ni [Generation no work – no education] in Spanish, bamboccioni

3.4.3 Human capital theory

HCT posits 'that schooling raises earnings and productivity mainly by providing knowledge, skills and a way of analysing problems' (Becker 1993:19) HCT has become near synonymous with the economist Gary Becker (1993) and Neoliberal economic thought (Foucault 2008; Brown 2015; Dardot and Laval 2017). However, the term was popularised[33] by Beckers' neo-Keynesian colleague in the Chicago school Theodore Schultz (Cooper 2017:219; Marginson 2019). Schultz (1961) developed HCT to explain disparities in economic development between some nations and others and between the wages commanded by black and white workers in the US. This focus on inequality is also explicit in Mincer's (1958:281) earlier paper developing HCT, he defines this investigation's research puzzle as: 'How can one reconcile the normal distribution of abilities with a sharply skewed distribution of incomes?' (Mincer 1958:281). This preoccupation reflects the theory's roots as a response to the socialist and anti-colonialist critiques of both capitalism and economic inequality that had reached a zenith in the 1960s (Cooper 2017). HCT in its contemporary form explains such outcomes in terms of education and other investments made into future productivity by individuals themselves, or their families, employer, or state. Wages levels are represented as being primarily driven by these, albeit while also influenced by other 'random factors' (Borjas 2006:58). For Becker (1993), these 'investments' can encompass a broad range of activities:

> *Schooling, a computer training course, expenditures on medical care, and lectures on the virtues of punctuality and honesty are capital too in the sense that they improve health, raise earnings, or add to a person's appreciation of literature over much of his or her lifetime.* (Becker 1993:16)

HCT sees the state's role as providing opportunities to accumulate human capital through education and training and increased 'awareness' of the need for 'lifelong learning' and advertising oneself (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015; Dardot and Laval 2017; Fehrer 2020).

HCT understands human beings - or companies, states, and families - as individualised rational actors, each 'continuously seeking to strengthen its competitive positioning and appreciate its value' (Brown 2015:33). Individuals are encouraged to look upon themselves as 'self-reliant entrepreneurs' and should constantly work to:

> *…make themselves valuable by advertising their highly prized skills, by brandishing their appealing social networks, or, failing that, by presenting their unlimited availability and flexibility as valuable assets.* (Fehrer 2020: 148)

[Mammas Boys] in Italian or hikikomori [withdrawn] in Japanese (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015; Mascherini 2019). A further anecdotal confirmation of such derogatory connotations arose in the classroom when my question 'What does the term NEET mean?' once received an answer suggesting it denoted a lazy young man who spends all day on the couch.

33 Both the practice of evaluating people in monetary terms based on their attributes and capacities and the term itself have a much longer history. Kiker's (1966) history of the practice of 'valuing man as capital' traces it right back to the 17th Century when William Petty developed a methodology for calculating the money cost of the power of his native England, the effects of migration, and of war. The term 'human capital' itself did not originate in Chicago; the first recorded use of the term being made in an 1842 document 'Report to the Secretary of the Bombay Government' - potentially in reference to the slave trade (Hodgson 2014:1071).

Critics argue HCT negates the collective character of value and knowledge accumulation, reducing it to a set of individual cost/benefit decisions (Gleizes 2000; Abarzúa 2005). Balibar (1994:53) claims this manoeuvre inverts the Marxist critique of the exploitation of labour as 'the capitalist is defined as a worker, as an "entrepreneur"; the worker, as the bearer of a capacity, of a human capital'. Structural explanations are backgrounded. Instead, social inequality is explained by the choices of individualised rational actors. In other words, it:

> *…implies that those with social advantages succeed not because of their birth and connections, but because of their abilities and powers of application.* (Marginson 2019:2-3)

Another line of scepticism about HCT involves engaging with the concept of skill in a more critical fashion. Contra HCT, Braverman (1998) understood 'skill' not as an accumulated resource but as a site of conflict between employers and workers within the capitalist mode of production - the former seeking to undermine the technical control of the latter over their labour-process. Moving beyond Braverman's (1998) focus on technical expertise, Warhurst et al. (2017) argue skill has historically been ascribed discursively along the lines of gender, race, class and age in a manner that marginalises subordinated groups. The language of 'skill' provides a code by which these social inequalities can be reproduced and naturalised (Cohen 1984; Warhurst et al. 2017).

Grugulis et al. (2004) identify a trend from the 1960s onwards wherein discourses surrounding skill have become increasingly abstract. This dynamic is attributed to a shift in the balance of power favouring employers as related to de-industrialisation and the expansion of the role of the services industry (Cohen 1984; Grugulis et al. 2004; Lloyd and Payne 2009; Warhurst et al. 2017). Cohen (1984:113) diagnosed this in the UK as a 'redeployment' of skill away from 'manual dexterity' or 'mental co-ordination' towards 'transferable' or abstract skills in line with the weakened position of organised labour. This new understanding of skill has a class character – the middle classes are encouraged to pursue their 'vocation' while the lower orders are called upon to make do with whatever they can get (Cohen 1984:119). Lafer (2004) identifies this dynamic at work in state 'training programmes' in the US that he argues were thinly camouflaged attempts to compel the out-of-work to revise their expectations from working life downwards.

3.4.3.1 Scarred youths?

HCT is central to how 'youth' is framed in contemporary policy-making and political discourse (Eurofound 2012; O'Reilly et al. 2015; Yates 2017). One reflection of this is the ubiquitous use by policymakers of terms like 'asset', 'resource' and 'investment' concerning young people (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015). When it comes to youth unemployment in the last decade, 'the scarring effect', a concept derived from HCT, has become one of the most evoked explanations of why the issue requires an urgent policy response (Bell and Blanchflower 2011; Scarpetta et al. 2010; González Pandiella 2013; DSP 2013b; O'Reilly et al. 2015; Devlin 2015).

The 'scarring effect' emerged as a concept within labour economics in the US and draws on HCT's assumption that education and skill accumulation are the key drivers of employment outcomes (Ellwood 1982). It argues that experiences of extended unemployment at a young age have two potential ramifications throughout an individual's career. The first hypothesis is of a 'wage penalty' as the individual's career progresses. The time spent out-of-work is argued to lead to a 'depreciation' of the human capital that otherwise would be accumulated within employment (Ellwood 1982). Since the 1980s, a range of studies, primarily looking at the US and UK contexts, have investigated and found evidence to support this hypothesis (Ellwood 1982; Mroz and Savage 2006; Ekert-Jaffé and Terraz 2011). The second hypothesis is that youth unemployment raises the probability of 'career instability' in which the individual faces further unemployment spells and 'state dependence' in the future. This effect is theorised regarding the negative 'signal' resume gaps send to prospective employers (Bell and Blanchflower, 2011). In more recent times, the concept has stretched, and negative physical and psychological health impacts have also become theorised as 'scars' left by youth unemployment:

> *We know that the "scarring" effects of long-term youth joblessness leaves a legacy that reduces lifetime earnings, increases the risk of future periods of unemployment, augments the likelihood of precarious employment, and results in poorer health, well-being, and reduced job satisfaction more than 20 years later.* (O'Reilly et al. 2015:1)

This theory implies that the state must intervene with the young unemployed to reduce 'scars' by keeping them as 'close to the jobs market' as possible (Bell and Blanchflower 2011:4). However, despite the consensus implied by 'we know' in the above quote, the empirical findings of career instability and health impacts as 'scars' of youthful unemployment are less than conclusive[34]. One frequently cited study by Mroz and Savage (2006:277) found controlling for 'unobserved heterogeneity' greatly reduced the 'measured persistence in unemployment'. In other words, unobserved factors could be driving the correlation between youthful unemployment and career instability (Heckman and Borjas 1980). Similarly, the idea that youth unemployment is a driver of adverse health outcomes has mixed support within the literature reviewed by this study (Schaufeli 1997; Morell et al. 1998; Virtanen et al. 2016; Wright et al. 2019)[35].

3.5 Contemporary welfare policy and youth unemployment

This final section turns to the contemporary treatment of youth unemployment within the academic and policy literature. It is organised around three questions. How do we measure youth unemployment? [Section 3.5.1] What are its theorised causes? [Section 3.5.2] What is to be done about it? [Section 3.5.3].

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34 In fact, a sole research paper, Bell and Blanchflower (2011), is cited to support each of these claimed outcomes within the O'Reilly et al. (2015) paper. Bell and Blanchflower (2011) was also substantially influential in promoting these ideas the Irish policy context and wider policy discourses [Section 8.3.2.1].

35 The idea that unemployment is linked with poor health outcomes can be traced back to the Marienthal study in inter-war Austria by Jahoda et al. [1972]. For a critical evaluation of this study and the 'deprivation theory' of unemployment it spawned see Cole (2007) and Boland and Griffin (2015b:1-4).

3.5.1 How do we measure it?

The defining and counting of unemployment, and in particular youth unemployment, has long been a contested terrain. What appears to be a value-free statistical indicator, upon closer inspection, can prove to be a politicised instrument either downplaying or exaggerating the scale of worklessness (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015; O'Reilly et al. 2015). Developments in the UK under Margaret Thatcher's premiership offers a prominent example of this, with 19 adjustments made to the methodology of calculating the unemployment rate made between 1979 and 1990 – all but one revising the rate downwards (Griffin 1993:71)[36]. Conversely, Sukarieh and Tannock (2015:60-61) suggest that political and business actors often overstate the level of youth unemployment - to smooth the way for their preferred labour market and welfare policies. Therefore, it is crucial to be conversant with [and vigilant of] the various indicators measuring the youth unemployment level in Ireland and across the wider EU.

Three prominent indicators exist at the EU level that gauge the size of young unemployed or 'inactive' populations - the YU rate, the YU ratio and the NEET rate. The first two of these operate with a standard definition of unemployment as someone of working age who 'report that they are without work, that they are available for work and that they have taken active steps to find work in the last four weeks' (OECD 2021b). The YU Rate is the number of unemployed aged 16-24 divided by the total number of employed and unemployed between those ages. Conversely, the YU Ratio divides the number of unemployed aged 16-24 by the total population between those ages. The NEET rate divides the population who are not employed and not involved in further education or training by the total population of 16–24-year-olds. Table 6 below shows the youth unemployment level calculated by each of these indicators across Europe in 2013.

The table reveals that the YU Rate is calculated at a higher level in most countries than the other two indicators. It counts those ***within the labour force*** rather than the ***total population***. It thus fails to acknowledge that in most contexts, a significant portion of 16–24-year-olds are still in education and training and are thus less likely to be working or seeking work. In real terms, this means a high YU Rate could encompass a relatively small amount of people. Sukarieh and Tannock (2015:61-62) seize upon this in their critique of how the YU rate was deployed following the GFC – they also note the indicator may have been further distorted by young people prolonging their time in education and training in response to the crisis[37]. These potential distortions have led some, such as Hill (2012 cited in O'Reilly et al. 2015), to suggest the YU ratio may offer a more accurate understanding of the level of youth unemployment. As shown in Table 6, in most countries, this reduces the estimated level by about half.

36 A range of strategies were deployed including but not limited to: not counting those registered as looking for work but not in receipt of benefits; not counting those in receipt of benefits but only searching for part-time work; and the exclusion of those participating in youth training and other activation schemes (Taylor-Gooby and Dean 1992: 60-61).

37 See Clark (2011) for an exploration of this trend in England. Census data presented in Section 8.4.1 would suggest such a turn to education has occurred in the Ireland post-GFC.

Table 6 Youth Unemployment Rates, Ratios, and NEET Rates 2013 [Aged 15-24; Ranked by Ratios]

COUNTRY	RATE (%)	RATIO (%)	NEET (%)
Spain	54.6	21	18.6
Macedonia	—	17.5	—
Greece	57.9	16.5	20.4
Croatia	49.8	14.9	19.6
Cyprus	41.9	14.9	18.7
Portugal	38.2	13.3	14.1
Sweden	21.9	12.8	7.5
UK	20.2	12	13.3
Italy	39.7	10.9	22.2
Ireland	27.2	10.6	16.1
Slovakia	33.7	10.4	13.7
Finland	19.6	10.3	9.3
EU-28	22.7	9.9	13
Poland	27.3	9.1	12.2
Latvia	23.4	9.1	13
France	23.5	9	11.2
Bulgaria	28.4	8.4	21.6
Iceland	10.6	8.3	—
Denmark	12.5	8.1	6
Netherlands	10.4	7.7	5.1
Hungary	27.2	7.4	15.4
Estonia	18.7	7.4	11.3
Romania	23.6	7.3	17.2
Belgium	22.5	7.3	12.7
Slovenia	21	7.3	9.2
Lithuania	21.9	6.9	11.1
Malta	12.7	6.9	10
Turkey	—	6.6	—
Czech Republic	19.2	6	9.1
Switzerland	7.1	5.8	—
Austria	8.4	5.4	7.1
Norway	8.7	5.2	—
Luxembourg	14.1	4	5
Germany	7.7	4	6.3

Source: Adapted from Table 1 in O'Reilly et al. (2015:2).

As explored in Section 3.4.2.1, the NEET rate is often used as a proxy indicator for those young people considered the most 'at risk' from the worst impacts of youth unemployment and social exclusion. It forms a crucial part of the EU approach to monitoring member state policies targeting youth unemployment (EC 2014).

In the Irish context, the state has not emphasised this indicator to the same extent. In its EYGIP, the Irish DSP (2013b:31) raised issues with the rate calculated by the Quarterly National Household Survey in Ireland as it counted as NEET anyone who was a) not working and b) has not engaged in education or training in the last four weeks. They argued it thus counted as 'NEETs' those individuals who were still in full-time education but were not in classes in the four weeks before being surveyed. They amended the Eurostat methodology to calculate what they call an 'inactive' NEET rate, excluding the unemployed and students, which brought the level calculated among 15–24-year-olds down from 18% to 3%. Using the same methodology for those aged 18-24, they revised the rate downwards from 22.6% to 4.1%. By further excluding those with caring duties, they revised this down to 0.6% (DSP 2013b:31-34). The European Court of Auditors (2017:40) examination of Ireland and other member states EYGs does not support these manoeuvres; it argues Ireland excluded 30% of its NEET population from their plan.

3.5.2 What causes it?

This subsection examines the typical explanations in the literature for shifts in the level of youth unemployment in a national context. It begins with those explanations suggesting that young people's specific characteristics make them vulnerable to unemployment during economic crises [Section 3.5.2.1]. These 'cyclical' explanations emphasise the level of skills and experience found among young people or deficiencies of demand in the economy that disproportionately impact young workers. Conversely, structural explanations focus on the shortcomings of education systems and labour markets institutions found on the national level [Section 3.5.2.2]. Finally, it looks at those explanations focused on sub-populations of young people who are argued to be more 'at-risk' or 'vulnerable' to unemployment [Section 3.5.2.3].

3.5.2.1 A cyclical problem?

It is widely assumed that youth unemployment levels are highly cyclical – meaning they are susceptible to business cycles and overall unemployment trends (Freeman and Wise 1982; Clark and Summers 1982; Blanchflower and Freeman 2000; OECD 2014). This inclination was evident in Europe post-GFC, where countries with the worst downturns also had the worst outcomes for young workers. In Ireland, Estonia, Lithuania, Spain and Portugal, youth employment rates collapsed by more than 25% between 2008 Q1 and 2010 Q3 (Bell and Blanchflower 2011:9). It is argued that young people find it particularly difficult to stay in or enter the workforce during periods of recession (Casson 1979; Freeman and Wise 1982). Two broad explanations are common in the literature. Firstly, the 'supply-side' argument is that young workers are less competitive in the labour market (Bell and Blanchflower 2011:2). Secondly, the 'demand-side' argument that those sectors of the economy in which young people find work tend to offer precarious conditions and are vulnerable to economic shocks (Casson 1979:91-93; Reilly et al. 2015:3-4).

Supply-side explanations focus on characteristics specific to young workers, including a lower level of work and life experience and the smaller social networks that young people have compared to their elders. They are disadvantaged within the workplace as employers faced with downturn often apply a formal or informal policy of 'last in – first out' in which the priority is to retain older, more experienced employees – especially if redundancy payments are weighted on the years of service of an employee (Bell and Blanchflower 2011:2). Young people searching for work during downturns are further disadvantaged, having to compete with older experienced candidates with more developed job-search strategies and broader social networks through which they can discover employment opportunities (Bell and Blanchflower 2011; Eurofound 2012). This viewpoint understands that a lack of skills and work experience among young people determines their higher level of unemployment[38] and prescribes measures to address these deficits by investing in their 'human capital' [Section 3.4.3].

This school of thought also argues that 'inflexible' ***Employment Protection Legislation*** [EPL] protects older workers at the expense of freezing young people out of employment (Scarpetta et al. 2010; Rueda 2014). The purported distorting influence of minimum-wage legislation is particularly prominent in debates about youth unemployment in the US (Freeman and Wise 1982; Ellwood 1982). This style of argument forms a point of linkage between this perspective and structural explanations that focus on the role of institutions present within a national context [Section 3.5.2.2]. Another supply-focused theorisation argues that an outsized proportion of young people in the general population can increase youth unemployment (Freeman and Wise 1982). This demographic theory was prominent in the Global North during the 1970s and 1980s – including Ireland (The OECD Observer 1983:20). However, the persistence of high levels of youth unemployment despite declining cohort size has undermined its credibility (Bell and Blanchflower 2011:1-2).

Demand-side explanations identify the working conditions experienced by younger workers, and the vulnerability to economic shock of sectors in which they are concentrated, as determinants. Such diagnoses can be traced back to the 'blind alley occupations' or the 'boy labour' problem in the late 19th century [Section 3.3.1]. Historically speaking, young people in the workforce tend to be concentrated in sectors with the worst conditions and that are particularly vulnerable in recessions[39] (Casson 1979; Scarpetta et al. 2010). Across Europe, young people are disproportionately found in precarious or insecure forms of work and thus are particularly vulnerable to sudden unemployment (Chung et al. 2012). Ironically, 'flexibilisation' policies implemented by EU member states as a nominal response to youth unemployment in the first place have been identified as a driver of this precarity (O'Reilly et al. 2015:3-4). The answer implied by such a viewpoint is for the state to step in and stimulate

38 Conversely, in the Irish context by the late 1980s it was widely accepted that older workers were in fact at a disadvantage due to the decline of traditional industries [Section 2.3.3].

39 The Irish case post-GFC offers a clear example of this with the collapse of certain sectors such as construction and retail largely driving the increase in youth unemployment [Section 2.4.1.2].

demand by initiating infrastructure projects, directly employing the out-of-work, and raising the floor for employment conditions with the introduction of new regulations (Mitchell and Muysken 2009).

3.5.2.2 A problem of institutions?

Table 6 highlights significant geographical disparity across Europe in terms of youth unemployment levels - with some countries performing worse than others regardless of which indicator is examined. This divergence can be contextualised both in terms of the macro-economic impact of the GFC and the labour market, social protection and education institutions found in these countries. In Europe, such structural explanations tend to focus on Southern European countries such as Greece, Italy, and Spain where high levels of youth unemployment were found even before the GFC (Scarpetta et al. 2010; Rueda 2014).

As noted in Section 3.2.1, the divergent timing of youth transitions across Europe, including education to work, has long been explained as driven by welfare institutions (Aassve et al. 2013). Such analysis tends to rely on the Esping-Anderson (1990:26-29) typology which differentiates national welfare-regimes in terms of 'principles of rights' and 'stratification' effects. Esping-Anderson (1990) identifies three 'worlds' of welfare: Liberal as found in the UK and US; Corporatist as seen in Germany and France; and Scandinavian as found in Sweden and Denmark. Proponents of this typology have proved determined and adept in resisting and assimilating critique over the decades since its formation. For example, 'familialism' was included as a variable following critique of Esping-Andersen's initial model for neglecting the issues of gender, family and care (Orloff 1993). The Mediterranean 'world' was incorporated into the schema following criticisms made by Ferrera (1996). Steurer and Hametner (2013: 226) present a more up-to-date version of this typology. They distinguish between the:

- Liberal or 'Anglo-Saxon' model found in the UK, the US and arguably Ireland,
- the Corporatist or 'Continental' model found in France, Germany, Austria and arguably the Netherlands,
- the Social Democratic model found in the Nordic countries,
- the Mixed or 'Mediterranean' model found in Southern Europe,
- and the 'transitional' model which groups together the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

European comparative literature tends to frame the 'Nordic model' and the 'Continental model' of Germany and Austria as 'role models' in terms of their labour market, educational and welfare institutions which are argued to encourage smooth transitions to work for young people (Buchman and Kriesi 2011; Rueda 2014). Conversely, 'Mediterranean' institutions are framed as negative and linked to the particularly protracted nature of the transition to work in those countries (Buchmann and Kriesi 2011; Rueda 2014). 'Mediterranean' countries are typically criticised for the perceived barrier of labour market entry for young school leavers posed by their high levels of EPL for established workers. These are argued to produce a 'segmented' or 'dual' labour market system where older male insiders enjoy secure and well-compensated positions. At the same time, outsiders, including younger, immigrant, and female workers, are consigned to insecure and poorly compensated work (Rueda 2014).

This juxtaposition between Northern and Southern Europe also extends to the provision of education and labour market activation. A fundamental model of distinction in educational institutions is between those associated with those countries with 'Occupational Labour Markets' and those with 'Internal Labour Markets' (Smyth 2008). The former is defined in terms of a 'standardised and track-differentiated' education system and a strong linkage between education and the labour market through vocational education. The latter is defined as having less standardised education with weaker links to the labour market due to a general curriculum (Smyth 2008). For the Occupational Labour Market model, the vocational training and tracking system found in the German education system is typically the standard-bearer (Breen 2005). Denmark and Sweden are also noted for their well-funded educational systems with a developed vocational training process (Buchmann and Kriesi 2011). Furthermore, Denmark's 'flexicurity' model combines a robust social security net and activation regime with low EPL, is regarded as a role model in the eyes of the EU (Heyes, 2013). Overall, Northern European countries' education and welfare systems are typically represented as 'closer' to the labour markets than those in the Mediterranean periphery. Those of the latter group are argued to be further from the labour market in terms of the lack of vocational options within the education system, high levels of school leaving, and low levels of investment in labour market activation (Wolbers, 2007; Buchmann and Kriesi, 2011; Rueda 2014).

Ireland is now positioned within the literature as mainly conforming to the 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'liberal' welfare state regime, albeit with some idiosyncrasies. Chief among these is the historically predominant role of the Church in providing education and health, a feature more in line with the 'corporatist' model (Fahey 1998), and familial and gender norms more comparable with Southern Europe than other regimes (Buchmann and Kriesi 2011). Ireland's labour market is regarded as close to other 'Liberal' countries, such as the UK and the US, primarily due to its weak level of EPL (Breen 2005; Heyes, 2013; Lohmann and Marx, 2008; Buchmann and Kriesi 2011). This weak EPL regime means workers find themselves in a much more unstable and precarious condition (Wolbers 2007). The Irish education system typically does not impart vocational specific skills to students (Breen 2005; Smyth 2008). At the same time, it is argued to provide a critical signalling effect for employers. They make 'use both the level of educational qualifications and the grades received as criteria in recruiting young people' (Smyth 2008:315). A perceived lack of connection between the welfare system and the labour market has been another source of critique in the policy literature examining the period before the GFC (Martin 2015:9).

3.5.2.3 A problem of the 'at-risk'?

Another set of explanations of youth unemployment focus on localities that are considered 'deprived' or on 'excluded' and/or migrant or ethnic minority populations (Freeman and Wise 1982; Scarpetta et al. 2010; O'Reilly et al. 2015). Drawing on SE/I [Section 3.4.2] or theories of the underclass [Section 3.4.1], the 'risk' faced by members of these groups is usually explained in behavioural or cultural terms or as driven by other perceived deficiencies found among these populations.

Typically, the 'risk' of exclusion is explained in terms of the difficulties faced within the formal education system – resulting in an increased level of early school leaving, literacy and numeracy problems, and failure to attain the qualifications or credentials required for all but the most elementary or informal labour (Scarpetta et al. 2010). Another explanation theorises welfare dependence as a condition being transmitted through 'intergenerational worklessness' or 'work-poor families' (Eurofound 2012). This framing continues to be deployed by authors who perceive the political baggage of these ideas. For example, O'Reilly et al. (2015:7) stress the importance of what they call 'family legacy' - even after acknowledging the extensive literature criticising such approaches [Section 3.4.1.1] - and claim it is a determinant driven by other factors such as 'demographic changes, the expansion of higher education, and structural economic adjustment in the late 1970s and 1980s, resulting in the large-scale displacement of traditional manufacturing sector employment.' Furthermore, they focus attention on migrants to Europe and their children, who they argue suffer an 'ethnic penalty' regarding the attainment of skills, qualifications, and occupational status (O'Reilly et al. 2015:7).

In Ireland, literature produced before and post-GFC identified a similar subsection of the young population as at higher risk of unemployment (Smyth 2008; Kelly et al. 2012). Kelly et al. (2012) found that the risk factors include: previous experience of being unemployed for over 12 months; literacy and numeracy problems; no formal education; and living in an urban area. Smyth (2008) looked at School Leavers Survey data and found that higher education and parental employment status continued to be strong predictors of young people's employment status in both the pre- and post- Celtic Tiger boom periods. Her findings also suggest that signals associated with social class and educational success were of much more importance in periods of downturn:

> *…employment chances were influenced by social class, a pattern that is likely to reflect both access to employment networks and the reliance of employers on 'soft' skills, such as self-presentation, accent and self-confidence, as criteria in recruitment. Secondly, while having qualifications did facilitate access to employment, it appeared to be only those who had achieved high grades who had labour market success.* (Smyth 2008: 327)

Such a diagnosis of the problem suggests the state needs to make targeted interventions within these populations to integrate them into the workforce. This reponse typically involves investment in their 'human capital' and/or 'behavioural modification' interventions to change the incentive structures faced by the young unemployed.

3.5.3 What is to be done?

This section begins by outlining the activation response to youth unemployment. It examines the differences between activation approaches at the national level that has continued following the EYG [Section 3.5.3.1]. Secondly, it looks at the literature on ALMPs empirical record in reducing unemployment and argues the findings cast severe doubts on the efficacy of such schemes [Section 3.5.3.2]. Finally, a turn to the critical literature on ALMPs connects these measures to broader neoliberal political and economic developments [Section 3.5.3.3].

3.5.3.1 Activation and youth unemployment in Europe

The 'activation turn' across the Global North began in the 1980s, with the turning point typically traced to the promotion of an 'active society' by the OECD Jobs Study [1994] (Dean 1995; Mitchell and Muysken 2009; Bonoli 2013). 'Activation' describes a set of social policies that 'prioritise human capital investment and the removal of obstacles to labour market participation' (Bonoli 2013:19). In other words, activation measures target the unemployed - and other 'inactive' groups such as lone parents and people with disabilities – with training, rehabilitation, work experience, employment services and sanctions to get them back into the labour market[40]. The 'active' label contrasts with 'passive' policies such as unemployment insurance and income protection measures or early retirement schemes (Bonoli 2013:12; Weishaupt 2011:66). IGOs have played a key role in diffusing these policies, including the OECD (Dean 1995; Weishaupt 2011) and the EU through the 'Flexicurity' strategy advocated by the EC (2007) and the European Employment Strategy (Kildal 2009; Van Vliet and Koster 2011).

Approaches to activation vary significantly across Europe (Bonoli 2013). Torfing (1999) differentiates between 'offensive' and 'defensive' ALMPs, while Dingeldey (2007) adopts a similar dichotomy of 'enablement' and 'workfare' approaches. The former offensive or enabling strategy seeks to get the out-of-work into employment through training, work experience, and further education. Torfing (1999;2001) viewed his native Denmark as an exemplar of this resource-intensive form of activation (Armingeon, 2007). The latter defensive, workfare or 'work-first' approach increases the state's surveillance, conditionality, and sanctioning powers over the unemployed (Torfing 1999; Bonoli 2013). The US and other Anglophone countries like the UK and Australia are classified as following this 'workfare' strategy (Dingeldey 2007; Nelson 2013). Recent research suggests that post-GFC Ireland has also turned towards this latter path (Dukelow 2015; Murphy 2016; Millar and Crosse 2018) [Section 2.4.1.3].

An activation response to youth unemployment was widespread across Europe even before the GFC (Tsekoura 2019). From the mid-2000s onwards, EU interest in youth unemployment policy greatly expanded – with initial efforts focused on increasing youth 'mobility' through initiatives such as the ***European Employment Services*** [EURES] and Erasmus plus (O'Reilly et al. 2015:9). ALMPs were central to the EYG as formulated in 2013 (O' Reilly et al. 2015; Tosun et al. 2019; Tsekoura 2019). However, member states had flexibility in developing their implementation plans in line with 'national, regional and local circumstances' (Tosun et al. 2019:360). In practice, this seems to have resulted in states largely reinforcing their pre-existing strategies rather than adopting radical new policy departures (Cabasés Piqué et al. 2016; Rodríguez-Soler and Verd 2018; Dingeldy et al. 2019; Bussi and Graziano 2019). Quantitative comparative research by Tosun et al. (2019) found that countries who previously made little use of ALMPs did respond by expanding their usage. However, the gap between them and those countries with already extensive activation

40 Raffass (2017:2) differentiates between four main categories of ALMP: services and sanctions, training, private sector incentive schemes, and direct employment schemes.

regimes deepened. Rodríguez-Soler and Verd's (2018) content-analysis of EYG training and entrepreneurship schemes in Spain revealed a failure to tailor projects to those youths targeted. The EYGs most decisive impact has been argued to be an increased 'awareness of the negative consequences of youth unemployment and job insecurity' and in shifting the discourses used regarding this issue (Dingeldy et al. 2019:201).

3.5.3.2 Poor returns

The efficacy of ALMPs is a source of debate within the literature. Studies have taken a range of forms: individual evaluations (Indecon 2016); systematic reviews seeking to compare the 'effectiveness' of ALMP types in getting unemployed individuals into private sector employment (Kluve, 2006; Card et al. 2010); comparative examinations of their 'cost-effectiveness' (Smedslund 2006), and investigations of their impact upon the wider labour market and society (Calmsfors et al. 2004; Kangasharju 2007).

Results of studies comparing the efficacy of ALMPs have found mixed results at best. Typically, they find: 'defensive' policies are most effective at this goal; that training can have positive effects in the medium to long term; and that direct job creation is ineffective at it (Kluve, 2006; Kluve 2010; Card et al. 2010). However, such studies typically limit themselves to the short-term impact of these schemes (Raffass 2017:2). Youth specific schemes tend to have less effectiveness in getting their participants into private employment (Card et al. 2010; Kluve et al. 2016). Bell and Blanchflower (2011:4) and Eichhorst and Rinne (2017:6) draw similar conclusions on youth-specific schemes from their survey of this literature. In terms of cost-effectiveness, Smedslund et al.'s (2006 cited in Raffass 2017:3) review of schemes in the US found that only one got a job for every 33 people placed in an ALMP.

Research into their impact on the labour market has raised questions about the potential for counterproductive outcomes and perverse incentives (Martin and Grubb 2001; Calmsfors et al. 2004). The problems of ***deadweight***, where already highly employable people receive unnecessary interventions, and **displacement**, where subsidised workers replace non-subsidised workers, have been raised as points of concern in the design of such schemes (Kangasharju, 2007: 52; Calmsfors et al. 2004). A study of Swedish wage subsidy schemes revealed a level of displacement ranging from 1% to 84% depending on the 'closeness' of the scheme to the labour market (Calmfors et al. 2004: 37-38). Other forms of displacement have also been detected. For example, Raffass (2017:4) argues that many pioneers of the activation model – including Norway, Switzerland, and the UK- experienced increases in rates of those on long-term sickness or disability income supports that were potentially linked to these measures introduction.

3.5.3.3 The critical reading

The critical literature on activation offers a potential explanation for the enduring popularity of ALMPs despite weak evidence for their effectiveness in their stated goals. Marxist and broader critical perspectives argue these policies have a 'clear intention to institutionalise low wage and precarious work and to impose the disciplines of work on prospective workers' (Umney et al., 2018:345)[41]. Thus, ALMPs form part of the wider neoliberal political project aiming to 'recommodify' and 'discipline' labour on behalf of capital (Bonefeld 2002; Wacquant 2009; Mitchell and Muysken 2009; Cooper 2012; Umney et al., 2018). In this reading, 'problems' such as 'deadweight' and 'displacement' found in 'poorly designed' schemes [Section 3.5.3.2] can be viewed as an 'unstated function' of policies 'embedded in antagonistic class relations' (Wiggan 2015b:386).

Komlosy (2018) and Umney et al. (2018) point to the German Hartz IV reforms[42] as exemplifying this strategy in action. In their view, these reforms engineered a 'secondary labour market managed by the employment agencies, the primary function of which is to put pressure on regular employees and job seekers to sell their labour for less' (Komlosy 2018:207-208). One impact of these reforms was a drop in the number of 'voluntary quits' by workers, which is argued to reflect a 'fear of entering the new and highly stigmatised stratum of means-tested benefits claimants' (Umney et al. 2018:344).

Similarly, Cabasés Piqué et al. (2016:700) critique the Spanish EYG not only as underfunded, due to the simultaneous push for austerity, but also as promoting 'precariousness and the redistribution of existing employment'. They also critiqued the EYG inception as reflecting 'questionable political tendencies' including:

> *…[the] strategy to solve a structural problem such as youth unemployment with the adaptation of young people to the labour market…relying on education and training as a universal solution… 'punishing' people arguing that this motivates adaptation and activation.* (Cabasés Piqué et al. 2016:701)

Fergusson and Yeates (2013:13) characterise similar World Bank framings of youth unemployment as a personal failing as promoting a strategy of 'deflection and distraction'. In addition to this, their focus on excessive labour market regulation and minimum wage legislation was argued to direct attention away from the structural economic problems producing weak labour demand (Fergusson and Yeates 2013). Such findings complement the work of Sukarieh and Tannock (2015). They also claim 'global financial and business elites' put youth unemployment on the agenda in the post-GFC policy landscape, rather than the young unemployed themselves, with the outcome that:

> *…the dominant policy rhetoric and practice in many countries have thus been to seek to "help" youth by reducing their wages, benefits, and employment protections—along with those of their parents and grandparents as well.* (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015:73)

Crisp and Powell's (2017) examination of youth unemployment policy in the UK context further supports the argument that measures seeking to weaken the position of labour have been marketed as 'help' for the young unemployed. They found that employability discourses

41 Recent research from the Irish context depicts the re-construction of its social protection system as part of a similar project [Section 2.4.1.3].

42 In 2005, these reforms increased surveillance of claimants and introduced a scheme officially termed 'additional working opportunities with extra remuneration' in which they were compelled to take-up largely menial positions or have their benefits removed. These were popularly known as 'One-Euro-Jobs' due to the hourly wage of €1.00 to €2.50 offered (Komolsy 2018:207-2018; Umney et al. 2018).

- previously associated with ‘offensive’ or ‘enablement’ activation strategy [Section 3.5.3.1] - have become ‘colonised’ and used to legitimate workfarist measures that ‘reduce the costs of supporting young people while simultaneously compelling their engagement with ‘flexible’ and insecure labour markets’ (Crisp and Powell 2017:1786).

A broader critical literature also focuses on the ideological shift visible in the welfare discourses which accompanied the activation turn [Section 3.4]. A range of studies found activation and workfare policies have been accompanied by stigmatising political messaging and media campaigns aiming to cast welfare recipients as ‘work-shy’, ‘fraudulent’ or otherwise abject to the public at large (Finn 2019: 119; Tyler 2013; 2020)[43] and encouraging the out-of-work to contextualise their situation in individual terms (Boland 2016). Researchers in Spain and Italy have raised the alarm about the content of the EYG in this regard, arguing that the aspirations of this initiative have become ‘decontextualised’ within their countries and deepened existing inequities (Rodríguez-Soler and Verd 2018; Tsekoura 2019). Tsekoura’s (2019) research into EYG implementation in Lombardy in Italy found a disjuncture between the European discourses of ‘citizenship as labour market participation’ and the realities faced by youths on the ground. This discrepancy potentially exacerbated their exclusion by making participants feel responsible ‘even in situations where they have limited control over external conditions or ability to make decisions regarding their life project’ (Tsekoura 2019:497).

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter established that the association of ‘youth’ with crisis and risk has a long history. Youth can function in both a negative and positive sense and is mobilised by various actors as an ideological tool, which generates a sense of moral imperative to act and channels attention away from alternative framings of social issues. Thus, a researcher’s goal is to interrogate who invokes youth and for what purposes?

Youth unemployment emerged as a specific policy problem in Europe in the early 20th century and ‘re-emerged’ as a widespread concern amid the economic crises of the 1970s. Points of continuity and discontinuity were identified in the literature. There is a continuing understanding of youth unemployment as a ‘supply-side’ problem rooted in the deficiencies among a section of the young population. However, in earlier explanations of youth unemployment, there was considerable attention paid to the ‘demand-side’ in the form of the employment opportunities and industries open to young workers. This side of the problem became side-lined over the 1980s and 1990s in favour of series of neo-liberal welfare discourses focused on problems of ‘dependency’, ‘exclusion’ and ‘human capital’. The critical literature argues these welfare-discourses work to background structural processes driving inequality and stigmatises those who have fallen afoul of them.

Mainstream literature within the European context reproduces these neo-liberal welfare discourses’ assumptions and problematises the young unemployed themselves or the institutions that manage the transition from education to work for young people: the

43 Such themes have also emerged in Irish studies of the post-GFC reforms [Section 2.4.1.3].

schooling system; the labour market; and social protection. The closeness between education, social protection, and the labour market in the form of vocational training and strong activation regimes and a deregulated labour market are popular explanations of why certain countries have struggled less with youth unemployment than others. In mainstream policy literature, there is a widespread international consensus around ALMPs despite a lack of evidence of their efficacy in achieving their stated goal.

A turn to the critical literature develops an alternative perspective on the 'activation turn'. Within these sources, ALMPs are positioned as: a component of broader efforts to discipline labour on behalf of capital following the stagflation crisis of the 1970s; intertwined with campaigns of 'stigma-from-above' (Tyler 2020) seeking to legitimise and reassert hierarchies of class, gender and race; diffusing individualised forms of subjectivity that seek to deny collective narratives of unemployment and poverty.

Chapter Four: Theory and Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework and methods of this study.

Section 4.2 positions WPR in relation to other theoretical approaches to the study of policy-problems. It distinguishes WPR as a framework that centres on interrogating the content and effects of problem representations. This focus contrasts it from positivist approaches which assume policy problems have a fixed content, and interpretivist methods, which tend to see the researcher's job as limited to ensuring a preferred problem definition is marketed effectively to the public. **Section 4.3** presents the WPR framework for policy analysis. It also outlines a series of theoretical and methodological innovations drawn from ***Critical Discourse Studies*** [CDS] to adapt WPR to this project's requirements. **Section 4.4** outlines the key categories and concepts that underpin this study. These include: the categories of text, genre and field and the concept of re-contextualisation from CDS; Foucauldian archaeology and genealogy; and legitimation and de-legitimation as theorised by the CDS practitioner Van Leeuwen (2008). **Section 4.5** discusses how the sample that informed this study was gathered from the fields of 'policymaking', 'parliamentary-politics' and the 'media' and then analysed using a worksheet incorporating elements from the WPR framework and CDS.

4.2 'Problems' and policy studies

Section 1.2 explored how by focusing on the concept of 'youth unemployment', this study belongs to the sub-field of Policy Studies that deal with 'policy-problems'. The 6-pronged WPR framework was chosen as it offered a clear pathway to pursue this research puzzle and matched the ethos of this study with its dictate to take nothing for granted. Before outlining this methodology, this section distinguishes it from other understandings of 'problems' within policy studies.

Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) distance WPR from two broad schools that they label 'comprehensive rationalism' and 'political rationalism'. The former label denotes policy analysis of a positivist and technocratic bent, which for the most part operates with a 'given set of problems' (Bacchi 2016:58). The hegemonic 'evidence-based policy' model is the primary target of this label. This style of policy analysis presents itself as preoccupied with the question, 'What works?' (Roberts 2005). This research puzzle is to be satisfied through a 'modern emphasis on rational problem-solving, with its focus on accurate diagnosis and knowledge of causal linkages' (Head 2008a:2). Head (2008a) divides the evidence this model examines into three separate categories: political knowledge of strategies and tactics by political actors; scientific knowledge based upon a systemic evaluation of past conditions and trends; and implementation knowledge based upon the 'practical wisdom' held by policymakers. Irrespective of what evidence is evaluated, the 'problem' analysed is taken as existing 'out there'[44] (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). No space is left to investigate how it was constituted in the first instance. Ironically, this assumption that the 'problem' itself has fixed characteristics narrows the field for understanding or interpreting evidence from the outset (Bacchi 2009; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016).

'Political rationalists' disavow this pretension to scientific objectivity and pursue overtly politicised or critical research (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). Analysts of this school of thought acknowledge that problems are not 'given' but are contestable and therefore take the issue of 'problem-formulation' or 'problem-setting' seriously. In her work Bacchi (2016) sub-divides researchers of this style between 'interpretivists', and 'critical realists'. This latter group hold on to the positivist anchoring of the comprehensive rationalist approach while accepting power's role within the policy process. Bacchi (2016:5) characterises this paradigm as postulating:

> *…a reality existing "independently of social actors" while accepting that the interpretations of those actors can influence that reality, and that a "range of individual, group, organisational and societal processes and structures" influence human action.*

In other words, for critical realists, at least part of the problem remains 'out there'. Conversely, interpretivists argue that policy-problems are socially constructed, with the 'problem definition' process forming 'a great tug of war between political actors asserting competing causal theories' (Stone 1989:293). WPR lies closer to the literature produced by this group of scholars. However, Bacchi and Goodwin (2016:59) are still keen to differentiate their approach. While interpretivist analysts acknowledge that problems do not exist 'out there', they are inclined to work on the assumption that 'definitions of problems in the context of practice must answer the criteria of feasibility and worth, or improvement' (Dery 2000:40). This can be seen in the work of analysts such as Weiss (1989:117) who sets out to determine what constitutes a 'good' problem definition and develops a series of qualitative criteria on the three levels of 'overture, process and outcome.' Such research aims to enable 'policy entrepreneurs' to forward definitions of the problem in the political arena, which will gain common currency and/or avoid controversy (Weiss 1989; Dery 2000; Stone 2012).

To put it another way, the goal is to facilitate policymakers in 'trying to get people in society to see a situation as one thing rather than another', with individuals being understood as having inconsistent policy preferences largely dependent upon what 'loyalties and images' can be called upon by political actors (Stone 2012:11-12). Thus, Bacchi and Goodwin (2016: 60) critique interpretivists as having a fixation with 'managing' problems rather than interrogating them – especially when it comes to the constitutive effects upon the 'objects' of a policy. Such a focus on problem management is unacceptable to this project. While opening the content of the 'problem' to critique; it continues to position the role of the researcher as an expert whose function is to address the findings of their research 'upwards'

44 This limitation remains even within the comprehensive rationalist allowance for 'wicked problems', a term for those policy issues found to be 'complex, open-ended, and intractable' (Head 2008b: 101). This perspective still treats the 'problem' under investigation as being external to the process of policymaking (Bacchi 2016).

to the state or other powerful actors within a society so that they can govern more efficiently or effectively.

WPR avoids this trap by adopting a post-structuralist position and interrogating what it terms ‘problem representations’ or ‘problematisations’ (Bacchi 2009). Theoretically, it draws heavily on the work of Foucault’s conceptualisation of power as having a ‘productive role’ rather than being limited to a repressive or negative function (Foucault 1977;1979); his concept of ‘discourse’ (Foucault and Rabinow 1991); and his research strategies of ‘archaeology’ [Section 4.4.3] and ‘genealogy’ [Section 4.4.4].

In Foucault’s (1997 cited in Glynos et al. 2009:10) initial formulation problematisation was ‘a movement of critical analysis in which one tries to see how the different solutions to a problem have been constructed; but also, how these different solutions result from a specific form of problematisation’. However, Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) broaden this definition to the two widely used meanings of the term ‘to problematise’. Firstly, as per Foucault, as interrogating the ‘deep-seated assumptions and presumptions’ that underpin the solutions we propose to ‘problems’ in society, and secondly to problematise by putting something forward as a ‘problem’ (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016:38).

These two definitions of problematisation, and the Foucauldian conceptualisations of power and discourse, are the foundation for two basic presuppositions of the WPR approach. The first presupposition is ‘that what we say we want to do about something indicates what we think needs to change and hence how we constitute the “problem”’ (Bacchi 2012:4). Therefore, a researcher can work her way backwards from any policy proposal in a policy document or text concerned with policy towards what Bacchi (2009) terms the ‘problem representation’. Contra interpretivist approaches, such as Stone (2012), the significance of the ‘representation’ identified is not as a collection of images or semiotics, nor is the issue that a particular interpretation of a policy ‘problem’ was chosen over rival ‘problems’. In the WPR approach, the significance of a ‘problem representation’ stems from the constitutive effects it has on how social reality is perceived. Here, Bacchi adopts the stance of Shapiro (1988:xi), who argues that ‘representations do not imitate reality but are the practices through which things take on meaning and value’.

These ‘problem representations’ or ‘problematisations’ encountered within policy texts are understood to constitute the ‘real’ through which we are governed (Bacchi 2016). Treating these representations as having a directly productive role allows the researcher to develop an outline of ‘specific forms of reality’ that power creates through the problematisations present in a particular policy and to assess their potential impact (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016:29). Thus, the second foundational presupposition of WPR is that; ‘governing takes place through the ways in which issues are problematised’ (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016:39). The argument here is that problematisations are crucial to the practice of government (Bacchi 2009). Here WPR draws on the field of governmentality studies, where scholars such as Mitchell Dean, Peter Miller, and Nikolas Rose have built upon the work of Foucault and developed an area of research that moves the focus of the analysis of power ‘from why to how’ (Miller and Rose 2008:6). This form of analysis centres on the ‘strategies, techniques and procedures through which different authorities seek to enact programmes of government in relation to the materials and forces to hand and the resistances and oppositions anticipated or encountered' (Rose 1996: 42).

These two propositions challenge comprehensive rationalism, which assumes 'problems' as exterior to the policymaking process, as something that sits out there waiting patiently to be solved by politicians and experts. Instead, WPR argues policies should be seen to produce particular 'problems' based upon certain assumptions or presuppositions (Bacchi 2009; Bacchi 2015; Pantazis 2016). Consequently, the researcher focuses on how practices and relations of power encoded within policies produce specific 'problems', 'subjects', 'objects', and 'places' (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016:29). The advantage of this strategy of 'problematisation of problematisations' is that it ensures the researcher's critique is focused on challenges people engage with – albeit not taking them on face value (Fairclough 2013:185). The WPR approach thus aligns with the key rationale of this project of what was at stake in focusing on 'youth unemployment' as a problem in Ireland between 2008-2014 [Section 1.2].

4.3 The WPR framework

This section introduces the WPR framework. Section 4.3.1 outlines the research questions that characterise this approach, their ontological assumptions and how they are enacted in practice. Section 4.3.2 identifies theoretical and practical weak points of the WPR framework that this project has sought to address by adopting insights and methods produced within the field of CDS.

4.3.1 The six questions and final step

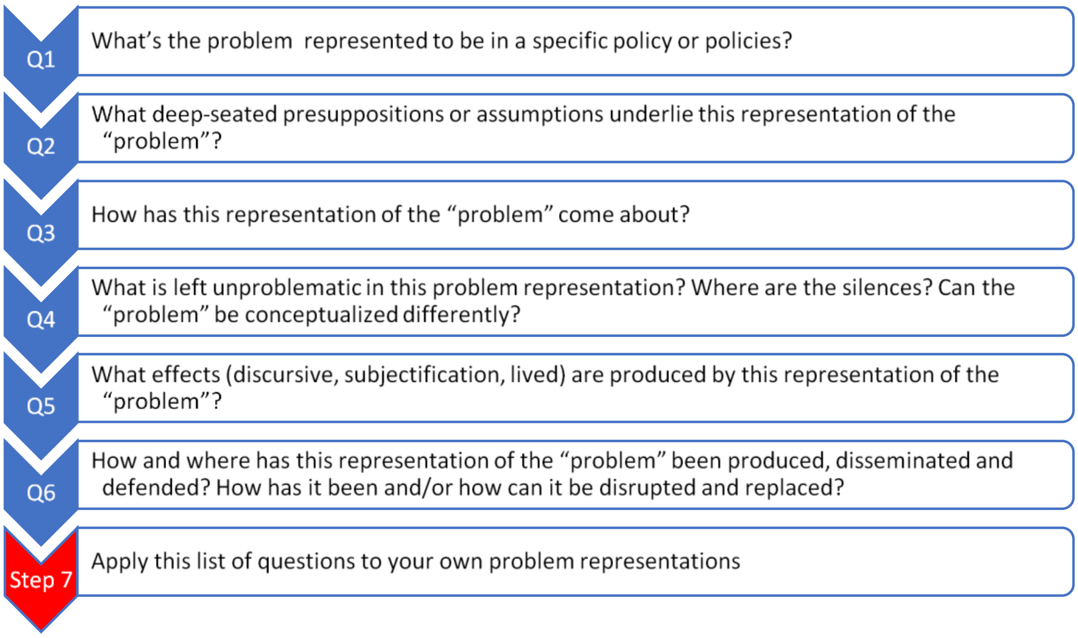
In WPR, the researcher applies six separate research questions to the policy or set of policies under analysis [Fig 2]. This process is followed by a seventh step where the researcher applies the six questions to their conclusions.

Q1 opens the process by identifying the key action(s) being proposed within a text or texts and tracing the way from these to the representation of the problem(s). For example, one policy document responding to illegal drug use may propose a 'zero-tolerance' approach in the form of increased sentences for those possessing or supplying drugs and more resources for policing. Another document might propose a 'harm reduction' strategy consisting of decriminalising some drug offences, providing safe sites for drug use, and increased resources for health services.

Having identified the encoded problematisation within a policy measure, the researcher applies the five remaining questions to 'take a step back' from the proposal and challenge what is 'taken-for-granted' within it.

Q2 applies Foucauldian 'archaeology' to reveal a problem representation's epistemological and ontological assumptions [Section 4.4.3]. The focus here is 'conceptual logics' lodged within a given problem representation rather than on the presuppositions or beliefs of policymaking individuals or groups (Bacchi 2009:5).

Figure 2 The WPR Research Framework



Source: Adapted from Bacchi and Goldwin (2016:20)

Often these 'conceptual logics' can be connected to specific patterns or styles of problematisation. In practice, the process of identifying the presuppositions within a text involves the employment of elements of discourse analysis to uncover binaries, key concepts and categories operating within a policy (Bacchi 2009). To continue with the examples of 'zero tolerance' and 'harm reduction' policies given above; each represents the problem in a radically different way and produces the 'objects' of their policies differently. The first policy document might look at the problem as one of 'law and order' and produce the object of the policy as 'criminals' to be punished with the full might of the law. The second group might represent the problem as a question of 'health' and define their policies' target as 'people with addictions' or as an 'at-risk population'.

Q3 involves carrying out a 'genealogy' to trace the 'descent' and 'emergence' of the problematisation under investigation [Section 4.4.4]. Bacchi (2009) divides this process into two parts. Firstly, an examination of the 'non-discursive practices' that helped to bring a specific problem representation about. What 'developments and decisions' led to the formulation of the policy proposal being examined? The second part of this question requires the researcher to acknowledge that the problem representation under examination is one of multiple competing problematisations that exist over time and space. Therefore, a Foucauldian inspired method of genealogy is employed to disentangle better the practices and processes that led to the formulation of the problem representation in question.

Q4 probes 'silences' or blind spots within policy measure(s) by asking 'what fails to be problematised?' (Bacchi 2009:12). For instance, the 'law and order' representation of drug use might be silent regarding factors driving demand for these drugs or the interaction between societal inequalities and the worst outcomes of drug use. Conversely, the 'harm reduction' problematisation might be silent on the relationship between those living in areas where 'safe sites' are located and the users of those services. Here the researcher draws upon what they have unearthed about alternative ways of viewing the problem during Q3. The researcher can also look at cross-cultural examples; in this case, the researcher could look at how other countries have problematised 'drug use' or 'addiction'.

Q5 assesses the 'effects' produced by a problem representation for the 'object' of a policy. Here the focus is not just the 'outcomes' of a policy but the potential difficulties or unintended outcomes that it could engender. Bacchi (2009) divides these effects into three groups: discursive, lived and subjectification effects. Discursive effects are those which proceed from the limits imposed on what can be thought and said. These effects link back to the findings of the preceding research questions about the assumptions underpinning a problem representation, its genealogy, and finally, the silences entailed by this problem representation. Subjectification effects entail how subjects and subjectivities are constituted in discourse. In other words, what subject positions are created by this discourse? For example, the two responses to illegal drug abuse given above could produce their objects as 'offenders' or as an 'at-risk population' respectively. Bacchi (2009:17) also notes that problematisations often locate responsibility for a problem with certain actors, usually the targeted group themselves. Thus, researchers should examine the impact of the problem representation upon the targeted group. Lived effects are the impact upon life and death (Dean 2006 cited in Bacchi 2009:15). These are the effects a problematisation has upon material existence. For example, if a policy introduces a means test, what does that signify in material terms for those on the borders of the cut-off point for assistance? If a policy is universal, what does that mean in terms of resources available for those considered most in 'need'?

Q6 examines the production and dissemination of the problematisation and existing or potential resistance to it. The first half of this question channels Foucault's (1991 cited in Bacchi 2009:37) call to question 'What individuals, what groups or classes have access to a particular kind of discourse? How is the relationship institutionalised between the discourse, speakers and its destined audience?'. The second half of the question examines past and present challenges posed to the 'problem representation' identified in Q1. The researchers aim is to uncover what discursive resources are available to resist and to engage in the process of re-problematisation.

Finally, this process is cemented by a **seventh supplementary step** by which the researcher critically examines her findings and alternative policy preferences using the same series of questions to ensure 'self-reflexivity' regarding the problematisations which she has brought to the analysis [Section 4.5.3].

4.3.2 Modifying and supplementing WPR

While WPR aligned with the ethos and aims of this study and clearly delineated the areas to be investigated, in practice, its application required the resolution of two significant challenges. Firstly, the challenge of ***scaling up*** the framework to cover a relatively broad range of data over an extensive period. Examples of WPR studies of this scale were limited as researchers tend to restrict themselves to a small range of documents and policy interventions[45]. Another challenge encountered was the application of Q5 and Q6 in a systematic fashion. The process by which the researcher interrogates the effects, the diffusion, and contestation of a problem representation is relatively underdeveloped and ambivalent in the WPR literature (Cort 2011:27-32). This ambiguity is potentially one reason, aside from space constraints, that many researchers have applied this framework in a truncated form (Pantazis 2016; FitzGerald and McGarry 2016; Gaffney and Millar 2020).

This study drew upon methodological and theoretical adaptations from CDS in response to these challenges. This interdisciplinary field developed from the 1980s onwards and synthesised theoretical insights and methodological innovations from sociolinguistics, critical theory, sociology, and other disciplines to investigate how discourse 'changes as well as controls and shapes contemporary society' (Krzyżanowski and Forchtner 2018). CDS literature offered practical insight into managing and carrying out a project of this scale and the execution of analysis at both the micro and macro levels [while ensuring the output was intelligible to others!]. As Anaïs (2013) argues, CDS has a lot of practical insight to offer to those seeking to apply Foucauldian research tools in assembling an archive and addressing the systematic nature of the text through the conceptualisations of 'text', 'genre' and 'field'. Furthermore, CDS helped systematise this project's approach to the issues of 'silence', 'dissemination' and 'contestation' raised by WPR. As explored below the theorisations of 're-contextualisation' [Section 4.4.2] and 'legitimation' [Section 4.4.5] by Van Leeuwen (2008) helped in this regard.

Bacchi herself would probably critique synthesising WPR and CDS. She has repeatedly distanced her approach from CDS due to what she argues are divergent conceptualisations of discourse (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016; Bacchi 2018). Before engaging with this potential critique, it is advisable to reflect for a moment on Lichbach's (2003:4-5) typology of three reactions taken by researchers to opposing approaches within a field of study: 'competitors' attack the perceived inadequacies of opponents; 'pragmatists' ignore methods and theories diverging from their own; and 'imperialists' attempt to assimilate elements of divergent perspectives within own preferred approach. Each of these has potential benefits and weaknesses. One could argue that Bacchi's work displays elements of both the 'competitor' camp that stress 'irreconcilability' and the 'pragmatist' camp that 'work with one model or paradigm and ignore their foils' (Lichbach 2003:5). This is clear in her blog, with multiple posts stressing the incompatibility and/or irrelevance of other popular research approaches to WPR - typically centred on a failure to adhere to strict Foucauldian assumptions surrounding subjectivity and knowledge[46].

Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) argue CDS is incompatible with WPR as it is too focused on discourse as 'language in use'. In contrast, their approach is focused on an 'analysis of discourses' defined in terms of 'deep-seated ontological and epistemological assumptions' at play within 'problem representations' (Bacchi 2018). This distinction fails to acknowledge that

45 Cort (2011) is the primary exception among the literature available to this study.

46 Examples include posts on theories of 'affectivity' (Bacchi 2020) 'critical realism' (Bacchi 2019), and 'interpretivism' (Bacchi 2018).

CDS is a field that encompasses a broad range of approaches, all of whom tend to analyse discourse at multiple levels within their research rather than just the micro-level of 'patterns of speech, rhetoric and communication' that she reduces it to (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016:35). Conversely, Anaïs (2013:123) identifies convergence as well as divergence between Foucauldian approaches, such as WPR, and CDS and argues that each can address weak points in the other, with genealogy addressing the a-historicism of some theories within CDS, and CDS in return helping to systematise genealogical methods. Thus, it can be argued that the two approaches are not necessarily incompatible[47] – but that they complement each other and merely look at different levels of discourse. Indeed, others have already managed to combine elements from CDS with the WPR approach (FitzGerald and McGarry 2016).

The primary CDS scholar drawn upon in this study is Van Leeuwen (2008), who operates with a more Foucauldian inspired understanding of discourse as 'socially specific ways of knowing social practice' (2008:6). This is not so far removed from the Bacchian formulation as they both constitute discourse as systems of knowing. At the same time, there is a divergence in focus, with WPR looking at discourse at a broader level and Van Leeuwen at the micro-level. This study seeks to demonstrate that zooming into the micro-level in this manner can allow for a more thorough engagement with WPR Q6's call to investigate dissemination and contestation.

4.4 Key Concepts

This section outlines the theoretical underpinning and application of the key concepts within this project. **Section 4.4.1** engages with the concepts of ***text***, ***genre*** and ***field*** as adapted from CDS (Fairclough 1995; Unger 2013; Forchtner and Schneickert 2016). These concepts helped to delineate and contextualise the data reviewed by this project. **Section 4.4.2** covers ***re-contextualisation,*** a term widely used within CDS to describe the selective transmission of elements of a text or set of texts between contexts (Van Leeuwen 2008; Krzyżanowski 2016). This concept is used to augment WPR Q4 and Q6 [Section 4.3.1]. **Section 4.4.3** and **4.4.4** look at the Foucauldian strategies of ***archaeology*** and ***genealogy,*** which animate Q2 and Q3 of the WPR framework. **Section 4.4.5** presents ***legitimation*** and ***de-legitimation*** as theorised by Van Leeuwen (2008). His framework is used to examine the defence and contestation of problematisation as investigated by WPR Q6.

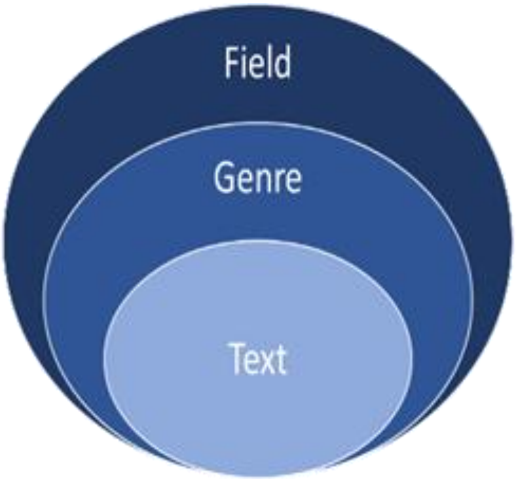
4.4.1 Text, genre, and field

Bacchi (2009:54) identifies 'practical texts' or 'prescriptive texts' as the key data for WPR analysis – including 'policy statements, public addresses, parliamentary debates, government reports, pieces of legislation, court decisions'. The methodology has also been adapted to analyse other sources, including interview material (Cort 2011; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016) and media coverage (Zufferey 2014). However, the nature of this material and its social location is often under-elaborated within this body of work. While WPR focuses on discourse in a broad sense rather than a linguistic sense, it was still necessary to engage with such

47 Trickier from the perspective of this author is the commitment of many researchers within CDS to Habermasian ideas surrounding normativity (Forchtner 2011; Wodak 2001).

questions to contextualise the source material. This study adopted the categories of 'text', 'genre' and 'field' as developed within CDS to address this issue. As heuristics, these concepts enable critical evaluation of the setting within which texts are found.

Figure 3 The Matryoshka doll of Field, Genre and Text



The relation of terms to each other can be visualised using the metaphor of a matryoshka, as can be seen in Figure 3. A ***text*** is the fundamental element of analysis for CDS. The term can narrowly denote solely written and spoken communication or more broadly to encompass visual and other non-verbal forms of communication (Unger 2013). A commonly used definition of 'text' is that of De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981 cited in Wodak 2008:7-8), who identify them as 'communicative occurrences' which meet the seven standards of what they term 'texuality': cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality[48]. Cohesion and coherence focus on the 'internal' or linguistic features of a text. In contrast, the remainder of these terms describe 'external' aspects such as 'the relationship of the text to co-text, context, audience, society, etc.' (Unger 2013:53). This study primarily examined written texts: policy documents, parliamentary proceedings, and newspaper coverage. However, such texts are often 'multimodal' as they use visual modes of communication like infographics alongside the written form. Chapter Seven's analysis of media coverage also extended to spoken and visual forms of communication, including a televised debate and posed photographs.

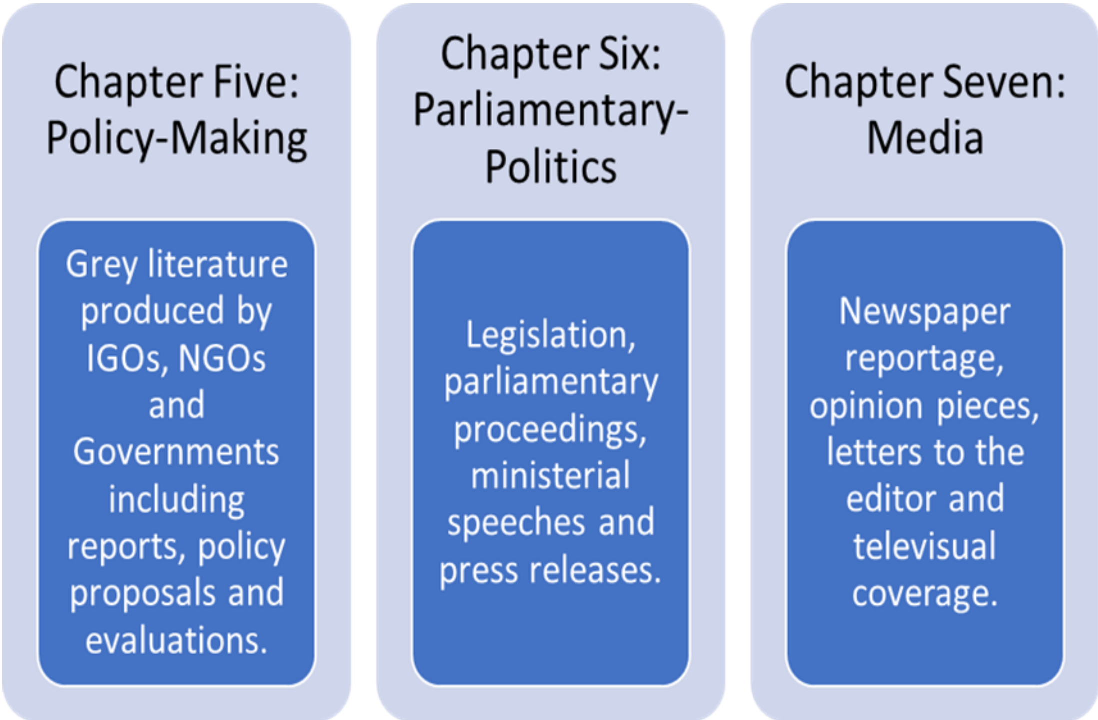
Each text abides by specific logics and [often unspoken] rules shared with others of a similar type. In CDS terminology, these texts belong to certain ***genre*** forms or 'socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity' (Fairclough 1995:14). In turn, texts and their genres are associated with a specific context, which is referred to as a ***field*** in CDS. This concept is adapted from Bourdieu [1984], who used it to describe a 'structured space of relations in which the positions of individuals or schools of thought were defined in terms of their differential relationship with other participants' (Lane 2000:73). Fields are understood as 'social microcosms' that operate with relatively

48 'Intertextuality' is a term that denotes how 'all texts are linked to other texts, both in the past and in the present' in various ways whether 'through continued reference to a topic or main actors; through reference to the same events; or by the transfer of main arguments from one text into the next' (Wodak 2008:3).

autonomous power relations, logics and rules and are located within a wider 'social macrocosm' (Forchtner and Schneickert 2016). Incorporating fields into the analysis brings attention to the power exercised 'over' discourses which dictate who has the right or resources to speak there (Jäger 2001; Foucault 1971). These relations can be revealed by identifying the specific agents and institutions that exist within a field.

Borders between fields or texts and genres are rarely clearly demarcated in practice. However, this heuristic framework allows the researcher to theorise the process of 'dissemination' through the CDS concepts of 'intertextuality' and 're-contextualisation' [Section 4.4.2], wherein elements of a text may take on a whole new salience within a new field (Unger 2013:47).

Figure 4 The three fields examined in this study and associated genres



This project examines material from three fields: 'policymaking', 'parliamentary-politics' and the 'media'. Each of these fields has their own specific genres [Figure 4]. Section 4.5.1 outlines how the sample was assembled in each field. As each field offers speaking positions to specific actors and has their own associated discourses, comparing them to each other aided with the investigation of the Q4 of the WPR framework in which the researcher sets out to identify silences or alternative conceptualisations of the 'problem' under investigation. It also enabled the first half of Q6, which focuses on the dissemination of a problem representation. Dividing the research this way also ensured the manageability of the project.

4.4.2 Re-contextualisation

Re-contextualisation describes a process by which elements of language or discourse travel between different fields (Krzyżanowski 2016). The concept is commonly employed within CDS (van Leeuwen 2008; Richardson and Wodak 2009; Krzyżanowski 2016). At a simplified level, the re-contextualisation of discourse can be represented as a three-stage process taking place within three related contexts [Fig 5]. This schema is adapted from Bernstein (1990), who developed the concept in his work on language, class and the British education system.

The process begins with the generation of a form of discourse in the primary context or field[49]. The discourse is mediated to a target context through a re-contextualising context. Bernstein (1990) primarily employed this concept as a means of explaining how social practices are actively produced in the form of theories and policies by the 'upper reaches of the education system' such as universities or the ministry of education and are then transferred to the 'lower reaches' at the school level. Some aspects of discourse are transferred during this process while others are not, leading to 'de-contextualisation'. Consequently, a spatial and strategic hierarchy or order of discourses is established (Krzyżanowski 2016: 7-8). It is during the second stage between these two points where the re-contextualisation process occurs[50].

Another critical point is that re-contextualisation is not understood as subject to accident or error (Bernstein 1990). When a text is generated, decisions are made through a process of selection and omission, foregrounding and backgrounding amongst other practices depending on the intentions of the author(s) and the context within which they are placed (Bernstein 1990). Think of the advice often given to those writing and speaking to 'know their audience' – i.e., to produce their text in a manner that anticipates the register, tone and format associated with the expected audience of a text.

This project involved the analysis of re-contextualisation as it plays out at the specific level of the text. This was achieved by ***benchmarking*** texts against each other within and across fields to reveal differences in the order of problematisations found, silences between texts, and meanings attributed to terms. A worksheet was developed to operationalise this concept that included questions classifying the genre and involved applying Q1 and Q2 of the WPR framework to those practices proposed by a text [Appendix III].

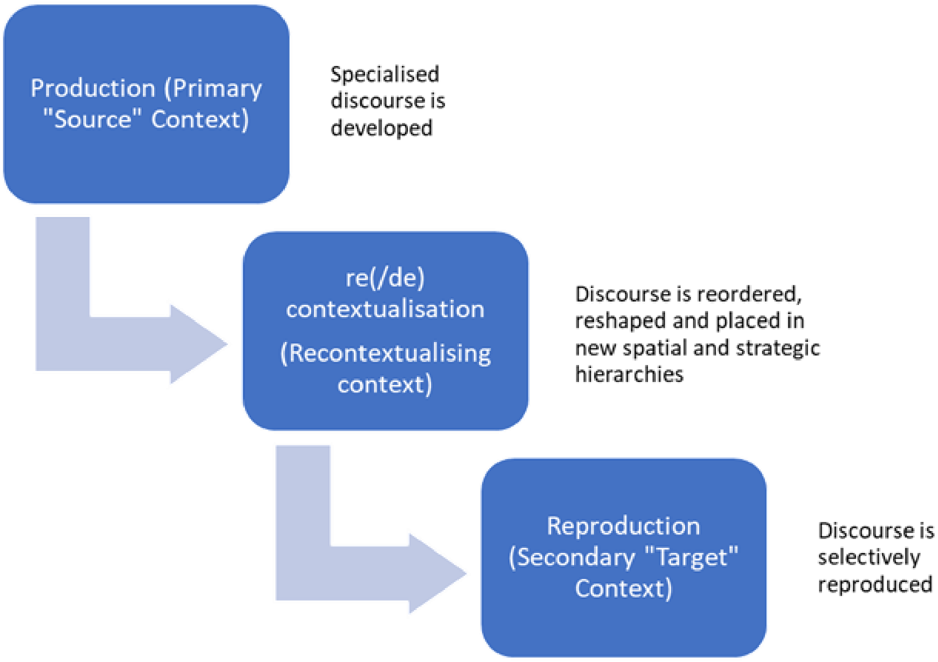
Re-contextualisation comes to the fore in Chapter Five, which examines the problematisation of youth unemployment on both the international level of the OECD and EU and the local level of Ireland during the aftermath of the GFC. It is also in the foreground in

49 'Context' in Bernstein's (1990) terms denotes not just a physical setting wherein communication takes place but also as a social context wherein individuals are socialised in a manner that shapes their perception of self and other. This is to a large extent analogous with Bourdieu's [1984] concept of field as a site with specific practices, associated actors, and knowledges, and indeed it is operationalised as such within CDS (Forchtner and Schneickert 2016).

50 It should be stressed, however, this simplification aiming to communicate the idea should not be taken to indicate this is a unidirectional or strictly linear process. On the contrary, often there are encounters with counter-discourses, which in turn impact upon the site of production.

Chapter Seven, which explores the dissemination of the problematisation of youth unemployment from the policymaking and political fields to the media field.

Figure 5 Three Stages of Recontextualisation



Source: Adapted from Bernstein (1990) and Krzyżanowski (2016)

4.4.3 Archaeology

Foucauldian archaeology is central to WPR Q2, which asks which assumptions or presuppositions underpin a problem representation. It works to identify the 'history of the systems of thought' by 'uncovering the discursive traces of distinct historical periods and reassembling them' (Garland 2014:369; Deacon 2000). The question here is not whether the discourse under analysis is true or false but rather under what conditions can a statement be said to be true. Archaeology concerns itself with the 'conditions of possibility' of a specific 'discourse' or form of knowledge – i.e. what can be thought and what can be believed by certain groups or societies at particular points in time. It makes the 'positivity' and 'historicity' of discourse the object of its analysis, focusing on its 'conditions of possibility, existence and transformation' rather than its meaning or truth. Thus, the researcher examines the 'meaning' of discourse in terms of the conditions by which it becomes intelligible, rather than looking for a secret meaning 'out there' in the head of social actors or some hidden social factor (Bacchi 2009).

Bacchi (2009:7) adopts the archaeological method to identify how policy creates meaning through elements such as the binaries, key concepts, and categories at play within a specific policy. ***Binaries*** within policies such as male/female, passive/active or adult/young tend to involve dichotomies where one side is excluded from the other, imply a form of hierarchy, and work to simplify complex relationships (Bacchi 2009:7). ***Key concepts*** are the foundational assumptions around which a problematisation is built; in this project, they include 'activation', 'scarring' or 'human capital', terms that predominate in academic discourses surrounding youth unemployment. For WPR, the significance of such concepts is their understanding of human nature or 'rationality' and the behaviours they recognise or preclude. Upon closer inspection, they can often prove to be 'abstract labels that are relatively open-ended' and thus are open to contestation and redefinition (Bacchi 2009:8). The ***categories*** produced within a policy are another crucial entry-point. Researchers should pay attention to how categories such as 'unemployed' or 'at-risk' are defined and measured and be conscious of the effects [Q5] and silences [Q4] produced. Foucault (2002) identifies additional areas of archaeological interest – whether the policy privileges certain 'places of speaking' or 'strategies' and 'themes and theories'. In other words, which 'experts' and epistemologies grant meaning to the problematisation in question. Through these areas of attention, Q2 seeks to 'flesh out the problematisations through which an issue is thought' and identify the political rationalities at play (Bacchi 2009:43).

The worksheet developed by this study incorporates the archaeological focus of Q2 by noting the binaries, key concepts, categories, and other elements of problem representations found within a given text [Appendix III].

4.4.4 Genealogy

WPR Q3 involves a genealogical research strategy that examines the historical conditions that give rise to a problematisation of the associated practices as encoded in a policy. This approach shifts attention towards the exercise of 'power' (Howarth 2000; O'Farrell 2005). Contrary to the archaeological focus on 'structural order, structural differences and the discontinuities that mark off the present from its past' (Garland 2014: 371), genealogy seeks to historicise the present by exploring the ***descent*** and ***emergence*** of forms of discourse and knowledge and associated institutions[51].

Tracing descent is not the establishment of a simple origin story for a phenomenon but instead examines the 'heterogeneity of practices' within which it was formed. The researcher also identifies alternative discourses located in the past that may or may not mesh with the predominant form in the current epoch. These alternative or 'subjugated' knowledges tend to come in two forms. The first form, 'erudite knowledges', are those which have been silenced; those 'dissenting opinions and theories that are not widely recognised' (Bacchi, 2009:36). The second, 'indigenous knowledges', are localised beliefs and understandings and are typically associated with those classified as 'unqualified' or 'disqualified' to speak within the prevailing power relations (Bacchi 2009:36). These forms of knowledge can help the researcher with their task to expose as 'plastic' what was thought to be solid and to develop resources for potential 'counter-discourses' essential for the process of contestation (Brown 2001; Ciccarielo-Maher 2017). The objective is to destabilise what we 'take for granted' in the present by exposing it as the 'effect of historical accident' rather than the product of will,

51 Foucault's (1977) exploration of the emergence of the penal system was his first exemplar of this research strategy in practice.

design or telos – in the process potentially opening it up to contestation and disruption in the present (Brown 2001; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016).

In this broad sense, this entire project can be considered an exercise in genealogical research – it takes a problematisation from the near present - that of 'youth unemployment'- and aims to expose as contingent the practices and knowledges which sustain it and give it meaning. Q3 is operationalised in this project by two means. Firstly, this study sought to trace the genesis of the assumptions and key concepts that underpin the problem representation as encountered applying the archaeological analysis of Q2. Secondly, Chapter Two pursues this question by looking at other periods where youth unemployment became a problem representation of note on the national level – reflection on the elements of (dis) continuity between these and contemporary representations are outlined in Chapter Eight.

4.4.5 Legitimation and de-legitimation

As well as dissemination, Q6 asks the researcher to investigate how problem representations are defended, contested, and disrupted. In this project, the defence or disruption of a problem representation is theorised as a 'legitimation process' of 'justification' in which there is an attempt to normalise 'unexpected, untoward acts' (Zelditch 2001:7). Van Leeuwen (2008:124-135) offers a 'justificatory schema' categorising common legitimation strategies [Fig 6]. Each of these strategies can occur separately or in combination with others. They can also be reversed to de-legitimise/critique a given social practice.

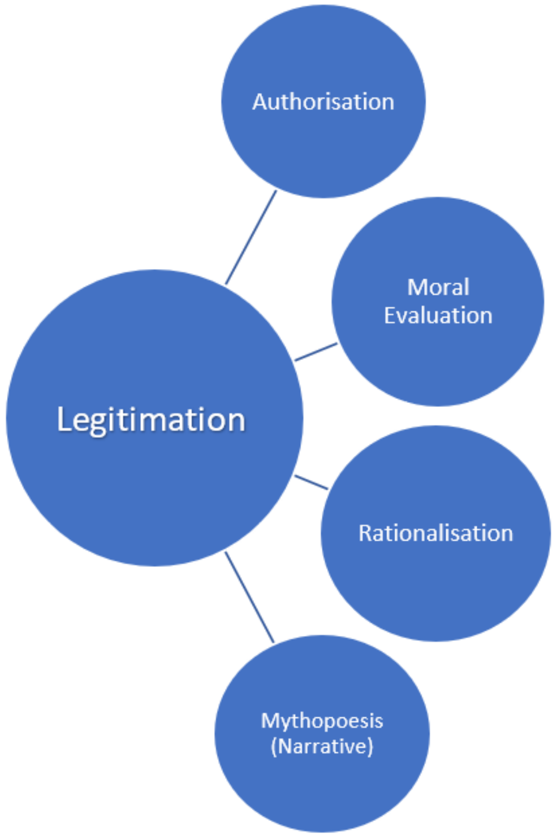
Authorisation is invoked when an action is justified by connecting it to ***impersonal*** sources of authority, such as tradition, law, custom, and/or conformity to majority behaviour or belief, and ***personal*** forms of authority invested within specific individuals due to their status as role models, celebrities or holders of public office, or from their perceived expertise due to the possession of credentials, life-experience, or occupation (Van Leeuwen 2008:106-109)[52]. When it comes to this latter form of authority, Maesse (2015) points out that not all experts are equal. For example, when academics are granted a speaking position, most disciplines are considered experts in their respective fields. However, economists can be an exception to this and find themselves treated as 'universal experts' and are summoned on various issues (Maesse 2015:295-296).

Moral evaluation involves connecting social practices to value systems and is sub-divided into three forms by Van Leeuwen (2008). Firstly, it can take the form of ***evaluation*** as signalled by adjectives attached to the described practice. This process is often subtle; Van Leeuwen (2008:110) gives the example of adjectives found in advertising such as 'cool' and 'crisp'. ***Abstraction*** involves representing practices in abstract ways to position them as positive or negative. One example already encountered in Chapter 2 of this project is the representation of policies seeking to train or coerce the unemployed towards paid employment as 'labour market activation' or 'incentivisation'. ***Analogies*** involve positive or negative comparisons of practices either directly or implicitly. Van Leeuwen (2008:113) cites an implicit example at

52 Alternatively, a practice may be criticised by suggesting it lacks such forms of authority.

work in Ivan Illich's [1971] polemic against modern schooling where he uses language such as 'incarceration' and 'drilling' to compare it with prison and the military.

Figure 6 Van Leeuwen typology of legitimation strategies



Source: Adapted from Van Leeuwen (2008:124-135)

Rationalisation focuses on the purported rationale of a social practice to grant or deny legitimacy. ***Instrumental rationalisation*** justifies actions in terms of their goals, uses and purposes. For example, a parent telling their child to eat carrots to improve their vision. On the other hand, ***theoretical rationalisation*** represents social practices as being founded on some form of 'truth' and as conforming to the 'natural order of things' (Van Leeuwen 2008:113).

Mythopoesis is the use of narrative to represent social practices as legitimate. These take the form of ***moral tales*** in which 'protagonists are rewarded for engaging in legitimate social practices or restoring the legitimate order' (Van Leeuwen 2008:118). Conversely, they can take the form of ***cautionary tales*** in which protagonists are punished for straying from the prescribed path.

This legitimation framework comes to the fore in Chapter Seven, where a micro-analysis of a sample of selected texts is made [Section 4.5.2].

4.5 Gathering and Analysing the Data

This section presents the methods by which this project was carried out. **Section 4.5.1** outlines how the samples that informed this study were assembled and offers a breakdown of the materials gathered from each field. **Section 4.5.2** explains how the data was analysed from each field using a worksheet incorporating the WPR framework and elements from CDS.

4.5.1 Gathering data

This project followed Bacchi's (2009) guidance that the analysis of problematisations should begin with 'practical texts'. Following an initial literature review and exploratory investigation of the policy measures implemented post-GFC, it identified two key policy initiatives introduced in response to a stated problem of 'youth unemployment'. These were:

Social Practice A: Three age-banded reductions to the level of JSA and related payments in SW and P bills introduced by a FF led coalition government in April and December 2009, and again in November 2013 by a FG-Labour coalition [Section 2.4.2.1].

Social Practice B: The EYG as recommended by the Council of Europe on 22 April 2013 and provided for in the Irish context in an implementation plan published in December 2013 and implemented from January 2014 onwards [Section 2.4.2.2].

Having identified these two key practices, it was possible to distinguish between the two fields within which they were produced, disseminated, and contested: 'Policy-making', 'parliamentary-politics' and 'media'. Each field had specific characteristics regarding the types of data collected, the research questions emphasised, and the research process. All documentation gathered was analysed with the aid of a worksheet primarily based on WPR Q1 and Q2. The exact content and format of these worksheets shifted in line with features of the field examined and the questions being focused on [Section 4.5.2].

Chapter Five details the findings from the 'policymaking' field, taken in a broad sense to encompass inter/intra/non-governmental and state organisations that produced 'grey literature'[53] between 2008 and 2014 proposing practices in response to youth unemployment. It focuses on how the Irish EYGIP was formulated based on a sample produced between 2010 and 2014 [Table 7]. Genre-wise this chapter looks solely at 'practical texts', as in the typical implementation of WPR. The analysis in the chapter was conducted at three levels. It began by examining documentation produced by the OECD and EU. These organisations have played a key role in setting the terms of the policy debate in social policy (Dostal 2004; Kildal 2009). This influence has especially been seen regarding youth unemployment (Cort 2011; Sukarieh and Tannock 2015). Next is the documentation authored by NGOs on the Irish level. These sources primarily consisted of submissions made to the Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Social Protection and Education in 2012 and two reports produced by the National Youth Council of Ireland [NYCI] in 2010 and 2011. Finally, attention

53 This is a term used within policy analysis to denote those research materials used to inform and evaluate policy outside of formal academic research. Examples include reports, working papers, government documents, white papers and policy evaluations.

zooms in on the Irish EYGIP as produced by the DSP in 2013. A background on the civil society organisations which feature can be found in Appendix IV.

Table 7 Breakdown of Policymaking sample by source

Source	n
OECD	2
National Youth Council of Ireland	3
European Commission	1
Council of the European Union	1
Department of Social Protection	1
Oireachtas Library and Research Service	1
Economic and Social Research Institute	1
Disability Federation of Ireland	1
Think tank for Action on Social Change	1
Youth Work Ireland	1
Total	14

Chapter Six analyses texts from the field of 'parliamentary-politics'; documenting the legislative processes in 2009 and 2013 that enacted a series of reductions in the level of JSA payable to the young unemployed. Table 8 breaks down this sample by genre. The corpus included the three social welfare and pension bills as enacted, transcripts of the Dáil proceedings[54] at the Second and Third stages concerning these bills, amendments introduced by government and opposition parliamentarians as part of the process, and press releases and speeches as published by the Department of Social Protection. Background on political parties whose members were quoted from this field can be found in Appendix IV.

Chapter Seven is based on a sample from the 'media' field covering the period between 15 October 2013 and 16 November 2013 – encompassing the period from the simultaneous announcement of another tranche of reductions to JSA and the first details of the Irish iteration of the EYG, up to the signing of the bill enacting the former measure. This mediatisation of Budget 2014 during this period offered a unique point to investigate both the 're-contextualisation' of problematisations from the fields of 'policymaking' and 'parliamentary-politics', as examined in Chapter Five and Six, into that of the 'media'. As both the practices announced were novel, it also enabled the examination of legitimation and de-legitimation strategies enacted within this field by those granted a speaking position. Such moments where authorities are obliged to 'justify' their 'controversial actions' are crucial to understanding processes of legitimation and de-legitimation (Vaara 2014).

54 The decision was made to exclude Seanad debates from the analysis due to constraints of time and lack a of evidence of novel problematizations from an initial analysis of those debates.

Table 8 Breakdown of parliamentary-politics sample by genre

Genre	n
Ministerial Speeches	4
Initial Legislation and Explanatory Memos	3
Legislation as Passed	3
Second Stage Dáil Debates	3
Press Releases	3
Committee Amendments	3
Committee Stage Debates	3
Total	22

In building an initial sample for the macro-analysis in Chapter Seven, the focus was primarily on the print media, using three online databases – the Irish Newspaper Archive, the Irish Times Archive, and Nexis. The same search terms "Jobseekers' allowance" OR "Youth Guarantee" between the dates 15 October 2013 and 16 November 2013 were used on all three platforms. These narrow parameters were chosen to focus on the dissemination of these practices and the problematisation(s) they entailed and to ensure the manageability of the sample. Only texts focused on one, or both practices were included in the sample of 29 print texts collected. Upon beginning the analysis, a further opinion piece by then Taoiseach Enda Kenny was included. This text did not use the chosen keywords but was referenced in one of the other texts. Table 9 breaks down the texts by newspaper. While the research was limited to national papers, the style of these newspapers ranges widely from broadsheet [The Irish Times, Irish Examiner], hybrid broadsheet-tabloid [Irish Independent, Sunday Independent] and tabloid [Evening Herald, Irish Daily Mail]. This variation means they had differing audiences. The sample encompassed a wide range of genres across the field of print media. It included reportage, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, and a personal experience piece – as can be seen in Table 10. This initial sample was further supplemented with a panel discussion about these policies from the current affairs show 'Prime Time' screened on ***Raidió Teilifís Éireann*** [RTÉ] on 12 November 2013. Background on the participants in this discussion can be found in Appendix IV.

A second sample was developed for the legitimation and de-legitimation analysis. This sample included texts from the media and other fields which explicitly sought to defend or contest one or both social practices announced on 15 October 2013. In addition to print media sources this sample included the speech announcing the measures by then Minister Joan Burton, the Prime Time segment included in the previous section and a visual image and social media post produced by a campaign group WNL [Section 2.3.3] that sought to de-legitimise the practices. These texts were identified during the data collection process for this and the other fields that informed this study. Including a broader range of sources enabled a deeper understanding of the discourses marshalled in different genres and the problematisations developed outside of the print and televisual media. Table 11 breaks down this sample by genre.

Table 9 Breakdown of media sample by source

Source	n
Irish Independent	10
The Irish Times	9
Irish Examiner	5
Evening Herald	3
Irish Daily Mail	3
RTÉ	1
Total	31

Table 10 Breakdown of media sample by genre

Genre	n
Reportage	15
Opinion Piece	10
Letter to the Editor	3
Opinion/Reportage Hybrid	1
Opinion/Personal Experience	1
Editorial	1
Televised Panel Discussion	1
Total	31

Table 11 Breakdown of the legitimation/de-legitimation sample by genre

Genre	n
Opinion Piece	4
Speech	2
Televised debate	1
Opinion/Reportage Hybrid	1
Opinion/Personal Experience	1
Photo Stunt	1
Total	10

4.5.2 Analysing data

This study involved a close reading of a broad range of written and multimodal textual data from various sources. Having engaged with the CDS literature, efforts were made to systematise the approach applied in this project. The objectives were to aid comparability of data within and across fields and ensure the mode of analysis was both intelligible and open for scrutiny by others (Anaïs 2013). These aims were achieved by developing a worksheet outlining the questions asked of each text [Appendix III]. As explored below, this worksheet was modified according to the nature of the data found in each field, and the research questions being emphasised. However, each version followed the same three-step schema when initially investigating a text.

Step One: Noting down preconceptions before analysing a given text. E.g., What genre was it expected to be? What problematisation(s) would be encountered? What would be silent? This step sought to encourage self-reflexivity in line with Step Seven of the WPR framework [Section 4.3.1]. It also helped to make more explicit what was surprising or discontinuous about a text.

Step Two: Undertake an initial reading of the text and locate its genre. This aim was achieved by reflection on the text's features. E.g. technical, or colloquial vocabulary, the syntax used, the tone and key, the social location or setting of the text, the participants, whether the intended audience and purpose of the text were identifiable or not and the norms of interpretation[55]. The aim here was to locate the text within its field.

Step Three: Apply WPR to the text by identifying the specific practices advocated or provided for. Q1 was employed asking what problem representation was implied by the practice(s). Q2 exercised archaeological methods and involved noting the concepts, categorisations and binaries linked to the practices inscribed. Q5s focus on subjectification and discursive effects was also implicated here. A further question reflecting on the order of problematisations was also included. This addition was necessary as many texts contained a multitude of proposed actions, often in contradiction with or 'nested' within each other (Bacchi 2009:21). This required strategies to distinguish between the ordering of these practices and differentiate the dominant form of discourse within a text. One method offered by Bacchi (2009:4) is to 'follow the money' by looking at where funding is targeted within a proposal. From CDS and critical sociolinguistics, other analytical strategies were adopted to decipher which problem representation is dominant. E.g., evidence of 'overlexicalisation' – where the author uses many synonymous or near-synonymous terms to describe a social practice – which can often suggest an intense preoccupation with it (Fowler and Kress 1979:210-212). Upon completing this process, Q4 which asks - what remains silent? - was applied to the text.

In Chapter Six, the analysis is focused on SW and P bills and the debates in the Dáil that preceded their enaction. The lengthy nature of these texts, the sheer number of participants, and the discussion of budgetary measures outside of the purview of this study all posed difficulties for the worksheet as originally designed. The solution was to adapt the research strategy. In practice, this entailed identifying and highlighting those sections discussing 'youth unemployment' and other related issues during Step Two in addition to genre identification. These highlighted sections formed the focus of the third step, which applied the WPR framework.

Chapter Seven examines the problematisation of youth unemployment in media. It also emphasises Q6 of the WPR framework by reviewing the legitimation processes at work in a selected sample of texts from multiple fields. While elements of Q6 informed the analysis in previous chapters, this chapter centres on it and examines how the problematisation(s) produced within the restricted fields of 'policymaking' and Irish 'parliamentary-politics' were disseminated in the Irish mass media for public consumption. This research focus was pursued in two phases on the macro and micro levels. Firstly, texts were analysed following the three steps as outlined above. Again, this involved modification in line with the nature of the material examined. As well as genre analysis and the application of the WPR framework, the themes and the positioning of texts were analysed in terms of whether they acted to legitimate or de-legitimate these practices and the social actors represented. This measure revealed the silences between texts [Q4] and identified texts suitable for the micro-analysis,

55 These genre criteria were adapted from a worksheet provided by Prof. Michał Krzyżanowski at the 2018 iteration of the European Consortium for Political Research Summer School Methods Course on Analysing Political Discourse.

which formed the second analysis phase. This micro-analysis involved going line by line through selected texts and noting the legitimation strategies present.

4.5.3 Representativeness, reliability, validity, and reflexivity

Qualitative research such as that pursued in this project should display 'trustworthiness and authenticity' (Millar et al. 2019). The classic criteria in traditional research to demonstrate it is **representativeness** in that the sample reflects the characteristics of the research object, **reliability** in that the analysis can be repeated by others and **validity** in that it offers a 'true' picture of the world (Bryman 2008). Such criteria are more suited to quantitative research and hard to bring about in a qualitative study of this type, but it is argued that the research design upholds their spirit.

Steps were taken to make clear how the finding of this project were arrived at. CDS was the methodological inspiration in this regard. The systematicity of this discipline aims to make processes of data collection and analysis as transparent as possible. This measure ensures a level of reliability for the research. Others can see how the interpretations of the data were arrived at – even if a given reader may not agree with those interpretations. Jäger (2001:51) identifies 'completeness' as a proxy for representativeness in discourse studies of this type. This goal is achieved when the addition of new data for analysis stops returning formally novel findings to the study. It is believed that this criterion was completed across the three fields examined. The openness on this aspect of the methodology to critique augments the trustworthiness and authenticity of the research.

The criterion of validity and the claim to 'truth' it implies are anathema to the post-structural lens adopted in this study. Instead, it is argued that as the researcher is highly implicated in the object of their research, the ability to demonstrate 'reflexivity' is critical (Millar et al. 2019:563). This goal is crucial as:

> *'…given one's location within historically and culturally entrenched forms of knowledge, we need ways to subject our own thinking to critical scrutiny.'* (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016:24)

The researcher must be clear about how they are positioned within the research to ensure the openness to scrutiny of the interpretations they arrive at and improve the quality of those findings. In WPR, reflexivity goes beyond making 'declarations' of self-reflexivity in which the researcher announces the ways they are positioned concerning their research subject. Instead, the focus is on being reflexive as a practice (Bacchi 2012). It is thus incorporated as the Seventh Step of WPR by which the researcher applies the Six questions to problem representations they produce during their research; in terms of any prescribed policy responses they might make during their research. In this study, the insights from the application of this seventh step emerge in Section 8.3.1 And Section 9.5.3. In addition to this, the first step of the worksheet developed for this study, where the researcher notes their preconceptions before engaging with the material under investigation, sought to foster reflexivity about the assumptions being brought to the data [Section 4.5.2].

Chapter Five: 'Guaranteeing' our Youth in Policy

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the field of policymaking. It is based on a sample of practical texts and grey literature from between 2010 and 2014. The analysis involved benchmarking texts produced by IGOs and Irish civil society organisations against each other and the Irish EYGIP as published in 2014. Information about how the sample was gathered and analysed is available in Section 4.5. Background information on the Irish civil society organisations featured in this chapter can be found in Appendix IV.

The first three sections present the findings of WPR Q1 and Q2 and outline the problem representations found. **Section 5.2** presents IGO level problematisations based on a sample of texts from the OECD and EU institutions. **Section 5.3** outlines findings from the level of Irish civil society based on texts from NGOs, charities, and think-tanks. **Section 5.4** analyses the Irish EYGIP and benchmarks it against the problematisations encountered in the preceding sections.

Section 5.5 moves to WPR Q3 and Q4 and excavates the assumptions, presuppositions, and silences at work within this field. **Section 5.6** concludes with a summary of the key findings.

5.2 IGO Problematisation(s)

This section provides an overview of findings from texts produced at the IGO level. It finds a series of problematisations at work: a representation of the young unemployed as deficient in terms of their level of education in the form of credentials or 'human capital', their behaviour, their immobility, and a lack of entrepreneurial initiative and/or resources to become self-employed [Section 5.2.1]; a representation of certain sections of young unemployed people as 'at risk' [Section 5.2.2]; of education and training systems as flawed or disconnected [Section 5.2.3]; of social protection systems as 'passive' [Section 5.2.4]; and of excessive labour market regulation and/or wage levels [Section 5.2.5].

5.2.1 The young unemployed as THE problem

These texts represent youth unemployment as the outcome of a range of shortcomings found amongst the ranks of this population that render them 'un-competitive' on the labour market or stop them from entering it in the first place. Diagnoses included a lack of credentials or human capital; behavioural deviance; ignorance of available opportunities, immobility; and a lack of entrepreneurial predisposition or support.

P1: The young unemployed lack 'credentials' and 'human capital'.

Example 5.1

"Youth Guarantee" refers to a situation in which young people receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. (CEU 2013:1)

The predominant representation focused on a ***lack of qualifications, skills, or experience*** as the obstacle young unemployed individuals face. This problematisation can be traced back to from the central pledge of the EYG [Example 5.1]. Together these texts represent young unemployed people as ***un-competitive on the labour market*** due to shortcomings in terms of credentials and/or a low level of human capital.

Example 5.2

Further efforts should be made in many countries to ensure that no youth enters the labour market without a recognised and valued qualification […] teenagers should be encouraged to stay longer in education […] School dropouts also need special attention from the education authorities to ensure they remain engaged in, or re-connect with, education… (Scarpetta et al. 2010:5)

A problematisation of a lack of 'qualifications' or credentials among the young unemployed can be found across these documents [Example 5.2]. Often, this problem representation can be traced back to practices emphasising 'second chance' education or supplementary measures within the education system. Thus, this problematisation is intertwined with representations of 'at-risk' youth [Section 5.2.2] and weaknesses within education and training systems [Section 5.2.3].

Example 5.3

The Irish economy is shifting away from bricks and mortar towards knowledge-based services, and those previously employed in construction-related activities need to acquire the skills and competencies required in these expanding sectors. (González Pandiella 2013:2)

A representation of young unemployed individuals as lacking 'skill' was identified across the OECD texts. However, these texts also shared a pervasive vagueness regarding which 'skills' were lacking or desirable. One exception was a proposal to transform unemployed construction workers into IT workers in an Ireland-specific OECD text [Example 5.3]. Another was found in an OECD (2014: 34) report, evaluating the Irish EYGIP, which identified 'hotels, retail etc.' as areas with a high likelihood of future vacancies and thus a potential focus of training efforts[56].

EU texts suggested language acquisition or familiarity with ICT as 'skills' to be fostered among the young unemployed. Spanish investment in this regard is viewed as a 'good

[56] The precarious and 'low-skill' conditions requirements typically found in hospitality and retail in Ireland and elsewhere is left silent here (Murphy 2017; Nugent 2020).

example of concrete and positive results' from the EYG (EC 2014:5). Specific 'future growth' sectors are named potential targets of EYG policies, including the green economy, health, social care, and ICT sectors (CEU 2013: 2). However, there were no references to the specific skills these sectors require - whether technical or otherwise. The absence of practices targeting specific technical skills implies a focus on less tangible 'employability' or 'transferable' skills[57] (Grugulis et al. 2004). This problem representation positions the young unemployed as malleable subjects - rapidly transferred from one sector to another when the demand arises.

Example 5.4

…use targeted and well-designed wage and recruitment subsidies to encourage employers to create new opportunities for young people, such as an apprenticeship, traineeship or job placement… (CEU 2013:4)

EU documents also represented a lack of experience and un-competitiveness among young people as a problem. Proposals are made to establish an intermediate level of 'apprenticeship' or 'internship' between the education system and employment and to introduce employer subsidies to take on out-of-work youths [Example 5.4]. This latter practice is also advocated within OECD texts (Scarpetta et al. 2010:25).

P2: The young unemployed lack motivation or awareness.

Example 5.5

…provide personalised guidance and individual action planning, including tailor-made individual support schemes, based on the principle of mutual obligation at an early stage… (CEU 2013: 4)

A representation of a behavioural deficiency among the young unemployed can be found across the grey literature - but is most evident in OECD texts. Young people were problematised as either being '***discouraged'*** from job-searching or lacking **'awareness'** about employment and other available opportunities[58].

Example 5.6

…establish a youth compact whereby those in unemployment will receive a compulsory offer of training, work or a combination. (González Pandiella 2013:34).

OECD texts (Scarpetta et al. 2010; González Pandiella 2013) focused primarily on the first iteration of this problematisation. They emphasised investment in services and sanctions within the social protection system and increasing the conditionality and eligibility criteria for income and other supports. Example 5.6 offers a clear example of this with a call to make training or work 'compulsory' for the young unemployed.

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[57] In other words, it as much the attitudinal predisposition of the young unemployed as their technical capacity being problematised here [Section 3.4.3]

[58] This latter problematization can also be linked to the representation of a skills deficiency as through practices which constitute 'job-searching' as a 'skill' to be imparted to the young unemployed (see NYCI 2010:34).

Example 5.7

Promote employment/labour mobility by making young people aware of job offers, traineeships and apprenticeships and available support in different areas and provide adequate support for those who have moved. (EC 2014:7)

EU texts represented 'awareness' as a problem. They call for young unemployed people to be made 'aware' of their 'responsibilities' when engaging with the social protection system. Young people also needed to be educated about opportunities available on the national and European levels and self-employment's potential [Example 5.7]. Such practices represent youth unemployment as a problem of ignorance.

P3: The young unemployed are 'immobile' or need 'support'.

EU texts emphasised practices that would encourage the young unemployed to move from their areas, regions, or countries to locations where they could find employment [Example 5.7]. This goal was to be achieved via: the dissemination of information; by the work of the EURES agency; and the provision of language lessons and other services and supports to improve 'mobility' (CEU 2013: 4). Such practices represented the ***transnational immobility*** of the young unemployed as a problem - rooted in a lack of resources or ignorance of the available opportunities.

Example 5.8

The first line of defence is to provide income support to the unemployed youth to help them sustain their job search. (Scarpetta et al. 2010:4)

Conversely, OECD texts problematised young unemployed individuals' ***immobility within their own country*** [Example 5.8]. The González Pandiella (2013:21) report identified housing support as one area for Irish authorities to work on; doing so was argued to improve the mobility of the young unemployed. A lack of capital or resources among the young unemployed was thus represented as prolonging their condition[59].

P4: The young unemployed are un-entrepreneurial.

Example 5.9

'…promote and provide continued guidance on entrepreneurship and self- employment for young people, including through entrepreneurship courses'. (CEU 2013:4)

European texts problematised both the entrepreneurial ***awareness and ability*** of young people. This problematisation was strongest on the EU level but was also present within OECD literature (see González Pandiella 2013:34). Practices set out in these documents are divided between those that problematise: a lack of 'awareness' among the young unemployed - addressed by training and education on the subject; or a lack of 'capital'- resolved by the provision of micro-loans by the state (EC 2014:6-7).

[59] Such a problematisation runs against the grain of the aged-banded JSA rates examined in Chapter Six.

5.2.2 'At-Risk' young people

Example 5.10

Member States should develop mechanisms to identify and activate those furthest away from the labour market (the NEETs) […] Member States should establish new tools and strategies with all actors that have access to these unregistered young people (e.g. social services, education providers, youth associations.). (EC 2014:2)

IGO texts all identified sub-populations of the *young unemployed as being* more 'at risk', 'far away from the labour market', 'vulnerable', 'left behind' or 'disadvantaged'. This sub-population is represented as having deeper deficiencies of the types listed in Section 5.2.1, especially a lack of 'credentials' and 'human capital'. This group is positioned as being most in 'need' of intervention and requiring more intensive forms of 'rehabilitation' to become employable (González Pandiella 2013:2).

Scarpetta et al. (2010) argued to ***target resources at those 'most in need' of intervention***. Those in 'need' were labelled as 'left behind youth' and classified in terms of a lack of credentials, having an ethnic minority or migrant background, and/or living in a 'disadvantaged/rural/remote' area (Scarpetta et al. 2010:18). On the Irish level, González Pandiella (2013:13) identified this population as consisting of 'school dropouts, young individuals from an immigrant background, those living in workless households and those suffering from disabilities.'

This problematisation of sub-populations or their geographical location can also be found on the European level. Here the preferred classification is the 'furthest away from the labour market' or 'the NEETs' (EC 2014:2). The EC (2014) called for a focus on this 'population' and proposed data sharing and increased surveillance by member states to identify and register its members and the development of activation strategies to bring them 'closer to the labour market'. However, this document also represented the problem on the spatial level. It described how the Youth Employment Initiative, a fund set up to support activation practices across the EU, explicitly targeted those regions of member states where the NEET rate had risen above 25% (EC 2014:8).

Example 5.11

Mentors could provide young people from immigrant backgrounds with information about the 'rules of the game' and about the way to behave during interviews and on the job… (Scarpetta et al. 2010:30)

Overall, the problem is represented as a deficiency located within these 'at risk' individuals and populations [Example 5.11]. The theories of social exclusion and dependency culture [Section 3.4] underpin the practices prescribed and the characterisations of the group or spaces provided. Scarpetta et al. (2010:30) contained an exception to this; it also problematised external barriers facing 'young people from immigrant background' by calling for the 'rigorous implementation of existing anti-discrimination legislation.'

Benchmarking these texts against each other revealed a widespread silence regarding the gendered dimension of youth unemployment. Gender differences did arise as a topic in one EU text examined, which called for member states to ‘pay attention’ to gender and ‘diversity of the young people who are being targeted’ (CEU 2013: 3). The preamble of this document also identifies ‘young parents, primarily young mothers’ as a population of concern in terms of a lack of ‘adequate work-life balance measures’ (CEU 2013:1). Overall, however, the language adopted is ostensibly ‘gender neutral’ – something that will be returned to later in the analysis [Section 5.5.2].

5.2.3 Education and training institutions

Example 5.12

The first policy objective ought to be to prevent young people from dropping out of school [...] Second, youth at risk of dropping out of school and low achievers should receive a second chance through apprenticeship…. Third, students should receive financial incentives such as performance-based scholarships conditioned on combining work and study to facilitate their school-to-work transition... (Scarpetta et al. 2010:26)

OECD and EU texts included practices that represent education and training systems in member states as problematic. Scarpetta et al. (2010:5) saw what they termed ‘the Jobs crisis’ as an opportune moment to address deficiencies of education systems across the OECD’s membership. This problematisation is highly intertwined with practices that focus on ‘at risk’ subpopulations [Example 5.12]. EC (2014:6) prescribed a greater level of cooperation between public employment services and secondary school systems to facilitate the ***monitoring and targeting*** of young people deemed likely to leave school early or without credentials through school visits, data sharing, and training teachers.

Example 5.13

…ensure that measures undertaken in the context of a Youth Guarantee scheme aimed at boosting skills and competences help to address existing mismatches and service labour-demand needs. (CEU 2013:4)

On the EU level, a problem representation was made of ***skills mismatches from existing education and training set-ups*** [Example 5.13]. An EC (2014:11) memo proposed practices to improve the ‘quality and supply’ of apprenticeships and to raise ‘awareness’ among the young unemployed and change their ‘mind-sets’ towards them (p.7).

5.2.4 ‘Passive’ social policy

Example 5.14

To reconnect youth at risk of marginalisation, there should be an effective mix of so-called "carrots" (income support and effective ALMPs) and "sticks" (activation stance and moderate benefit sanctions). (Scarpetta et al. 2010:26)

Social protection systems and public employment services were also problematised within these texts. ‘Passive’ income supports were represented as producing additional risk for the young unemployed - unless combined with the ‘stick’ of activation [Example 5.14].

OECD texts advised member states to provide an ‘active’ set of supports - involving education, training, and conditionality - to get young unemployed people into work (Scarpetta et al. 2010; OECD 2014). EU texts proposed an emphasis on ‘principles of mutual obligation’ when designing measures targeted at the young unemployed (CEU 2013:3) This proposal can be traced back to a representation of problematic behaviour driving young unemployment [Section 5.2.1].

5.2.5 Labour market regulation(s)

Example 5.15

*Reducing the gap between regulations for temporary and permanent contracts… (*Scarpetta et al. 2010: 5)

One problematisation, constructed by Scarpetta et al. (2010), identified EPL as disincentivising young people’s hiring in certain states [Example 5.15]. Regulations were problematised as producing ‘poorly-integrated new entrants’, a sub-group of young workers with secondary school diplomas who ‘find it difficult to find stable employment, even during periods of strong economic growth’ (Scarpetta et al. 2010:20). France, Greece, Italy, Japan and Spain are identified as having large populations of this type (Scarpetta et al. 2010:30). Conversely, countries with ‘low-regulated labour markets’ are positioned as enabling a ‘smoother’ transition to work for young people (Scarpetta et al. 2010:20).

Example 5.16

One option would be to introduce a youth sub-minimum wage in those countries with a relatively high and universal statutory minimum wage… (Scarpetta et al. 2010: 30)

This text also identified a ‘high and universal statutory minimum wage’ as an obstacle to youth employment [Example 5.15]. EU texts also problematised the cost of young workers labour. However, they proposed practices to reduce ‘non-wage labour costs’, meaning the state rather than the employee would bear the burden (CEU 2013:4). This problematisation interlinks with that of the young unemployed as ‘uncompetitive’ or unattractive employees from the employers’ perspective [Section 5.2.1].[60]

A counter-problematisation to excessive state labour market regulation was found in an EC (2014:11) proposal to establish a ‘Quality Framework for Traineeships’ and a ‘European Alliance for Apprenticeships’. Such measures to introduce ‘high-quality work experience under safe and fair conditions’ suggest a problematisation of the behaviour of employers.

[60] The clear assumptions here is that unemployment levels are driven by state induced distortions of the labour market – as theorised within neo-classical economic thought [Section 3.3.3].

5.3 Civil Society Problematisation(s)

This section provides an overview of the problematisations found within a sample of texts produced by Irish civil society organisations. It finds that evidence of problematisations that focus on: the young unemployed themselves in terms of their levels of education and training, behaviour and 'awareness', and capacity for entrepreneurship [Section 5.3.1]; 'at-risk' populations defined in terms of educational attainment, geographical location and more marginally on young people who are a member of ethnic minority groups, seeking asylum or who have disabilities [Section 5.3.2]; the education system as detached from the labour market and/or as being undermined by austerity [Section 5.3.3]; the social protection system as either making enough use of conditionality and activation or conversely as being bureaucratic, unfair and as distorting the labour market [Section 5.3.4]; weak demand in the Irish economy [Section 5.3.4].

5.3.1 Problematising young people

Prescriptions made within these texts ***reproduce the central drive of the IGO literature***. They centred training, education, and casework practices that problematise deficiencies among the young unemployed themselves [Section 5.2.1]. Prescriptions made to the Oireachtas Committee suggest a particular consensus on young unemployment as a problem founded in a lack of 'credentials' and 'human capital' (ESRI 2012; YWI 2012; NYCI 2012; TASC 2012). NYCI (2010:12) expanded the concept of a skills-deficiency beyond the workplace to 'career planning', 'job searching skills' and 'personal development skills' that are to be inculcated among the young unemployed.

Example 5.17

Job search activity should be monitored on a regular and ongoing basis (ESRI 2012:7)

The ESRI (2012) submission emphasised a behavioural deficit; it lamented the absence of 'systematic monitoring of job-search activity' and 'sanctions for non-compliance' in the Irish social protection system [Example 5.17].

Example 5.18

Information should be communicated in a simple and clear manner using a variety of methods to engage with young jobseekers particularly the hard to reach. (NYCI 2011:49)

'Awareness' is problematised by the NYCI (2011), they proposed measures to improve access and communication of information to young unemployed individuals - focused on 'the hard to reach'. This problematisation was nested within a representation of the social protection and training system as opaque and non-user friendly [See Section 5.3.2]. TASC (2012:9) proposed encouraging entrepreneurship among the young unemployed through 'tailor-made supports', 'entrepreneurial training' and 'micro finance'.

Example 5.19

…young people should be supported to make informed choices, so that they are clear about the opportunities and challenges presented by emigration to different parts of the world. In instances where there are no jobs available, the State should do all it can to support young people to secure employment abroad. (NYCI 2011:34)

A relative absence of the representations of 'immobile' young unemployed people was revealed by benchmarking these texts with those on other levels. NYCI (2011) is an exception to this [Example 5.19]. It foreshadows EU proposals that the state should provide information and support young unemployed people who wish to migrate. Conversely, some of these texts, such as TASC (2012) and YWI (2012), represent their proposed measures as preventing emigration as well as youth unemployment. This representation contrasts with the emphasis on 'intra-EU' mobility as encouraged within EU and DSP texts.

5.3.2 Problematising 'at-risk' young people

As with texts consulted on the IGO level, there was a problematisation of specific sub-sections of the young unemployed as being particularly 'at risk of falling through the cracks' (NYCI 2012), as being 'disadvantaged' (DFI 2013; YWI 2012) or 'hard to reach' (YWI 2012; NYCI 2011). However, this problematisation is muted within the ESRI (2012) text, and the EU classification of NEET is absent across this sample.

The NYCI (2010; 2011) delineates this group purely in terms of their educational attainment or as those living in 'disadvantaged areas'. TASC (2012:8), in their contextual summary, distinguished between 'young people with secondary education [who] entered [the] labour market during the boom to take up employment in construction and related sectors' and 'young people without formal qualifications' as groups of concern as well as 'graduates' who are 'leaving education with little prospect of employment'.

Example 5.20

*Extend entitlement to young people over 18 and under 25 from the **asylum-seeking community to vocational training*** [emphasis in original] (YWI 2012)

YWI (2012) called for the extension of vocational training to young people in the 'asylum-seeking community', arguing that if 'these young people acquire refugee status then they should have skills and training to compete in the jobs market'. This proposal is particularly striking. Firstly, it constitutes access to education solely in terms of economic utility. Secondly, limiting the proposal to vocational training presupposes the position in the labour market individuals from this group should aspire to. This reproduces the economised problematisation of young members of minority groups as found on the IGO level[61]. TASC (2012:2) identifies 'people from ethnic minorities' as needing 'new types of unemployment support' to 'find jobs' such as the provision of language classes[62].

[61] It also reflects an existing racial stratification within the Irish labour-market (Joseph 2018; 2020)

[62] This text deals with general unemployment as well as youth unemployment and therefore this problematisation appears to extend to all members of these groups.

The DFI (2013) text, as per the focus of the organisation, identifies 'young people with disabilities and those suffering from chronic illnesses' as a group in need of practices tailored to their' doubly disadvantaged' status, including changes to the rules of existing payments to enable access for members of this group to activation schemes in the form of reserved spaces, an allowance for extra supports, and longer durations in these schemes than typical.

5.3.3 Education and training Institutions

Example 5.21

[Education and training programmes] … should be demand led, driven by the needs of growth areas and strongly connected with real jobs in the economy. (ESRI 2012:7)

ESRI (2012) advocated reforms within the education system, which they problematised as being disconnected from the 'needs' of the economy. It prescribed that training provided to the unemployed 'should be driven primarily by the needs of enterprises' (ESRI 2012:7). To ensure this, they proposed the establishment of 'sectoral skills councils' with employer input (ESRI 2012:9). The NYCI (2010:69-70) also proposed addressing a perceived lack of 'work experience' within courses in both the mainstream education system and 'second chance education' provision. In addition to this, they (NYCI 2011:50) advocated the establishment of 'entrepreneurship' as a subject in second-level education.

Example 5.22

Delaying entry into the labour market through education. (NYCI 2011: 19)

The NYCI (2011) report included a novel representation of the role of education for this sample [Example 5.22]. One which positioned education and training mechanisms as ***a holding ground*** for young people waiting to enter the labour market. Such a representation implicitly constitutes the economy as neatly 'cyclical' in which an eventual 'recovery' is assured[63].

Example 5.23

…by weakening education supports that keep young people in school and college, the quality of the labour force declines, and Ireland's long-term productive capacity diminishes correspondingly (TASC 2012:1)

A problematisation of austerity practices within the Irish education and training system was also evident in some of these texts. This representation emerges most strongly in TASC (2012), which represents a macro-economic problem [Example 5.21]. YWI (2012) and NYCI (2012) reproduced to varying degrees these concerns and called for an end of a cap on higher education provision, ***post-leaving certificate course*** [PLC] places, and the preservation of apprenticeships. These proposals can be considered as constituting a counter-problematisation; they run against the grain of consensus elsewhere in this sample by

[63] This is symptomatic of the wider assumption held in the early post-GFC period. In Chapter Six it is shown that some political representatives also assumed the economic crisis and resulting unemployment was a temporary obstacle [Section 6.4.4].

representing austerity as counter-productive for the young unemployed. They also reveal a silence on these effects within both the IGO and DSP texts consulted. However, it is worth emphasising that calls to reverse austerity are muted and implicit in these documents. Concrete measures proposed are limited to the reversal of individual austerity measures or take the form of ambivalent calls for 'reform and expansion' of the education system (TASC 2012:8).

5.3.4 Social protection institutions

Example 5.24

An effective activation strategy also needs to be backed up with appropriate sanctions for non-compliance with job search and activation requirements. (ESRI 2012:7)

ESRI (2012) problematised the 'motivation' of the young unemployed, a problem they represent as compounded at the level of the social protection system due to:

a lack of compulsion regarding interview attendance, an absence of systematic monitoring of job- search activity and, up to recently, a complete lack of sanctions for non-compliance. (ESRI 2012:7)

They called for greater conditionality and an increase in the 'activation capacity' of the DSP in line with the increased numbers of claims within the system. It is also notable that the DFI (2013) text identified its proposals to expand access to activation for 'young people with disabilities and chronic illnesses' as serving to prevent 'poverty traps' and as 'making work pay' – terms associated with the dependency culture thesis [Section 3.4.1].

NYCI (2011) went against the grain of the problematisations of a 'passive' or overly permissive social protection system – as found on the IGO level and the eventual EYGIP examined below. They proposed that DSP staff referring young people to 'education, training and work experience' would be compelled to provide 'reasons why' documentation outlining how it would enhance the individuals' career prospects (NYCI 2011: 49). They also argued for appeals processes to be made more 'efficient' and rapid in cases where sanctions are to be imposed (NYCI 2011:50). Linked to these practices were calls to establish a 'Charter of Rights' for young unemployed people and reverse the reductions made in 2009 to JSA rates payable to under 24-year-olds (NYCI 2011: 48-50). These NYCI proposals also contradicted the predominant understanding of 'targeted' policies as found elsewhere; they argued for 'personalised' supports at the 'individual' level rather than focusing on 'at-risk' groups. Together these practices constitute ***discrimination*** or ***unfair treatment of young people*** within the social protection system and broader Irish society as a problem. This problematisation is widely absent elsewhere in the policy sample[64] but was widely apparent in the fields of parliamentary-politics and media examined in Chapters Six and Seven.

One other point of departure within this sub-sample is a problematisation made by TASC (2012) and, to a lesser extent NYCI (2012), of activation schemes as distorting the labour market. Both called for greater oversight and regulation of the JobBridge internship scheme,

[64] It is also backgrounded in the NYCI submission to the Oireachtas Committee (NYCI 2012).

which they argued was exploited by some employers. TASC (2012:7) calls for a more robust surveillance regime over ALMPs to guard against 'perverse consequences'.

5.3.5 A 'weak' labour market

Example 5.25

Policy responses must be informed by the extent to which crisis is caused by insufficient labour demand, rather than inadequate labour supply (TASC 2012:5)

TASC (2012) was a lone voice calling for practices to stimulate 'demand' for labour within this sample [Example 5.25]. They proposed establishing an 'investment strategy focused on social and economic infrastructure' and the 'fast-tracking' of projects funded by the European Investment Bank (TASC 2012:4). They also called for the establishment of a study to assess the feasibility of a 'Youth Job Guarantee' where the state would enable local authorities and not-for-profit organisations to act as employers of last resort for young unemployed people (TASC 2012:4). These practices drew upon a Keynesian style problematisation of unemployment stemming from a lack of 'demand' rather than failings on the level of the unemployed themselves [Section 3.3.3].

This latter proposal for the state to adopt employer of last resort measures was shared by YWI (2012) and the NYCI (2012). However, a consistent Keynesian emphasis on practices that stimulate demand is solely found within the TASC text. For example, while YWI (2012) called for a 'employer of last resort' scheme, they proposed funding it via austerity measures such as introducing new taxes, consumer charges on property and water, and the privatisation of 'non-essential state assets'. The NYCI (2012) text, for its part, makes repeated references to 'scarce resources', suggesting it too accepted a need for austerity.

Other proposals to stimulate demand within the economy were more in keeping with the predominant discourse found at the level of the IGO literature. TASC (2012:4) proposed 'tailor-made supports' to assist young people in establishing businesses and grants to enterprises in 'youth-friendly sectors' such as 'tourism, catering, ICT, social services, and sports' (TASC 2012:8). NYCI (2011:49) called for credit measures to encourage enterprise by young people and problematised state bureaucracy as obstructing entrepreneurial activity.

5.4 The Irish EYG Implementation Plan

This section outlines the findings of the analysis of the Irish EYGIP (DSP 2013b) [Section 2.4.2.2]. Benchmarking this policy document against other texts from this field revealed it to have: centred a problematisation of education and training and behaviour as driving youth unemployment [Section 5.4.1]; re-contextualised the problem representation of at-risk youth towards one of managing 'scarce resources' [Section 5.4.2]; introduced a stronger 'stick' of activation for the young unemployed [Section 5.4.3]; and that it downplayed any problematisation of education and training institutions [Section 5.4.4] or the labour market [Section 5.4.5].

5.4.1 The young unemployed as THE problem

The DSP (2013b) implementation plan reproduced the focus on problematisations of the young unemployed themselves as identified above. It centred on the problematisation of a deficit of credentials and human capital and the behaviouralist problematisation.

The practices outlined sought to impart skills, credentials, and work-experience among the youth unemployed. A 'credentials' deficit was to be addressed via the already existing 'second chance' educational or training 'pathways' for early school leavers (DSP 2013b:7). The 'experience' deficit through reserving places on the JobBridge internship programme [Section 2.4.2.2], which was described as:

> *…breaking the cycle where jobseekers are unable to get a job without experience, either as new entrants to the labour market after education or training or as unemployed workers wishing to learn new skills.* (DSP 2013b:19)

Programmes such as 'Momentum' and the 'Back to Education Allowance' are identified as addressing a skills deficit among the young unemployed. For the most part, the EYGIP proposed ***prioritising existing schemes for those aged 18-25*** rather than introducing measures explicitly targeted at this age group (DSP 2013b:16). The specific 'skills' to be imparted are vague even by the standards of the broader sample informing this chapter. An exception is 'language acquisition', which is identified as a deficit to be addressed [Example 5.26].

Example 5.26

> *Basic language training would be provided in advance and language acquisition while abroad will be a compulsory element of the placement. (*DSP 2013b:23)

This language learning proposal's 'compulsory' element formed part of a wider pattern of practices that represented a behavioural problem among the young unemployed. This problem is constructed as deviant behaviour or abuse of the system rather than a question of 'discouragement' or 'awareness' as in most IGO and civil society texts analysed. Hence, it appears in unexpected places, such as language acquisition while on a European internship or placement.

The EYGIP proposed that upon engaging with services, a young unemployed individual was to be provided with a 'record of mutual understanding' which guarantees them an 'offer of work, training, or education' within four months of the initial '1-2-1 interview' (DSP 2013b:15). The record requires the young person to accept any 'reasonable referral to and offer of, employment, internship, training or education' and upload their CV to the official public employment services website JobsIreland.ie or to face potential sanctions or investigation by the Department. This is a much more stringent level of conditionality than required of older claimants, which was explained as stemming from the fact that:

> *…work experience, training and education opportunities will, under the Youth Guarantee, be prioritised for young people, and that other cohorts will be displaced from access to*

these opportunities, young people will be expected to demonstrate a higher level of engagement and commitment with the public employment services. (DSP 2013b: 16)

Thus a 'behavioural' problematisation was deeply encoded within the design of the Irish EYG. Increased conditionality and sanctions were represented mainly in OECD (Scarpetta et al. 2010) and ESRI (2012) texts in line with an economic rationality. The paternalistic terminology and punitive practices found within this text are more evocative of what Levitas (1998) described as a 'moral underclass discourse' [Section 3.4.2].

DSP (2013b) also reproduces the problematisations of the young unemployed as lacking entrepreneurial awareness or resources. The plan provides for the establishment of 'Youth Entrepreneurship Programme' with a focus on 'capacity building, mentoring, and coaching' and access to microfinance (DSP 2013b:24).

DSP (2013b) suppressed the question of mobility - internally or externally speaking - save for a committal to 'fund some of the re-location costs and/or living costs' incurred by those taking part in European schemes which involve moving abroad for at least nine months for 'work experience' or 'training' (DSP 2013b:23). Little to no attention was paid to domestic mobility in this report as identified as a problem elsewhere [Section 5.2.1].

5.4.2 Distributing 'scarce resources'

Example 5.27

…this differentiated approach is to ensure the most efficient and effective application of scarce resources and to minimise the deadweight cost of intervention… (DSP 2013b:16)

This plan emphasised the 'scarce resources' available to the Irish state, it thus resolved to prioritise resources for those deemed most 'in need' of intervention [Example 5.27]. The identification of this sub-population was to be carried out by an algorithm calculating the 'probability of exiting the live register' following the collection of biographical data (DSP 2013b: 13)[65]. This subgroup was represented in terms of the perceived financial burden they posed - rather than their 'social exclusion', or failure to accumulate 'human capital' as found in IGO and civil society texts [Section 5.2.1; Section 5.3.1]. Thus, this is a re-contextualisation of a problematisation of 'at-risk' sub-populations in line with the logic of austerity.

The DSP adopt the NEET rate as one of four indicators[66] monitoring the EYG's progress (DSP 2013b:28). At the same time, the plan downplayed the importance of targeting NEETs who are not claimants within the DSP system[67] (DSP 2013b: 4). Furthermore, as noted above, this plan primarily prioritised those classified as young on existing schemes targeted at the

[65] The indicators for this 'PEX' algorithm include gender; age; marital status; spousal income; number of dependent children; motivation; access to transport; education; literacy/ numeracy; number of claims; unemployment history; employment history; proficiency in English language; location; health status; payment type (DSP 2013b:35)

[66] The other three were the youth employment and unemployment rates and the youth unemployment ratio.

[67] In fact, it provides an annex to justify this decision (DSP 2013b: 31-32). As established in Section 3.5.1 this would be held up as a failing in the Irish EYG by the EU (European Court of Auditors 2017)

general unemployed population. There is limited provision made within this plan to target the specific needs of the young unemployed or sub-populations among this group[68].

5.4.3 'Passive' Social Policy

Example 5.29

The intervention and activation process governing the Youth Guarantee will essentially be a tailored version of this Pathways to Work activation model with a greater focus on early engagement for all younger job-seekers compared to job-seekers in other age categories. (DSP 2013b:14)

The existing social protection system is problematised as it previously applied the same terms and conditions to young claimants as those from the general population. This can be traced back to from the central measures outlined in this plan; to set aside places for young claimants on existing programmes and target them with increased conditionality and sanctioning powers. As noted above, this is represented as a problem of inadequate surveillance of this population of claimants [Section 5.4.1] and inefficient resource allocation [Section 5.4.2]. The young unemployed were identified as a problem-population in that they were a drain on the state's fiscal resources.

The document also committed to a 'partnership' approach in the area of social protection between the various 'service providers' whose remit is to deal with the young unemployed; this began with the development of the plan itself with a 'stake-holders' forum being held to get 'non-governmental input (DSP 2013b:10-11)

5.4.4 Education and Training Institutions

Example 5.28

…reforms will focus on increasing the market focus and dual-learning content of PLCs, and on extending apprenticeship beyond the limited range of industries and occupations to which it currently applies. (DSP 2013b: 18)

The implementation plan is reticent when it comes to overhauling the education system in line with criticisms levelled by IGOs [Section 5.2.3] or civil society organisations [Section 5.3.3]. It commits solely to 'reviews' of the existing system (DSP 2013b:18). The exception to this is the PLC and Apprenticeship schemes which were highlighted as areas to be reformed [Example 5.28]. Provision was also made for an 'online system' to facilitate employers and students in the tertiary educational system to 'register their programmes, to offer work-experience places to such programmes or to apply for work placements from such programmes.' (DSP 2013b:24).

[68] Exceptions mentioned within the text include the already existing second chance education scheme 'YouthReach' (DSP 2013b:19) and the creation of an internship programme specifically for 'disadvantaged youth' (DSP 2013b:22). See Section 2.4.2.2 for a presentation of further EYG funded youth targetted schemes that emerged post-2014.

5.4.5 Labour market

There is a notable absence of problematisations of the labour market within these documents. However, there was provision for action to subsidise employment of job seekers via the JobsPlus scheme (DSP 2013b:20).

There were also proposals to act on the behaviour of employers to appeal to them using an ethical register. A specific internship programme for the 'most disadvantaged young people' is proposed, with employers set to be canvassed to provide places in line with their 'Corporate Social Responsibility' programmes (DSP 2013b:22). This proposed practice, which represents the employment of youths as a charitable act, further underlines a dominant problematisation within this field of youth unemployment stemming from the deficiencies of young people.

5.5 Assumptions and Silences within this field

This section presents the archaeological findings in this field, and the wider silences revealed by the benchmarking process. These include: that an economised representation of youth unemployment prevails with a focus on fiscal burden rather than any social threat from this group [Section 5.5.1]; deep gendered and racialised assumptions, presuppositions and silences that were re-contextualised within the Irish context [Section 5.5.2]; a series of class-based assumptions about skill and mobility that favour the vantage point of employers over workers [Section 5.5.3].

5.5.1 An economised problem

The central logic underpinning the EYG is found in the EC (2014) memo, which represents the benefits of this scheme purely in fiscal terms:

> *…the International Labour Organisation has estimated the cost of setting up Youth Guarantees in the Eurozone at €21 billion per year…. However, the costs of NOT acting are far higher…. [Eurofound] has estimated the economic loss in the EU of having millions of young people out of work or education or training at over €150 billion in 2011 (1.2% of EU GDP), in terms of benefits paid out and lost output.* (EC 2014:3)

These documents produce unemployment as a threat on the individual and social levels. However, in contrast to previous eras, the focus is primarily upon the economic burden posed to and by this group, rather than constructing them as a moral or political threat to the social order [Section 3.3.2]. Fears about crime or other forms of social unrest centred in 20th-century representations of youth unemployment only arise at the margins of policy documents from this period (e.g González Pandiella 2013: 16; TASC 2012). This representation of youth unemployment as an economic burden perhaps explains the re-contextualisation found between the IGO and Irish DSP level where practices supposedly seeking to protect the most 'at risk' were transformed into measures seeking to manage the allocation of 'scare resources' [Section 5.4.2]. On the individual level, the 'cost' of unemployment is also represented in economic terms in the form of the 'scarring effect' [Section 3.4.3.1] identified across many of these texts (Scarpetta et al. 2010:4; NYCI 2010:9; CEU 2013:1; DSP 2013b:29; OECD 2014:16).

Some texts, however, stretch this effect beyond its HCT focus to also include adverse psychological (NYCI 2010:8) or demographic impacts (CEU 2013:1)

These policy documents overall work to produce a state whose role is to act on the labour market's supply-side – maximising the stock of educated and compliant wage labourers for employers to draw upon. Except for TASC (2012), there is little to no evidence of the demand-side focus found across Europe and the OECD until the 1970s/1980s [Section 3.3.3]. The emphasis on getting young people into 'work' at all costs, or at least a simulacrum of it, elides the conditions within the workplace itself. Contra the proposals found in Scarpetta et al. (2010), the targeting of minimum wage and other labour market regulations have been argued to worsen the condition of young workers (Chung et al. 2012; O'Reilly et al. 2015). The GFC led to a widespread deterioration and downward pressure on working conditions within Ireland and in other European and OECD member states. Factors such as an embargo on public employment and freeze on infrastructure projects further reduced demand for labour in the Irish context [Section 2.4.1.2]. The nominal interest in promoting youth employment is belied by the relative lack of measures proposing to stimulate demand rather than improve the 'supply' features of out-of-work youths.

5.5.2 Gendered and racialised assumptions and silences

Across the whole corpus, there is scant attention paid to the gendered dimensions of youth unemployment. While these texts[69] adopt an ostensibly gender-neutral language, it is repeatedly apparent that the dominant problematisation of youth unemployment views the object of its policies as male.

The most obvious signal of this assumption is a focus on the construction sector in the Irish context (González Pandiella 2013; DSP 2013b). While the collapse of this sector was dramatic, with a fall from 60,000 employees in 2007 to 5,000 in 2012, this focus fails to acknowledge a severe decline from 160,000 to 90,000 positions in the largely feminised services sector revealed by this same text (González Pandiella 2013:8). As seen in Chapter Three, youth unemployment has historically been viewed as a 'boy-labour' problem across various contexts - including Ireland [Section 3.3.1]. Contemporary youth unemployment discourses continue to fixate on the urban male - particularly those belonging to working-class and/or racialised communities. Such a conceptualisation of the object of these policies is prevalent on the IGO level [Section 5.2.2]. It is rather revealing that the documents also problematise these marginalised groups in terms of their purported deficiencies rather than identifying any societal barriers.

The DSP (2013b) text and some of the Civil Society texts quantified youth unemployment by gender. However, an explicit focus is not evident from the practices proposed. Similarly, the focus on youths from 'immigrant' and 'ethnic minority' backgrounds largely fails to translate from the IGO level to the Irish EYGIP. While civil society organisations such as the

[69] As noted in Section 5.2.2 this call to 'consider' gendered difference is not supplemented with any further recommendations which would suggest that it is not a priority here either.

YWI (2012) and TASC (2012) identify 'asylum seekers' and 'ethnic minorities' as populations requiring specific interventions, there is no mention of the Irish Traveller ethnic group.

5.5.3 Class-based assumptions

'Skill' is a recurrent word across this sample yet is curiously unspecified overall. There is little reference to specific technical skills, and texts which went into more detail described 'soft' or 'employability' skills [Section 3.4.3]. This trend is underlined by NYCI's (2011) including the ability to job-search itself as a skill to be imparted to the young unemployed. Employers were positioned as the key actor determining which skills were 'needed'. Irish civil society organisations such as YWI (2012) and the ESRI (2012) deploy a concept of the 'real economy' to underline this primacy of employers in determining the direction of training and education.

There is little evidence of inquiry into what sectors show potential for employment growth by these texts. The EC (CEU 2013:2) alluded to the potential of the 'green economy, health and social care'. These areas are clearly socially necessary and labour intensive; however, historically, they have not been attractive areas for large-scale investment by private sector firms acting according to market imperatives. Such investment has typically been 'externalised' to the household or the state (Wallerstein 2011; Bhattacharya 2017). The incoherence between the neoliberal consensus [Section 3.3.3] and the requisite state intervention for these sectors to grow may explain why reports produced at the abstract level allude to the potential of the 'knowledge economy' or 'green economy'. In contrast, concrete proposals within Irish context focus on the low-wage, low-skill areas of 'hotels, retail, etc.' (OECD 2014:34).

The concept of 'experience' holds a similar nebulousness within these texts. There is a taken-for-granted assumption that this is a natural category and a failure to acknowledge that its very existence is a feature of a labour market wherein employers very much have the upper hand versus a greatly expanded reserve army of labour (Breen 1988:442; Umney et al. 2018). This assumption allows the intermediary stage of 'apprenticeship' or 'internship' between the education system and the employment to expand to these sectors where it would not have been seen as traditionally necessary before the crisis. González Pandiella (2013:27) indirectly acknowledged this situation when he argues that the Irish JobBridge scheme could be better understood as a subsidy scheme for employers than a traditional work experience scheme.

The directives and policy documents produced on the European level take it for granted that 'mobility' is a positive solution to high levels of youth unemployment found in some member states and regions. This outcome may be the case for those regions and member states that benefit from a ready supply of skilled and cheap labour, but it is to the detriment of those regions from which they leave. Documents on the Irish level pay little to no attention to issues impacting labour mobility on the domestic level. There is no discussion of the impact cuts to income supports, increasing housing costs, and public transport may have had on the ability to job-search.

What is implied here is that the direction of training and education should be subordinate to employers' [short or at best medium-term] interests. Combined, the problem representation(s) at work in this field seek to inculcate a subjectivity among young workers that is both compliant with the will of their employer(s) and malleable enough to shift from workplace to workplace, sector to sector, region to region and country to country as demand arises.

5.6 Conclusion

The problematisations found within this field converge to a considerable degree. Benchmarking these documents against each other reveals divergence more in terms of emphasis rather than great silences between EU and OECD documents. Both sets of texts problematise young unemployed individuals above all and argue for practices that would shape them into more malleable, mobile, and compliant workers capable of moving from sector to sector and region to region to adjust to the needs of employers [capital]. Educational and social protection institutions of their member states are to be reformed to achieve this objective.

Overall, the practices proposed by these civil society organisations fall in line with the dominant representation of the young unemployed as THE problem established on the IGO level. ESRI (2012) converges heavily with OECD (Scarpetta et al. 2010; OECD 2014) authored texts, as could be predicted considering the predominance of professional economists in the composition of both organisations.

The Irish implementation plan also conforms highly, but in some respects selectively, with the problematisations produced on the IGO level of youth unemployment. The emphasis of the EYGIP is on increasing the conditionality regime within the social protection system, targeting resources at sub-populations of the unemployed, and in the provision of 'work experience' schemes. It is important to note that the 'targeting' practice proposed by the Irish EYGIP reveals a problematisation centred on 'scarce resources' rather than the 'risk' or 'disadvantage' faced by certain sub-populations of the young unemployed as found on the IGO level. The primary objective is getting an individual to 'exit the live register' rather than rehabilitation of the 'excluded' or equipping them with the 'human capital' needed for 'high-skill' sectors.

Moving to the forms of knowledge used to give these problematisations meaning allow us to differentiate between the discourses produced by the OECD and EU. The categories, binaries and explanatory theories introduced by the OECD reveal the basis of their assumptions on neo-classical economic thought. These texts are replete with concepts and assumptions associated with HCT, most significantly the concept of 'scarring' across practically all the texts examined on the IGO level. However, it is quite often unclear what forms of skills, experience, or training are to be imparted. There is also evidence of the influence of the concept of 'welfare dependency' both implicitly and explicitly in the case of González-Pandiella (2013) text.

These foundations are shared by EU texts, but there is also evidence of other knowledges within these texts. Of these, the most prominent example is the concept of NEET and the wider SE/I discursive framework. Interestingly, the EU fixation with NEETs is downplayed by the Irish EYGIP. This finding also plays out in most of the Irish civil society texts. DSP critique of this concept appears to be motivated by the EU NEET Rate indicators calculation that Ireland had one of the highest levels in Europe.

There are some areas of contestation within civil society texts. Some constituted young people as being ‘discriminated’ against by DSP officials and the government (NYCI 2010; 2012) and/or made a Keynesian-style problematisation of the Irish economies ability to absorb young people into the workforce post-GFC (TASC 2012). However, the critique of discrimination against youth found in the NYCI (2010) represents ‘activation’ as forced upon already educated and trained individuals among the young unemployed. Likewise, the economic counter-problematisation forwarded by TASC (2012) is isolated within these texts. What critical discourses and alternative problematisations identified on the level of Irish civil society, overall, fail to register within the implementation plan. This silence is even more striking as the document mentioned that it was created with the input of ‘stakeholders’ (DSP 2013b:10-11).

Chapter Six: Incentivising our Youth in Parliamentary-Politics

6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the three SW and P acts that legislated for the introduction of age-banded JSA rates. The legislative process through which measures were enacted offers an unparalleled insight into the problematisation of youth unemployment within the field of Irish' parliamentary-politics' during the crisis period of 2008-2014. A complete account of the three bills and the context in which they were introduced can be found in Section 2.4.2.1.

The sample informing this chapter includes the legislation itself, committee amendments, press releases and the transcripts of Ministerial speeches and Dáil debates [Section 4.5.1]. Those quoted are identified by their party affiliation at the time. Background information on the parties and independents featured can be found in Appendix IV.

Section 6.2 presents the problematisations produced by the FF-Greens-Independents and FG-Labour coalition governments in 2009 and 2013. **Section 6.3** surveys the alternative and complementary problematisations forwarded by opposition members of the Dáil.

Section 6.4 reflects on Q2 and Q4 of the WPR framework and argues this analysis revealed widely shared assumptions among Irish parliamentarians and deep silence regarding the viability of the Irish economic model.

6.2 The governing problematization(s)

This section examines how youth unemployment was represented as a problem in the Dáil by successive governments in 2009 and 2013. Problem representation(s) found include: a dominant representation of the need to make 'savings' [Section 6.3.1]; a need to preserve state resources for other more 'vulnerable' or deserving groups [Section 6.3.2]; that young JSA claimants were at risk of dependency or other behavioural issues [Section 6.3.3]; and a representation of a human capital deficit among the young unemployed [Section 6.3.4].

6.2.1 'Savings'

Example 6.1

These changes have the potential to generate savings of €12 million in 2009 and €26 million in 2010. (Hanafin, Dáil Debate 22/4/2009)

Example 6.2

For every 10,000 people we help off the live register we save approximately €95 million in yearly welfare expenditure. That is why since coming to office I have focused on transforming the Department from the passive benefits provider of old to an active, engaged, and focused organisation... (Burton, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013)

The dominant problematisation at work across all three budgets was a need to 'restore order and stability in the public finances' (Hanafin, Dáil Debate 22/4/2009). Ministerial speeches introducing the first two bills in 2009, the third in 2013 and accompanying press releases all made prolific use of the term 'savings' to describe the reductions these legal instruments made to a range of income supports (Hanafin, Dáil Debate 22/4/2009; Burton, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013; DSP 2013a). Such measures included cut to payments and ancillary allowances and changes to eligibility criteria and conditionality.

Thus, the introduction of age-banded JSA must primarily be understood within this broader context of austerity. Examples 6.1 and 6.2 above, show JSA rate reductions were also directly described as resulting in 'savings'. This demonstrates these practices were components of the wider problematisation of the level of State expenditure being devoted to social protection.

6.2.2 Resource allocation

Example 6.3

We have avoided making any cuts in the state pension. We have also fully protected more than 420,000 children in welfare dependent and low-income families from cuts in child benefits (Hanafin, Dáil Debate 10/12/2009)

Example 6.4

Balancing the needs of people who are dependent on social welfare against the money which is available is extremely difficult, but I assure the House that the government has done and is doing its utmost to protect the most vulnerable people in our society. (Burton, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013)

Multiple contributions by government ***Teachta Dálai*** [TDs] in 2009 and 2013 represented JSA reductions for the young unemployed, and other spending cuts, as directly related to the preservation of payments made to the 'most vulnerable' groups of claimants. The ministerial speeches accompanying these bills in the winter of 2009 and 2013 both included this representation [Example 6.3; Example 6.4]. This problematisation involved constructing a clear deserving/undeserving binary between those claimants targeted by spending cuts and other categories of 'spared' claimants. Examining this process over time reveals a sleight-of-hand at work. Groups spared from direct cuts to their income in one budget were targeted in successive budgets or indirectly impacted by cuts made to other allowances or services they were reliant upon[70].

'Vulnerability' and 'fairness' are two underpinning concepts marshalled repeatedly when describing which categories of claimants are to be targeted or not. For example, during the debate of the first Act in 2009, the Minister made it known that the JSA reduction for 18- and 19-year-olds would not apply to those categorised as 'vulnerable' such as those with

[70] McCashin (2019:234) notes how reductions in ancillary benefits, changes to contribution rules and an increased pension age all worked to cut pension expenditure.

dependent children or who had left the care of the Health Service Executive (Hanafin, Dáil Debate 22/4/2009; SW and P Act 2009a). This budget also spared those already claiming the JSA or those transferring from other income supports such as JSB and Disability Allowance. This latter practice was repeated across the two extensions of the reduction in late 2009 and 2013. Hanafin (Dáil Debate 22/4/2009) describes this move as avoiding a 'large income drop' for existing claimants[71].

6.2.3 'Welfare dependency'

Example 6.5

We all know of cases where the 18-year-old is trotted into the social welfare office by the family almost on his or her birthday and told 'Sign here, I have done it and your grandfather has done it'. There is this intergenerational dependency on welfare. (Hanafin, Dáil Debate 23/4/2009)

***Example 6.*6**

…signing on for jobseeker's allowance on a person's 18th birthday is not the start to adult life any parent would want for his or her child. (Burton, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013)

The 'behaviour' of young people on welfare was represented as a problem by both governments. The practice of reducing the dole was defined as correcting young claimants' behaviour by pushing them towards productive activities - 'further education or training' in 2009, and 'work' in 2013 (Hanafin, Dáil Debate 23/4/2009; Burton, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013). Conversely, the existing payment level was represented as 'disincentivising' training or education or paid employment - producing a problem of 'welfare dependency' among the young unemployed [Section 3.4.1]. Government contributions relied heavily on categories and concepts drawn from the 'culture of poverty' thesis as developed in the 1960s in the US. This underpinning was most evident in the invocation of intergenerational welfare dependency [Example 6.5]. The young unemployed [and their families] were constituted as 'idle' and exploiting the state's largesse within speeches made by both Ministers [Example 6.5; Example 6.6]. Responsibility was thus laid at the feet of the young unemployed individual and their family.

At the same time, the state was positioned as having a paternalistic role towards the young unemployed; it was tasked with getting them into work, or some form of activity related to it. While there was an invocation of the skills/training/experience deficit during these debates, such a problematisation was subordinate to the reduction or elimination of the problem of youthful 'welfare dependency' [Section 6.3.4]. Other practices enacted within these bills reveal that this behavioural problematisation of claimants was not limited to the young unemployed. Section 6 of the first SW and P bill in 2009, significantly increased the level of conditionality on JSB and JSA by legislating that any claimants of these payments:

[71] The mass protests of pensioners the previous year which forced a government U-turn is silent but relevant here [Section 2.4.3]. Restricting the cut to new entrants potentially avoided such a reaction from current 'young' claimants of the JSA.

Participates or agrees to participate as the case may be, if requested to do so by an officer of the Minister in a course of education, training or development which is considered appropriate by the officer having regard to the training and education needs of the person and his or her personal circumstances. (SW and P Act 2009a)

6.2.4 'Incentivisation'

Example 6.7

Receiving the full adult rate of a jobseeker's payment at 18 years of age without a strong financial incentive to engage in education or training can lead to welfare dependency from an early age (Hanafin, Dáil Debate 22/4/2009)

Example 6.8

The place for any young person is not permanently in front of a flat screen television. It is at work or in education and training. This is where they get the best start in life (Gilmore, Dáil Debate 17/10/2013)

A problematisation of a lack of skills/training/experience among the young unemployed was widely apparent within this field. It is quite clear from the contributions by members of both governments [and most opposition TDs] in 2009 and 2013 that there was a widely understood need for practices to improve the 'human capital' of the young unemployed. However, it is also clear that government TDs produced this problem as subordinate to the representations focused on the behaviour of young welfare claimants [Example 6.7 and 6.8].

The first 2009 Act, provided an 'incentive' exemption for jobseekers who took up positions in specific education or training schemes that allowed them to claim the full adult rate[72]. When the two-tier JSA was expanded to a wider age group in late 2009 this exemption was extended by an amendment introduced by the Minister and the DSFA to those partaking in work experience schemes provided by training agency FÁS (SW and P Act 2009b).

In the 2013 act, no additional incentive mechanism was included (SW and P Act 2013). Furthermore, the existing allowances had been undermined by the previous year's budget – it capped payments for 'young' participants in Youthreach, VTOS and Fás courses at €160 per week [Appendix I]. Despite this, the 2013 cuts' rationale continued to rest on a representation of 'incentivisation' [Example 6.8]. The difference was that, in the minister's speech announcing the measure, the emphasis shifted from education and training to 'incentivising' work[73].

[72] The silent issue with these 'incentives' in 2009 is that these training programmes were already oversubscribed – a point raised by opposition politicians at the time [Section 6.3.1].

[73] Silent in this speech, but raised by opposition TDs, was the fact that according to NERI's (2013:33) calculations there were 28.5 jobseekers for every available vacancy.

6.3 Opposition problematisation(s)

Having outlined the problematisation constructed by the governments of 2009 and 2013 in introducing and extending aged-banded JSA payments, the focus now turns to the practices and problem representations advanced from the opposition benches.

Opposition TDs responded to the government's moves by: problematising investment in further education and training as insufficient [Section 6.4.1]; positioning alternative targets for austerity as 'fairer' including wealthy individuals, MNCs, semi-states and 'fraud' in the welfare system [Section 6.4.2]; representing the young unemployed as an 'unfair' target either by arguing the measure constituted discrimination or by appealing to their 'vulnerable' status [Section 6.4.3]; claiming that age-banded JSA incentivised emigration and exploitation rather than education or employment[Section 6.4.4]; and finally by problematising the 'demand-side' in the Irish economy through calls for stimulus measures and public works [Section 6.4.5].

6.3.1 Insufficient investment in education and training

Example 6.9

I share the Minister's concerns about the young becoming welfare dependent and about their availing of social welfare immediately after leaving school. However, she has put the cart before the horse to some extent by not ensuring that places are available to these new claimants. (Enright, Dáil Debate 22/4/2009)

Dáil debate transcripts from the first SW and P bill in 2009 show that many opposition TDs had no disagreement in principle with cutting JSA to 'incentivise' education and training. Indeed, some parliamentarians, such as FG TD Olwyn Enright were at pains to stress this point [Example 6.9]. Instead, criticism focused on a failure to invest adequately in the administrative, training, and educational resources for those young claimants targeted by the measure. Thus, state activation measures were represented as lacking in terms of the numbers of caseworkers dealing with the unemployed, the numbers of places available in courses, and these courses' quality.

Example 6.10

…the State is not in a position to provide the necessary training courses. We are not prepared to accept a proposal to extend that penalty of a half-rate jobseeker's payment… There has been a big switch to short-term training. [...] A person might get onto a course that lasts a few weeks. He or she gets the full rate, the course comes to an end and he or she goes back onto €100 per week. Nobody can provide that person with another training course.' (Shorthall, Dáil Debate 11/12/2009)

The extension of these rates to all new claimants under 24 later in 2009 saw an end to any explicit acceptance that these measures were an 'incentive' aiming to drive the young unemployed towards training or work. There was, however, a continued emphasis by opposition TDs - such as then Labour TD Roisin Shortall [Example 6.10] - on the insufficient supply, quality and duration of the activation schemes provided by the Department and other agencies.

Example 6.11

The only additional activation provision for young people is a small youth guarantee. How adequate is the funding for this? […] The numbers will grow year on year as people emerge from schools and universities and no jobs are available. This budget guarantees only an extra 3,250 places in education, training and work experience… (Ó Snodaigh, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013)

An emphasis upon the need for increased spending on training was also common in opposition contributions in 2013 [Example 6.11]. ***Sinn Féin*** [SF] TD Aengus Ó Snodaigh and others were particularly exercised about the proposed scale of the Irish EYG - the first details of which were announced alongside the deepening of age-banded JSA rates [Chapter Seven].

The practice implied by this line of critique was augmented investment in activation policies, further education, and training by the state. In other words, post-GFC youth unemployment was represented as being driven by a 'human capital' or 'credentials' deficit in contrast to the behavioural problematisation pushed on the government side of the Dáil. In the latter two debates, this practice of increasing spending on activation measures was frequently raised in conjunction with calls not to reduce payments. However, in some cases the need to target young people signing on this way continued to be implicitly or even explicitly accepted by some opposition parliamentarians.

6.3.2 Alternative 'fairer' targets

Example 6.12

[The government] are far more reluctant to examine the transfers that take place…to those taking advantage of tax breaks. […] I refer to tax breaks associated with car parks and spas. In that category, 86% of them apply to people earning more than €200,000 a year. The figure for the subsidy of interest relief to landlords is some €400 million in a half year. There is a long list of these transfers… (Higgins, Dáil Debate 22/4/2009)

Many opposition TDs highlighted alternative targets for either expenditure cuts or increased taxation, such as the 'tax breaks' extended to wealthy households and landlords as identified by Labour TD Michael D. Higgins [Example 6.12]. Such a proposal drew upon and subverted the binary of deserving and undeserving as mobilised on the government's benches - by shifting the focus of austerity towards other social groups or institutions. Such a representation also often sought to recast the 'young unemployed' and/or other categories of claimants as unfair targets for spending cuts [Section 6.3.3]. The precise focus of the alternative practices they proposed shifts depending on the TD in question's party affiliation or ideological leaning.

Wealthy individuals and multinational corporations based in Ireland were common targets from the left and sometimes the right. A Labour TD attacking the December 2009 bill condemned what she termed Ireland's 'ridiculously generous corporate welfare regime'

(Shorthall, Dáil Debate 10/12/2009), while a FG TD noted the budget failed to '[take] a penny from the rich' (McEntee, Dáil Debate 11/12/2009). The practice implied represents the problem of austerity as something to be resolved by increased taxation of the wealthy rather than by cuts targeting those reliant on the social protection system.

Such a problem representation is even more vigorous in the 2013 Dáil debates, mainly reflecting a change of composition in the Dáil following the 2011 elections in which far-left candidates, both independent and from parties like People Before Profit and the Socialist Party, took seats. This redefining of the deserving/undeserving binary in favour of claimants and against the wealthy and corporations continued along the same lines as found in the 2009 debates.

Example 6.13

…what should have been done is to tackle the fraud. It has been reported this week that up to €2 billion of fraud is going unchecked in the social welfare system. […] Who picks up the tab? It is the weak, the vulnerable, the children, the unemployed and the young. (Lee, Dáil Debate 10/12/2009)

Example 6.14

We have a whole sector of government bodies running amok, unpoliced, with political appointees at the top […] These quangos represent a Celtic Tiger explosion of wealth under the former Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern - not this government - who created quangos galore to suit political purposes. They should now be abolished. That is where the first line of cuts should come. (Ross, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013)

Increased taxation of the wealthy and corporations were not the only practices proposed, with many calling for increased oversight and cuts to irresponsible state expenditure. In 2009, a purported 'welfare fraud' problem was highlighted as draining resources by FG TD George Lee and others [Example 6.13]. In 2013, public sector and semi-state agencies dubbed 'Quangos' were the focus of those such as Independent TD Shane Ross [Example 6.14]. Another alternative 'fair' target was highlighted by then Independent TD Stephen Donnelly, who argued for the suspension of payment of billions of euros of bonds not covered by the 2009 Bank Guarantee (Donnelly, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013).

These lines of critique support the problematisation of state expenditure as out of control but identify alternative sources of 'savings'. Whether increased taxation or spending cuts, the practices proposed by the opposition, once again, conceded as much as they challenged the government problematisation(s) as forwarded in 2009 and 2013. Firstly, there was a tacit acceptance of the problematisation of 'savings' [Section 6.3.1]. Proposing to shift the burden of austerity to other social actors meant the assumption that the state had limited agency and had to radically adjust its spending and taxation behaviour remained unchallenged. This problematisation is also striking because it rested upon a similar deserving/undeserving binary, and a representation of austerity as a zero-sum transfer of resources between social groups, as found above. However, the transfer is more transparent in this case as these measures were presented as alternatives to already proposed cuts – in the government's construction of a deserving/undeserving binary, it often remained unclear how the targeting of the 'welfare dependent' directly benefits those deemed to be among the 'deserving'.

6.3.3 The young unemployed as an 'unfair' target

In addition to identifying 'fairer' means of fulfilling austerity targets, many opposition TDs in 2009 and 2013, called for the suspension of new JSA rate reductions for young claimants or for restoration of this age group to the full adult rate. This proposed practice represents the age-banded rate as an 'unfair' practice; however, an examination of these proposals identifies two distinct problematisations: a representation of the cut as 'discrimination' or 'unfair treatment'; and one based on a representation of the 'vulnerability' of these young people and their families.

Example 6.15

There are no "differences of capacity, physical and moral, and of social function" between a 24 and a 25-year-old. There is no way one can differentiate between them yet, in the Bill that is exactly what the government is trying to do. There is no more difference between a 24 and a 25-year-old than there is between a 34 and a 35-year-old. (Lee, Dáil Debate 10/12/2009)

Example 6.16

In the real world we all occupy every day, one becomes an adult at the age of 18. In the parallel universe of the social welfare world, one does not become an adult until the age of 26. (O'Dea, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013)

The first style of problematisation can be traced from a series of contributions that represent the practice of introducing age banded rates for the JSA as a form of 'discrimination' [Example 6.15]. FG TD, George Lee, made this point forcibly when he quoted Article 40 of the Constitution that 'All citizens shall, as human persons, be held equal before the law' (Lee, Dáil Debate 10/12/2009). In 2013, FF TD Willie O'Dea made a similar argument, however, he based it on 'common sense' rather than the constitution[74] [Example 6.16]. An independent TD, Tommy Broughan, echoed Lee four years later by again citing this measure as a violation of Article 40 (Broughan, Second Stage 24/10/2013).

This problematisation draws upon a legal and human-rights based discourse to represent the age-based rate reductions as equivalent to other forms of discrimination along the lines of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. In 2013, Independent TD Stephen Donnelly explicitly made this argument by invoking the *Equal Status Act 2000* (Donnelly, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013).

[74] Interestingly, this argument was forwarded by Deputy O'Dea despite his voting twice in favour of age-banded JSA in 2009.

Example 6.17

The measure before the House is going to force even more young people into homelessness. On the basis of that fact alone, I urge the Minister to row back on it. (Ó Snodaigh, Dáil Debate 25/10/2013)

A distinct representation of age-banded JSA and other austerity measures as 'unfair' is traceable from those contributions arguing that they targeted the 'vulnerable'. During the third stage debates of the second SW and P bill of 2009, Deputies from Labour and Sinn Féin highlighted the failure by the Department to "poverty-proof"[75] the Act and proposed it be stalled until such a calculation was completed (Dáil Debates 11/12/2009).

In 2013, attention was brought to the material impact of the JSA reductions on the young unemployed and the households they live within – especially the potential effect of putting them at risk of homelessness [Example 6.17]. This line of critique represents the reduction of income for young claimants as increasing the levels of poverty and homelessness experienced by this age group. However, it is more subdued within these debates than the 'age-discrimination' style of problematisation.

6.3.4 'Incentivisation' of emigration and exploitation

Example 6.18

It is profoundly hypocritical that the government continually uses the "brain drain" excuse for not increasing income tax on very high earners yet is introducing a series of cutbacks for those aged under 25 that actively promotes such a brain drain. (Shortall, Dáil Debate 10/12/2009)

Example 6.19

The thinking behind these provisions in this budget is not that it will help people into education or into a non-existent employment but that it will encourage people to emigrate. (O'Dea, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013)

A representation of the JSA cuts as 'incentivising' emigration rather than education or employment was a frequent line of critique advanced in these Dáil debates. Its frequency of occurrence on the opposition benches is in stark contrast to a near-total silence about emigration within Ministerial speeches and the contributions of government TDs. Interestingly, in most cases, Opposition speakers represent outward migration using the concept of the 'brain drain' - which originates in HCT [Section 3.4.3]. This term frequently occurs among contributions from the opposition benches in both 2009 and 2013. The most striking appearance of HCT inflected language is by Socialist Party TD Joe Higgins, who described the outward migration of young people as the loss of 'sophisticated human computer chips carrying with them huge knowledge, talent, education and social investment' (Higgins, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013).

[75] This is a measure in state budgets where information was provided to elected representatives about the predicted impact on those classified as "at risk of poverty".

This problematisation of economic loss contradicts the representation of 'mobility' as a positive attribute to be fostered among the young unemployed as found in the IGO policy literature [See 5.2.1]. However, framing mass migration as an economic threat to the country also reflects the preponderance of economic rationality within this field. It is in stark contrast with the problematisation of emigration found in media discourse, which represented the problem in terms of the emotional burden upon the young person and their families [Section 7.3.1].

Example 6.20

… in an indirect way this could undermine the minimum wage and there may be a situation in this country whereby the minimum wage could drop considerably (O'Shea, *Dáil Debates 10/12/2009)*

Example 6.21

Baroness Burton's prescription for the young unemployed in Ireland who are denied a job in the scorched earth of the austerity ridden economy is to work for €50 per week for employers who are looking for free labour at the taxpayer's expense. (Higgins, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013)

Another line of critique represents the government's actions - both age-banded JSA and the wider activation push - as indirectly [Example 6.20] and directly [Example 6.21] undermining the conditions of workers, and as incentivising more exploitative practices by employers. Here the social practice of austerity is re-contextualised from being a question of making 'savings' towards what one Socialist Party deputy describes as an 'ideological counter-revolution against the social wage and the welfare state' (Daly, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013). This line of argumentation is noticeably more potent in the debate surrounding the 2013 bill – again reflecting a shift in the political composition of the Dáil.

6.3.5 Economic demand

Example 6.22

Fine Gael … set out detailed proposals that would create and protect more than 250,000 jobs and training opportunities in the economy. […] €18 billion stimulus plan to create 10,000 jobs in 2010, youth unemployment initiatives that would take 30,000 people off the live register next year, the abolition of the airport tax, the reversal of the VAT increase… and the reduction of the 13.5% VAT rate to 10% which would create 7,500 jobs next year. (Naughten, Dáil Debate 10/12/2009)

Example 6.23

This is a deliberate attempt to attack them [young people], undermine their incomes and patronise them with promises of training when what is required is job creation and job stimulus. (Nulty, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013)

In the 2009 debates, opposition figures made alternative proposals that problematised a poorly functioning Irish economy as the root of the unemployment experienced by young people and their older peers. In December 2009, FG TD Denis Naughten highlighted his party's plan to stimulate employment [Example 6.22]. The measures described sought to promote demand by providing tax relief to the private sector as a subsidy. The next day, Sinn Fein's Arthur Morgan proposed that the state should engage in infrastructure development such as school building using funds derived from the National Pensions Reserve Fund (Morgan, Dáil Debates 11/12/2009). The former strategy located the problem as an uncompetitive Irish private sector whose excessive pricing is limiting demand. The latter practices are closer to those Keynesian inspired demand-side policies encountered in the preceding chapter in proposals by civil society organisations [Section 5.3.5].

One notable difference between the 2009 and 2013 debates is that this representation is much more muted and near absent within the latter. The most explicit exception to this trend appeared in a contribution by independent TD Patrick Nulty - and even then, in unspecified terms rather than concrete proposals [Example 6.23].

6.4 Shared Assumptions and Silences

This section examines the assumptions and presuppositions underpinning the problematisations encountered in this field - and the silences left [WPR Q2 and Q4]. A shared discursive foundation was found to exist between the government and opposition in the Dáil regarding youth unemployment. Alternative representations were present but marginal [Q6].

Austerity itself was depoliticised within these Dáil debates with a shared assumption that such measures were unavoidable and merely a bookkeeping question [Section 6.5.1]. A shared reliance on a deserving/undeserving binary is noted across the government and opposition benches. This collective assumption had the effect of turning austerity into a competition over resources between potential target groups represented in terms of their (un-) deservingness. The government representation of the problem assumed that the young unemployed were deviant or that a subsection of this constituted an 'underclass' [Section 6.5.2]. SE/I was also widely evident within this field – primarily on the opposition benches [Section 6.5.3]. However, it is argued to have had a depoliticising effect and fed into the representation of austerity as a competition between rival deserving and undeserving social groups. The section concludes by examining the evident assumptions about the Irish economy in this sample. Youth unemployment was represented as a 'cyclical' problem, and structural questions about the Irish economy were elided [Section 6.5.4].

6.4.1 Austerity as accounting

Example 6.24

A man in receipt of welfare payments telephoned me this afternoon. He was not pleased that he faces a cut of more than €8, but he has decided to stop smoking. (Conlon, Dáil Debate 10/12/2009)

A shared problematisation of 'savings' constitutes austerity as a competition over the 'fair' allocation of resources and as a question of accounting - or even household budgeting [Example 6.24]. The government is represented as having its agency limited to adjudicating who is the 'most vulnerable in society' and which cuts are 'fair'. Ministerial speeches in 2009 and 2013 externalise the ultimate responsibility for their practices to higher authorities and processes outside their control. Hanafin (Dáil Debate 22/4/2009) points to the 'current economic circumstances' or the 'current economic environment' (Hanafin, Dáil Debate 10/12/2009). Burton and her FG-Labour colleagues represent their actions as constrained by the 'catastrophic economic crisis' inherited from their predecessors (Burton, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013). Austerity is thus depoliticised and becomes a fait accompli.

Government problematisation(s) were built around the question of who is deserving of mercy from the state. A continuous pattern across the three debates is observable with deserving groups such as 'pensioners' and 'children' pitted against 'fraudsters' and 'welfare dependent' young people who were to be punished or corrected. Representing the problem this way thus detached each austerity measure from the wider context of social disinvestment. It also backgrounded the question: 'who benefits?'. Debate was focused on the targeted group's characteristics rather than the broader political context. The indirect impacts of austerity were also suppressed. While a government may have 'preserved' pension rates or child benefits in a budget, it at the same time acted to cut other services or ancillary payments that those 'spared' (and their households) relied on.

Oppositional representations tended to focus on negotiating the terms of this deserving and undeserving binary. Those on the left and right of the political spectrum constructed alternative binaries casting austerity targets such as 'widows', 'carers' and 'young people' as 'vulnerable'. These claimants were then positioned in contradistinction with other alternative 'undeserving' targets. For the left parties and independents, negative representations were applied to 'millionaires', and multinationals receiving 'corporate welfare'. Those on the right focused on 'welfare fraudsters', the public sector and 'Quangos'. Opposition TDs from across the political spectrum directed their ire at the levels of income enjoyed by semi-state CEOs and politicians.

At times, it was clear that many connected these measures with the wider context of austerity beyond the social protection budget and drew upon alternative forms of knowledge, which re-politicised these practices as an attack upon the poorer sections of society by the wealthy [Section 6.4.5]. However, within this field there is limited evidence of any meaningful disruption to this problematisation.

6.4.2 The deviance of 'a cohort'

Example 6.25

FÁS and the Department of Social and Family Affairs are currently running a pilot exercise in Clondalkin and Letterkenny for all 18- and 19-year-olds who wish to sign on the live register for the first time… Initial feedback showed that many candidates did not wish to participate, preferring to get almost the same money without having to attend a course, and consequently they were sometimes disruptive and difficult to manage. This obstacle of a lack of a substantial financial incentive is now being addressed with the introduction of the reduced rate of jobseeker's allowance for those under 20. (Hanafin, Dáil Debate 22/4/2009)

In 2009 and 2013, the policy of reducing welfare payments for the young unemployed relied on a representation of this group as containing an 'underclass' at risk of 'welfare dependency'. Minister Hanafin was clear that this measure targeted what she termed a 'cohort' of 'disruptive and difficult' youths as evidenced by the experience of the Department on a pilot scheme [Example 6.25]. Her successor as Minister, Joan Burton, was more reticent about identifying the features of the welfare dependent in her speech.[76] However, colleagues on the government benches, such as Labour Party Leader Eamon Gilmore [Example 6.8], clearly viewed these rate reductions as preventing youthful idleness from being subsidised by the state[77].

The features attributed to this group include: the 'choice' of idleness over work; a repudiation of familial responsibilities including for their progeny; their association with particular locations; the intergenerational transmission of this 'culture', and a 'disruptive' or 'difficult' demeanour. Many of these assumptions share elements with the representation of out-of-work urban working-class young men in earlier periods of Irish history[78] [Chapter 3.3.2]. References to 'culture' and 'intergenerational' transmission through crude anecdotes of parents bringing their children to the dole office on their 18th birthday also reveal a remarkable parallel with the discourse around the 'culture of poverty' or 'welfare dependency' identified in the literature [Section 3.4.1].

One apparent divergence with historical representation is that the feared **social threat** of 'demoralisation' among the younger members of this 'underclass', whether in the form of crime or deviance or a threat to the political or social order, does not seem to have the same currency as in the past. That is not to say these ideas were not in circulation as made clear in 2009 by a FG TD, David Staunton, who connected youth unemployment to 'mental health' issues, 'burglaries' and 'social unrest' (Staunton, Dáil Debate 23/4/2009). However, the expression of such fears is marginal within the sample. The focus is much more on the ***economic threat*** and ***financial burden*** posed by the indigent.

Example 6.26

Where is the published research or evidence to suggest that young jobseekers are deliberately choosing social welfare payments over work? There is a cock and bull story about a pilot scheme in Letterkenny […] Some years ago, we would be regaled by Fianna Fáil speakers…about what they called 'our beautiful youth'. Suddenly, these young people are very problematic. (Higgins, Dáil Debate 22/4/2009)

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[76] However, in a press interview shortly after becoming minister Burton invoked a similar representation of a deviant subpopulation of young welfare claimants when she warned of the danger of: 'Young men leaving school early to drift into a lifetime of the dole and unemployment'(McGee, 2011)

[77] Gilmores comment re-contextualised a statement attributed to a fellow Labour TD Eamonn Maloney: 'Parents will tell you that they do not want their children at home watching a flat-screen television seven days a week' (Brennan 17/10/2013).

[78] The description of these youths by Mary Hanafin in Example 6.25 echo the report from the failed Clonast labour camp in 1940 quoted in Section 3.3.2. This pilot scheme was itself used to justify cutting off unemployment assistance for young men who refused to participate in the CC [Section 2.2.2].

Repeated attempts by opposition TDs to disrupt these assumptions were found across the debates examined. A typical line of critique questioned the evidence supporting the government's assumptions and construing them as having an 'ideological' rather than empirical foundation. Labour TD Michael D Higgins deployed both lines of argumentation in his dismissal of the evidence provided by Minster Hanafin [Example 6.26]. Such a line of attack was also pursued in the debates surrounding the later bills with a focus on what one Socialist Party TD termed a set of 'bigoted, ignorant and cynical stereotypes' applied to youths and other categories of claimants targeted by these measures (Higgins, Dáil Debate 24/10/2013).

6.4.3 'Vulnerability'

Example 6.27

I assure the House that the government has done and is doing its utmost to protect the most vulnerable people in our society. (Burton, Second Stage 24/10/2013)

The concept of 'vulnerability' plays a crucial role in these debates, especially in constituting certain claimants as more deserving than others [Example 6.27]. It is also prominent in the contributions made by opposition TDs when positioning measures as unjust. In April 2009, Minister Hanafin and her colleagues in the government agreed that certain subsections of the young population could be categorised as vulnerable. This representation was mostly suppressed on the government side within debate surrounding the second Act of that year and was again widely absent from the FG-Labour benches in 2013.

'Vulnerability' and the other terms linked with it in these debates - such as 'poverty' and 'disadvantage' - identify the influence of the SE/I framework [Section 3.4.2]. While the currency of these concepts regarding youth unemployment diminished on the government benches as the crisis progressed, it continued to resonate with the opposition. This focus assumes that the state role concerning social protection is residual and targeted at those deemed 'most-in-need'. The influence of this SE/I representation could perhaps explain the lack of impact of the concurrent human rights discourses, which argued that ALL young unemployed people were being discriminated against by these policies [Section 6.4.3].

As identified in the literature surveyed in Section 3.4.2, this discourse had a depoliticising effect within these debates. In fact, in the context of austerity, such a discourse facilitated a competitive framing of deservingness. There is a deafening silence, by most of those using this discursive framing, regarding which social processes or actions were making these groups 'vulnerable', 'impoverished' or 'disadvantaged'

6.4.4 A 'cyclical' economy

Example 6.26

Recessions are cyclical events. This one too will pass. By making the right choices, not the populist ones, to correct our public finances we hasten the day when more people will return to work and our economy will grow again. (Conlon, Dáil Debate 10/12/2009)

While economic forms of rationality dominate the three debates, the status of the Irish economy's structures themselves was near absent. At its crudest, these forms of knowledge reduced these measures to a question of accountancy - of 'savings'- completely silencing the lived effects for those on the receiving end of austerity. The need to appeal to economic knowledge was also clear among opposition speakers who anchor their critique primarily in terms of the economic impact. For example, outward migration was mainly represented in economic terms, focusing on the loss of 'human capital' over other discursive framings [Section 6.4.4].

Critique of the Irish economic model was muted throughout these debates. In 2009 debates, there was evidence of an assumption among the government benches that this downturn would be 'cyclical'. That business would resume as usual as soon as the global economy picked up[79] [Example 6.26].

The seeming acceptance of the logic of austerity is reflected by a near disappearance of potential stimulus proposals by Opposition TDs within the 2013 debates [Section 6.4.5]. This shift suggests that even a weak Keynesian critique of the austere direction of Irish economic policy had become hard to articulate by this period.

6.5 Conclusion

Texts within this field constituted youth unemployment along different lines than those examined for the preceding chapter. Practices ostensibly introduced to deal with youth unemployment were found to be nested within the problematisation of austerity. Young unemployed people were thus problematised within the terms of a debate centred on the questions: Where were 'savings' to be made? Which groups were to be targeted and how?

Across the debates examined, certain groups are constituted as 'vulnerable' or 'in need'. Conversely, others were constructed as 'undeserving' and as a drain on the limited resources available. Here the problematisation of the 'behaviour' of the young unemployed was crucial as it enabled what would otherwise be a straightforward budget cut to be represented as an 'activation' measure seeking to 'incentivise' work and training over remaining on social welfare. Thus, this practice produced a problematisation of 'welfare dependency', which is also traceable from other practices in the SW and P bills aimed at the out-of-work population. It is quite apparent that the practice of cutting JSA for the young unemployed and other austerity measures enacted in the budgets examined were represented as being based upon deserving/undeserving binaries. Interestingly, many opposition TDs structured their argumentation upon similar lines – constituting other groups as requiring cuts or increased taxation rather than those proposed by the government.

A 'human capital' and 'credentials' deficit problem as constituted within the policy texts is also widely found within this sample. However, both governments subordinated this problematisation to focus on supposed behavioural, cultural, or attitudinal shortcomings

[79] Such optimism is also evident in a 2008 press release which quotes Minister Hanafin advising young people that 'returning to education and training to improve your skills will be the key to availing of the up-turn in the economy which will inevitably come' (DSFA 2008).

among the young unemployed. Critique from the opposition benches focused on the need for further resources for training and other activation measures. This fixation highlighted that the problematisation of a ‘skills/training/experience’ deficit among the young unemployed was advanced by actors across the political spectrum. In the first 2009 debates, it was also evident that some on the opposition benches saw cutting JSA as justified if these measures were augmented.

The examination of the debates surrounding these budgets revealed a series of counter-problematisations formulated by opposition politicians absent or muted within the policy field. Of these, the most novel and pervasive was the problematisation of ‘emigration’ as a negative or perverse outcome of government actions and inaction. There is also evidence of the problematisation of ‘economic demand’ encountered in civil society policy literature [Section 5.3.5]. However, this problematisation is muted, particularly within the 2013 debates, and limited to Sinn Féin and other parties or independents on the left of the political spectrum.

Chapter Seven: Activation or Exile in the Media

7.1 Introduction

On 15 October 2013, two measures responding to youth unemployment were announced: a further reduction in the rate of JSA payable to the young unemployed; and the first details of the Irish iteration of the EYG. This project took advantage of this announcement as an entry point for WPR Q6 - which examines the dissemination and contestation of problem representations [4.3.1]. The focus is thus on how these policies were communicated and contested in the media field. The findings are based on a sample that includes texts from print media, a panel discussion televised by the state broadcaster RTÉ, and government and social media communications produced between 15 October and 15 November 2013 [Section 4.5.1]. Background on participants in the televised panel discussion can be found in Appendix IV.

The research was carried out in two phases: first, a WPR analysis based on the print and televised media sample; second, a micro-analysis of legitimation strategies on a smaller sample that also included material from other fields [Section 4.5.2]. **Section 7.2** and **7.3** provides the findings of the WPR analysis of the media sample – it is divided between those representations that sought to disseminate and defend the government's practices and those which sought to contest these measures. **Section 7.4** and **7.5** summarises the micro-analysis findings regarding the legitimation and de-legitimation strategies at play.

7.2 Re-ordering the governing problematisation(s)

This section explores how the governing representation(s) of youth unemployment produced within the fields of policy-making [EYG] and parliamentary-politics [age-banded JSA] were re-contextualised in the media sample.

Within this field, the focus was heavily placed on the problematisation of youth unemployment as the outcome of a 'human capital' deficit among the young unemployed [Section 7.2.1]. The problematisation of 'welfare dependency' among the young unemployed or sub-populations of this group is also present [Section 7.2.2]. Though predominant in the data analysed for Chapter Six, the problematisation of 'savings' or austerity is largely suppressed across this sample, a trend that intensified over time during the period examined [Section 7.2.3].

7.2.1 A 'human capital' deficit as THE problem

Problematization of young people as having a skill or experience deficit was widely apparent across this sample. The need for some form of Youth Guarantee was broadly accepted and represented as a legitimate action. A focus on training and education was identified in 18 [60%] of the texts within the print media sample and formed the central focus of the Prime Time panel discussion on RTÉ.

There was a noticeable shift as time moved on from the announcement on 15 October. Discussion in the print sample became more and more focused on the resources devoted to Ireland's EYG; and less upon the JSA rate reductions. This trend intensified in the later texts of the sample – spurred by a DSP leak on 12 November of details about the proposed EYGIP as discussed below (O'Brien 12/11/2013). The televised panel discussion that same day was highly focused on the resources being devoted to the EYGIP and whether they were enough to solve the problem of youth unemployment.

Example 7.1

There has been much ill-informed criticism of the JobsBridge internship programme but the facts speak for themselves. Young people are voting with their feet as the scheme originally set at 5,000 places has now exceeded 20,000. And, most importantly, 60pc of interns have secured paid employment, double the European norm. (Kenny 21/10/2013)

The representation of training and education in this field was often misleading when benchmarked against the actual practices implemented by the state. Schemes such as JobBridge or Momentum were represented as if they were targeted solely at the problem of youth unemployment rather than being open to all claimants of working age. A striking example of this occurred in an opinion piece penned by Taoiseach Enda Kenny, which implied all JobBridge participants were 'young people' [Example 7.1]. As raised in Section 2.4.2.2, according to DSP data, only 29% of participants in JobBridge were in the 18-24 age group as of November 2012 (Indecon 2013:9)[80].

Example 7.2

I'd take the IT sector. There's approximately 4,000 jobs in the IT sector and according to FIT, Fast-track to IT, who actually have a speciality in working with long-term unemployed people from disadvantaged areas…they have spoken to the Microsofts of this world, the Semantics of this world… If you can get the people up-skilled which is through the Momentum, the Momentum initiative which is a short-term upskilling of people into jobs that will be available in the IT sector […] what I'm saying is there is no shortage on ideas, there are sectors of the economy that are growing, and there are people within those sectors that are willing to take on… (John Lyons on Prime Time 12/11/2013 [12.50-13.28 min])

Overall, there was a reproduction of the ambiguity about just what skills, training or experience were to be inculcated as identified in Chapter Five [Section 5.2.1] and Chapter Six [Section 6.2.4]. A notable exception occurs in a contribution from Labour TD John Lyons in the Prime Time panel discussion [Example 7.2]. Here the IT sector is held up as the target for re-training efforts among the unemployed[81].

[80] A later report with data until November 2015 reports a lower participation rate of 27.6% for the same age group (Indecon 2016:7).
[81] Silent here is the scale of unemployment compared to the 'approximately 4000 jobs' in IT - at the time of speaking there were 396,512 people on the live register (CSO 2013).

Example 7.3

The DSP themselves admit that they have about 18,000 places for young people on current labour market measures while the demand is in the region of 41,000. (McLoughlin 23/10/2013)

Many texts that challenged JSA rates reductions simultaneously tacitly accepted the problematisation of a deficit of 'human capital' among the young unemployed. For example, a letter from a representative of YWI published in the Irish Independent problematises a mismatch between the available places on activation programmes and the much greater numbers seeking to take part [Example 7.3]. A representation of the EYG being 'under-resourced' frequently occurred in the latter weeks of the period covered by this investigation - spurred partly by the campaigning of YWI (O'Brien 22/10/2013; McLoughlin 23/10/2013).

A leak from the DSP brought further attention to this problem representation (see O'Brien 12/11/2013). It detailed plans to target resources at those considered 'most-at-risk' in line with the proposals found in the EYGIP as published the following month (DSP 2013) [Section 5.4.2]. This practice was re-contextualised within this field as being motivated by austerity or 'scarce resources' (O'Brien 12/11/2013) and as symptomatic of the 'paltry sum' being dedicated to this initiative compared to countries like Sweden (Irish Examiner 13/11/2013).

7.2.2 Passivity and welfare dependency

Example 7.4

The cutting of social welfare payments for under-25s… is a lesson to our youth that welfare dependency is not the answer - and that taking responsibility for your own life is.(O'Keefe 15/10/2013)

Example 7.5

…in Ireland today it is possible for young people to leave school, sign on and claim various benefits. It is time for bold action against early recruitment to a dependency culture. (Donohue 16/10/2013)

In the announcement's immediate aftermath, some texts reproduced the problematisation of the young unemployed as in danger of welfare dependency [Section 6.2.3]. However, this was backgrounded as time moved towards the SW and P Acts' enactment on 9 November 2013.

Opinion pieces by O'Keefe (15/10/2013) and Donohue (16/10/2013) in the wake of the announcement reproduced this representation strongly and in terms more explicit than found in the field of parliamentary-politics [Examples 7.4; Example 7.5]. The O'Keefe reaction piece (15/10/2013) not only re-contextualised this problematisation but acted to ***intensify*** it by making more explicit the implied representation of young welfare claimants as a behaviourally deviant economic burden [Section 7.5.2]. The speaking position adopted was less in thrall to the SE/I discourse still found within those texts produced by the DSP or the contributions of government politicians as examined in Chapters Five and Six.

Example 7.6

People have asked why is there a focus on the under-25s [...] They are at greatest risk from becoming permanently disengaged from work. We cannot allow welfare dependency to take root. (Kenny 21/10/2013)

This intensification process can also be seen across two texts that appeared in the same issue of the Irish Independent on 21 October 2013. The first is an op-ed by Enda Kenny, which gave an account of the government's efforts in welfare reform and justified the focus on young claimants [Example 7.6]. This text represents the government as 'activating' the Irish Social Protection system and transforming it from a passive service that left the young unemployed 'languishing' on the dole queue and created a problem of 'welfare dependency'. In other words, the 'passive' welfare system rather than claimants are the primary object being problematised. Strikingly, the practice of reducing JSA rates for the young claimants was only indirectly alluded to in the text. This can be seen in Example 7.6 where it is described in abstract terms as 'a focus on' them.

Example 7.7

Writing in today's Irish Independent, he robustly defends the controversial cut to dole payments for young unemployed people in last week's Budget, saying: "We cannot allow welfare dependency to take root." (Sheahan 21/10/2013)

In the second text, the newspaper's political editor analysed Enda Kenny's comments and re-contextualised them in the process [Example 7.7]. The object under problematisation shifts from the DSP to those claiming welfare and broader societal attitudes towards welfare claiming. This redirection is underlined by the article's headline, which described the Taoiseach as 'declaring war' on 'our welfare culture'.

7.2.3 Resource allocation

Example 7.8

The marginal cutting of dole payments for the under-25s will save €30 million annually. Free GP care for the under-fives will cost €40 million. That's called a recalibration of justice. And it is a Budget adjustment that should be welcomed by all. (O'Keefe 15/10/2013)

Chapter Six identified a problem representation, by which the reduction in JSA payments for young claimants was constituted as acting to preserve or transfer resources elsewhere [Section 6.2.2]. Such a representation is subdued in the media within those texts supporting the measure. However, an opinion piece in the Evening Herald on the day of the Budget not only reproduces this representation but also does so in a much more explicit manner than found in any of the transcripts of Dáil Debates [Example 7.8]. In this case, the measure is represented as a direct transfer to Free GP care for children aged under-5. Once again, the representation of ***deservingness*** is central with the text positioning this move as a transfer from the 'idle poor' to a group the author termed the 'squeezed middle'. This group is defined as 'the families who have been worst hit throughout this recession' elsewhere in the text (O'Keefe 15/10/2013).

Example 7.9

…there are finite resources, and a decision was made that with finite resources do we put some of that which what other countries had of best practice around. […] They've put … some of that money into actually developing services for people in order to ensure that they may have a better opportunity of taking up jobs… (John Lyons on Prime Time 12/11/2013 [2.15-2.38 min])

More common within this sample was the positioning of JSA reductions, and the EYG and wider DSP activation regime as being in a zero-sum relation to each other. In other words, that this austerity measure was a redirection of resources towards activation. This representation was often implicit within texts. Occasionally, it was directly invoked [Example 7.9].

7.3 Alternative Problem Representations

Similar alternative or counter problematisations as found in Chapter Six were also identified in the media sample. However, once again, the order of emphasis shifts. Emigration is central to the representation of youth unemployment within this field – though left silent in some texts seeking to promote the measures announced on 15 October [Section 7.3.1]. Some of these texts seek to re-cast the young unemployed as 'deserving' [Section 7.3.2]. Often this was done at the expense of others [Section 7.3.3]. Finally, there was a problematisation of the Irish labour market – albeit a very faint one [Section 7.3.4].

7.3.1 Emigration as THE problem

Example 7.10

The only motivation Budget 2014 offers under-26s is for further questioning their future in this country... (O'Dwyer 16/10/2009)

After training and education, the second most common social practice mentioned across the print sample was emigration, with it appearing in 15 texts [50%]. There was clear evidence of a widespread assumption of a link between high levels of youth unemployment and increased outward migration rates measured between 2008 and 2013 [Section 2.4.3]. Texts challenging JSA reductions predicted this policy would increase this exodus – indeed, many of these texts posited that this was the objective of the government and the DSP in introducing this measure in the first place (Browne 16/10/2013; Connolly 19/10/2013).

Treating this sample as a spectrum, with texts overtly trying to legitimise these practices on one side and those overtly contesting them on the other, reveals that the presence of emigration as a topic depended on the text's position. Emigration was largely suppressed within texts that wholeheartedly supported the measures. In contrast, those outright opposing them centred the government's actions and inaction as increasing emigration.

Example 7.11

… a lot of emigration that's happening in Ireland right now is forced. And what that leads to is absolutely what we would see as a mental health crisis. That is the family that's left

behind but also the people who are being forced to leave. Because they're… they're living in new situations, with people they've never met before. They don't want to be there. That's not… that's not acceptable way to treat people in our society. (Moira Murphy on Prime Time 12/11/2013 [24.19-25.04 min])

Emigration was also central to the Prime Time segment examined. One distinguishing feature was that the negative impact was represented in terms of mental health and family relations by those such as WNL representative Moira Murphy [Example 7.11][82]. In contrast, panellist Professor Alan Barrett, the Head of the Economic Analysis Division of the ESRI, re-asserted economic rationality by representing emigration as a preferable option on the individual level to the 'scarring effect' of youth unemployment [Section 7.5.3].

Example 7.12

There hasn't been a street or a family I'd say in this… in this country that hasn't em you know had a forced emigration… it's not tolerable without a doubt. … All I will say is you know the government doesn't have all the solutions. We do not have the silver bullet on what needs to be done to ensure that every young person in Ireland has an opportunity… . But we do have a number of opportunities there and the biggest one is… Is the rollout of the Youth Guarantee next year which will ensure that some young people will be given options that aren't currently being given options… (John Lyons on Prime Time 12/11/2013 [25.06-25.33 min])

Another feature specific to this source was that proponents of the government's policies engaged with this issue [Example 7.12]. Government TD John Lyons represented emigration as an inevitable consequence of the economic downturn and pressures upon the Irish state.

One silence revealed by the benchmarking process, is that for all the widespread discussion of emigration across the sample, the content was typically de-historicised and abstract. When the historical record was invoked, the examples chosen are generally related to pre-20th century colonial violence in Ireland or more leftfield extrapolations from world history[83]. The historical experience of emigration as a recurring trend in Ireland, and the economic and social processes driving it, rarely surfaces.

[82] This contrasts with the economic representation of a 'brain drain' which predominated within the Dáil debates examined [Section 6.3.4]

[83] Browne (16/10/2013) compares the government's policies to the Cromwellian invasion of Ireland in the 17th century [Section 7.5.1]. White (14/11/2013) connects the contemporary situation to 19th century mass migration following the famine, however, she also mentions her own experiences as a migrant during the 1980s. Another text (Irish Examiner 13/11/2013) underlines the importance of tackling this issue with the argument that youth unemployment played a decisive role in the rise to power of Adolf Hitler - an isolated instance of the representation of the young unemployed as a political or social threat in the sample.

7.3.2 An unfair target for austerity

Example 7.13

When are Irish youths considered to have turned into men and women? According to Mr Quinn and his colleagues, Brendan Howlin and Michael Noonan, it seems to be 25 years of age. Youth by definition is adolescence, formative years, early life and early stages. With practically no jobs available these under-25s - who could be married, have children, have rent to pay, etc - are still expected to live for a week on the equivalent of one hour and 15 minutes of the pay of any of these three ministers, based on €166,000 per annum. (Dennehy 22/10/2013)

A legal or human rights discourse was marshalled repeatedly across this sample to represent the government reducing the JSA as 'discrimination'. Often, those texts reported on the debates over the SW and P Act, as explored in Chapter 6, re-contextualising selected quotes from the proceedings. One text deepened the rights-based problematisation by pointing out the measure classified young people on income supports as less than adults, while they were simultaneously classified as adults in other spheres [Example 7.13].

Many of these texts displayed an assumption of generational-injustice or even generational-warfare as underpinning the government's approach. As seen in Example 7.13 a binary between 'young' and 'old' was produced by stressing that these measures are being introduced by 'middle-aged ministers on mammoth salaries' as one opinion piece put it (Browne 16/10/2013). A photo stunt by campaign group WNL which sought to pressure the Seanad to vote against the measure further underlined this point [Figure 7].

One notable effect of this problematisation of age-based discrimination, based on an assumption of intergenerational inequality, was the suppression of other forms of social inequality across the print sample. In the newspaper texts, the potential disproportionate impact of the cut on those of lower socioeconomic class - or upon minority ethnic groups such as the Traveller community - was largely absent. The print sample, on the whole, neglects that this cut passes on a burden from the state to the families of young people – particularly burdening those of lower socio-economic backgrounds. Also mostly elided was the existence of a subsection of young people who cannot rely on familial support for various reasons.

Example 7.14

…the social welfare cut is going to have a real impact on vulnerable young people. Causing homelessness in the first place but actually also preventing young people from moving out of homelessness because they actually can't afford to do so. And we did see that with the 2009 welfare cuts so the evidence is there to support that. (Niamh Randall on Prime Time 12/11/2013 [10.28-11.23 min])

The notable exception to this suppression in the print sample is found in an opinion piece in the Irish Examiner, which made an explicit link between the 2009 JSA reductions, youth unemployment and a 'parallel rise in youth homelessness' (Connolly 19/10/2013). Such a representation of this measure increasing 'vulnerability' and 'homelessness' also arises in the Prime Time segment in a contribution from the audience by a representative of the homelessness charity the Simon Communities [Example 7.14]. This echoes arguments found within Dáil debates [Section 6.3.3].

Figure 7 WNL photo stunt protesting the JSA rates change

Source: Mannion (2014)

7.3.3 Other targets as more (un)deserving

Example 7.15

If the government is looking to save an additional EUR 32 million, the banking levy of EUR 150 million could be increased to EUR 200 million […] This would allow for social welfare rates to remain the same, but also allow for the government to invest more in the youth guarantee scheme that currently stands at only EUR 14 million. (O'Connor et al. Irish Times, 7/11/2013)

As in the Dáil [Section 6.3.2], the process of representing young claimants as 'deserving' is often complemented by identifying others as 'undeserving' and more acceptable as austerity targets. The banking sector was singled out as a potential target in a joint letter contesting the JSA reductions sent by several campaign groups, trade unions, charities, and NGOs [Example 7.15].

Example 7.16

The Facebook generation did what they were told; they went to school, worked hard, often took out student loans and juggled work with university education for the promise of good jobs that didn't materialise. Now they must wonder whether the cupboard will be completely bare by the time they reach pension age, should the benefits and entitlements bestowed on older people continue unabated. (Naughton 25/10/2013)

Elsewhere in the print sample, the assumption of intergenerational inequality is put to work to differentiate between deserving and undeserving subjects. Similarly, to how this binary functioned in Chapter Six, young people were cast as the 'victims' while other 'adult' or 'older' groups were portrayed as living off the state's largesse. In Example 7.16 above, a binary is constructed between the 'Facebook generation' and those in receipt of pensions. Other targeted groups included public sector employees and wealthy people receiving child benefits – a universal income support (White 14/11/2013).

7.3.4 Labour market problems

Example 7.17

...it is also the responsibility of the government to create the environment where young people won't have to rely on State handouts. We all want a land of opportunity where business flourishes and there is a reduced reliance on benefits. (Donohue 16/10/2013)

Widespread reference was made to the difficulty of finding work in Ireland. There was some problematisation of the labour market evident within this field. A figure of '32 unemployed people for every job vacancy advertised in Ireland' is cited repeatedly in the sample (Connolly 19/10/2013; O'Halloran 26/10/2013; O'Connor et al. 7/11/2013)[84].

However, these denouncements of labour market conditions were not typically linked with concrete proposals to intervene within the labour market. Overall, across the print sample, the focus remains on the problematisation of a 'skills/experience/education' deficit among young welfare claimants. One of the few exceptions in the print sample is an ambivalent call for a more pro-business environment [Example 7.17].

Example 7.18

…the vast majority of households in Ballybrack, in Ballymun or for any working-class area …did work and have worked for… so many generations. […] Our construction workers and people who used to the work in the construction industry. Led into the industry by the government and are now failing miserably to deal with these people. … It's an awful shame, cause construction workers of all people could actually be put to work. There could be good public enterprises if the government so chose … we have finite resources … but it's a political choice where we put our resources. (Hugh Lewis on Prime Time 12/11/2013 [9.09-10.15 min])

[84] The quoted statistic originated in NERI (2013:33).

Another example can be found in the Prime Time segment in which a People Before Profit councillor on the panel called for the state to step in and stimulate demand for employment [Example 7.18]. This practice suggests a Keynesian style ‘demand-side’ problem representation as already encountered in the field of policy [Section 5.3.5] and parliamentary-politics [Section 6.3.5]. However, this proposal was isolated within the debate, and the focus was more on the quality and quantity of services acting upon welfare claimants.

Example 7.19

Instead of funding postgraduate courses, which could boost graduates’ skills and future earning potential, the government prefers to sink its money into JobBridge - providing free labour to private companies for up to 18 months resulting in paid workers being displaced. (Browne, 16/10/2013)

Example 7.20

…the most objectionable feature of JobBridge is the preposterous hype. The presentation of a cleaning job as an ‘internship’ requiring nine months of 39-hour week training before qualification is achieved, is a typically absurd spin-off from a scheme in which words have lost their meaning. (Irish Independent 16/11/2013)

There is also evidence of the problematisation of labour market activation, particularly the scheme JobBridge, undermining working conditions. The focus on JobBridge is perhaps not surprising since it was announced as a ‘flagship’ program alongside the significant reforms made to the Irish social protection system and quickly became a lightning rod for critique [Section 2.4.3]. At times, this problematisation was advanced alongside the dominant problem representation of a deficit of education or training among the young unemployed [Example 7.19]. Some texts went beyond this and rejected the idea of such a deficit in the first place [Example 7.20].

7.4 Legitimation of the policies

This section provides an analysis of legitimation strategies at play within a selected sample of texts from the fields of parliamentary-politics and the media. Those identified include: the construction of a mythopoetic narrative by which the JSA reductions were represented as a transfer from negatively evaluated social actors, the young unemployed, or practices to positively evaluated social actors and practices in the form of the EYG [Section 7.4.1]; the suppression and/or negative representation of those targeted by these policies [Section 7.4.2]; and the use of personal and impersonal forms of authority [Section 7.4.3].

7.4.1 Mythopoetic representations

Example 7.21

…the Department will spend €1.08 billion on work, training and education places and related supports for jobseekers – an increase of almost €85 million on our projected spend this year. I’m making the changes relating to Jobseeker’s Allowance for young people in this context – to place a greater emphasis on work, training and education supports rather than income supports. (DSP 15/10/2013)

Example 7.22

The main purpose of this cut is to encourage young people to take up available training opportunities or to participate in back to work schemes. (O'Keefe 15/10/2013)

Practically all the texts from the sample which sought to legitimate the reduction to the JSA - and the introduction of the EYG - constructed a narrative by which the government was acting to take resources away from ***negatively evaluated*** groups and practices and transferring them to ***positively evaluated*** groups and practices. In Van Leeuwen's (2008:106) terminology, this is a strategy of legitimation by mythopoesis in which actors are rewarded for legitimate practices and are punished for illegitimate practices.

The negative evaluation of young JSA claimants by subtle and direct discursive strategies was central here [Section 7.5.2]. However, the construction of such a narrative was also achieved by a series of instrumental rationalisations. A prominent example was the construction of the purpose of JSA reductions as improving the level of training and education among the young unemployed – whether a purported transfer of resources from 'passive' welfare payments towards 'activation' schemes and/or by incentivising the young unemployed towards these schemes or employment [Example 7.21; Example 7.22]. Deepening the JSA age-bands was represented as complementary or as a prerequisite of the EYG in Ireland. This style of representation enabled a moral tale that acted as a form of ***sleight of hand*** in which training and education were foregrounded, and the material impact of the JSA reduction on the young unemployed was backgrounded.

Example 7.23

…Ireland had a problem with long-term unemployment even before the recession. The number of jobless households went from 10pc to 15pc between 2004 and 2007 despite significant economic growth. When the recession hit, this figure ballooned to 22pc last year, double the average across Europe. This is unacceptable and can't be allowed to fester, otherwise we'll be living with the long-term social and economic consequences for years to come. (Kenny 21/10/2013)

Example 7.24

There are people in the area that I represent who live in second generation jobless households. So there are young people who I went to… I actually taught in school out in the area as well. Who have never had a parent or a sibling in their family ever go to work. Now I want options for those people. (John Lyons on Prime Time 12/11/2013 [8.18-9.09 min])

These texts also constructed a **cautionary tale** in which the government was compelled to take action to prevent the deleterious consequences of 'welfare dependency'. Here the government's efforts are rationalised theoretically, with the reduction in welfare levels being defined as fighting 'welfare dependency' [Example 7.23 and 7.24].

That the state was taking action to prevent the transmission within the family of 'welfare dependency' was a key element here. This representation recurs across those texts seeking to legitimate the practices of reducing the amount of JSA payable to young claimants. When the speaker was a politician or an 'expert' this was invoked via technical terminology such as 'jobless households' as above. However, in the broader media, more stigmatising language was used to impart the same message. Namely, that specific categories of claimant were 'pathologically state dependent' (O'Keefe 15/10/2013).

7.4.2 Suppression and negative evaluation of those targeted

Example 7.25

Fine Gael's message is also directed at taxpayers contributing to the cost of public services. Mr Kenny and Finance Minister Michael Noonan have been deliberately pitching the crackdown on dole and medical cards to the taxpayers who are footing the bill. (Sheahan 21/10/2013)

Those texts seeking to legitimate these measures tended to suppress the population who were the object of these policies or negatively evaluate them if they were present. Across the sample of texts examined, those targeted by the JSA rate reductions and the EYG were overwhelmingly represented as an ***unindividuated mass*** - classified primarily in terms of their age. There is slight variation in this trend between those texts seeking to legitimise or de-legitimise the policies, with descriptors such as 'young people', 'young adults', 'Under-25s', 'under-26s' being the most common ones across the sample. The population targeted by these policies are aggregated in terms of their age more than any other feature. At times, they are erased altogether within the text or represented in a highly depersonalised and abstract manner. For example, by reducing them to the 'dole' and 'medical cards' they claim [Example 7.25].

Thus, the individuals targeted by the reduced JSA rate and who were to take part in the EYG were systematically de-emphasised in these texts. They were solely to be understood in terms of their collective age, which in turn was evaluated as a characteristic that discredited them as a population and warranted the 'corrective' measures applied.

Example 7.26

Signing on for Jobseeker's Allowance on a person's 18th birthday is not the start to adult life that any parent would want for their child. (DSP 15/10/2013)

Those targeted by these policies are also represented as ***passive beneficiaries*** of government action ***rather than agents capable of acting in their own right***. This trend is set firmly within Minister Joan Burton's speech announcing the measures in the Dáil. 'Young people' were mentioned 12 times within this speech. However, only on one occasion were they represented as active agents - the activity in question was signing on for benefits [Example 7.26]. Following van Leeuwen's typology (2008), the child signing on the dole is 'overdetermined'. They are a fictional individual who stands in for all young people who are claiming benefits[85]. This sentence also serves to differentiate along 'us' and 'they' lines,

[85] This is underlined by the fact that this cut didn't impact 18-year-olds signing on as this age-group were already put on the lowest possible rate in the April 2009 budget [Section 2.4.2.1].

between 'parents' who want the best for 'their child', and those of young people claiming JSA.

Young people are repeatedly represented in terms of familial relations within the print media sample on both sides of the debate. Those targeted by the measures are frequently described in relational terms as 'our' young people (DSP 15/10/2013; Kenny 21/10/2013). Thus, they are represented as subject to the authority of the state or the family unit and not capable of deciding their interests on their own terms (DSP 15/10/2013; Kenny 21/10/2013). At times, however, this relational identification is mobilised to de-legitimise these same policies by conferring a sense of responsibility towards 'our young people' who were being subjected to unfair treatment (Browne 16/10/2013).

In most texts, the modes of evaluation are subtle and reflected in the chosen lexicon associated with social actors and practices or on an implicit differentiation between 'us' and 'them' [Example 7.26]. Kenny (21/10/2013) adopted the former strategy. For example, his text negatively evaluated the DSP as 'passive', allowing the unemployed to 'fester' and leaving 'young people' in particular 'languishing on dole queues'. Sheahan's (21/10/2013) text eliminates the target of the policies and reduces them to a 'welfare culture'. However, other sources were less subtle in evaluating young welfare claimants and other groups targeted by measures in Budget 2014.

Example 7.27

On the one hand, we have those who depend for their livelihoods on state handouts while, on the other, there are the equally dependent Nama-style princes and princesses, many of whom are riding out the recession on the back of the toil and relentless belt-tightening of middle Ireland. (O'Keefe 15/10/2013)

Example 7.27 comes from a text that extensively used moralised evaluations of those targeted by those policies. For example, the terms used to describe benefits claimants negatively describe them as 'pathologically state dependent' or 'the 'idle poor' or 'Nama-style princes and princesses'[86]. Conversely, a group identified as 'middle Ireland' is evaluated positively and as victims of unfair but largely unspecified practices. Elsewhere in the text, they are denoted as 'the squeezed middle'. This text is highly evocative of what was identified as 'welfare populism' by others examining political discourses from this period (Meade and Kiely 2020).

7.4.3 Personal, Impersonal and Expert Authority

These texts work to associate the measures with various forms of authority - the personal authority of elected officials and expert figures or the impersonal authority of higher powers and 'laws, rules, and regulations' (Van Leeuwen 2008:108). There is a near-total tendency to represent the government as unified and its ministers as active and decisive. Often, these actions were granted impersonal authority by referring to them using indirect terms such as

[86] 'Nama' here refers to the National Asset Management Agency a state administered 'bad bank' that took over property loans from the distressed Irish financial sector following the GFC. Here those in receipt of state benefits are being compared to property developers who were bailed out by this measure.

‘the budget’. Where reference is made to Ministers within the government, they were typically presented as active regardless of whether they are evaluated positively or negatively. Those government politicians identified tend to be Ministers affiliated to the Labour Party, with the exceptions of Taoiseach Enda Kenny and Finance Minister Michael Noonan. When it came to defending these policies on television, it was a Labour TD, John Lyons, who took up the task. This division of speaking roles echoes the defence of these practices within the Dáil – with Labour acting as the ‘face’ of the policies and FG backgrounded. Indeed, as already noted, a striking feature of the opinion piece credited to Enda Kenny (21/10/2013) is that the JSA reduction is only referred to indirectly.

Example 7.28

Miriam O’Callaghan*: Alan… Is it [JobBridge] successful?*

Alan Barrett: *Yeah eh… I don’t know. I’ll come back to that…*

Miriam O’Callaghan: *Ha! You’re an economist. You know everything.*

(Prime Time, 12/11/2013 [14.55-15.14 min])

Texts seeking to justify the government policies relied heavily on expert authority and, at times, representations of other countries as role models for Ireland to emulate. The former strategy is apparent in print media texts which referred to the OECD (Kenny 21/10/2013)**;** the latter, in Sheahan (21/10/2013) who compared Ireland to the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain in terms of the welfare level they afford to the young unemployed[87].

The centrality of expert authority and, in particular, economic expertise is most apparent within the Prime Time segment. The host Miriam O’Callaghan repeatedly defered to panellist Professor Alan Barret of the ESRI as an adjudicator of the veracity of contributions made by the other participants. This speaker’s opinion was called for topics such as: the ‘incentivisation’ impact of the JSA reductions; the importance of training and education; and emigration. His ‘expert’ speaking position, derived from his status as a professional economist, is revealed starkly by one exchange on the topic of JobBridge’s efficacy [Example 7.28]. This role reflects the observation of Maesse (2015) that economists tend to be positioned within the media as ‘universal experts’ capable of applying their expertise to a variety of subjects. Conversely, other ‘experts’ that appear in this segment, representatives of the Simon Communities and YWI and others, were only consulted concerning particular issues such as homelessness or the availability of activation schemes.

Expert authority based on ‘lived experience’ was also deployed to legitimate these policies. Government TD John Lyons worked to establish his personal authority by referring to his class background – defined in terms of where he comes from and the constituents he represents [Example 7.24]. This background is presented within his contributions as giving him a unique insight into the problem of ‘long-term unemployed people from disadvantaged

[87] It is worth noting that no rationale is given within this text as to why these countries were chosen nor is there a clear presentation of the relevance the policies of these countries described had to those being discussed in the Irish context.

areas' and the associated issues of youth unemployment, its relation with jobless households, and the correctness of the government's practices. Furthermore, contributions from two members of the audience described their own positive experiences of JobBridge – an intern with Independent News Media who was later offered a position with the company, and the CEO of a company that made use of the scheme.

Example 7.29

Let me be very, very clear about it. I mean forced emigration is a horrible thing and… I mean this is one point where actually the recession has a very big impact on parents. I mean we often talk about… you know the recession and how it's impacted on young people. But I mean, parents suffer enormously when their kids go away. So… I don't want to belittle this or pretend it's not eh a horrible issue but the truth is we've talked already about the dangers of being unemployed and staying unemployed for a very long time and it's clear that… that is that… that has a very negative impact on your career prospects and you know throughout your life. By contrast, I mean, if you emigrate you are at least staying connected to the labour market for a period of time and we know from a lot of research that actually your career possibilities can improve dramatically because you've worked away. So all I'm saying is from an individual perspective, emigrating it's probably a better economic decision. Ok. But obviously life is about much more than economics. (Alan Barrett on Prime Time 12/11/2013 [22.47-23.48 min])

One striking aspect of Alan Barrett's role within the panel discussion is that he invokes the 'scarring effect' in every single contribution. The concept was invoked about the value of JSA reductions as an 'incentive', the value of activation schemes, and the benefit of emigration to young people [Example 7.29]. This repeated invocation of the 'scarring effect' as an outcome of inaction points to its role as constructing a **cautionary tale** of the dangers facing the young unemployed. Its scattershot use also betrays its detachment from the actual content of the various practices being prescribed.

7.5 De-legitimation of the policies

This section analyses de-legitimation strategies at play within a selected sample of texts from the fields of parliamentary-politics and print, televised and social media. These texts sought to contest the governing problematisations(s) by: representing the government and the practice of reducing JSA as violent and illegitimate [Section 7.5.1]; positioning the government as a dishonest actor that was misrepresenting its actions as regards youth unemployment [Section 7.5.2]; attempting to re-legitimate the young unemployed as deserving, either by representing them as conforming to expectations of this group as inscribed in the dominant discourses within the media field, by differentiating them from other groups cast as undeserving, or by seeking to associate their situation with other groups targeted by austerity [Section 7.5.3].

7.5.1 Representing policy as violent and unjust

Example 7.30

"To hell or Canada" for our youth – Cromwell would've been proud (Browne 16/10/2013)

Texts seeking to de-legitimate the policies typically represented the government and its actions as coercive and unjust. This strategy occurs most strikingly in the headline of an opinion piece reacting to the announcement [Example 7.30]. Here the text compares the measures and the revelation that the DSP had been advertising job opportunities overseas to the declaration 'To hell or to Connacht' associated with the Cromwellian invasion and plantation of Ireland in the 17th Century.

This comparison with colonial violence forms part of a broader de-legitimation strategy evident across this sample, which represented the government's austerity measures as violence, and re-contextualised the proposed JSA reduction as a coercive measure aiming to 'incentivise' emigration rather than education and training or work. This strategy is continued within the article, which repeatedly evaluated ***the government and its policies as violent*** (Browne 16/10/2013).

Example 7.31

This Government pays lip service to creating a so-called knowledge economy, all the while draining funds from the only sector that can make that dream a reality – third-level […] the Government prefers to sink its money into JobBridge…resulting in paid workers being displaced. (Browne 16/10/2013)

What's more, the violent outcome of these 'swingeing cuts' was represented as purposeless or 'myopic' in Browne's (16/10/2013) terms – inverting the mythopoetic narrative present within pro-government texts [Section 7.4.1]. Rather than activating the social protection system or combatting welfare dependency, the text represented the government's actions as defunding the education system and displacing paid work [Example 7.31]. An alternative cautionary tale was constructed by which these practices were ***re-defined as counterproductive or irrational measures*** resulting in social catastrophe and economic disaster.

Example 7.32

…these negative common experiences that have been forced on us – forced emigration, mass unemployment, precarious and unpaid work, internship culture, escalating mental health issues, lack of affordable housing – have all been to pay for the crimes and corruption of the elite. Why does society move to their rhythm and not ours? (We're Not Leaving 9/11/2013)

An unfavourable evaluation of the government as coercive is also found in a speech delivered at a 'National Youth Assembly' organised by the campaign group WNL that was later posted on Facebook [Example 7.32]. Throughout this speech, both the JSA reduction and wider policy practices were represented as bellicose acts – the government was described as 'kicking our ass up and down the street', as pursuing a 'war', and as unfairly targeting young people and other marginalised groups. One recurring phrasing across texts seeking to de-legitimise these policies is that of 'forced emigration' or 'forced migration' (O'Connor et al. 7/11/2013; We're Not Leaving 9/11/2013). The phrasing 'forced emigration' also appears throughout the Prime Time segment, including in a contribution by the government TD participating in the panel [Example 7.12]. The descriptor 'forced' is also applied to other practices such as 'living on 100 euro a week' (Moira Murphy in Prime Time 12/11/2013 [4.04-4.55 min]) and parents 'being forced now to look after their young unemployed children' (Grace Wills on Prime Time 12/11/2013 [20.57-22.47])

7.5.2 Representing the government as dishonest

Example 7.33

The way that the government justifies this is to perpetuate a myth about welfare culture that young people are just sitting at home and watching their flat screen TVs which is what Eamon Gilmore said only a few weeks ago which is ludicrous. So there the justification for these training schemes is that it'll somehow provide an impetus for young people to get out there and get confident and get these jobs but that that's simply not… not possible. I mean we see here at the same time that these training schemes, there's also as student fees being increased, and at the same time there is introduction of registration fees for apprentices so you would question what the government is really doing here. (Moira Murphy on Prime Time 12/11/2013[4.04-4.55 min])

The government was also evaluated as a dishonest actor who was twisting and misrepresenting its own actions to the public- by those such as WNL spokesperson Moira Murphy [Example 7.33]. This style of representation was achieved by a meta-discursive critique which re-contextualised elements of government communications – in this case, Labour leader Eamon Gilmore's comments in the Dáil [Section 6.3.4]. Elsewhere expert authority was invoked to counter the government's claims. For example, Browne (16/10/2013) cited the NYCI as calculating a figure of €273 million as required for the EYG compared to what she terms a 'derisory' allocation of €14 million made by the government.

Example 7.34

During the madness of the boom, estate agents concocted a whole new language of euphemism, exaggeration, and evasion to depict rickety properties as enviable investments. These days, it's rickety internships that are being given the hard sell. The risks associated with overblown advertising remain the same- fall for the blurb and you could find yourself indefinitely trapped in a dead end. (Irish Independent 16/11/2013)

Elsewhere, negative evaluation is achieved by comparison or association of the government with duplicitous or criminal actors. In one opinion piece, the governments' representation of its activation regime is compared to the hype by estate agents about property before the GFC [Example 7.34]. Another example was the already quoted section of the Youth Assembly speech, which associates the government with the 'crimes' and 'corruption' of elites [Example 7.32].

7.5.3 Re-legitimating the young unemployed

The evaluation of the government's actions as violent was often complemented by a representation of **young people as a legitimate actor on the receiving end of unjust practices**. Young people were evaluated as 'victims' of unwarranted acts against their well-being, complementing the representation of the government as violent and dishonest seen above, but also re-inscribing them as lacking agency and as an unindividuated mass [Section 7.4.2].

Example 7.35

If the Government really wanted to help unemployed young people, many of whom are highly skilled graduates… (Browne 16/10/2013)

This re-evaluation was typically achieved by appealing to the framing of deservingness as established by the dominant problematisation of a training and education deficit or behavioural deviance [Example 7.35]. The measure of cutting the JSA is represented as unjust as the targeted young people were already conforming to what is expected of them – being educated, searching for work etc.

Example 7.36

When I signed on to Jobseekers Allowance in January 2009, it didn't feel like a big deal. I'd worked since I was 16 and had always been able to find a job. Perhaps I was naïve, but I really didn't think I'd be spending the next four years on the Live Register. There have been weeks when I've sent out three or four job applications a day – it's just extremely difficult to get work. It's the age-old problem of 'need experience to get a job, need a job to get experience. (Clarke 6/11/2013)

Such a legitimation strategy was central to one text that related the personal experience of a young unemployed person (Clarke 6/11/2013). Drawing on the expert authority conferred by representing her lived experience, the text sought to re-legitimate the young unemployed and de-legitimate the government's action in cutting JSA. As this unfolded within the text, there was a clear negotiation process with the governing representations. In Example 7.36, the difficulties of job-searching in a recessionary environment are complemented with a mantra deferring to the dominant problem representation in this field – 'It's the age-old problem of "need experience to get a job, need a job to get experience"'. Elsewhere the text noted the various forms of self-improvement and education the author had engaged in while attempting to find work, and her happiness at finding a part-time job.

Example 7.37

… I was unlucky and I finished college then I had to take the tumble on the dole like everybody else does for the first few months. […] We did have to go to meetings, and after three months if you were still on the dole, you were brought in to give you tips and solutions on how to get a job. I found there was people across all parts of society in there which was… which was kind of a strange thing for me to take on. Where regards to… there was people from all across society basically. People asking what you do if you fail your

leaving cert? You had people asking where is the best place to get English language courses? And then you had people like myself who done a Masters in University Limerick and we're just basically waiting to get a get a good job. I mean we had individual meetings afterwards and literally I was just told look you've done enough education.(David Ryan on Prime Time 12/11/2013 [16.42-18.14 min])

Expert authority based on lived experience is also invoked in the contributions[88] made to the Prime Time segment examined [Example 7.37]. The process of re-legitimation of the young unemployed attempted by David Ryan, the National Director of the youth wing of FF, again involved negotiation with the dominant problematisation(s). The speaker represented himself and other [educated and native] young unemployed people as legitimate actors by differentiating himself from other claimants who lacked education or were not native English speakers - thus, distinguishing himself from claimants inscribed as 'undeserving' within the 'welfare populism' of this period [Section 2.4.1.3].

Example 7.38

This is a call out to young people who have had enough of forced emigration, no work, unpaid work, miserable work. This is a call out to the rabble' to young workers, students, women, migrant workers, people of the Traveller and minority communities, to working class communities, to trade unionists, to people with disabilities, to people across the gender and sexuality spectrums and from all corners of the island. This is a call out to any young person who is ready to take that step into getting organised and fighting back against all the crap, against all the corruption, against all the attacks on our lives and futures. (We're Not Leaving 9/11/2013)

There is much less evidence of these forms of negotiation with the governing problematisation(s) in the Young People's Assembly speech [Example 7.38]. This silence is perhaps reflective of its externality to the field of traditional media - unlike the other texts in this sample. Another contrasting aspect with these other texts is that young people are presented as active agents rather than a passive and unindividuated mass. In this case, they were represented as a unified 'we' and associated with other social actors who share their experience of 'the government' and 'the powerful'. This association relied on differentiation from other negatively evaluated social actors, including the 'wealthy' and 'bosses'.

7.6 Conclusion

The analysis of this field uncovered a re-ordering of problematisations as produced by the fields examined in Chapters Five and Six when they were disseminated within the media. The problem representation of the young unemployed as lacking skills/training and experience prevailed over other ways of seeing the problem.

The findings reflect a successful re-contextualisation by the government of an austerity measure as integral to its activation strategy. As argued in Section 7.4.1, a shift in focus

[88] It is important to note, however, that throughout the panel discussion it is evident that the young people who provided their lived experiences gained their speaking position due to affiliation to either civil society or political groups whether protest groups, charities, their employers, or political parties.

towards the EYG and away from the JSA reduction enacted in this period was central to the justification strategy for these policy initiatives, which sought to construct a narrative of a transfer away from illegitimate social actors and practices towards legitimate actors and practices.

The problematisation of ‘welfare dependency’ and negative evaluations of the unemployed uncovered in Chapter Six were also disseminated within this field - but with less frequency. This representation’s intensification by some texts within the print media suggests a division of labour between the fields of policy and parliamentary-politics and that of the media. The message produced within these former fields was re-contextualised in a much more differentiating and stigmatising manner by sympathetic actors within journalism. This process was enabled by the seeming distance between media actors and those responsible for enacting these measures.

There was strong evidence of attempts to disrupt the governing problematisations. However, this often involved a process of negotiation with the terms set by the assumptions these representations of youth unemployment relied upon. Texts seeking to oppose JSA reductions largely accepted the premise that education and training shortcomings were central to the problem of youth unemployment.

The representation of this measure as ‘incentivising’ or even ‘forcing’ emigration as encountered in Chapter Six was pervasive in this field. Emigration was represented more as a problem in terms of individual and familial well-being than an economic problem as on the opposition benches of the Dáil. This difference reflected a broader trend whereby economic rationality had to share space with other discourses – though, as seen in Section 7.4.3 economic authority occupied a central position.

Limited space was afforded to a representation of social inequality and poverty as opposed to the dominant focus on training and education and/or emigration. This relative silence is striking considering the potential material impact of JSA reductions for young claimants.

Chapter Eight: Discussion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of this project in relation to the national and international literature reviewed. It addresses the research objectives established in Section 1.3 as pursued within the framework of WPR [Section 4.3].

Section 8.2 emphasises Questions One, Two and Three of the WPR framework. These ask respectively: What is the problem represented to be? what assumptions and presuppositions are at play within this representation? and how did this representation come to be? It distinguishes between two problem representations focused on behavioural or human capital deficiencies among the young unemployed. When re-contextualised to Ireland, these representations were found to be subordinate to the terms of reference set by the broader goals of austerity and of 'competitiveness'.

Section 8.3 reflects on the discursive and subjectification effects these problem representations imposed and thus partly addresses Question Five of the WPR framework. The delineation of these effects also enables further reflection on Question Four, which examines the silences left, and Question Six, which investigates how problematisations are disseminated and defended or disrupted and contested.

Section 8.4 offers a partial response to the remaining aspect of Question Five, in which the researcher interrogates the 'lived effects' of a problematisation. It examines the available data and secondary literature on the labour market, emigration, and poverty outcomes for young people between 2008 and 2019.

Section 8.5 concludes by summarising this project's findings for each of the WPR questions. It concisely addresses the question raised at the start of this thesis: How was youth unemployment problematised in Ireland between 2008 and 2014?

8.2 Austerity, Competitiveness and Youth Unemployment

This section addresses WPR questions One, Two and Three. What was the problem represented to be? What were the assumptions, and how did this representation come about?

It begins by re-examining the behaviouralist problematisation identified by this study [Section 8.2.1]. It is argued that the push to implement austerity between 2008 and 2014 set the terms of reference for this representation. The timing of the policies introduced and the wider literature on Irish welfare reform indicate that Irish policy makers put youth unemployment on the agenda in the first instance. The content of these policies and the behaviouralist assumptions that underpin them are also argued to have been shaped by local rather than external actors.

Attention then focuses on the problematisation of the young unemployed as lacking human capital [Section 8.2.2]. A diverse range of actors advanced the resulting problem representation with practically all texts identifying education and training as a solution for youth unemployment. This representation was also found to be nested into a broader policy objective – 'competitiveness'.

This section concludes by arguing that the human capital and behaviouralist paradigms became highly entangled within the Irish context [Section 8.2.3]. Once again, domestic policy actors were central. Further underlying this point is the strong continuity identified between the practices applied during this period and those uncovered in previous periods of recession in Ireland, as explored in Chapter Two.

8.2.1 Austerity and Youth Unemployment

Chapter Six explored how SP and W Acts in 2009 and 2013 were represented in terms of 'making savings' above all other considerations. Chapter Five uncovered how the Irish EYGIP was moulded in line with a problem representation of 'scarce resources'. Thus, both government interventions examined by this study, were shaped by the exigencies of austerity. One point to reflect upon here is how did 'youth unemployment' fit within this wider focus on 'fiscal consolidation'? Is it the case that the introduction and expansion of age-banded JSA rates was an expression of the priorities of Irish policy actors? Alternatively, were these measures influenced by international actors through the MOU with the Troika in 2011 or the EYG in 2013?

Much of the commentary and analysis at the time presented these and other austerity measures primarily as an external imposition (McCabe 2015: 48). However, researchers investigating social protection reform in Ireland have argued that domestic actors had much more leeway than typically suggested at the time (Murphy 2014a). While the MOU set targets for the Irish government, they continued to have considerable autonomy in determining how those goals were achieved (Murphy 2014a; Dukelow 2015). Hick (2018:7) found the bailout deal drew upon ambitions already held by senior policymakers in Ireland - the real change was their ability to implement them. For example, reforms targeting lone parents, introduced by the *Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2010*, and cemented in Budget 2012, had already been agreed upon by successive governments since at least 2006 (Millar et al. 2019).

Conversely, there is little evidence youth unemployment was on the radar of policymakers on the national or international levels before the GFC [Section 2.4.2]. All the available evidence suggests its arrival on the policy agenda was directly linked with this cyclical shock and its consequences for the Irish labour market [Section 2.4.1]. This timing echoes a longer trend in the history of youth unemployment as a policy problem on the national level. In 2008-2014, as in the late 1930s and 1970s, it came on the agenda amidst domestic and global economic downturns and factors that potentially impeded emigration [Section 2.2; Section 2.3].

Both the timing and the content of the practices introduced further support the contention that youth unemployment was mainly problematised at the behest of domestic policy actors. The first legislation reducing JSA rates for the young unemployed were implemented in April and December 2009 – a full year before the MOU was established. Cousins (2016:60) notes that the Troika itself had little input into which benefit rates were to be reduced or to what extent. Likewise, while the EYG was put on the agenda by the European Commission, the Guarantee as realised on the Irish level consisted primarily of increased conditionality and the establishment of quotas for the Under-25s on existing schemes targeting the general unemployed population [Section 5.4].

8.2.1.1 The Behaviouralist Problematisation

The relationship between the austerity agenda and the style of problematisation of youth unemployment are evident in those policies focused on the behaviour, attitudes, or predispositions among the young unemployed population. The harsher form of this behaviouralist paradigm can most prominently be seen in practices such as age-banded JSA and increased conditionality introduced between 2009 and 2013 [Section 6.2.3]. This style of problematisation was also evident within the EYGIP as formulated by the DSP [Section 5.4.1].

Chapter Five also uncovered an alternative softer behavioural problematisation focused on 'awareness' among the young unemployed population. Here, the assumption was that the young unemployed were ignorant of the opportunities available to them through entrepreneurship, returning to education, or moving to another country. This problem representation was much more diffuse. It was advanced both by the Irish iteration of the EYG [Section 5.4.1], by the European institutions themselves [Section 5.2.1] and by organisations such as the NYCI [Section 5.3.1].

Unlike the widespread focus on a purported HCT deficit as examined below, the harsher behaviouralist problem representation was found to be primarily limited to those texts and practices introduced by the DSP and government politicians – though there is some influence of this paradigm within certain IGO documents examined [Section 5.2.1]. Nested within this problematisation was the implicit and sometimes explicit representation of an 'underclass' among the out-of-work [Section 6.4.2; Section 7.2.2]. Much of the language used by politicians and media figures was influenced by the 'welfare dependency' paradigm that emerged in the US during the late 1960s [Section 3.4.1].

It is striking that there was little to no evidence of these fears about welfare dependency among the young unemployed in the period before the GFC[89]. The mixed at best evidence to support such concerns after the GFC should also be noted. As one opposition TD pointed out in April 2009, the empirical basis for the first JSA reductions was unclear [Section 6.5.2]. Arguing against the last tranche of these reductions, Taft (2013) noted that while JSA rates increased 32% between 2004 and 2006, the employment rate among the 20-24-years age group was 68.8% - the fourth highest in the EU-15. As noted in Section 2.4.2.1, the little research that has been done into the impact of these measures has had mixed findings. Walsh (2016:21-22) found that the second of the 2009 reductions on those aged 24 and younger

89 The sole evidence of such policy ambitions found by this study was in 1998 when Minister for Enterprise and Trade Mary Harney commented during a media appearance that those aged under 25 should have their access to welfare 'cut off' after 6 months if they refused to engage with training programmes (Mac Carthaigh 19/6/1998). These comments were withdrawn after criticism by trade unions and the INOU (Dooley 19/6/1998).

had a 'negligible' impact on the exit rate to employment. Doris et al.'s (2020:923) examination of the effect of the first Act targeting 18- and 19-year-olds found it reduced unemployment duration for 18-year-olds by more than a year compared to those 18-year-olds who signed on before the measure. However, this study also acknowledged it may also have resulted in reduced consumption within the economy and increased familial dependence and risk of homelessness (Doris et al. 2020:924).

Furthermore, such findings focused on 'unemployment duration' or 'exit to employment' outcomes tell us little about the existence of the pathological diagnosis of welfare dependency that underpinned this problematisation. In this regard, while not solely focused on the 'young unemployed' per se, recent ethnographic research into the impact of the new regime of welfare conditionality in the Irish context by Finn (2019) and Whelan (2021) contradict such a representation of a lack of willingness to work among claimants.

How did the policy of restricting JSA levels paid to those aged 26 and younger come about? While the form this strategy took was novel, it can be read as a resurrection of the spirit of earlier measures, which sought to conserve revenue by restricting access to unemployment assistance to people based upon age, geographical location, or family status. The most prominent of these were the EPOs introduced intermittently between the 1930s and 1971 [Section 2.2.2]. The introduction of the CC in 1940 extended this practice to urban areas by forcing young single men to choose between the scheme or their access to assistance [Section 2.2.2]. There are also strong parallels between the activation strategies from 2008 onwards and those deployed during the 1970s-1980s [Section 2.3.2]. In the late 1980s, the introduction of increased means-testing and control measures nominally targeting fraud in the guise of the Jobsearch scheme can be understood within this same continuum [Section 2.3.3].

The representation of such measures as addressing attitudinal and behavioural problems among the young unemployed is another theme through which a thread of continuity can be detected. For example, there are strong echoes between Minister Hanafin's account of failed pilot schemes for 18- and 19-year-olds in 2009 and the explanations given for the failure of the Clonast misadventure in 1940[90]. Those targeted by these measures were again defined in terms of a perceived unruliness and idleness. There are strong resonances between the suspicion and contempt voiced towards this population during the post-GFC period and that expressed by state elites since the formative years of the Southern state [Section 2.2.1].

However, it should also be noted there is also strong resonance between those anti-welfare discourses mobilised by Irish politicians and their counterparts in the media and those from other Anglophone countries such as the US and UK (Fraser and Gordon 1994; Tyler 2013). Such a representation is highly evocative of what Levitas (1998:7) termed 'moral underclass' discourse which centres on the supposed 'moral and behavioural delinquency of the excluded' [Section 3.4.2]. Certainly, O'Flynn et al. (2014) have demonstrated how welfare

90 Another stark expression of the continued purchase of the idea that 'military discipline' should be imposed among the young unemployed is evidenced by a EYG scheme initiated after the period examined by this project. The Defence Forces Employment Support Scheme requires participants to engage in military orientated training combined with employability training [Section 2.4.2.2].

claimants and other groups such as lone parents and asylum seekers were positioned as targets of public ire in post-GFC Ireland – directing attention away from more pressing targets of critique and problematisation. In the case of the young unemployed, these discourses drew upon the negative representations of young urban working-class people that Devlin (2006) found circulating within the Irish media before the GFC [Section 3.2.2.2].

Studies such as Moran (2006) noted how relatively codified the language of the underclass was in the Irish context during the Celtic Tiger period – with an avoidance of the more overtly stigmatising register as found in other Anglophone countries [Section 3.4.1]. Reticence to explicitly engage in such rhetoric appears to have dissipated following the GFC. Measures retrenching and reforming the social protection system were repeatedly accompanied by a behaviouralist and stigmatising style of problematisation targeted at welfare recipients, asylum seekers and other minority groups (O'Flynn et al. 2014; Devereux and Power 2019; Gaffney and Millar 2020).

Government figures and their supporters relied heavily upon such discourses when legitimating the reductions in JSA payable to the young unemployed within both the Dáil [Section 6.4.2] and the media [Section 7.4.2]. The reductions were applied to all future claimants of that payment within the age group. However, the accompanying representation often gave the impression they were aimed at a supposed 'underclass' among these claimants. This trend reflects Tyler's (2013:9) observation that such measures tend to be accompanied by processes of abjection through which those targeted are turned into both 'symbolic and material scapegoats'. Ministers and their colleagues articulating the need for these bills invoked unsubstantiated anecdotes of welfare claiming as a rite of passage in families, of lazy and feckless young people spending their days 'watching flatscreen TVs', and the personal experiences of DEASP staff [Section 6.4.2]. Chapter Seven found these representations were intensified within the media field by sympathetic journalists who were free to use more explicitly stigmatising language [Section 7.2.2].

Looking at the historical record also revealed divergent aspects in how this behaviouralist problematisation of youth unemployment was constructed. One striking finding of this study was how the impact of increased numbers of out-of-work youths was primarily represented in monetary terms. For example, the 'savings' lauded by Ministers introducing SW and P Acts in 2009 and 2013 [Section 6.2.1] or the figure of 12% in European GDP estimated by the EC (2014:3) as the 'cost' of inaction [Section 5.5.1]. This representation reflects a comprehensive shift in how youth unemployment was problematised compared to earlier periods. In the 1930s, youth unemployment was represented in psycho-social terms as a source of 'demoralisation' among the urban working classes (Mungham 1982; Devane 1942; COYU 1951)[91]. Such representations are notably marginal across the more recent sample examined by this study. Instead, youth unemployment was almost universally problematised in fiscal terms as a drain on the exchequer. The predominance of such a representation was also seen

[91] References to crime and 'subversion' during the YEA Act Dáil debates suggest that such representations were also in circulation in Ireland during the 1980s (Dáil Debates 25/11/1981).

in the Irish EYGIP, where the call to prioritise those most ‘in need’ was re-contextualised as a practice rationing ‘scarce resources’ [Section 5.4.2].

8.2.2 Competitiveness and Youth Unemployment

Aside from imposing austerity, policymakers in post-GFC Ireland sought to make the Irish economy more ‘competitive’ on the global level (Kenny 21/10/2013). This project has found that youth unemployment was often nested within this broader policy goal in two manners.

The first version was found in the IGO literature in Chapter Five, which suggested ‘competitiveness’ was to be achieved through investment in human capital in the form of activation programmes, further education, and training for the unemployed and early school leavers. Indeed, the assumption of the HCT paradigm [Section 3.4.3] that educational attainment and skill are the primary drivers of labour market outcomes was central to how youth unemployment was framed in Ireland and on the international level between 2008 and 2014. This section discusses the disjuncture between a representation of the young unemployed as lacking training, skills and experience and the available data on the levels of ‘human capital’ possessed by young people in the Irish context.

The other iteration of the problem of ‘competitiveness’ worked to represent Irish wage labour as ‘uncompetitive’. Inspired by the hegemonic assumptions about unemployment of the Neoliberal era [Section 3.3.3], this competitiveness was seen as best achieved in negative terms by cutting labour costs rather than HCT investment. The consequence has been an expansion of the low-wage and ‘low-skill’ sectors of the labour market in the Irish context (McDonnell and O’Farrell 2016; Collins and Murphy 2016; Coulter and Arqueros-Fernández 2020).

8.2.2.1 The Human Capital Problematisation

The assumption that young unemployed individuals lacked ‘education’, ‘skills’ and ‘experience’ was pervasive across each field examined by this study. In Chapter Five, this problem representation was advanced by OECD and EU texts and the Irish EYGIP – but was also found within those produced by youth organisations and left-leaning think tanks. In Chapter Six, this problematisation was identified by both government and opposition TDs. In Chapter Seven, this problem representation was the focus of both supporters and opponents of the government’s actions. The near-consensus around such a representation mirrors the mainstream academic and policy literature, which also emphasises second-chance and further education and ALMPs in response to unemployment among those aged 18-25 (Bell and Blanchflower 2011; Kelly et al. 2012; O’Reilly et al. 2015; Martin 2015).

There is a striking disjuncture between the pervasiveness of this problem representation and the available data from this period on the levels of ‘education’, ‘skills’ and ‘experience’ possessed by young people in Ireland. In 2008 at the onset of this crisis, 29.2% of those aged 20-25 in Ireland had attained a tertiary level of education, the highest level among this age-group across Europe (Eurostat 2021a). Indeed, the Irish workforce has since been diagnosed as among the most ‘overeducated’ in the European Union (McGuinness et al. 2017). Consulting the available evidence also makes it hard to sustain the proposition made that a deficit of 'work experience' was driving this shift in the fate of young workers, not least as research from this period found that 85% of unemployed young people on the live register had already worked (NERI 2013:2-3).

One potential counterargument here is that these young people were getting the 'wrong' type of education, meaning the skills they had were 'mismatched' to the ostensibly objective needs of the economy. Certainly, such a critique is advanced by the texts analysed in Chapter Five. However, this idea of a 'skills mismatch' is spurious in a context that moved from near 'full unemployment' on the eve of the GFC (FÁS 2006) to the situation in 2013 where there were 32 unemployed people for every vacancy (NERI 2013:1). Such a sharp reversal of fortune points towards a scenario in which cyclical shock rather than insitutional failings were the main driver of youth unemployment [Section 3.5.2.1.]. As noted in Chapter Two, the collapse of the construction and retail sectors was a crucial factor here [Section 2.4.2.2]. Those employed in these sectors suddenly found their skills no longer in demand – it is not the case that they lacked skills. The speed of change in labour market outcomes, and the high level of education and experience among this age group, reveals such a diagnosis as far-fetched and detached from the conditions on the ground. The focus on this deficit downplayed and silenced the relevance of macro-economic explanations and posited instead an individualised explanation focused on bad 'choices' (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015; Fehrer 2020).

This study found that the focus in each field examined on 'skills' and 'experience' often had an ethereal quality. While every policy text consulted for Chapter Five was adamant about training and educating the young unemployed, they were less forthcoming about which skills were lacking or what sectors should be boosted. This ambivalence about which 'skills' were lacking was reproduced within the samples that informed Chapters Six and Seven[92]. However, in practice, the focus on human capital investment was belied by both the small scale of the retraining schemes that existed and the concurrent divestment from the third level education system [Section 2.4.2.1]. These practices in fact proposed the opposite representation – that the state was investing too much in the education of its population.

On one level, this discrepancy between rhetoric and the practices implemented could be taken as an effect of the subordination of this problematisation to that of austerity. However, a return to the literature suggests more insidious dynamics could be at play. Section 3.4.3 identified a series of works linking an increasingly abstract representation of 'skills' with society-wide drives to revise workers' expectations downwards regarding wages and job satisfaction (Cohen 1984; Lafer 2004; Lloyd and Payne 2009). Warhurst et al. (2017) identified the ascription of social groups as skilled or unskilled as a significant driver of inequality, with the concept increasingly being understood less in terms of credentials or capacity and more as a quality ascribed to members of the 'correct' social class, gender, race or in this case age-group. This connection suggests that this style of problematisation can become implicated with practices that seek to increase competitiveness by reducing labour costs and representing the losers of this process as 'abject'.

92 The exception being the isolated description in Section 7.2.1 of the transformation of out-of-work construction sector workers into IT sector workers.

8.2.3 How did these representations relate to each other?

This project has distinguished between a problematisation of flawed behaviour and attitudes among the young unemployed and that which represents their deficiency in terms of a lack of skills, training or experience. In distilling the dominant representation(s) of the problem of youth unemployment down to these two positions, the study echoes the findings of other researchers that have distinguished between 'offensive' and 'defensive' approaches to activation [Section 3.5.3.1].

These two approaches are sometimes represented as opposed to each other; with a zero-sum game between measures seeking to invest in human capital and behaviouralist 'work-first' interventions. However, this project's findings suggest these paradigms can become interlinked and reinforce each other in complex ways. This finding echoes Crisp and Powell (2017) in the UK context, who warned that the concept of 'employability' central to the HCT paradigm has evolved towards legitimating punitive workfare policies. The findings in Chapter Six, suggest a similar dynamic has been at play in the Irish context, with austerity measures being explained in terms of 'incentivising' education and training in 2009 and work in 2013 [Chapter 6.2.4]. The entanglement of these problematisations was also evident in how the announcement of the Irish EYG, which proposed investment in the human capital of the young unemployed, was conflated with and thus legitimated the move to reduce the JSA rate for those same individuals [Section 7.4.1].

How did these two positionings of the problem of youth unemployment within the goal come to be? In Chapter Three, we saw how international organisations such as the OECD, the EU and the World Bank have all sought to place youth unemployment on the policy agenda (Fergusson and Yeates 2013; Sukarieh and Tannock 2015). Chapter Five examined the terms of reference established by the OECD and the European Institutions and how the Irish DSP responded with its EYGIP in 2013. The findings in that chapter suggested that while the issue was put on the agenda at the European level - domestic policy actors decided the content. The EYG, as constructed on the European level, had a strong focus on education and training and job subsidies that represented the young unemployed population as requiring human capital investment [Section 5.2.1]. However, the findings of Chapter Five suggest that the Irish EYG reinforced the existing activation approach rather than provoking any new departures – a finding that replicates those of other studies on the EYG in other contexts (Cabasés Piqué et al. 2016; Dingeldy et al. 2019).

Furthermore, unlike what Dingeldy et al. (2019:197) found in Greece and Spain, there is little evidence that Irish politicians or policy makers discourse shifted in line with European level framings of the issue. Against such a trend, this study found that Irish policymakers sought to dismiss the focus on NEETs called for by the EYG [Section 5.4.2] and that politicians favoured an Anglophone 'moral underclass' style over the SE/I register promoted by the European Institutions [Section 6.4.2].

Academic analysis of welfare policies in Ireland have tended to stress the novelty and rupture the workfarist turn has represented from the social policy of the Celtic Tiger period (Murphy 2016; Boland and Griffin 2015a; Whelan 2021a). Conversely, by taking a longer view, this project identified strong areas of continuity with previous periods of economic crisis during the 1930-1940s and the 1970s-1980s. Such a comparison revealed two broad patterns of state action and inaction. Firstly, income support denial and restriction to 'incentivise' mobility or lower wage expectations among the out-of-work population. Secondly, the introduction of measures addressing perceived deficiencies of skill or behavioural delinquency among this population. However, while the state continues to draw the young unemployed and the broader 'inactive' population into its 'disciplinary geography' (Whelan 2021a), for the most part, this is no longer a question of labour camps as in the 1940s but through practices diffused within the community and enacted by civil society (Ryan 2007).

The EYGIP examined in Chapter Six can be seen as a much less ambitious repeat of the measures introduced in the 1980s as part of the YEA and European Social Funds ambit [Section 2.3.2]. One striking example of this is the parallels between the WEP of 1977-1988 and later day 'internship' schemes such as WPP and JobBridge [Section 2.4.]. The similarities between these schemes include the criticisms raised by trade unions and opposition parties that they enabled the exploitation of young people and shut others out from work [Section 2.3.2; Section 2.4.2.2]. Research into both this older scheme and Jobbridge corroborated these allegations to an extent; with evidence of what in academic terms are 'deadweight loss' and 'crowding out effects' (Breen 1988; Indecon 2016; Arlow 2019) [Section 3.5.3.2].

Thus, we can argue that practices of increased conditionality and activation encountered during this research were already 'lying around', to paraphrase Milton Friedman (2002: xiv), within Irish policy debates for years or even decades beforehand.

8.3 Discursive and Subjectification Effects

This section is structured around the first two elements of WPR Question Five, which interrogates the discursive, subjectification and lived effects of the problem representation(s) [Section 4.3.1]. Discursive effects denote the 'terms of reference' that shape what can be thought and said about a problem (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016:23). Subjectification effects refer to how 'subjects' are produced in problem representations (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016:23). This section also addresses Question Four regarding the silences left in a problem representation and Question Six, which examines how a problem representation is disseminated and defended or contested and disrupted.

8.3.1 Discursive Effects

This section identifies three discursive effects of the dominant representation(s) of 'youth unemployment' found by this study. Firstly, the construction of a differentiation between young unemployment and the 'general' experience of worklessness during this period, and between the reductions of JSA payable to the young and the wider context of austerity. This demarcation, in turn, facilitated a denial of space to alternative problematisation(s) such as those implicating economic and social structures in Ireland. A second effect was a restriction across fields regarding who had the right to speak, and which forms of knowledge were relevant. This restriction is argued to have further limited the space for contestation. Finally, attention is drawn to the gendered and racialised aspects of the problematisations encountered and the divergence between IGO discourses and those found in the Irish context in this regard.

8.3.1.1 Foregrounding 'youth' and backgrounding the economy

> *'…talking about "the young" as a social unit, a constituted group, with common interests, relating these interests to a biologically defined age, is in itself an obvious manipulation.'* (Bourdieu 1993:93)

In each field examined, the focus was more on 'youth' than on the unemployment side of the equation. In retrospect, it is very striking, considering the prevailing macro-economic conditions, that youth unemployment was primarily represented as an individualised question of deficiency or deviance. These problematisations drew upon well-established representations of the shortcomings of youth – often based on assumptions that are not corroborated by the available evidence as seen above.

In Section 3.2.2, the argument was advanced that youth is a malleable concept[93]. Social actors frequently mobilise negative and positive connotations of 'youth' to legitimate policy goals and interests (Sukarieh and Tannock 2015; Threadgold 2020). One noted effect of focusing on 'youth' is a transformation of 'social problems' related to economic structure into 'moral problems' particular to the young (Fergusson and Yeates 2013). The findings of this study support such critical assertions about how a focus on 'youth' operates within policy.

Thus, the problematisation of youth unemployment acted as a sleight of hand which drew attention towards the 'youthfulness' of those to be acted upon rather than the economic collapse that precipitated their workless condition. The connotations of deviance, inexperience and vulnerability associated with 'youth' facilitated a problem representation defined in terms of the deficiencies discussed above. Chapters Six and Seven highlight how even many oppositional voices represented the problem of youth unemployment in these terms rather than pointing to the elephant in the room – the Irish economic model. The discursive effect here was to put the blame at the feet of the young unemployed themselves and to background the role of economic breakdown in this issue. In other words, there was a reproduction of what Griffin (1993) diagnosed as the 'victim-blaming-thesis' [Section 3.2.2.3]. At the same time, it allowed the 'young unemployed' to be distinguished from the wider unemployed population, and the measures targeting them to be abstracted from the wider austerity drive.

The near absence of problematisation focusing on the demand side or structural aspects of the Irish labour market is remarkable considering the staggering breakdown in the pillars of the Celtic Tiger model during this period [Section 2.4.1.2]. The same 'openness' which enabled the boom left the country highly vulnerable to external shocks such as was experienced in 2007/2008 (McDonough 2018). At the most radical, the counter-problematisations ventured by oppositional actors were based on a tame Keynesianism that

93 This malleability was reflected in the media sample surveyed in Chapter Seven where there was a recurring slippage away from the quite restricted definition of those aged between 16 and 24 adopted by the OECD, EU and the Irish State [Section 7.2.1].

often proved inconsistent even within the boundaries of the texts in which they were inscribed [Section 5.3.5; Section 6.3.5; Section 7.3.4].

The parallels between the post-GFC situation and the periods of economic downturn examined in Chapter Two were similarly marginalised across all three fields examined. The absence of broader macro-economic critique is discontinuous with those texts examined by this study from earlier periods. For example, the final report of the COYU (1951) afforded attention to the inefficiencies of Irish agriculture as a source of underdevelopment and as driving the under-employment of the populace. Similarly, Dáil debates in 1981 concerning the YEA demonstrate the rhetorical support from both government and opposition TDs for industrial planning and more significant state intervention in the economy in response to the superfluity of broad swathes of the working-age population (Dáil Debates 25/11/1981)[94].

The limited presence of critiques and alternatives to the orthodox economic perspective suggests a continued consensus within these fields around the Celtic Tiger model - despite its harsh repudiation by the GFC. The survival of this consensus could explain the lack of historical perspective found across the samples that have informed this study. It appears that many policymakers, politicians, and journalists held on to a hubristic sense of rupture with Ireland's past that emerged during the boom (Kirby 2010). At the same time, these actors reverted to those same tactics that preserved the social order in previous economic breakdowns.

8.3.1.2 Who has the right to speak?

The critique uncovered by this study generally deferred to the terms of the debate as set by the predominant problematisation(s). Striking examples were found in each field of texts of speakers couching critique in line with the prevailing order of discourse. Chapter Five found a civil society organisation that advocated limited Keynesian-style labour measures contradictorily funded by deflationary austerity measures [Section 5.3.5]. Chapter Six found even the most radical voices within the parliament made their case in the discursive framework offered by HCT [Section 6.4.4]. Chapter Seven saw how young people afforded the space to speak tended to devote more energy to positioning themselves as deserving subjects than challenging the prevailing discourse head-on [Section 7.5.3]. Those young individuals targeted by these policies were largely silenced across these fields with government and opposition TDs, experts and NGO workers speaking in their place.

The media coverage examined for Chapter Seven revealed the most open attempts to resist the dominant problematisation. In Section 7.5.1, it was seen how contestation hinged upon a reversal of the moral tale as established by those supporting the measure. Opponents sought to re-represent the cut as a coercive measure encouraging emigration and exploitation. In this field, the centring of economic knowledge and its experts was more visible. It had to compete with alternative discursive frameworks based on mental health [Section 7.3.1] and problematisations of social injustice and exploitation [Section 7.3.4].

94 It should be stressed however that the presence of such critique and counter-problematisations in earlier periods were not substantially reflected in the practices enacted.

At the same time, even within this field, youth unemployment continued to be constructed within the framework of economic rationality and HCT. The clearest example of this can be seen in the panel discussion examined in Chapter Seven. The participating economist was positioned as a universal expert and was called upon to act as an adjudicator on statements made by fellow panellists on a range of topics from the incentive effect of the JSA cuts, the displacement effect of JobBridge and the costs and benefits of emigration [Section 7.4.3].

Accepting the terms of reference imposed can only be understood as a reflection of power relations in Irish society. One in which the enforcement of austerity and competition were widely upheld as what was needed 'to get this country working' (Kenny 21/10/2013). Chapter Two noted that contestation to austerity was relatively limited in the Irish context during the period 2008-2014. This relative lack of resistance can be partly explained by the disorganisation of traditional oppositional institutions within Irish society at the onset of the crisis. A weak and divided parliamentary left was matched by a trade union movement in 'disarray' following the collapse of social partnership (Finn 2019: 105; Adshead 2018). NGOs and community organisations also proved incapable of taking up the banner of resistance - due to a dependency on the state cultivated during the Celtic Tiger period (O'Connor 2016; Royall 2017).

At the same time, it should not be taken for granted that because contestation was muted and contradictory within these fields there were no counter-discourses and contestation produced by the out-of-work targeted by these measures. In particular, Chapter Two shows a rich history of resistance by the out-of-work in the Irish context; typically formed along the lines of class and community rather than age group.

8.3.1.3 Silence on gendered and racialised differentiations

Chapter Three noted that youth unemployment as a policy problem has often been shaped by the gendered assumptions of the society in which they are invoked [Section 3.3]. In Chapter Two, it was argued that in the Irish context, youth unemployment has typically been seen as a problem of male members of the urban working-classes who are positioned as a 'problem population' associated with dependency and anti-social behaviour. Such negative representations of young working-class men were found to be at play within the Irish media in the period leading up to the GFC (Devlin 2006).

The texts and statements of Irish politicians examined in the course of this study suggest that such gendered and class-based assumptions were also at play in policy discourses mobilised about youth unemployment between 2008 and 2014. However, there is a discontinuity as this gendering has often become more codified and implicit than found in earlier periods of what was once termed the 'boy-labour problem' (Casson 1979). The gender-neutral language deployed in the grey literature examined in Chapter Five would suggest that gender was just not a factor for policy makers on this issue. Of this sample, only one text acknowledged any gender disparity in terms of employment outcomes and in that case, it was focused on lone parents [Section 5.2.2]. However, the critical interrogation enabled by WPR reveals that gendered assumptions about waged work and the impact of its absence are baked into the practices these documents propose [Section 5.5.2]. The texts examined in this study also operated with a gendered lens, foregrounding the experience of out-of-work men and the sectors in which they worked. This implicit gendering signals the persistence of well-established norms in terms of just whose loss of employment is grievable (Boland et al. 2015) – for example, the focus on the construction sector despite similar amounts of jobs being lost in more feminised sectors such as retail [Section 2.4.1.2][95].

Contemporary understandings of youth unemployment have been critiqued as operating with racialised assumptions about the younger members of migrant or ethnic minority groups [Section 3.4.1.1]. This study found evidence of such a focus within IGO policy literature. Documents produced by the EU and the OECD paid considerable attention to youth unemployment as a problem of these sub-populations [Section 5.2.2]. In doing so, they positioned these youths and their communities as the problem and backgrounded questions of structural inequality and systematic racism.

At the same time, this topic was entirely suppressed within the Irish EYG implementation plan and didn't appear at all within the fields of parliamentary-politics and the media. This silence cannot be argued to reflect the absence of such populations in Ireland. An examination of the 2011 Census calculates that 13% of respondents aged 15-24 were non-Irish nationals (CSO 2021). It also found that non-Irish nationals made up 12% of 15–24-year-olds whose PEA was unemployed (CSO 2021). The OECD (2020) calculate Ireland's foreign-born population in 2019 as 16.9%, making it the 6th highest among OECD members[96]. The Irish Traveller ethnic group were also totally suppressed within texts from the Irish context. Though a small section of the total population - the 2016 Census calculates a figure of 0.7% - this group suffers from high levels of exclusion from the labour force. The 2016 Census estimated an unemployment rate of 80.2% for the total adult Traveller population (CSO 2016). This blindness regarding the internal composition of the young unemployed can be understood as an effect of the dominant representation of this population as a problem only in so far as they were a drain on the state's coffers [Section 5.5.1; Section 6.2.1].

In line with Step Seven of the WPR framework [Section 4.3.1] a danger should be noted here, and it should be stated clearly that this finding does not suggest we should plead with the state to apply the activation paradigm more 'inclusively'. Based upon the prevalent problematisations of unemployment among minority populations found in the IGO literature [Section 5.2.2], and the record of such targeted interventions elsewhere[97], there is a dangerous potential that highlighting this silence could aid the promotion of practices that compound exclusion. Such a danger was made clear in the initial aftermath of GFC when political actors sought to position claimants originally from other jurisdictions, such as those from the EU Accession states, as 'fraudulent' or otherwise undeserving (O'Flynn et al. 2014;

95 These findings replicate Boland et al.'s (2015) examination of Irish media coverage of unemployment.

96 Ireland's role as a significant sender of emigrants, many of whom returned during the Celtic Tiger period, should be noted as a potentially influencing this indicator.

97 For examples of the punitive content of such interventions see Wacquant (2009) on the treatment of racialised populations in the United State, and Van Baar (2012) on the 'activation' of members of the Roma populations in Slovakia

Gaffney and Millar 2020). Instead, this finding should be seen as a symptom of the inegalitarian way 'work' is thought about in Ireland; in so far as what kind of activities are valued as 'work', and which kind of workers are visible and valued. It reveals unspoken deep assumptions about whose unemployment was seen as posing a threat to the status quo (Boland et al. 2015).

8.3.2 Subjectification: The Victim Blaming Thesis

This section explores the effects created by assumptions that youth unemployment results in 'scarring' and 'dependency'. It argues that both representations cast the young unemployed as ***victims*** in need of saving but also as ***perpetrators*** by positioning them - and their families - as the authors of their condition. Returning to the literature, the point is made that the 'scarring effect', though based in HCT, has taken on many of the assumptions previously expressed in terms of 'demoralisation' and 'dependency' and on equally questionable empirical grounds.

The dissemination of these 'victim-blaming' representations is argued to have played a critical role in positioning the young unemployed as undeserving subjects and thus legitimating the measures introduced between 2008 and 2014. Furthermore, drawing on Chapter Seven, it is argued that these representations impacted how young unemployed people presented themselves within the media. Those given a speaking position sought to position themselves as 'deserving' and, in some cases, differentiate themselves from the wider ranks of the unemployed. It thus limited the space for effective contestation of the dominant problem representations.

8.3.2.1 'Scarred' subjects

The HCT inspired concept of the 'scarring effect' [Section 3.4.3.1] was widely invoked within each field examined by this study. In its original formulation, this concept theorised a wage scar and increased career instability for individuals who experienced unemployment early in their careers (Ellwood 1982; Mroz and Savage 2006). The metaphor of 'scars' has increasingly been used to theorise psychological and social impacts as well. This expansion of meaning can be seen in how the concept was taken up within the policy field [Section 5.5.1] and within the media [Section 7.4.3]. However, the evidence for these psycho-social impacts is far less clear than some have suggested within the academic and grey literature [Section 3.4.2.1]. A single research paper by Bell and Blanchflower (2011) was frequently relied on to substantiate these claimed impacts both within the literature and the fields examined by this study. Citations of this work can be found widely in international policy circles (see Scarpetta et al. 2010; Gonzalez- Pandiella 2013) and in the Irish context where it was cited in the media (Duncan 3/11/2009) and in the Dáil (Burton, Dáil Debates 11/12/2009).

The findings of this study suggest that the 'scarring effect' has taken on elements more in line with the earlier theories of 'demoralisation' [Section 3.3.2], welfare dependency [Section 3.4.1] and SE/I [Section 3.4.2]. In other words, this concept has enabled the re-contextualisation of older assumptions about youth unemployment in a packaging that is more in line with the register of contemporary scientific and political discourses. What distinguishes 'the scarring effect' from the earlier theory of 'demoralisation' is that it represents youth unemployment as an individual problem rather than a collective threat. This individualisation shifts attention away from social structure – to the point where poverty and poor employment prospects are represented as the outcome rather than causes of youth unemployment.

This concept works to produce young unemployed people themselves as 'vulnerable' subjects or as 'victims' heading down a wrong path. The scattershot deployment of this concept [Section 7.4.3] reveals something important about it and its predecessor 'demoralisation' and their diagnosis of the young unemployed people as 'vulnerable' or 'in danger'. Namely, that there is zero link between this diagnosis and the proposed cure. A further reflection of this point is that while Bell and Blanchflower's (2011) paper was used as the foundation for this concept's re-contextualisation within these fields, the same article's negative findings on the efficacy of ALMPs were largely ignored (Bell and Blanchflower 2011:4). The concept itself then is better understood as a legitimation device rather than offering genuine insight into the condition of the young unemployed.

8.3.2.2 'Dependent' subjects

Chapter Six highlights how successive Irish governments represented the young unemployed in terms of their potential 'dependency'. This representation of the young unemployed - or sections of the young unemployed - as forming a burden on the public purse was evident across the fields of policy and media as well. Once again, the young unemployed were cast as 'victims'— facing a life filled with worklessness and state dependence. At the same time, they and their families were positioned as the perpetrators of this outcome, the state's role being to incentivise 'work over welfare'.

The implication of the family in these youths fate is another thread linking contemporary representations of youth unemployment and those of the past. Familial 'responsibility' for the behaviour and attitudes of young people continues to be centred just as it was in the COYU (1951). Like in the case of 'mobility', the problematisation remains implicit in policy making and academic literature, which represents it through the euphemistic term 'intergenerational worklessness' [Section 3.4.1.1]. Conversely, in parliamentary-politics successive Ministers of Social Protection presented anecdotes of young people being brought to the dole office as a rite of passage on their 18th birthday [Section 6.3.3]. In the print media, columnists heralded their industriousness and that of the 'squeezed middle' compared to the feckless hordes [Section 7.4.1].

The targeting of young unemployed individuals continues to be transformed into a moral tale of domestic discipline, with the state stepping in to correct these wayward youths. These representations and the language they were expressed in also owe a lot to the discourse around the 'culture of poverty' or 'welfare dependency' that emerged throughout other Anglophone countries from the late 1960s onwards [Section 3.4.1].

As previously discussed, there is a strong continuity between this behaviouralist representation and historical discourses; however, there has also been a shift in processes of subjectification at play. The activities of the CC and the proposals made by the COYU examined in Chapter Two focused on both the body and soul of young unemployed individuals. They sought to physically re-shape the young unemployed into bodies capable of performing the physical tasks required by factory and construction work – or potential military service [Section 3.3.2]. Simultaneously, they sought to inculcate them spiritually and psychologically against the 'demoralisation' of idleness, and to comply with the moral strictures of the time – with an emphasis on thrift, timekeeping, and prayer (COYU 1951). Conversely, in Chapter Five, the 'awareness' or disposition of the young unemployed was the primary target of policies. The aim is to ensure more 'entrepreneurial', 'mobile', 'flexible' and 'motivated' behaviour. The human worth of young unemployed individuals was constituted primarily in terms of the 'education' and 'skills' they can bring to the economy. Conversely, those who do not possess this capacity were constituted as members of a 'discredited population' (Fehrer 2020).

8.3.2.3 'Undeserving' and/or 'deserving' subjects

In Chapter Six and Chapter Seven, it was clear that the representation of 'deservingness' was key to how the JSA reductions were disseminated and legitimated to the public. Government TDs and sympathetic voices within the media relied on a mythopoetic presentation by which this measure took away from the 'undeserving' young unemployed and gave to other 'deserving' groups [Section 6.2.2; Section 7.2.3].

Some politicians and media commentators also ensured that even the critique of the JSA cuts was redirected back towards supporting the broader drive towards austerity and competitiveness. The 'vulnerable' status placed upon the young unemployed was deployed to propose austerity measures against other purportedly more deserving targets, including those receiving pensions and public sector workers [Section 6.3.2; Section 7.3.3]. This dynamic reflects what Sukarieh and Tannock (2015:71) term a 'generational conflict discourse'.

The centrality of meritocratic and individualised explanation of positive outcomes in the labour market and the stigmatising explanations offered for failure serves to sideline those explanations that might allow those who lose out the opportunity to preserve their own self-esteem. Research by others such as Finn (2019) and Whelan (2021b) demonstrates how these stigmatising effects play out individually. Whelan (2021b) theorises this as a 'toxic symbiosis' driven by negative connotations of both worklessness itself and reliance on the social protection system.

Chapter Seven showed how young individuals sought to validate themselves as 'deserving' - either by stressing their efforts to improve themselves or by distinguishing themselves from other 'undeserving' unemployed individuals [Section 7.5.3]. The individualised and self-concerned narratives of young people within the media sample echo one study that found a lower level of empathy and politicisation among young unemployed participants (Yeager and Culleton 2015:40). Yeager and Culleton (2015:39) explained this finding in generational terms, in which young people were faced with a novel situation. In contrast, their elders had the experience of previous recessions to 'contextualise' it. Against this, this project's findings would suggest that they were following a script imposed from above, which actively called on them to understand their experience in these terms and set out to foster a lack of solidarity and even contempt for others in the same condition.

The introspective fixation on further education and self-improvement as markers of 'deservingness' reflects how the policies and discourses enacted in the name of youth unemployment called upon young individuals to establish themselves as ***credentialed*** and ***entrepreneurial*** subjects. This distancing strategy revealed the class-based underside to the association of worth with the possession of third level credentials - the possession of which continues to be highly determined by class background (Smyth 2008). The authority-granting strategies adopted by young unemployed individuals to claim a right to speak offer an entry point into the individual expression of subjectification imposed by the dominant problematisation. The presence of both these strategies conforms with the existing research into how individuals experience stigma and seek to 'manage' it (Goffman 1968; Tyler 2020; Whelan 2021b).

8.4 Lived Effects

Lived effects describe how these discursive and subjectification effects translate into people's everyday lives (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016:23). Though the methods adopted by this study limited the extent to which this question can be explored [Section 9.4] this section seeks to partially address this question by surveying data[98] at the population level of those classed as young during and after this crisis period right up to the eve of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. It begins by looking at data related to labour market outcomes from this period before dealing with the issues of migration, housing, and poverty.

8.4.1 Young people and the labour market 2014-2019

As put by Taoiseach Enda Kenny (21/10/2013), the objectives of the policies examined by this thesis were to stop young people 'languishing on dole queues' and to 'get this country working' [Section 7.2.2]. This section examines labour market trends between 2014 and 2019 to evaluate these policies in this regard.

At first glance, it appears that major progress was made against the problem of 'youth unemployment' between 2014 and 2019. Figs A, B and C in Appendix II offer clear evidence that the YU rate and YU ratio had dropped back in line with the European average from 2015 onwards. The YU rate had fallen to 12.5% in 2019 from its highpoint of 30.6% in 2012 (Eurostat 2020b). The YU ratio dropped to 5.9% in 2019 from a highpoint of 15.5% in 2012 (Eurostat 2020c). The NEET rate for 15–24-year-olds further corroborates this with a drop from 19.4% in 2010 to 10.1% in 2019 (Eurostat 2020d). Though these indicators remained higher than their pre-GFC levels[99], it was clear that the DSP was confident about its progress on this front, with multiple press releases welcoming the progress on unemployment and youth unemployment (DSP 2017; DSP 2019a). However, at times confidence failed to be replicated

98 Appendices II and V collate the data as produced by the CSO, Eurostat and other studies that informs this section.

99 The YU rate was 3.9% higher in 2019 than 2006 (Eurostat 2020b) and the YU Ratio 1.2% higher (Eurostat 2020c).

in the media, with one headline claiming that youth unemployment continued to be a ‘blackspot’ (Walsh 2/5/2019).

Cross-referencing these YU indicators with other available data on the labour market activity pours cold water on any assumption that this drop represented a ‘recovery’ for young people. The general employment rate grew from 59.1% in 2012 up to 69.5% in 2019 – 2.2% less than the pre-GFC rate of 71.7% in 2007 (Eurostat 2020a). However, growth in this indicator was far more sluggish for those aged 15-24, from 34.8% in 2012 up to 41.2% in 2019 – 21.8% less than the 2007 rate (Eurostat 2020a). This suggests that the drop in the number of young people classified as ‘unemployed’ did not necessarily mean that they were going back to work.

Comparing census data on Primary Economic Activity [PEA] from 2006 and 2016, suggests that the drop in youth unemployment levels could be explained by an increase in the average time spent in education. Table A in Appendix V shows a 15% jump from 50% to 65% of those aged 15-24-year-old reporting education as their PEA (CSO 2020). Table B in Appendix V collates data on 20-24-year-olds and shows a similar jump of 12% between censuses from 27% to 39% of that population (CSO 2020). This shift suggests that the significant response by young people during the examined period was to increase the time spent in the secondary and tertiary education system. As noted in Section 3.5.1, international research has found young people facing economic downturns often react by extending their time in education – of course, this delaying strategy is limited to those who can afford to do so financially or otherwise (Freeman and Wise 1982; Clark 2011). However, there also appears to be a drop in levels of part-time employment among those in education. Nugent (2020:4-5) calculates that the ILO participation rate for 15-19 and 20-24-year-olds, which includes part-time work performed by students, fell by at least 15 percentage points for both groups between 1999 and 2019, with a drop from 45% to 24.2% for the former and from 85.8% to 70.5% for the latter.

Such increased participation in education could be read as a successful transmission of the policy message that human capital investment by individuals is the solution to their employment woes. Finn (2019:293) also found a strong belief in further education among his participants, that while parallel to the state’s demands of this group, often involved doing so without state support. Furthermore, the HCT inspired messaging of state officials during this period was contradicted by their concrete practices, which involved protracted divestment from education and introducing increased barriers to access [Section 2.4.2.1].

What about those young people in employment? Research into the conditions faced by those young people in work raises even more questions about the content of the ‘recovery’ (Murphy 2017; Nugent 2020). In Section 2.4.1.2, it was noted that policy during this period was defined by an ‘internal devaluation’ strategy that sought to increase competitiveness by reducing labour costs (Allen and Boyle 2013:26-29; McDonnell and O’Farrell 2016; Collins and Murphy 2016; Coulter and Arqueros-Fernández 2020). Umney (et al. 2018) shows that such a push was common across Europe throughout the post-crisis period[100]. As seen in Section

100 See Kotouza (2019:132-151) for an account of such measures in the Greek context.

6.2.4, the practice of seeking to 'incentivise' work over welfare for the young unemployed also formed part of this push to promote 'competitiveness'.

A range of studies examining the post-GFC Irish labour market has highlighted that working practices are becoming both formally and informally precarious and insecure with a trend towards what one report termed 'enforced flexibility' (Wickham and Bobek 2016). Attention has been drawn to the increasing incidence of low-paid work (Collins and Murphy 2016; Nugent 2020); involuntary part-time work (O'Sullivan et al. 2015); temporary employment (Collins and Murphy 2016; Pembroke 2018); and variable employment agreements such as 'zero hours' or 'if-and-when' contracts (O'Sullivan et al. 2015; Pembroke 2019). Young workers have been found to experience such conditions disproportionately (Murphy 2017). A report by Nugent (2020) on behalf of NERI examining labour market conditions for the Under-35 age group[101] underlines this point:

> *'Almost every indicator of precarious work available showed elevated levels of precarity for younger workers relative to labour market conditions before the financial crisis.'* (Nugent 2020:3)

This statement is based on various indicators measuring precarity, including those measuring underemployment and the incidence of temporary contracts. Underemployment, defined as involuntary part-time work, among under-35s whose PEA is 'at work' was calculated as being 28% in 2018 compared to 21.6% in 2006, with the figure reaching a high point of 59.7% in 2012 (Nugent 2020:9). Another indicator clearly showing this trend is the temporary contract rate for employees under 30, which rose from 15.2% in 2007 Q4 to 24.2% in 2019 Q4 (Nugent 2020:12). In the same report, it is noted these temporary contacts themselves are getting shorter in duration leading to increased insecurity with the proportion of contracts of shorter than one year's duration for those aged 15-29 rising from 29.6% in 2004 Q4 to 52.7% in 2019 Q4 (Nugent 2020:13).

Aside from the legacies of the recession and state responses pursued from 2008-2014, another factor driving this increasing precarity among young workers could be the sectors and occupations in which there has been job growth for the under-25s during this 'recovery' period. Fig A in Appendix V shows accommodation and food have been the primary drivers of employment in this age group since 2014. In other words, young workers became increasingly concentrated in the Irish economy's most low-wage and low-security sectors (Murphy 2017; Nugent 2020). The outcome of this is reflected in the findings of McGinnity et al. (2021) that those aged 15-24 were more 60% more likely to be in employment that paid low-hourly wages and in 65% more likely when measured in terms of low-weekly pay (McGinnity et al. 2021:69;71-72).

The HCT problematisation identified by this project suggested that investment in education and training among the young unemployed was the solution for their condition. However, the data suggests that this turn to education is incommensurate with the jobs available in the Irish economy. Even before the GFC, analysts have found evidence of 'over-

101 In other words, both those aged 15-25 during the 2008-2014 period examined by this study and those currently classified as 'young' by employment and unemployment indicators.

qualification' or 'over-education' among Ireland's working population in which many are left unable to find work that matches their level of education or skill[102] (Flisi et al. 2014; McGuinness et al. 2017). McGuinness et al. (2017:173), examining data from 2014, found an overeducation rate of 15% when measured in terms of employees having surplus education relative to what was needed to 'get' their job – a figure that was around the EU-28 average. The rate for graduates was 25% (McGuinness et al. 2017:173). However, when overeducation was calculated in terms of what was needed to 'do' the job, a rate of 21% among Irish employees was found – among the highest in the EU-28 (McGuinness et al. 2017: 188). This finding suggests a disjunction between entry requirements and the content of employment (McGuinness et al. 2017:174).

Nugent (2020) gives additional information on occupational trends post-GFC for the under 35s. The numbers of Under-35s in the top three skills categories, Managers, Professionals and Associated Professionals, did grow 4.5% from 33.7% in 2008 to 38.2% in 2018. However, the biggest expansion of 4.9% from 23.3% to 28.2% was in Service and Sales, an occupational category typically described as low-skill (Nugent 2020:15). At the same time, Craft and Related Trades employment experienced a significant drop from 13.7% to 9.2%. Beyond the frustration experienced by those unable to find work commensurate with their credentials, it is crucial to realise this trend has wider consequences for social inequality. The downward pressure this 'oversupply' exerts in the labour market means that those without credentials are at a disadvantage in an increasingly competitive labour market (Ó Riain 2017). This outcome would suggest that within these generational effects, there is a class-based bias in which those without the resources to access education are more at risk of poor outcomes in the labour market (Murphy 2017). This evidence combined casts doubt on the idea that the drop in the level of youth unemployment can be equated with improved labour market outcomes for young people.

8.4.2 Beyond the Irish Labour Market

Those promoting reduced JSA rates for under-26s represented the move as 'incentivising' work or education. Conversely, those opposing it sought to argue that it enforced migration among the young unemployed instead [Section 6.3.4; Section 7.3.1]. Chapter Two noted the empirical basis of this latter representation pointing to the recurring role of emigration as a 'safety valve' for political and economic stability in Ireland, and a repeated reliance on strategies of 'violent inaction' by which there is a 'calculated withholding of the means to live' (Davies et al. 2017: 1270).

Despite the controversy sparked by outward emigration in Ireland, this project found that it was backgrounded as a topic within the grey literature and in the output of government politicians. This could potentially be understood as reflecting the fact the 'safety valve' functioned in this period [Section 2.4.3]. Acknowledging the high levels of migration may also have complicated the government's representation of lack of motivation to take up work as driving youth unemployment. When this topic did appear, it was represented as the quality

102 Leaving aside for the moment the class-based and gendered assumptions and tensions loaded within the concept of 'skill' [Section 3.4.3]

of 'mobility' which was to be encouraged among unemployed individuals via the opportunity to engage in internships, traineeships, and language learning in other EU member states [Section 5.2.1]. The comparative prevalence of a problematisation at the IGO level of the 'immobility' of the young out-of-work suggests the impetus came from outside the confines of the Irish state and wider society. However, there was evidence of domestic policy actors in this recent period of crisis going beyond implicitly encouraging this option. For example, the controversial diffusion of advertisements for jobs in Canada by the DSP in 2013 highlighted by opposition sources examined in Chapters Six and Seven [Section 6.3.4; Section 7.3.1].

Those in oppositional speaking positions were far from silent in raising the question of emigration and its relation to the policies introduced during this period. At the same time, there was a curious silence within such texts regarding the experiences of the 1950s and 1980s and the insights they offered regarding this recent wave of outward migration. In the media, it was more common to find reference to the 17th century Cromwellian invasion than the more recent past [Section 7.5.1]. By examining this situation in terms of the experience in the 1970s-1980s and 1930s-1950s, we can see those broad currents of continuity between the problem of 'youth unemployment' in the Irish context and the reliance on emigration to reduce surplus population pressure on the social structure. However, in doing so it is important to note that taking the longer view reveals the precarity of this set-up and its dependence on broader dynamics within the capitalist world-system. While it may have 'functioned' in this period, there is the possibility that it may break down just as it has in the past[103] (Fitzpatrick 1984; Mac Laughlin 1994).

Another feature of discussion of the migration surveyed in Chapter Seven is that it was quite abstract - with little interest in just who was leaving Ireland during this period in terms of nationality, age, or class, and for what reasons? Migration from Ireland has never been a universal, static, and ahistorical experience. It has always been classed, gendered, and varied in terms of destination and permanence depending on global and domestic social and economic conditions [Chapter Two]. While research into these subjects post-GFC is limited, the findings of Glynn et al. (2015) show that a discussion of these factors would have complicated the narrative somewhat with a clear compositional shift compared to these earlier periods where it was the less educated and those from the rural periphery who migrated in biggest numbers [Section 2.4.3]. Conversely, in the post-GFC period, emigration, like education, seems to be the response taken by those with the economic resources to do so[104] (Murphy 2017). It is perhaps the class-character of this outward flow that saw the more direct outcomes of these JSA reductions, such as increased reliance upon familial resources in terms of shelter and economic support, and increased risk of poverty and homelessness suppressed, and this issue centred [Section 7.3.2].

103 Indeed, some have suggested that such a situation is currently underway with the obstruction of international travel imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic (Whelan 2020; Ó Luain 2020).

104 The caveat here being that the supposed 'gentrification' of migration from Ireland from the 1980s onwards has been used to reinforce the narrative that Irish migration patterns are driven by individual choice rather than uneven development and social structure (Mac Laughlin 1994).

8.4.3 From precarious work to 'precarious lives'

What about outcomes outside of the labour market? Chapter Six and Chapter Seven presented oppositional voices who claimed that reductions to the JSA would result in increased reliance upon familial support and increased risk of impoverishment and homelessness for those who lacked such an option [Section 6.3.3; Section 7.3.2].

While this area remains understudied by academic research, one of the few studies of these measures, while focused on the impact of the first tranche of 2009 cuts on the duration of unemployment, also noted the potential of increased reliance on familial resources and risk of poverty and homelessness because of these measures (Doris et al. 2020). Van Lanen's (2020) research into the experience of disadvantaged urban youth in Cork and Dublin reveals the difficulty of investigating the lived effects of these and other measures as familial support served to mask from public view the extent to which 'everyday austerity' has resulted in increased exclusion and deprivation among this section of the population.

Pembroke (2018:448) also found that precarity in work translated into 'precarious lives' in terms of 'access to healthcare, mental health, family formation, housing, and relationships.' An examination of available data and research further supports the argument that the insecurity experienced by young people in Ireland extends far beyond the workplace and the dole queue.

As previously noted, it is challenging to gauge poverty data on those aged 15-24 due to the large proportion of this age group living within the family household. However, following the example of Taft (2015) and examining the Eurostat data (2021c) on severe material deprivation[105] gives some insight into how this age group is getting on. Fig B in Appendix V collates the data on the rate of severe material deprivation for 18-24-years olds by economic activity. It shows that the rate for the total young population nearly quadrupled between 2006 and 2012, growing from 3.4% to 14.0%. There are moderate signs of improvement from this point on, with the rate dropping to 7% by 2018. Conversely, the figure for unemployed young people is much worse and has shown no sign of dropping - going from a low point of 8.9% in 2006 to 28.3% in 2018. Chronologically, the jump in this rate maps onto the introduction of the JSA age-banded rates following the 2009 and 2013 budgets.

Young people also appear to be encountering increased difficulties in terms of accessing housing. The average age of people leaving the parental home increased from 25.3 in 2006 to 26.8 in 2019 (Eurostat 2020b). Focus Ireland, a homelessness charity, calculated that the number of young homeless grew 85% between 2015 and 2018 (Focus Ireland 2018). It is important to note the indicator this figure is based on - one produced by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government – operates with a quite restrictive definition of 'homelessness' - measuring only individuals in state-funded emergency

105 Severe deprivation is defined by Eurostat (2021c) as a situation in which an individual suffers from the 'enforced inability to pay' for at least four of the following items; 1) to pay their rent, mortgage or utility bills; 2) to keep their home adequately warm; 3) to face unexpected expenses; 4) to eat meat or proteins regularly; 5) to go on holiday; 6) a television set; 7) a washing machine; 8) a car; 9) a telephone.

accommodation[106]. It thus excludes the 'hidden homeless' - those who are rough-sleeping, sofa-surfing, squatting or otherwise in insecure forms of shelter outside of the official system – meaning the figures are presumably worse (Hearne 2020:73).

This shift in housing outcomes must also be understood in terms of what is increasingly described as a 'housing crisis' in the Irish context (Bobek et al. 2020; Van Lanen 2020). State policy following the GFC, including increased access to the housing market by international finance, and austerity-inspired disinvestment from public housing, have resulted in higher house prices and rents and growing housing insecurity and homelessness (Hearne 2020). This shift has impacted heavily on the growing section of the population reliant on the private rental market. By 2016, over half of 25–34-year-olds were renting on the private market, compared to 15% of the same age group in 1991 (Hearne 2020:32). Hearne (2020: 24), using data from the Residential Tenancies Board, calculates an increase in the average rent on existing rental properties of 57% between Q1 2012 [€744.72] and Q1 2019 [€1169]. In Dublin, the rate of increase was calculated at 73% during the same period [from €961 to €1662] (Hearne 2020:24).

Thus, the lived effects of these policies are found in the areas of housing, family formation and increasing dependence for young people on familial resources rather than market activity or state support (Pembroke 2019; Van Lanen 2020; Bobek et al. 2020). Ireland already had a welfare structure noted as familial. Still, it is quite possible that the measures introduced during the period examined by this thesis have exacerbated the importance of these links and worsened the outcomes for those who cannot rely on familial resources to get ahead or even get by. Reflecting this the JSA reductions examined by this thesis were partially withdrawn in 2019 for those in receipt of state housing supports. DEASP Minister Regina O'Doherty, a member of the government that extended these measures in 2013, explained as a response to the fact that:

> *The residual income of young jobseekers on these housing supports after paying the minimum contribution payments on rent supplement, HAP, or other local authority housing supports can lead to significant hardship and threat of homelessness.* (DSP 2019b)

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed how the findings of this thesis relate to the literature examined during this study. Having done so, these findings can now be refined and presented concerning the six questions of the WPR framework:

Q1 What was the problem represented to be?

This study uncovered two dominant problematisations that represented the young unemployed as behaviourally deviant or as lacking human capital in the form of skills, education, and training. These problematisations were found to be subordinate to broader policy goals focused on the pursuit of austerity and competitiveness.

106 Further information on this measurement can be found at https://gov.ie/en/collection/80ea8-homelessness-data/

Q2 What assumptions or presuppositions did these problem representations have?

While drawing on different forms of knowledge, these problem representations share the central assumption that this problem originates with the young unemployed themselves. An examination of the available data on the skills, education and labour market behaviour of this population casts doubt on the accuracy of these assumptions. Furthermore, rather than being distinct approaches to activation, behaviouralist work-first policies and human capital focused policies can be complementary. Reflecting this, they were actively conflated by policy actors across the sample that informs this study.

Q 3 How did these problem representations come to be?

Reflection on the timing and content of the proposals uncovered in the Irish context leads to the conclusion that in Ireland, domestic policy actors played the decisive role in putting the issue on the agenda and defining how it was problematised in policy. Examining these measures considering the policies from earlier periods as surveyed in Chapter Three suggests strong continuity in how youth unemployment is problematised in Ireland.

Q4 What silences were left?

There was a pervasive silence surrounding the relationship between the systematic breakdown of the Irish economy and high youth unemployment during this period. Any reflection on the gendered aspect of youth unemployment was largely suppressed within the Irish EYG and in wider discourses. The impact of the crisis on younger members of migrant and ethnic minority populations was also silent on the Irish level.

Q5 What were the discursive and subjectification effects of the problem representations?

By emphasising the 'youth' of the group targeted by these policies, it was possible for policy actors to centre the purported deficiencies and deviances associated with this population. Stigmatising assumptions of 'scarring' and 'dependency' were used to differentiate the young unemployed as an undeserving population and potentially to differentiate this population internally in the eyes of its members. Economic knowledge and experts were centred, and those targeted by these policies were largely excluded from speaking positions.

Q5 What were the lived effects of these policies?

While the level of youth unemployment dropped by any measure from 2014 onwards this trend does not appear to have been driven by any increase in employment among that age group. Young people are spending longer time in education and are disproportionately impacted by precarious and low-paid work. This precarity in the workplace is matched by precarity in terms of living conditions with substantial increases in the experience of severe material deprivation and homelessness for under-25s.

Q6 How were they defended and disseminated? What contestation and disruption took place?

Proponents of the JSA reductions and the human capital investment measures such as the EYG conflated these measures and their supporting assumptions. They drew upon the negative connotations of youth and historically rooted stigmatising representations of an underclass to represent the object of these policies as illegitimate and undeserving.

Evidence was found of contestation and counter-discourses across the three fields. However, for the most part, they were partial critiques that sought to negotiate with rather than disrupt the dominant problematisation(s). In the field of policymaking and parliamentary-politics they relied on weakly stated neo-Keynesian problematisation of the demand-side within the Irish economy. Oppositional discourses in media tended to focus on emigration as the primary lived effect of the JSA age-banded rates introduced in 2008 and 2014. An examination of historical record supports this thesis. The Irish state has repeatedly responded to economic crisis by making access to income supports more difficult for surplus populations who are demographically more likely to emigrate – or by outright reducing and withdrawing them as in 2009 and 2013. However, one discursive effect of this focus was to background the more direct potential material impacts of the JSA reductions in terms of increased inequality, familial reliance, poverty, and homelessness.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This chapter forms the conclusion to this study. **Section 9.2** begins by recapping the key aims and objectives of the project. **Section 9.3** provides a summary of the findings. **Section 9.4** reflects on the challenges faced in conducting the research and the merits and limitations of the project revealed through this process. **Section 9.5** presents the empirical and theoretical contributions made to the existing literature and the implications for both policy and future research in this area. **Section 9.6** ends the chapter with a brief coda on the implications of this study's findings amidst the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its impact upon the Irish labour market.

9.2 Overview

Youth unemployment has been on the policy agenda across Europe since the GFC. Concern about the topic has been raised internationally by IGOs (Scarpetta et al. 2010; CEU 2013; ILO 2013; Fergusson and Yeates 2013; Sukarieh and Tannock 2015) and academic experts (Bell and Blanchflower 2011; O'Reilly et al. 2015). On the Irish level, it was identified as a crucial policy challenge by politicians (Kenny 21/10/2013; DSP 2013a), NGOs, think-tanks and charities (NYCI 2010; 2011;2012; TASC 2012; YWI 2012; ESRI 2012). A range of policy initiatives were enacted in response at the European (CEU 2013) and Irish levels (SW and P Act 2009a; SW and P Act 2009b; SW and P Act 2013; DSP 2013b). These policies were implemented alongside an extensive austerity and activation drive within the Irish social protection system (Dukelow 2015; Collins and Murphy 2016). These reforms have been a topic of growing debate within the literature. Controversy has been raised both about their content and their iniquitous consequences for marginalised groups and broader Irish society (Collins and Murphy 2016; Allen and O'Boyle 2013; Finn 2019; Coulter and Arqueros-Fernández 2020; Whelan 2021b)

This thesis sought to contribute to this debate by examining how youth unemployment was represented in policy between 2008 and 2014. It used the WPR research framework in combination with tools from CDS to do so (Bacchi 2009; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016; Van Leeuwen 2008). It focused on two policy initiatives from this period that specifically targeted the young unemployed: the introduction and extension of age-banded rates on the JSA income support for those aged between 18 and 26 (SW and P 2009a; SW and P 2009b; SW and P 2013); and the development of an Irish EYGIP in 2013 (DSP 2013b). The development and dissemination of these policy measures were examined across three separate fields: 'policymaking', 'parliamentary-politics', and the 'media'. This research was further supplemented by a genealogical investigation into how youth unemployment arose as a problem in earlier periods of economic crisis in the Irish context and the forms policy responses took.

This study shined a critical light on how we talk about youth unemployment in Ireland. It excavated the power relations at play and revealed the presuppositions that underpinned the representation of youth unemployment in international and Irish policy texts. It then critically evaluated the effects of these representations, how they were disseminated and legitimated, and the extent to which they were contested.

9.3 Findings

Findings from across the three fields examined by this study all broadly pointed towards a prevailing understanding of youth unemployment. One that treated it as a problem of the young unemployed themselves. Conversely, alternative problematisation(s) of the social and economic context within which this problem emerged were backgrounded. In Chapter Five, it was apparent that policy texts from authorities in Ireland, and international organisations such as the EU and the OECD, represented the problem of youth unemployment as driven by shortcomings of skills and experience and behavioural defects found among out-of-work youths. The examination of parliamentary-politics in Chapter Six and the media in Chapter Seven found that the qualities of 'deficiency', 'un-deservingness' and 'vulnerability' were attached to the young unemployed. These representations served to legitimate austerity measures whose effects were harmful to these young individuals and the wage-earning population as a whole. Indeed, the examination of how the problem representation of youth unemployment was re-contextualised between the international level of the EU and OECD and the Irish context revealed that this problem was subordinate in the first place to the twin goals of austerity and competitiveness.

The project found attempts to contest the hegemonic problematisation(s) across all three fields. However, for the most part, this contestation took the form of weak and partial critiques trapped within the terms of reference imposed by these policies. Most oppositional actors conceded to predominant representation that it was the characteristics of these young people - and not the sudden decline in demand for labour - that ultimately explained their condition. Consequently, the focus continued to be on problematising 'youth' rather than unemployment. Separately, some actors sought to position the young unemployed as an unfair target of austerity compared to others – often shifting the focus to other groups in receipt of income supports. Again, this strategy served to reproduce the logic of austerity at play and re-inscribe the dominant style of problematisation.

The archival investigation offered insight into the genealogy of the problematisation of youth in the Irish context. It revealed a strong continuity in the perceived object of measures nominally targeted at 'youth unemployment' - namely male members of the urban working-classes. Strong parallels between the characteristics of those periods wherein it has been constructed as 'problem' were also evident. Typically, this took the form of a combination of global economic downturn and factors which obstructed the 'safety valve' of emigration. Archival research also revealed a rich history of resistance against the actions and inaction of the Irish state by the unemployed and the communities within which they live.

The genealogical aspect of this research project also highlighted points of divergence between contemporary and earlier representations of youth unemployment. Historically, youth unemployment was problematised as a source of political and social disorder. However, in post-GFC debates in Ireland, and at the European level, the focus was primarily on the fiscal cost of supporting the young unemployed. This reflects a shift in the forms of knowledge drawn upon to represent youth unemployment as a problem. In the past, a range of psychological and sociological discourses was mobilised to describe a threat of 'demoralisation' posed by youth unemployment. Conversely, in these more contemporary debates there was a firm reliance on economic expertise and framings - as signalled by the pervasiveness of the HCT inspired concept of the 'scarring effect'. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests the metaphor of 'scarring' has expanded to incorporate some elements of these earlier representations that link youth unemployment with social exclusion and poor mental health outcomes.

9.4 Merits, challenges, and limitations

This section reflects on the merits, challenges and limitations imposed by this study's chosen methodology and the manner of its execution.

WPR proved well suited to the ethos and aims of the researcher. It ensured the focus was always on the struggle to define the problem itself - rather than the people, places and things inscribed as a problem. It enabled a level of critical distance and reflexivity, which facilitated the challenging of the assumptions encoded in policy documents and public debates. Its application also frequently disrupted those assumptions I brought to this study as a researcher and someone who lived through this period[107]. The genealogical approach WPR takes to the policy problem under investigation helped to contextualise better the meaning of youth unemployment within the policy discourses and debates of this period and excavated points of continuity with the past that were mostly overlooked at the time.

The primary challenge within the research process was the question of manageability. Discursive analysis proved labour-intensive in practice, and strategies were required to make sense of the overall volume of data unearthed in the initial period of this study. One response was to zero in on the specific policy measures examined by this study which were unequivocally targeted at those aged 16-25 and out-of-work. The second involved adopting methods and insights from the discipline of CDS. Indeed, the systematicity of analysis this discipline encourages and the concepts of 're-contextualisation' and the differentiation between 'fields' it enabled helped flesh out what I had come to perceive as gaps between the formulation of the WPR research framework in theory and its implementation in practice.

Nonetheless, there were clear limitations evident in this study. This study could only offer a partial answer to Q5 of the WPR framework, which focuses on the effects of a problem representation. The time passed between the passage of the measures examined by this study and its narrowing to samples from the three fields surveyed precluded a more thorough investigation in this regard. Consequentially, it imposed a reliance on secondary research and official statistics to address this gap. Similarly, the methods adopted limited the exploration of contestation and resistance raised by Q6. As the data analysis proceeded, it was evident that the institutional features of each of the three fields examined sought to impose limits on

[107] One challenging aspect in this regard was the realisation of the level of capitulation to or negotiation with the dominant discourse evident within what, on first glance, appeared to be oppositional or resistant interventions within these fields [Section 8.3].

the speaking positions available and discourses that were permitted. These limitations have ensured that areas of ambiguity remain. However, they also signal future areas for research, as will be expanded upon below.

Finally, one challenge posed by adopting a genealogical approach suggested by WPR is knowing when to stop - consulting the historical record for Chapter Two raised as many questions for further investigation as were answered. Focusing on state initiatives explicitly targeting the young unemployed again helped to enforce manageability in this regard and address the temptation to keep burrowing. Two non-negotiable limitations also precluded this temptation - the project's restricted timeframe and the closure of [offline] archives during the Covid-19 pandemic. Again, this limitation points towards future avenues for research.

9.5 Contributions and Implications

9.5.1 Empirical

This study has made empirical contributions to the literature examining the austerity and activation measures enacted within the Irish social protection system following the GFC. It has also contributed to the international literature on youth unemployment, the forms of knowledge through which it is understood, and the discursive strategies used to legitimate austerity and stigmatise those relying on social protection.

As explored in Section 1.2.1, a growing body of research and literature has sought to critically evaluate the path taken by the Irish social protection system following the crisis of 2007/2008 using qualitative methods. A range of areas have been examined including: the political and policy factors underpinning that shift (Murphy 2014b; 2016; Dukelow 2011; 2016; Hick 2018); the discourses employed (Devereux and Power 2019; Meade and Kiely 2020); and the impact of these policies on groups such as the unemployed (Boland and Griffin 2015b; Finn 2019; Whelan 2021a; 2021b; Doyle forthcoming) and lone parents (Millar and Crosse 2018; Finn 2019). Despite this, only a limited selection of such research has examined youth unemployment as a policy problem during this period (Yeager and Culleton 2015; Papadopolous 2016a; 2016b). Even less so from a critical perspective. This study sought to remedy this. It has cast doubt on the effects of this generational lens within debates on worklessness in the Irish context – finding that this framing shifts debate towards the perceived problems of youth while backgrounding the questions raised by unemployment.

What's more, the study has historicised the discussion of unemployment policy during the GFC. Previous research on this period has stressed the novelty of this policy response compared to the Celtic Tiger period (Boland and Griffin 2015a; Murphy 2016; Finn 2019; Gaffney and Millar 2020). Against this, the longer view taken by this study as outlined in Chapter Two, unearthed striking elements of continuity with crisis response strategies of the past. Continuity was also found between the controversy that arose over state actions and inaction and their relation to contemporaneous mass emigration and workplace exploitation. While the concepts and terms within which youth unemployment was represented shifted - this was less the case for the practices adopted in response. This finding provides a challenge to explore further the points of historical (dis) continuity between the post-GFC period and Irish state policy during earlier periods of economic downturn[108].

This study marks an addition to a growing international literature that has taken a critical perspective on youth unemployment as a policy problem (Fergusson and Yeates 2013; Sukarieh and Tannock 2015; Crisp and Powell 2017). It adds to the growing literature on how the EYG established in 2013 translated into policy on the national level (Cabasés Piqué et al. 2016; Rodríguez-Soler and Verd 2018; Tsekoura 2019; Dingeldey et al. 2019). It corroborates warnings made by research done in other contexts regarding this issue's framing and the motivations of the actors who promote it as a policy issue. In particular, it supports the finding of Crisp and Powell (2017) that 'employability' framing has expanded beyond the human capital or 'supply-side' paradigm and is now used to market punitive and workfarist measures. This finding was particularly demonstrated by the role of the scarring effect across the sample, where it took on elements of older stigmatising discourses surrounding welfare recipiency as it became re-contextualised [Section 8.3.2.1]. This study also contributes to that section of the literature focused on discursive strategies taken up by political actors during this period of austerity and 'welfare populism' across Europe (Tyler 2013; O'Flynn et al. 2014; Vaara 2014; Meade and Kiely 2020). It identified and detailed the process of legitimation of these policies. Importantly it also brought attention to counter-discourses and de-legitimation strategies and critically evaluated them.

9.5.2 Theoretical and Methodological

This theoretical and methodological approach taken by this study has also contributed to the literature. Chapter Four outlined how this project applied Bacchi's (2009) WPR framework and the challenges and solutions it posed in practice. These issues were addressed with theoretical and methodological insights from the discipline of CDS. As noted in Chapter Four, such a synthesis has been attempted before (FitzGerald and McGarry 2016). Of course, Bacchi herself (2018; Bacchi and Goodwin 2016) has argued against such a combination [Section 4.3.2]. However, this project found both the systematicity promoted by CDS and its theoretical innovations aided in putting WPR into practice - without sacrificing its ontological presuppositions.

CDS aided particularly in pursuing the questions of silence, dissemination and contestation raised by Bacchi and Goodwin (2016). The benchmarking strategy developed from the CDS categorisations of text, genre and field and the concept of re-contextualisation enabled the monitoring of dissemination and silences across the sample. Dividing the data to be analysed between these categories ensured the manageability of the study and encouraged critical reflection about the power relations within which texts were produced. The Van Leeuwen (2008) approach to examining legitimation and de-legitimation strategies proved invaluable in grasping the processes of defence and contestation at work within the sample. While applying this framework involved the examination of discourse at a more

[108] One paper taking such an approach is Dukelow (2011).

micro-level than is typical in the application of WPR, this was found to complement and supplement the findings from the more macro-level of problematisation analysis.

9.5.3 Policy

As noted in Section 1.2.2, this study from the outset took a critical stance that sought to disavow a tendency within policy studies to adopt the state's perspective. The primary objective has been to highlight the restricted terms of reference for the debate in the first instance rather than prescribing responses. Nevertheless, its findings have notable implications for youth unemployment as a policy issue in Ireland and further afield.

The primary implication is to question the role of 'youth' as a concept in framing policy issues such as unemployment. The findings of this study have shown that representing worklessness as primarily a problem of 'youth' had the effect of severely circumscribing the range of debate on the issue. In each field, youth unemployment was subject to 'victim-blaming' framings – even within contributions by those seeking to challenge these policies or by representatives of the young unemployed themselves. Chapter Two and Three demonstrated that these representations of 'youth unemployment' and 'youth' in general are firmly embedded within Irish society and policy. Thus, this implication extends to the role of the category of youth in policy debates in general. Raising this point is not to deny that some 'problems', in areas such as employment and housing, have disproportionate impacts along generational lines. Instead, the call is to ensure that such a framing does not obscure the bigger picture or that other elements such as the role of class, gender, and race are not silenced as a result. As Sukarieh and Tannock (2015) and Threadgold (2020) warn, we should be wary of how the 'figure of youth' is deployed as a governing tool and critically examine the intent and actions of those bearing it.

The second implication of this study is for those seeking to influence policy debates. The findings suggest that those seeking to contest measures such as the introduction and expansion of JSA or activation schemes often reproduced assumptions and presuppositions that formed the foundation for these measures in the first instance [Section 5.3; 6.3;7.3]. As argued in Chapter Eight, this reflects the 'orders of discourse' at work within these fields and the restrictions on speaking positions afforded within them (Foucault 1971). This finding demonstrates the need for us adopt Bacchi's (2009:x) call to 'take a step back' from a policy issue under debate and critically evaluate the terms of reference imposed by powerful actors. Though the findings of this study are pessimistic the experience of the last decade of austerity has also shown that it is possible to contest and re-define welfare policy problems in the Irish context (Wayman 24/1/2012; Javornicky 2019; Devereux and Power 2019). The recent example offered by the abortion rights movement demonstrates that it is also possible to challenge stigmatising representations embedded within Irish policy and public discourse[109].

The final policy implication of this study links directly with this point. This study found that critique of Ireland's economic model was highly restricted even despite its forceful repudiation by the 2007/2008 crash. This systematic failure led directly to the placing of the

[109] See Cullen and Korolczuk (2019) for research on this issue.

problem of youth unemployment on the policy agenda. However, this point was near-silent across the samples examined by this study. The exception was a weakly voiced series of practices that pointed in the direction of a return to the Keynesian strategies of the mid-20th century by which the state would step in and seek to stimulate demand for employment.

Such a shift in focus could potentially alleviate some of the lived effects of problematisations identified by this study [Section 8.4]. However, in line with step seven of WPR, this problem representation should also be critically interrogated. While there is a limited space to do so, two glaring silences are clear from the outset. In practical terms, the space for such a departure in economic policy is highly constrained from the start by the countries position within both the European Union and the wider capitalist world-system (O'Hearn 2001; Bonefeld 2002; Coakley 2012; McDonough 2018). Secondly, a rose-tinted view of the high Keynesian period[110] fails to contend with its dependence on a series of restrictive and inegalitarian assumptions about gender roles and class relations and work and worklessness that themselves require a critical reckoning reappraisal and reformulation (Braverman 1998:197-200; Cooper 2017:9-18).

9.5.4 Points for Further Research

In Section 9.4, it was noted that this study ultimately could only partially explore the questions of the effects and resistance as raised by the WPR framework. These gaps leave two clear avenues for further research into this topic.

Firstly, regarding the effects of the dominant discourses surrounding youth unemployment and employment. As this project was focused on 'looking up and back' [Section 1.2.2] at this policy issue, this aspect was necessarily side-lined. However, there is a clear need for more research taking an experiential or ethnographic approach to the lived experiences of young un- and under-employed people in the Irish context. Such research could also offer insight into the lines of contestation and disruption of the prevailing problematisations.

Secondly, as already raised in Section 9.5.1, this study has shown that the recent direction of Irish welfare policy needs to be read in light of previous crisis response strategies. There is a clear space for more research of this type, especially regarding the resistance mounted to such policies. While there has been research conducted into struggles by unemployed movements of the past (e.g. Kilmurray 1988; Royall 2007; Johnston-Kehoe 2009), it has been fragmented across disciplines and time and requires deeper exploration and synthesis. Another potential avenue is an excavation of the representations of unemployment and youth unemployment within Irish cultural life. The songs quoted as epigraphs in Chapter Two of this study are just a selection of the 'hidden transcripts'[111] out there to be found.

[110] Not to mention the at best partial implementation of this paradigm in the Irish context during this period (McCabe 2013).

[111] Scott (2008:4-5) developed this term to describe the 'speeches, gestures, and practices' engaged in by subordinate social actors within spaces where they are free of the direct supervision or control of dominant social actors that serve to 'confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript'.

9.6 Coda: Youth Unemployment and Covid-19

The economic side-effects of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic have ensured that youth unemployment has once again become a central focus for politicians, civil society, and academia (McGann et al. 2020; DSP 2021). Though it is early days, this concluding section argues that the indications so far point towards a reproduction of the problematisations, and underpinning discourses, identified by this research project.

As argued by McGann et al. (2020:963), this new challenge exposes the 'fragility' and 'fault lines' of Irish social and economic life left by the 'recovery' strategies taken in the wake of the GFC (Boyle and Wood 2017). While the traditional measures of youth unemployment are unclear due to the unprecedented disruption within the labour market provoked by pandemic mitigation strategies, the most recent Covid-19 adjusted rate calculates a 12.4% general unemployment rate and a 25.6% youth unemployment rate (Burke-Kennedy 1/9/2021). This outcome is perhaps not surprising as the leading sector in which employment of under-25s was expanding before the pandemic was Accommodation and Food [Section 8.4.1] – one of the worst impacted sectors of the economy by this crisis. Thus, the exogenous shock of the pandemic has interacted with this compositional feature of the Irish workforce.

Despite this context, policymakers attention continues to be focused on the supposed endogenous deficits of the young unemployed. On 12 July 2021, the Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys, announced a new Pathways to Work plan seeking to reduce the youth unemployment rate to 12.5% by 2023 (DSP 2021:11). The policies by which this goal is to be achieved appear primarily to recycle the Irish EYGIP (DSP 2013b) strategy of reserving spaces for young people on existing schemes and introducing youth-specific employment subsidies, as seen in Chapter Five of this study.

This plan has also involved introducing a new 'Work Placement Experience Programme' on which 4000 places of 10,000 will be 'ringfenced' for young people (DSP 2021:11). Though only in operation for just over a month at the time of writing, critics have already labelled the scheme 'JobBridge 2.0' (Murphy 3/8/2021) [Section 2.4.3]. This is not the only element of déjà vu arising in contemporary political discourses. The spectre of 'welfare dependency' as discussed in Section 8.3.2.2 has also been conjured up concerning a purported need to retire the Pandemic Unemployment Payment - a special income support provided since March 2020 to assist workers in impacted sectors. One example occurs in a recent speech by Tánaiste Leo Varadkar:

> *We know from experiences of previous recessions that the longer somebody is out of work, the longer somebody is drawing welfare payments, the less likely they are to get back into work…* (Quoted in Glennon 4/8/2021)

Furthermore, the 'scarring effect' as discussed in Section 8.3.2.1 is also again being invoked in relation to the necessity for these and other measures (DSP 2021:11).

What makes this return to the by now familiar focus on the shortcoming of the young unemployed over the factors that provoked their condition so striking is that at the same time, the weaknesses of the Irish economic model are even more increasingly on clear display.

Even before Covid-19 appeared on the horizon, the existential threat posed by Brexit weighed heavily on Ireland's economic prospects (Boyle and Wood 2017). Contemporaneously, the role the Irish state has carved out as a tax haven has come under increased international scrutiny in the wake of a high-profile case taken against the MNC Apple by the EC (Coulter and Arqueros-Fernández:93). This scrutiny has intensified post-Covid with a recent US-backed initiative to establish a global corporate tax deal (Staunton et al. 5/6/2021). Such developments further expose the limitations of the model developed during the Celtic-Tiger period. These trends all emphasise the need to steer the debate on work and worklessness in Ireland away from the myopic 'victim-blaming' representations uncovered by this study.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Measures restricting young people's access to income supports and education 2008-2014

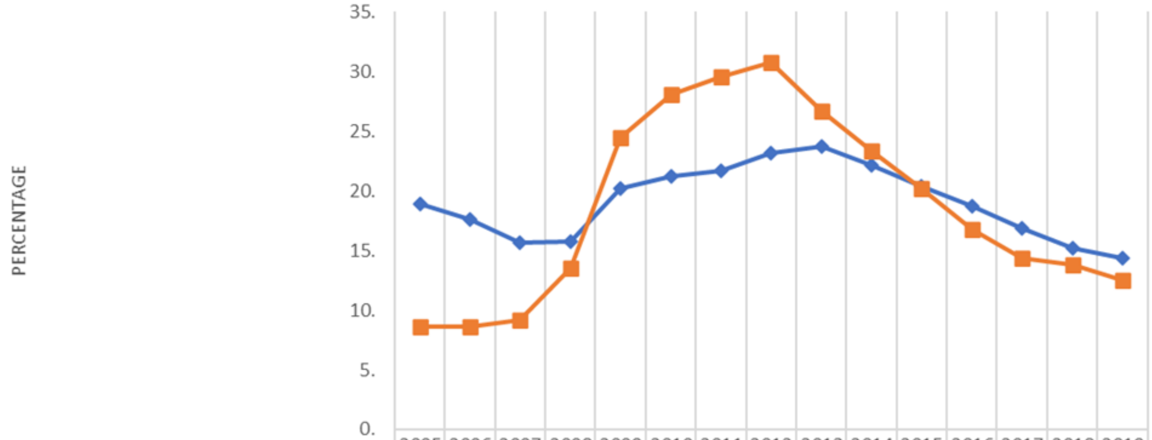
YEAR	INCOME SUPPORTS	FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING
BUDGET 2009 (DEC 2008)	Child Benefit rate payable to 18-year olds halved and to be phased out altogether by 2010.	Students Services Charge maximum raised to €1,500. Back to Education initiative cuts 500 places. STTC cuts approx. 100 places.
SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET 2009 (APR 2009)	Introduction of age-banded rates in JSA and SWA. 18-20-yr-olds to receive max payment of €100 p/w. Exemptions to this measure made for those who move from JSA to Youthreach, Senior Traveller Training Centre full-time courses, BTEA at Second level or PLC), and FÁS training courses. Exemption made for those in or leaving HSE Care	
BUDGET 2010 (DEC 2009)	Expansion of age-banded rates in JSA and SWA. 18-21-yr-olds to receive max €100 p/w. 22-24-yr-olds to receive max of €150 p/w. Allowances to participants in VTOS, Youthreach and STTCs and FÁS cut in line with €8.30 p/w cut to working age welfare payments.	Removal of Student Support Grant for those on BTEA doing PLC or VTOS courses. Rates of student grants and scholarships will be reduced by 5% Senior Traveller Training Centres cuts approx. 300 places. 4% reduction to allocation to Higher Education.
BUDGET 2011 (DEC 2010)	Reduction of €6 p/w for 22-24-yr-olds on JSA. New max of €144 p/w. Allowances to participants in VTOS, Youthreach and STTCs and FÁS cut in line with €8 p/w cut to working age welfare payments.	No new enrolments in STTCs from Jan 2011. 5% cut capitation grants to educational institutions including community education, the School Completion Programme adult literacy and Youthreach etc. Introduction of flat-rate student contribution of €2,000 p/yr and €200 p/yr introduced for PLC courses. 4% reduction in Student Support Scheme grants. Non-adjacent eligibility increases from 24km to 45km.

		Mature students no longer automatically eligible for the non-adjacent rate 5% cut in the non-pay allocation to Third Level institutions.
BUDGET 2012 (DEC 2011)	Proposals were made to increase age of entitlement for Disability Allowance to 18 and to introduce age banded rates equivalent to those found on JSA. These were withdrawn in the face of public pressure. Weekly allowances paid to 16-17-yr-olds on Youthreach, Community Training Centres and FÁS courses reduced to €40	Cost of Education Allowance annual grant for those on BTEA cut from €500 to €300. Student Support Scheme grant is reduced by 3% and reduced to just a fee grant for Postgraduate Students. Student contribution increased to €2,250 p/yr. Allocation to the Fund for Students with Disabilities is reduced by 20%. Capitation grants for further and adult education courses reduced by 2%
BUDGET 2013 (DEC 2012)	Exemption from JSA age-banded rates removed for those who move to VTOS, Youthreach and FÁS further education and training programmes. Replaced with new Max rate of €160 p/w	Cost of Education Allowance annual grant for those on BTEA discontinued. Income thresholds for entitlement to the Student Support Scheme grant reduced by 3%. Student contribution increased to €2,500 p/yr
BUDGET 2014 (DEC 2013)	Expansion of age-banded rates in JSA and SWA. 18-24-yr-olds to receive max €100 p/w. 25-yr-old to receive max €144 p/w. Exemption for those in HSE care extended from age 21 to 24. Those who move from JSA to BTEA, VTOS, Youthreach and FÁS further education and training programmes to receive max €160 p/w.	Student contribution increased to €2,750 p/yr. FÁS apprentices required to pay a pro-rata Student Contribution proportionate to the time they spend in Institutes of Technology.
BUDGET 2015 (DEC 2014)		Student contribution increased to €3,000 p/yr

Source: Compiled from data available on Citizens Information Board (2020) website.

Appendix II: Youth Unemployment Indicators 2005-2019

Fig A: YU Rate over time Ireland and EU-28

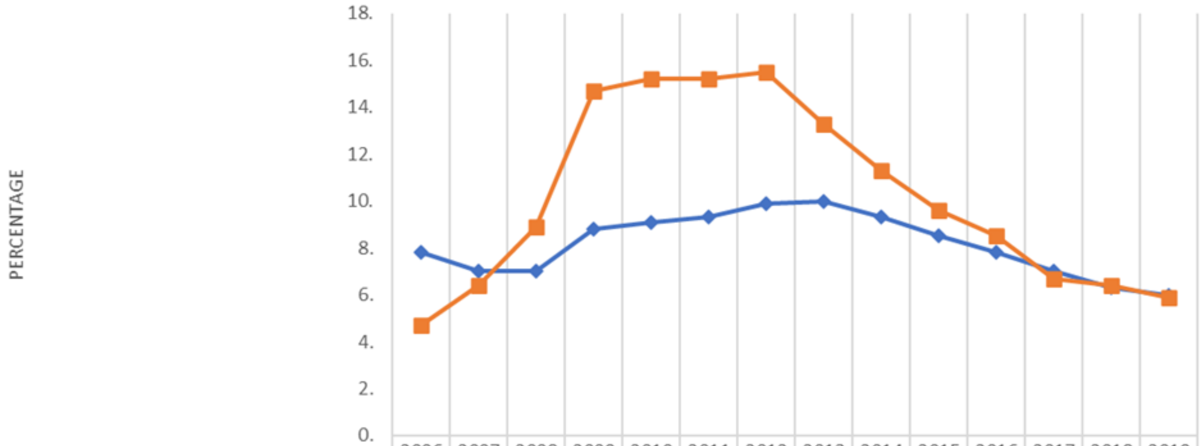


	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	18.9	17.6	15.7	15.8	20.2	21.2	21.7	23.2	23.7	22.2	20.4	18.7	16.9	15.2	14.4
Ireland	8.6	8.6	9.2	13.5	24.5	28.1	29.6	30.8	26.7	23.4	20.2	16.8	14.4	13.8	12.5

YEAR

Source: Adapted from Eurostat (2020b)

Fig B: YU Ratio over time Ireland and EU-28

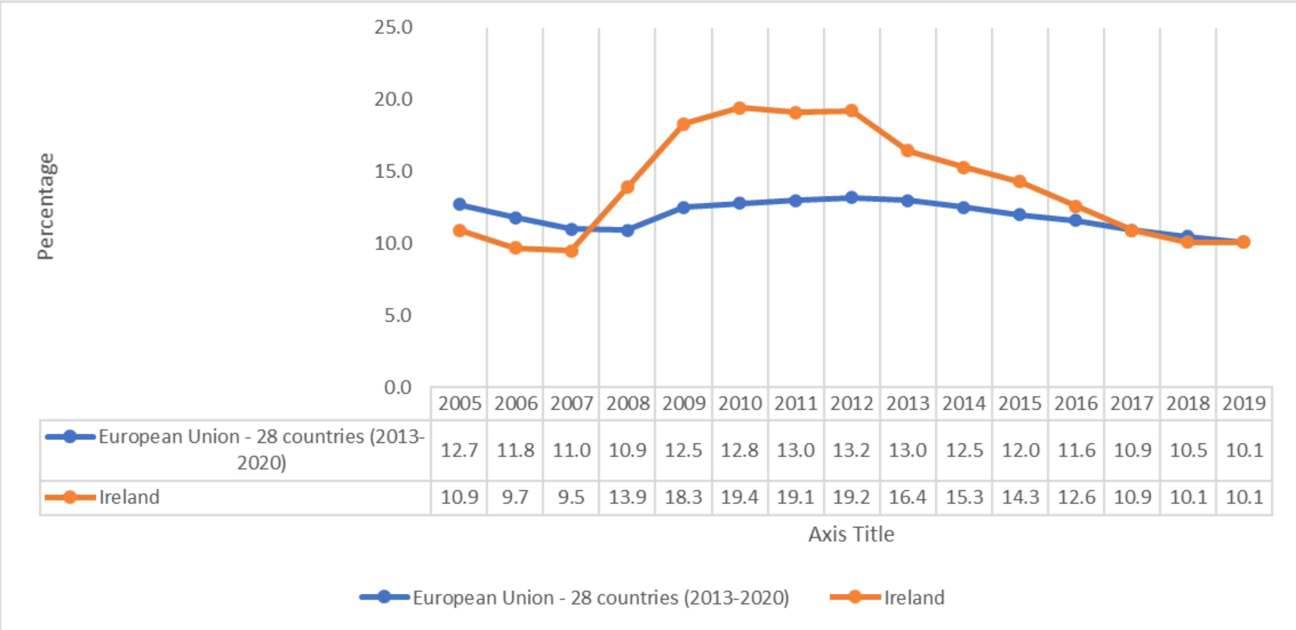


	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	7.8	7	7	8.8	9.1	9.3	9.9	10	9.3	8.5	7.8	7	6.3	6
Ireland	4.7	6.4	8.9	14.7	15.2	15.2	15.5	13.3	11.3	9.6	8.5	6.7	6.4	5.9

YEAR

Source: Adapted from Eurostat (2020c)

Fig C: NEET Rate over time Ireland and EU-28



	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
European Union - 28 countries (2013-2020)	12.7	11.8	11.0	10.9	12.5	12.8	13.0	13.2	13.0	12.5	12.0	11.6	10.9	10.5	10.1
Ireland	10.9	9.7	9.5	13.9	18.3	19.4	19.1	19.2	16.4	15.3	14.3	12.6	10.9	10.1	10.1

Source: Adapted from Eurostat (2020e)

Appendix III Sample WPR Worksheet

Text:

Genre:

Participants:

Date(s) Analysed:

Step I: Preconceptions

Step II: Genre Classification

Lexis? Syntax? Visual Text? Setting? Participants? Ends? Acts? Instrumentalities? Norms of interpretation?	

Step III: WPR Analysis

Q1) What's the Problem Represented to be? (What solution(s) are proposed in the text? What problem representation(s) does this imply?)	
Q2) What presumptions or assumptions underlie this problem representation? (What assumptions/knowledges/discourses make the problem representation(s) intelligible? How is this problematization(s) constructed? E.g. concepts and binaries)	
Q4) What is left unproblematic? (Has the problem been represented differently elsewhere)	
Order of Problematization? (If there is multiple problematizations is there evidence that one is dominant? Evidence of problem nesting?)	

Appendix IV: Overview of policy and political actors

Tab A: Irish civil society groups among sample in Chapter Five

Organisation	*Description*	*Website*
Disability Federation of Ireland [DFI]	Umbrella body for organisations working with people with disabilities in Ireland.	https://disability-federation.ie/
Economic and Social Research Institute [ESRI]	Research institute established by academics and senior civil servant in 1960 to conduct research and advise the Irish government on policies issues. Characterised by Papadopolous (2016a:505) as having a 'neoliberal' stance on the question of youth unemployment.	https://esri.ie/
National Youth Council of Ireland [NYCI]	Representative body for voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. Founded in 1967.	https://youth.ie/
Thinktank for action on social change [TASC]	Centre-left think tank that seeks to influence policy debates. Established in 2001.	https://tasc.ie/
Youth Work Ireland [YWI]	Organisation of voluntary youth services providers across Ireland.	https://youthworkireland.ie/

Tab B: Irish political parties featured in Chapter Six

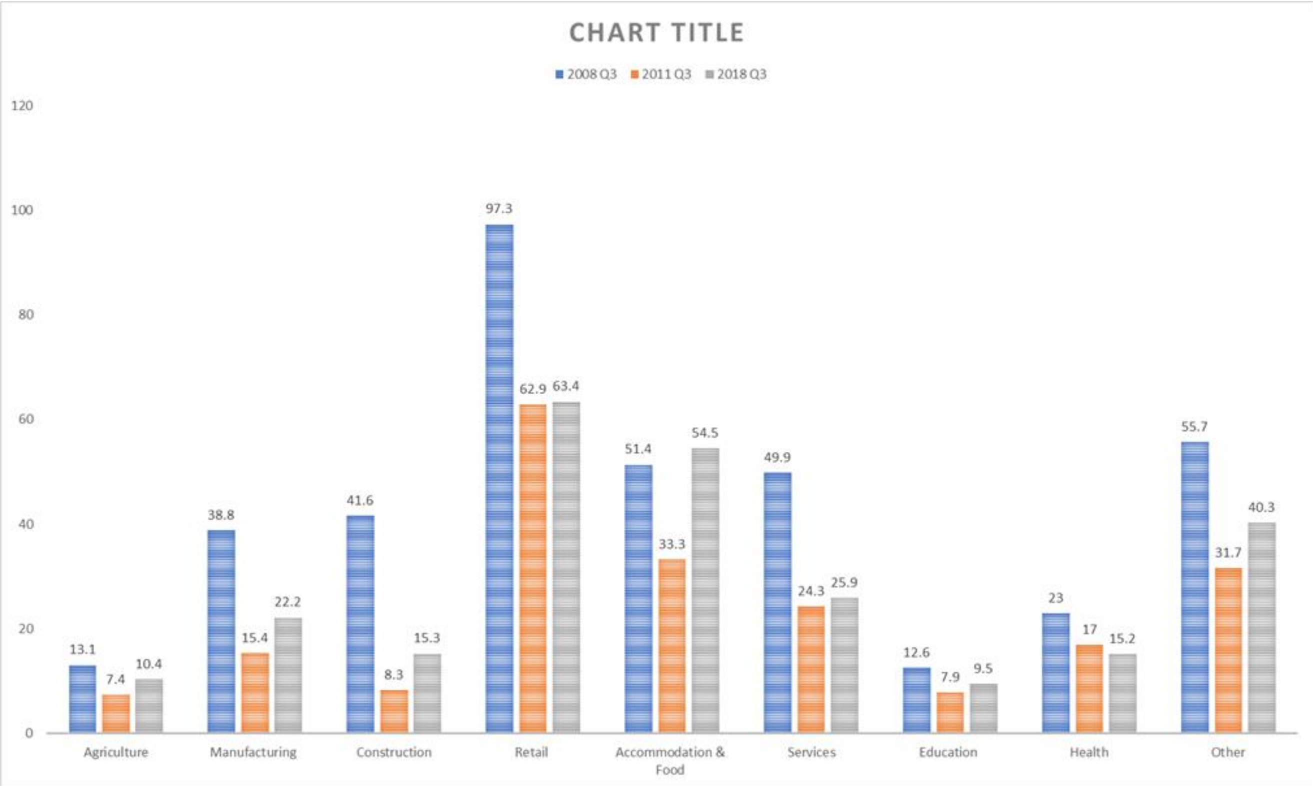
Political Party	Description	Website
Fianna Fáil [FF]	Centre-right nationalist political party (Ferriter 2010; Murphy 2016). Has held power for 62 of the 99 years of the existence of the Irish state but has struggled during the post-GFC period (Adshead 2017).	https://fiannafail.ie/
Fine Gael [FG]	Christian-Democratic party. Historically considered to be socially conservative with liberal economic policies (Gaffney and Millar 2020:7; Murphy 2016).	https://finegael.ie/
Labour Party	Traditionally understood as a centre-left social democratic party (Murphy 2016). However, while in government following the 2011 election it followed an unequivocally 'pro-austerity' path (McDonough 2018: 26).	https://labour.ie/
Sinn Féin [SF]	Left leaning nationalist party which following the GFC has positioned itself as 'an anti-austerity party for the working class' (Adshead 2017:17)	https://sinnfein.ie/
Socialist Party	Trotskyist party which had a breakthrough with the election of two TDs in the 2011 elections (Adshead 2017). Formed part of the United Left Alliance [2010-2013] electoral pact with fellow far-left parties People Before Profit and the Workers and Unemployed Action Group (Adshead 2017)	https://socialistparty.ie/

Tab C: Participants in Prime Time Panel Discussion in Chapter Seven

Participant	*Affiliation at time of broadcast*	*Role*
Professor Alan Barrett	Head of Economic Analysis Division of the ESRI.	Panel Member
Kate Lalor	Digital Marketing Executive and former Jobbridge intern with Independent News and Media.	Audience Member
Hugh Lewis	Councillor People Before Profit.	Panel Member
John Lyons	Labour TD and Vice Chair of the Oireachtas Committee on Jobs Enterprise and Innovation.	Panel Member
Moira Murphy	Spokesperson for the We're Not Leaving campaign [Section 2.4.3].	Panel Member
Miriam O'Callaghan	TV presenter with RTÉ.	Host
Mark Perry	Chief Executive of Green Shield Services a company which made use of the Jobbridge scheme.	Audience Member
Niamh Randall	Head of Policy and Communications with Simon Communities of Ireland - a charity that works with people who are homelessness.	Audience Member
Grace Wills	Community Employment Manager in Clondalkin, Dublin.	Audience Member

Appendix V: Young people's labour market activity and poverty data 2006-2019

Fig A: Employees aged 15-24 in Thousands by Sector 2008 Q3, 2011 Q3 and 2018 Q3



Source: Own Calculations using Eurostat (2020a). Categories adapted from NACE Rev 2. The category "Services" was created from sections H, J, K and S. The category "other" from M-O and R.

Tab A Primary Economic Activity 15–24-year-olds

ACTIVITY	2006	2011	2016
AT WORK	40%	22%	24%
UNEMPLOYED	7%	14%	8%
EDUCATION/ TRAINING	50%	61%	65%
HOME DUTIES	2%	2%	1%
ILLNESS/ DISABILITY	1%	1%	1%

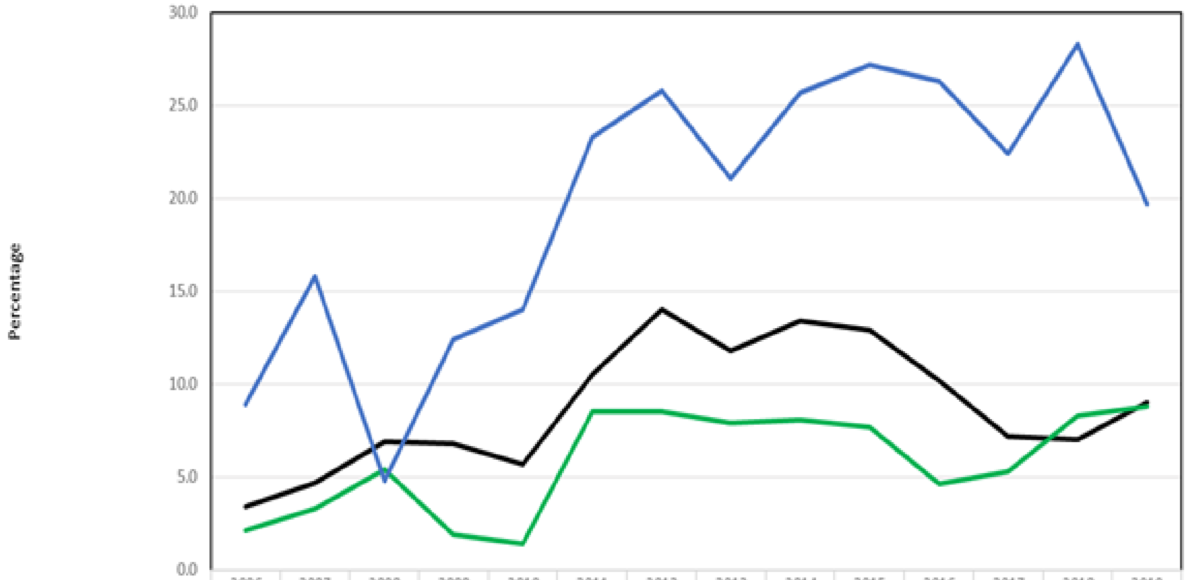
Source: Own calculations using CSO (2020) data.

Tab B Primary Economic Activity 20–24-year-olds

ACTIVITY	2006	2011	2016
AT WORK	60%	39%	44%
UNEMPLOYED	9%	21%	12%
EDUCATION/ TRAINING	27%	36%	39%
HOME DUTIES	3%	3%	2%
ILLNESS/ DISABILITY	1%	1%	2%
OTHER	0%	1%	1%

Source: Own calculations using CSO (2020) data.

Fig B: Severe material deprivation rate among 18-24 year olds by most frequent activity status



	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Population	3.4	4.7	6.9	6.8	5.7	10.5	14.0	11.8	13.4	12.9	10.2	7.2	7.0	9.0
Employed Population	2.1	3.3	5.4	1.9	1.4	8.5	8.5	7.9	8.1	7.7	4.6	5.3	8.3	8.8
Unemployed Population	8.9	15.8	4.8	12.4	14.0	23.3	25.8	21.1	25.7	27.2	26.3	22.4	28.3	19.7

Source: Adapted from Eurostat (2021c)