

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**Poverty Talk: Beyond Attributions -  
A Discursive Approach**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in Psychology at  
Massey University  
New Zealand**

**Paul Weston White**

**2000**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Acknowledgments

### Abstract

<b>Chapter One</b> .....	Introduction - Poverty talk	1
<b>Chapter Two</b> .....	Discourse and social psychology	14
<b>Chapter Three</b> .....	My Research standpoint	18
<b>Chapter Four</b> .....	The Focus of the present study	25
<b>Chapter Five</b> .....	Analysis - 'First conversational turn'	31
<b>Chapter Six</b> .....	Analysis - 'Second conversational turn'	37
<b>Chapter Seven</b> .....	Analysis - Repertoires in situated practice	48
<b>Chapter Eight</b> .....	Conclusion - A further 'turn in talk'	64
<b>References</b> .....		71
<b>Appendices</b> .....		79

## **Acknowledgments**

### **Thanks to:**

\* Friends: Karen Frewin; Rachael Pond; Rachel Winthrop; Christina Howard; Ken and Joanne Oakes

\* Supervisors; Dr Christine Stephens, Dr Mandy Morgan

\* Family: My children, Hadleigh and Jessica White; Parents, Stanley and Dinah White; Sisters, Anne Bayne, Jenny Webster, Nicky Hamdi-Pasha

## **Abstract**

The present study examines poverty talk in Aotearoa/NZ during the 'poverty debate' of 1996. Social psychology's attribution studies on lay peoples explanations for poverty are reviewed. Methodological limitations with these studies are identified and a discursive approach to the topic advocated. Textual data from the media and two Barnardos Care Centre focus groups are analyzed using methodology developed by Potter and Wetherell (1987), Edwards and Potter (1992), and Wetherell (1998). Four interpretative repertoires from the media text are identified: 'social security as destructive'; 'dissolute character'; 'resourcefulness'; and 'absolutely impoverished'. A further five interpretative repertoires are identified from the focus group talk: 'financial hardship'; 'real DPB person'; 'catch 22'; 'working the system'; and 'resourcefulness'. Focus group talk focusing on the rhetorical construction, and 'situated practice' aspects of the members' accounts during this period is explored, and the ideological implications of the accounting practices discussed.