Perspectives on Poverty

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Social Policy
at Massey University,
Albany, Auckland, New Zealand

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2013

Abstract

The idea that there is poverty experienced in countries that have an abundance of natural resources and accumulated wealth has attracted much public discussion in recent times. This thesis examines the perspectives on poverty of thirty-seven people living in New Zealand communities and situates these perspectives in a wider academic and public discussion. By examining these perspectives a gap in the research on poverty is addressed by taking into account the views and opinions of New Zealanders and relating these perspectives to broader governing processes. The main research strategy is a discourse analysis of thirty seven semi-structured participant interviews. The time period covered in the review of New Zealand literature and public discussion on poverty is from 1972 to the time of the commencement of the interviews in 2008. By employing a Foucauldian theoretical framework drawing on governmentality, the findings from the discourse analysis of thirty-seven participant interviews are explicated and situated within wider social and governing practices. This study highlights a general level of social distancing and "othering" directed at situations described as poverty and how social welfare beneficiaries become the main target for people's concerns about poverty. Of key interest was the tendency of the participants to spontaneously racialise and define poverty using non-material terminology. As this thesis looks at the implications of a governmentality involved in the development of a self-managing population, it draws attention to the processes of responsibilisation in place for those defined as "poor" in the context of social welfare provision.

Acknowledgements

There are many people who have contributed to the growth of this research and thesis. I would like to thank the research participants who gave their time to this study and my family and friends who have supported me through this process.

I would like to acknowledge my supervisors Dr Mike O'Brien and Dr Grant Duncan.

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Chapter One

Introduction

During 2006, at the formative stage of this research, there had been a considerable amount of public debate about poverty in New Zealand. I was interested in the range of public views, opinions and conversations about poverty and how these related to government policies. I became interested in exploring the dynamics of these public "conversations" further. My interest centred on how these conversations could reveal how we discern who is poor, who is wealthy, how we compare these positions, what we think about the fairness of this and to what extent we think the situation can change.

While undertaking initial reading around the topic of poverty this passage from Ruth Lister's book *Poverty* (2004:7) stood out and helped to shape my thoughts about the issue *"poverty has to be understood not just as a disadvantaged and insecure economic condition but also as a shameful and corrosive social relation"*. As part of her argument, Lister (2004) reviews the discourse about the poor and how this can become an "othering" practice by highlighting how the idea of poverty is (in this sense) a social construction. She highlights how easily the poor can become "othered" by institutional discourse and are consequently viewed by the non-poor as objects for study. Lister suggests that the concept of poverty cannot be isolated from its cultural and historical context – that it is a construction of specific societies and of different groups within those societies. She argues that how poverty is *conceptualized* has a large bearing on the decisions made about policies implemented to relieve it, as the broad conceptualizations of poverty are reflected in the margins within which poverty is *defined* – that is what members of the population are to be considered as poor, why they are considered poor, where the responsibility lies and how is this going to be responded to. An overriding official definition of what constitutes poverty then flows onto how researchers and policy developers seek to *measure* it, which in turn shapes social action.

As I wrote the literature review for this thesis, I found Lister's approach to breaking down the complex parts of a social issue like poverty for examination together with viewing

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these parts as an integrated, cyclical whole, a helpful way to organise the various components that have become associated with poverty studies. Moreover, as I reflected on Lister's work, I came to an understanding of poverty as being a set of circumstances accompanied by a shifting set of discourses and governance practices that surround discussions of its nature and management. I began to notice that how we discuss an impoverished state differs from person to person and from society to society and varies between different historical junctions. Furthermore, I observed that the same terminology can be used to describe poverty but can also have different meanings attached to those phrases – for example the term "the underclass" which has been used both by the political right and left with very different connotations and attributions of blame or causation.

Aims of the Research

As I undertook an extensive review of the existing literature on poverty I became clear about the aims of my research. I wondered how poverty is explained, justified, and expressed in New Zealand communities and how strong was the link between popular views and how the government presents and responds to poverty. Essentially I wanted to know how New Zealand people perceived poverty and being poor and whether there was a sense of social "othering" expressed in the community. The existing literature on poverty did not answer to my satisfaction whether New Zealanders essentially perceived poverty as a problem. I decided to take the position that what people in New Zealand communities are saying about poverty in New Zealand is important and can give some insight into the nature of the way we do things in this society. As part of a decision to investigate people's opinions, I decided at an early stage of the research project that I would not privilege statistical information and thereafter treated this as another discourse. In order to explore my queries further my research question was fine-tuned to become *how do people in New Zealand communities construe the concept of poverty?* During the process of the research, as I grappled with the interview material and wrote this thesis, a core theme that emerged was that the notion of "the poor" or people in "poverty" (however that may be defined and measured) does work as an "othering" principle and shapes practice in our communities as well as at an institutional level. Through an examination of participants' conversation I was able to discover some of the "othering" of the poor in the relations between those defined as "poor" and those who escape this

definition in New Zealand communities. Accordingly, this thesis explicates how this "othering" of the poor of New Zealand reflects a sense of social distance and helps to sustain a wider system that keeps a part of our society on the fringes while also serving to shape the conduct of those of us who are not marginalised in this way.

Process

The first undertaking of the research was to read extensively about poverty and write a preliminary literature review. I found that particularly in the New Zealand context there was a dearth of published research on the perceptions of, and attitudes to, poverty and wealth. Most of the information I could gather was in the form of newspaper articles or in small unpublished studies. While much of this literature and research tended to focus on quantifying the issue of poverty, a few articles and books written from an experiential, narrative position resonated more closely with the approach I wanted to take. I also noticed that arguments generated in the literature had a tendency to centre on structure and agency debates and the interplay between these. While keeping these debates in mind I wanted to look at poverty in New Zealand in terms of a rainbow of perceptions rather than as a black and white issue.

The research methods used in this study were primarily qualitative. The intention of the research was to investigate how people in New Zealand communities construed the concept of poverty and a range of opinions was sought along the socio economic continuum. This range included the opinions of those who did not in any way identify as being poor or as in poverty to give insights into mainstream constructions about being poor in a New Zealand context. However, I also recognised that those who are struggling financially (and who thus may or may not be considered as in a state of "poverty") do have a valuable contribution to make with regards to exploring commonly held ideas and concepts. While there has been qualitative research on poverty with people on low incomes, it has often been about how they *describe* their experience of poverty and less about what they *think* about poverty as a *concept*. So an effort was made to seek out and include the voices of people who were on low incomes as a reminder that a person's lifestyle and background can play a large part in how they present their ideas. As a

purpose of the study was to elicit participants' definitions of "poor" I did not classify anyone as "poor" unless they did so themselves.

Qualitative interviews provide data that is rich in depth and give participants time and a platform to explore their own views. I used qualitative interviews as a way of gathering information in preference to a survey questionnaire because it enabled me to explore the research question fully and gave a mosaic of impressions and a complexity that would have gone unnoticed when using a more standardised data gathering approach. Complex content often involves a qualitative judgement and during the writing and analytic stage of the research I was well aware that, whilst strong themes emerged, there were multiple ways to interpret the information that I had gathered and that the quotes I focussed on were primarily the quotes that best informed the set of significant concepts that I had uncovered. In addition, during the final writing process, I kept in mind that the fieldwork for this research was completed prior to the recession sparked by the collapse of global financial markets in October 2008 and that this event may have had some bearing on current viewpoints on poverty in New Zealand. This research, then, represents a snapshot of views at the time the data was collected in early 2008.

Participants portrayed various ideas about what New Zealanders think about poverty, what the Government says about poverty, and how Government departments operate to manage poverty. I looked at the information that I had collected and noted how different participants had varied and contradictory responses to the same "topic" or theme of interest, which was reflected in the language that they used to argue their point. I also found that the way speakers established their authority to speak on the topic of poverty was normally a self-reflective process using life narratives. There was a blend of information that often departed from academic knowledge of poverty. At times I had the sense that the questions I asked were of minor importance because participants had a set of pre-formulated ideas that they wanted to convey to me and I was surprised by some of the content that was raised when it was not expressly asked for. This was especially true as people spontaneously racialised and spiritualised the notion of poverty when I had no questions on my interview schedule that would lead them in this direction.

Theory

At the time of writing the thesis, I became interested in the writings of Michel Foucault and how they related to my research. In *The History of Madness* (2006), Foucault outlined a practice of institutional *"othering"* as he discussed how a contemporary understanding of "the mad" developed through various practices, and became normalised. He overviewed the confining practices of what he termed the "classical age" of the 17th and 18th centuries noticing how "the mad" and "the bad" had come to replace the social position of the "lepers" of the Middle Ages, and were regarded as lacking in some human qualities. He demonstrated through analysis of texts that it appeared to be deemed increasingly necessary to keep people who displayed signs of "madness" separated from communities through confinement in various institutions across Europe. This situation, he argued, was a shift from a previous age where the mad were not confined in this way. Alongside confinement, the explanation for madness had also undergone a transformation from what had been the common understanding of "mad" in the earlier time, to become defined as the obverse of reason or as *déraison* (Foucault, 2006). Foucault argued that describing and excluding "the mad" became a way of knowing that we as humans exercise reason. Once contained, "the mad" were observed, and further classifications became possible together with the idea that madness could be treated. It seems an analogy could be drawn between the treatment of the mad and the treatment of those in poverty. As I read Foucault's work, I contemplated the possible parallel between how the mad were grouped together, labelled and systematically made "other", and how the poor and the notion of "poverty" might be defined, classified and "othered" today by our institutional language, in economic and political practices, and in the conversations in our communities.

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) is a study of how the modern practice of imprisoning criminals developed in contrast with the earlier practices of public torture and execution. Foucault argued that such modern practices of discipline became a mode of more effective control. He also argued that the new method of punishment became the prototype for the regulation of all of society, with many institutions modeled on the modern prison and practicing three central disciplinary techniques of control; *hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and the examination*. Foucault saw that a way that power can be exerted over people is by letting them know that they are being observed.

He used the imagery of Bentham's Panopticon to articulate how he saw the practice of modern disciplinary power operating. This design for a prison had each inmate visible to a supervisor situated in a central tower whereby they could be observed at any time. However, inmates would not know whether they were being observed at any one moment and because of this pervasive sense of surveillance they would come to behave as if they were being watched. Thus, Foucault argued, control can be achieved as the subject of surveillance internalizes the principles of control. Discipline through the development of standards and a process of "normalization" also permeate a society, for example the development of national standards for education and medical practice. The "examination" tests an individual against what is considered "normal" as well as directs their behavior by compelling them to study or prescribing them forms of treatment. The information found in examinations is documented thus providing permanent details about the individuals examined. Categories, averages, and norms are generated from these records that are used to form knowledge about, and comparisons between, individuals as part of wider "populations". An individual can then be made visible as a "case". Rose (1999) used this Foucauldian account to demonstrate that knowledge about the "self" became possible as large numbers of people were gathered together at an institutional level and were observed and codified through processes of bureaucratic documentation. Educational, vocational and social welfare organisations established a regime of visibility with regulations and evaluation of conduct. Following this line of thought, as I wrote the thesis, I decided to determine whether today "the poor" as *social welfare recipients* are occupying a place that is particularly monitored and constrained both socially in our communities and at an institutional level.

In a series of lectures at the College de France in 1978 Foucault introduced his concept of *governmentality*. Here he offered a way to examine and study power and its relationship to the state through a genealogical analysis of the history of modern government (Foucault, 1978). Foucault generated this idea of governmentality as a way of understanding the characteristics of liberalism. He argued a case for seeing "liberalism" not as "theory or ideology" but as a practice, "a way of doing things" (Foucault, 2004:318). The main purpose of liberalism, Foucault observed, is to constantly critique the legitimacy of government, based on the principle "one always governs too much" - or at least, one should always suspect that one governs too much" (Foucault, 2004:319). Foucault argued that the emergence of the modern state as an entity that has become

involved mainly in assessing and managing risk was a new development, which contrasted strongly with the advice given on how to practice government prior to the sixteenth century. He traced a shift in the focus of government and practice of governing back to writers from the sixteenth century onwards theorising on the art of government, who focused their attentions on the "conduct of conduct" - that is how to act on individuals, and how individuals may act upon themselves, so as to guide, limit, and correct their behaviour. These writers concern with the "conduct of conduct" implied that effective governing would include a downward continuity from the well-organised state, to well-run families, and individuals who behave correctly (Bevir, 1999).

The concept of governmentality incorporates many of Foucault's ideas and is particularly suitable for looking at how populations are managed and at the notion of citizenship as an active process of social engagement, as have contemporary governmentality theorists such as Miller and Rose (2008) and Dean (1999). Rather than exclusively focussing on centralised state government this approach also looks at widespread forms of governance right down to how the individual governs him or herself. Thus as an analytical guideline, governmentality can be used to investigate power relations that shape how individuals as part of a population come to govern themselves and others towards contemporary understandings of what is known to be true and ethical. As I contemplated governmentality theory and how it regards both wider institutional and societal practices of government and conjointly the idea of self-government of conduct, I decided to utilise these concepts in the framework for this thesis on perspectives of poverty in New Zealand. Looking at poverty, in the light of Foucault's governmentality thesis, allowed for a questioning of how it came to be seen as a problem of government and the significance of political rationalities in shaping and positioning relations between the poor and the wealthy. It also allowed me to look inside our society through the views on poverty as presented by the citizens of New Zealand communities as those people subject to political rationalities and ask how they are subjecting themselves to contemporary governing frameworks. Thus, I found that the participants in the study provided valuable information about some of the wider institutional practices of government as well as their own practices of managing themselves around institutional monitoring, the notion of poverty, and relations with the poor.

Analysis

The work of Potter and Wetherell (1987) offered the best methodological guide for my research. I used their methodology to focus on the details in the written text that was generated by the interviews. Potter and Wetherell developed the notion *of interpretative repertoires,* which can be seen as "broadly discernible clusters of terms descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images" (Potter and Wetherell, 1995:89). I used this linguistic based approach to find dominant themes in the corpus of the data**.** Within these themes or clusters I found reference to some of the processes of governing citizens, both poor and non-poor, highlighting practices at an institutional and social level that provided evidence of how power is exercised. I looked for practices of governing instigated at a political level as well as at a grassroots social level. I noted the practices of governance imposed from without the individual as well as those that involved self-governing from within. I also took note of how the poor and the non-poor were relating and the governing language and practices around this relationship. As participants were essentially concerned about avoiding poverty they had strong viewpoints about how to circumvent a situation of poverty and expressed the perceived (and real) consequences of not following these prescriptions. When discussing the findings of the research in chapter ten, I relate the linguistic clusters emerging from the interview conversations back to a notion of *discursive practices,* which can be understood as the nature of the way things such as "poverty" come to be "known" in the ways they are spoken and thought about and acted upon, as espoused in the writings of Michel Foucault. This allowed for a broader focus on the wider sets of social constraints and governing practices that are supported in the everyday talk of New Zealanders.

Writing the Thesis

As I was writing the thesis there was two considerations that I came to review closely in the light of the interview data. Firstly, ***how did people describe the poor and the state of poverty and secondly how was this reflected in the organisation and management of the poor both socially and institutionally?*** As I progressed through the analysis and writing process I came to see that the participants' descriptions of the poor and of poverty were predominantly focussed on keeping a level of distance between themselves and the notion

of poverty and the poor. They did this in a variety of ways during their interview conversations with me and this material is collated and presented through the thesis and discussed in more detail in chapter ten. I found the governmentality literature offered a useful framework for conceptualizing and explaining theoretically what a sense of social distancing could mean for those who were positioned as poor, for those that position them in this way and for relations between the two. For a consideration of how people are organised, managed and "othered" at an institutional level, I concentrated on situating my research findings in a discussion alongside a contemporary notion of *active citizenship* that I noticed appearing in policy documentation and international debate on citizenship. An ideal of *active citizenship* shapes an expectation of a citizen as active, individualistic and self-managing whose citizenship is realised through the exercise of personal choice amongst a variety of options and who is seen as responsible for her/his own behaviour. Because I engaged a governmentality lens while writing this thesis, the concept of "citizenship" was recognised as being part of a disciplinary apparatus, as the notion of citizenship defines the boundaries of a population with the individual citizen being a member of the population to be regulated and managed under an umbrella of a certain type of expectations.

Contribution of the Thesis

Formulations of the New Zealand poor and how they should be governed

This thesis contributes to the knowledge of how poverty and the poor are "known" and "governed" in New Zealand. The thesis does this by employing a theoretical focus and combining this with empirical interview data to situate the talk of everyday New Zealanders in a Foucauldian understanding of "liberalism" as a principle and practice of the limitation of government (Foucault, 2004). By employing a theoretical framework drawing on governmentality, the perspectives on poverty and the governing of the poor taken from participant interviews are explicated and situated in wider systems of *discursive practice*. From this process several findings emerge that contribute to our understanding of how poverty is "known", how the New Zealand poor are identified and the expectations surrounding how they should be governed. Key findings include a description of a New Zealand form of "relative" poverty that is predominately explained in non-material terms and of a citizenship realised as *active* that rationalises a form of

institutional discipline around work participation and "responsible" consumption practices.

A chapter outline follows to provide a guide to the pathway and structure of the thesis.

Chapter Two - Philosophical Underpinnings

I discuss my epistemological position in chapter two, by focussing on the philosophical approach and key concepts that were an inspiration during the writing phase of this thesis. The theories of Michel Foucault concerning *discursive formations*, the connected nature of power relations, knowledge, truth and subjectivity are presented as they relate to this thesis and the research question of how poverty is construed in New Zealand communities. In particular, Foucault's governmentality thesis is outlined as it relates to this research.

The literature reviews contained in chapters three and four were completed to a draft stage prior to undertaking fieldwork and they both informed my approach to the fieldwork and provide a contextual backdrop to the information gained from the interview conversations.

Chapter Three - Scholarly Notions and Ideas about Poverty

In chapter three, I present a selection of scholarly debates and opinions from the academic literature on poverty. I locate my understanding of poverty as a shifting concept that has taken on various meanings across different societies and at different historical junctions. The understanding of the shifting nature of the awareness of poverty that I came to while reviewing this literature is supported in the governmentality thesis, which holds that broad discursive understandings and practices of population management are in a continual process of surfacing that offer citizens altered perspectives of how to function.

Chapter Four - New Zealand Dialogue and Debate 1972 – 2008

In chapter four, I review the public commentary and literature on poverty that has originated in the New Zealand context. I outline what has been said and discussed in local research, academic literature and in public opinion from 1972 until 2008 when I commenced the fieldwork for this research. I take a look at what has been implemented in policy to address poverty and the discussion surrounding this. I show how the discussion on poverty changed over time and sits alongside an increased visibility of evidence about the nature of poverty. In locating the concept of poverty in the New Zealand context I focus on the relevant background of a public discourse on poverty that was circulating at the time I commenced the fieldwork in 2008. Elements of the public debate on poverty stimulated a set of questions that were then formulated into a framework for discussion with participants.

Chapter Five – Fieldwork Process and Analytical Method

In chapter five, I detail the qualitative approach I undertook, which involved looking in some depth at the meanings people give to poverty in New Zealand society and the language resources that they used to illustrate their idea of poverty. Potter and Wetherell's (1987) method of discourse analysis used to base the analysis of the interview data on is outlined and the fieldwork process of my research is described. How I gathered the information, where I gathered it from and my reasoning at each stage of the process are explained.

The transcripts of the interviews informed me about the concerns we have about poverty in New Zealand. Amongst the rhetoric and contradiction I found some common threads about our understanding of the nature of poverty and the citizen and this information was thematically analysed. Chapters six to nine are a summarisation and presentation of that evidence.

Chapter Six – Defining Poverty and Categorising the Poor

"There is no real poverty in New Zealand"

In chapter six, I outline how the participants looked at the issue of poverty and tried to define this phenomenon for themselves by drawing on available categories and common assumptions. Common contradictions that I noticed in the interview conversations are identified as I focus on what participants knew about poverty and how they identified poverty or a lack of poverty in New Zealand. Key ideas surrounding the interview conversations were centred on a notion that there is no "real" poverty in New Zealand. Topics covered in this chapter are the visibility of poverty, its geographical boundaries, its ethnicity and its perceived relationship with crime. I overview the collection of ideas that I found about who is included or not included as being poor, as well as who is seen as deserving and not deserving of help, that emerged and were at times framed in an oppositional way.

Chapter Seven – A Non-Material Definition of Poverty

"It's not just about money"

In chapter seven I look at a cluster of ideas that surrounded the notion that poverty is "not just about money" - that it has other aspects to it. The argument often appeared to express disapproval of poverty being defined principally as a situation of a lack of money by government. As part of arguing for this position participants talked about a mind-set of poverty and of a form of non-material "emotional" poverty or poverty as "spiritual". In this chapter I draw attention to the range of ideas about the nature and cause of poverty that emerged, which were often inclined towards blaming the person for their life situation and justified poverty as an outcome of lifestyle choice.

Chapter Eight - Resourcefulness and Regulation

"Learn how to work the system"

In chapter eight I address what participants thought about a contrast in wealth at a systemic level and what they thought helped to maintain the status quo. Participants

outlined a contrast between wealth and poverty and presented people who lived at opposite ends of the income spectrum as outsiders who operate in separate systems and live in different worlds from each other. I present some of the practices that were talked of surrounding the management of poverty and the tolerance of wealth and locate this in the arguments generated about the effectiveness of the social welfare system in addressing poverty.

Chapter Nine– Income Inequality and Social Mobility
"Work hard and get ahead"

In chapter nine I outline a prevailing theme running through the interviews that hard work will overcome situations of poverty and how this belief was resisted in the conversations by the use of reference to the "myth" of New Zealand as having a classless society. Participants' opinions on wealth distribution in New Zealand are presented as I summarize how a gap between wealthy and poor people was generally seen as a natural outcome of how societies function and that social mobility was perceived as seldom achievable.

Chapter Ten - Discussion

In chapter ten I draw together the common themes and understandings presented about poverty in New Zealand that I found in the interview conversations and relate them to a broader notion of discourse in a Foucauldian sense. Connections are drawn between the interview data and policy constructions as I take a critical look at how the information I uncovered from the discussions that I had with participants might relate to, inform, or shape wider processes of social activity in New Zealand.

Chapter Eleven – Conclusion

Chapter eleven summarises and presents the key findings of the research by integrating the empirical work with the theoretical ideas generated and considering some of the implications for policy development.

Chapter Two

Philosophical Underpinnings

This chapter focuses on the philosophical approach and key concepts that informed this thesis. As I outline the main ideas contained in the writings of Michel Foucault I reflect on how they relate to a study of how poverty is construed in New Zealand communities. Of particular interest is the notion of the *discursive practices* that evolve to create and sustain paradigmatic systems of thought and knowledge (Foucault, 1972). Following a consideration of the body of work produced by Foucault and its usefulness for a study on poverty, I overview the key concepts contained in the governmentality thesis, and review the extension of these ideas in the growing body of governmentality literature. Key literature that relates to the governing of the poor is then reviewed. I will finish by commenting on the suitability of employing a governmentality approach in a study on poverty.

Discourse and Discursive Formations

The term "discourse" in the sense that Foucault uses it, encompasses both language use, and social and institutional practice that combine to inform knowledge about a particular "object" at a certain historical point in time (Foucault, 1972). What is important here is *how* "discourse" has been employed and that the term is predominantly used by Foucault to illustrate what "objects" of knowledge have formed and how those objects have become "known". This understanding of discourse as made known by Foucault shifts the attention away from discourse as meaning *merely the use of language,* towards a meaning of discourse that involves elements of social practice, institutional regulation and the relations between all these things as they describe an "object". As Foucault (1972:51) maintained, "these relations characterize not the language (langue) used by dis-course, nor the circumstances in which it is deployed, but discourse itself as a practice". With regards to the nature of reality and its relationship to studies of discourse, Foucault argued that discourses are more than merely signifying elements and that knowledge is produced by discourse as the "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972: 49). Foucault offered a definition of *discursive practice* as "a body of

anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function" (Foucault, 1972:131). In this sense, *discursive practices* can be understood to comprise both the spoken and unspoken nature of the way we do things in a society including the way we are trained to think and the notion that some things are unthinkable because of a historically contingent formation of ideas. Acknowledging this concept of discourse in a research endeavour is not inviting a debate about whether things exist but is asking how knowledge is formed; how this knowledge is both produced by and produces what we know about those things that we are considering and what we do about them. Therefore, when examining the production of knowledge that surrounds our ideas about poverty we can appreciate the increasingly sophisticated ability of governments to define and measure phenomena such as poverty and manage the lives of those who are defined as poor. These changing practices of information collection bring about new ways of generating knowledge leading to the production of a new blend of conventions that prescribe what is "say able" or "thinkable" about poverty at this particular historical moment, giving us a different basis for understanding than was possible in the past.

Foucault (1972) directed his analysis towards an ordered dispersion of "statements" that combine in a *discursive formation* that consist of statements that refer to the same object, have a similar style, constancy of concepts and support a 'strategy', "a common institutional, administrative or political drift and pattern" (Cousins and Hussain, 1984: 84-85). Meaning and meaningful practice are maintained within that dominant field of discourse. Foucault looked at social and institutional practices across different historical periods that operated to define and structure discourse and thereby inform knowledge. He was concerned with the history of how things come to be seen as "a problem" and how that problem was formed in discourse. He thought that forms of knowledge, objects, subjects and practices of knowledge, were produced in discourse, and these could diverge fundamentally from period to period, with no necessary linkage between them. Therefore in his examination of history, Foucault asked how today is different from yesterday, noting that history is not an inevitable process and that different periods can be similar to, but at the same time quite unlike, any other period. Thus, Foucault's view of history is not as a causal sequence of events and his study of history is not the search for origins, but he used the analogy of *archaeology* (Foucault, 1972). In this sense, I think it is useful to ask

what are people's concerns focused on in this present time, in this present society, to gain an impression of what are some of the underlying co-ordinates of thought and practice that make current "knowledge" possible in a contemporary setting. Therefore, in examining what is the level of common sense and assumption about poverty in New Zealand communities, I hoped to gain a sense of the consciousness that surrounds our notions of poverty. I did this with the awareness that context shapes the nature of social research and I am aware that some of the perceptions of poverty held at the time of the fieldwork may have changed with the experience of a shared hardship such as a global recession.

Knowledge, Power and Truth

The conventional understanding of power is that it is a force that emanates from a centre and someone or something possesses and exercises it. Foucault reconfigured this notion for us by suggesting that we take a different perspective to the nature of power. Firstly, we can reframe our understanding of power by noticing how it is exercised rather than by focussing on who possesses it. Secondly, instead of simply emphasising how it manifests in its repressive and controlling forms, Foucault draws attention to the *productive* characteristics of power involved in knowledge formation (Foucault, 1980). Thirdly, power in Foucault's conceptualization, does not necessarily flow downwards from a centralised source but also flows from the bottom up through a large number of relations at the micro level of society operating in a weblike manner, through various organisations and technologies. Power can therefore, be thought of as a "productive network, which runs through the whole social body" (Foucault, 1980:119). Further, resistance to a power network is always possible, thus "there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where the relations of power are exercised" (Foucault, 1980:142).

Foucault conceived of a complementarity between power and knowledge. He argued that power is always implicated in whether and in what circumstances knowledge will be applied and he thought discovering *how* power-knowledge is applied in the world is an important question as the assertion of "truth" is one of the practices of power. Thus Foucault argued, "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field

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of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1977:27). The "truth" of knowledge, as seen by Foucault, was "true" in the context of the *discursive formation* from which it emerged (Foucault, 1980). Foucault is asking us to recognise that although we can acknowledge that something may not be true in an absolute sense for all time, we can observe, that if knowledge and practice support a version of "truth" in a particular society, the real consequences of doing this will actually produce "the truth" in terms of its real effects in a community. As Foucault argued:

> Truth isn't outside power…. Truth is a thing of this world; it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned…. the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault, 1980:131).

By using this understanding of power-knowledge we can look at how the status quo is maintained and resisted at an individual and organisational level by identifying the practices that reinforce and maintain an acceptance of the existence of poverty. Also, when looking at perceptions of poverty and at the position of those who may be considered as poor in a community, it is useful to take into account the different ways in which individuals define and conduct *themselves* through the productive effects of power as well as noticing how power is being exercised by highlighting their resistance to it. Finally, regarding power as a "productive network", rather than reducing it to an oppressive hierarchal force, allows for the notion that the power relations around the accepted wisdom about poverty, are not necessarily something that can be discovered by focusing on policy and practice of central government alone, and that attention should also be given to social relations and practices at a community level.

The Subject and Subjectivity

In general, Foucault saw that the various forms of power-knowledge imbedded in discourse produce subject positions which construct identities that individuals will have learn to negotiate and either accept or resist. In *The Subject and Power* Foucault (1982:777-778) referred to the "three modes of objectification that transform human beings into subjects". The first of these are the methods of inquiry found in the sciences that operate to objectify the subject. As knowledge is formed in scientific discourse "subjects" are produced that have the characteristics we would expect as these are defined by the discourse, for example "the madman", "the criminal" and "the poor". The second mode is the use of "dividing practices" to objectify, where "the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others". These dividing processes include separating the sick from the healthy, the sane from the mad and the poor from the wealthy. The third mode reflects how "a human being turns himself into a subject". In *Technologies of the Self* (Foucault, 1988) Foucault discussed how various subject positions become inhabited by individuals through the use of specific *techniques* or practices "which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault, 1988:18). These techniques are seen by Foucault as being conducted within fields of power-knowledge but emphasis is also given to how this process becomes individualised. I will use a Foucauldian conceptualization of the subject in this research as I turn to what contemporary people in New Zealand communities are saying to determine some of the practices, habits and beliefs of these subjects and their common sense understandings. I will use this information to outline wider discursive frameworks and perceived social knowledge regarding poverty and its management.

Foucault and Governmentality

The governmentality thesis as an approach to the question of government incorporated and developed further the themes Foucault had previously explored with relation to his thinking around discourse, power-knowledge, truth and subjectivity. Foucault used the concept of government comprehensively and linked it strongly to an older sense of the

word that included problems of self-control, guidance for the family and for children, management of the household, directing the soul as well as management by the state or the administration (Lemke, 2001). Foucault saw that outside forces produce the "social self" and the notion of "conduct of conduct" encompasses the practice of governing others as well as the process of governing the forces around the self whereby an individual internalises and adopts various regimes of self-government. He identified three forms of power; the sovereign power, disciplinary power and pastoral power that make up the power relations in a modern state (Foucault, 1978).

Sovereignty is the historical legacy of a monarchical type of power that refers to the complete physical authority over those who are subject to its domination. Disciplinary power is the negative form of power, which Foucault explored in his study of prisons in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977) where an internalised form of surveillance designed to produce a docile person has become something of a blueprint for the exercise of power in modern society (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982). This disciplinary form of power has been extended to the population, Foucault argued, as *biopolitics*, meaning the management of the births, deaths, reproduction and illnesses of a population through various apparatus and technologies including the notion of political economy. Pastoral power, discussed at some length in *The Subject and Power* (Foucault, 1982:783-784) utilises the goal of "individual salvation" whereby leaders become involved in giving direction to followers in the habits they need to achieve moral correctness. The state can be seen as "a modern matrix of individualization or a new form of pastoral power" as it replaces the old goal of salvation after death with "worldly salvation" in terms of attainting health and well-being in this life. For Foucault then, the power relations in the *governmentality* of the modern state can be seen as an intermingling of sovereign and disciplinary power with the Christian notions of confession and pastorship.

Economy and statistics

According to Foucault, a conceptual evolution occurred from the eighteenth century onwards with the conceptualization of the notion of "economy" as a new plane of reality (Foucault, 1978). This idea of "economy" was linked to, and made viable by, a corresponding conceptualization of an understanding of "population" as a social object that was liable to death rates, epidemics and patterns of growth. Foucault saw statistical

measures as an "event" that began to provide knowledge about the health of a population. Because of this transformation in understanding, Foucault argued, the focus on who to govern then shifted from the family to the population and the main instrument of management or technique of government increasingly exercised by the state was to become an evolving notion of "political economy".

Foucault's understandings of the nature of government, government practice and transformation of government contained in his governmentality thesis, provide a lens to look through that can challenge our contemporary ideas about "population" and "economy" and encourage us to realise these understandings as temporal and shifting. In particular, the production of statistics can be seen as a vital step in the shift from seeing poverty not only as a personal misfortune or failure, to seeing it also as a social phenomenon that can be managed. This understanding followed from the newly emergent science of "political economy" which had allowed us to "see" the economy as something more than just a collection of households. The temporal and shifting nature of knowledge is observed in the effects of how poverty came to be "known" after the collection and processing of data in the historical studies of Charles Booth (1892-1903) and Seebohm Rowntree (1901) followed later by Peter Townsend (1979). While the earlier studies measured poverty as a phenomenon defined in terms of an individual's access to a set of basic necessities for sustaining life, the later studies also took social participation into account, by defining poverty as the outcome of "relative deprivation". As statistics provide information that reinforces and tell us what we think we "know" about poverty and who is poor, this knowledge will have some bearing on how people are regulated, controlled and punished in the community. The governmentality thesis offers a conceptual opportunity to investigate contemporary governmental practices of population management as they relate to poverty, as well as bringing awareness that statistical representation can be seen as a *discursive practice* that form "poverty" as an object of the disciplines of the human sciences, and that demarcate "the poor" as a subset of a population that may be addressed as an "economic problem" more than a moral one.

Governmentality Theory

The Nature of Government, Economic and Social Life

A growing body of literature and empirical research has adopted and extended Foucault's governmentality analytic building on the accounts of several scholars who have reviewed Foucault's work and formulated working definitions of governmentality. The articulation of Foucault's original work by Miller and Rose (1990) and Rose and Miller (1992) highlights both the discursive and technological elements of government (Henman, 2006). Governmentality is understood by Rose and Miller (1992) as an approach to the analysis of political power that looks at the complex alliances between central government and those other self-managing local centres that seek to govern economic activity, social life and individual conduct. Rose and Miller (1992:173) argue that "political rationalities" and "governmental technologies" are "intrinsically linked to developments in knowledge and to the powers of expertise". They define "political rationalities" as:

> the changing discursive fields within which the exercise of power is conceptualized, the moral justifications for particular ways of exercising power by diverse authorities, notions of appropriate forms, objects and limits of politics, and conception of the proper distribution of such tasks among secular, spiritual, military and familial sectors (Rose and Miller, 1992:175).

Further "technologies of government" as defined by Rose and Miller are:

> the complex of mundane programmes, calculations techniques apparatuses documents and procedures through which authorities seek to embody and give effect to governmental ambitions   (Rose and Miller, 1992: 175).

They see the relationship between political rationalities and technologies of government as follows:

> If political rationalities render reality into the domain of thought 'technologies of government' seek to translate thought into the domain of reality, and to establish 'in the world of persons and things' spaces and devices for acting upon those entities of which they dream and scheme (Miller and Rose, 1990:8).

In their initial writing on the topic of the governing of economic life they coined the term "governing at a distance" to explain the transformation of expertise and the regulation of the activities of professionals (who are set up in self-managing centres such as government departments and community organisations), to "operate a regulated autonomy" (Rose and Miller, 1992:173). Rose (1990, 1996) argues that in particular, "psy" expertise has emerged as a key technology of government that is involved in generating knowledge of the individuals to be "governed at a distance". Disciplines such as psychology have played a significant role in "inventing ourselves," Rose maintains, and have changed the ways in which human beings understand and act upon themselves, and how they are acted upon by authorities, guided by the expertise of doctors and therapists (Rose, 1996).

Dean (1999) has also comprehensively theorised and advanced the Foucauldian understanding of governmentality. In *Governmentality Power and Rule in Modern Society* (Dean, 1999) key concepts in the governmentality thesis are outlined and methods of the analysis of mentalities and techniques of rule are explained. As Dean (1999) analyses the term "governmentality", he argues that the concept provides both a way to think about government and governing as well as giving an approach to asking how and what those who are governed think about the way they are governed. He argues that thinking is a "collective activity" that includes "bodies of knowledge, belief and opinion in which we are immersed" (Dean, 1999:16). He suggests that a mentality is not "readily examined by those who inhabit it" as he notices how those who are governed take their way of life for granted as being the norm (Dean, 1999:16). He also highlights how the same activities "can be regarded as a different form of practice depending on the

mentalities that invest it" (Dean, 1999:17). The reflexivity contained in the concept of governmentality is further highlighted as Dean explains:

> On the one hand, we govern others and ourselves according to what we take to be true about who we are, what aspects of our existence should be worked upon, how, with what means, and to what ends. We thus govern others and ourselves according to various truths about our existence and nature as human beings. On the other hand, the ways in which we govern and conduct ourselves give rise to different ways of producing truth (Dean, 1999:18).

While recognising a degree of historical contingency is essential when looking at how social issues such as unemployment or poverty come to be constructed and acted upon by government; Dean outlines how governmentality theory can be used to describe the emergence of a government that saw that the object of governing power was to regard "the forces and capacities of living individuals, as members of a population, as resources to be fostered, to be used and to be optimized" (Dean, 1999:20). He argues that governmentality implies a relationship of government to forms of sovereign and disciplinary power which in modern times have been recast "within this concern for the population and its optimization" (Dean, 1999:20). Additionally, Dean contends that the term governmentality must include government in terms of any "conduct of conduct" thereby including "not only how we exercise authority over others, or how we govern abstract entities such as states and populations, but how we govern ourselves" (Dean, 1999:12). Thus Dean states, "to analyze government is to analyze those practices that try to shape, sculpt, mobilize and work through the choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals and groups" (Dean, 1999:12).

"Advanced liberalism" - governing at a distance through autonomy and freedom

Foucault treated the political doctrine of liberalism as a distinctive form of political reason, as a mentality of rule or a systematic way of thinking about government, which represents a method of rationalizing the exercise of power in the form of government (Lemke, 2001). The political philosophy of neo-liberalism is best appreciated in a governmentality framework therefore as a complex emergence of a rationalisation that sits behind a series of solutions to the problems of government such as "unemployment" or "poverty". Theorists looking at government "mentalities" tend to argue that in recent

times the concept of "society" has shifted in liberal democratic countries in favour of a new concept of the "self-governing individual" who is situated within a new style of rule that Rose (1996) and Dean (1999), term "advanced liberal government". The types of practice that characterise advanced liberal government involve "a plethora of indirect mechanisms that can translate the goals of political, social, and economic authorities into the choices and commitments of individuals" (Rose 1996, 165). Advanced liberal states have thus become facilitating states that work through the autonomy of individuals to "govern at a distance" at a variety of separate agents and locations (Rose 1996). As Larner and Walters (2000:365) argue "a governmentality perspective draws attention to how particular governmental identities are tied to practices of self-government, to ways of acting on the self". So in constituting a new project of self-hood, professionals such as "case managers" can be seen as the engineers of advanced liberalism, as they participate in the building of identities that promote "active" citizenship (Rose, 1999).

In *Powers of Freedom*, Rose (1999) offers an approach to the analysis of political power which extends Foucault's hypotheses on government and how we are governed. Rose argues that the notion of "freedom" is not the opposite of government but one of its key inventions and most important properties and therefore that a certain way of understanding and exercising freedom is compatible with advanced liberalism. This new form of freedom is a freedom that works through an individual's subjectivity to shape the way in which they conduct their lives. Subjects have been transformed into individuals with "rights" as "modern individuals are not merely "free to choose" but *obliged to be free*, to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice" (Rose, 1999:87). Thus, Rose argues, that notions such as "choice" govern subjects through their freedom. Further, this increasing emphasis on encouraging individuals to "choose" to become active, enterprising, autonomous citizens has become linked with reducing levels of state welfare services.

Therefore "liberalism", as seen by Foucault and discussed by those scholars who have extended his work (Rose 1996, 1999, Dean M. 2002, Hindess, 2001, Lemke, 2001) represents the emergence of a particular set of techniques, practices and institutions for governing the conduct of citizens. Thus, when viewing government through the insights afforded by governmentality theory we can see that the ideal of a liberal "freedom" in practice depends on a multitude of disciplinary measures within a modern society, which

are constitutive of and integral to liberalism. Following this line of inquiry, governmentality scholars (Dean M. 2002, Hindess 2001) have argued that to ensure that the majority of a population do consent to be governed in and through certain "freedoms"; liberalism itself depends on an example of the "un-freedom" of other members of the population. Thus, although some members of a society are seen as competent in governing themselves in and through freedom, others are not and are judged as needing external forms of regulation and discipline to learn to become responsible "active" members of a society (Hindess, 2001). This is particularly noticeable in the case of unemployed people, argues Dean (2002) as they are simultaneously told they will become "free" from dependence on the state as they are required to act upon themselves in certain ways. Dean (2002) argues for the need to have a greater understanding of how oppressive forms of authoritarian power in liberal states are being normalised in knowledge generated outside the domain of state governance. This domain of knowledge formation influences and shapes governmentalities and is very noticeable when looking at how the poor are governed in modern liberal forms of rule.

Governmentality and Governing the Poor

There have been numerous studies generated that come under the general rubric of "governmentality" which draw on the theory advanced by the scholars discussed above. The topics that have been studied are varied and range from looking at processes of global governmentality through to studies analysing the "self-help" movement. In this next section, I will outline the work of key authors who demonstrate how policies and practices that are concerned with the management of poverty and the poor, work to create and promote particular forms of subjectivity (or governed subjects).

Kingfisher writes about the feminisation of poverty and in particular the voices and experiences of women on welfare in Canada, USA and New Zealand (1996, 1998, 2001, 2002). In her research Kingfisher has combined ethnographic methods and discourse analysis to explore social and cultural constructions of gender and shifting notions of personhood. She looks at the relationship between everyday talk and social structure and at connections between discourse and resistance. In *Women in the American Welfare Trap* (1996) Kingfisher examines the conversations between the recipients of public assistance

and the welfare workers who serve them, who are mainly women, addressing issues of identity and self-worth in her analysis. This research demonstrates how women who are often viewed as victims without control can also be seen as actively working within the confines of the system to exert their autonomy. Further work is contained in an edited volume *Western Welfare in Decline Globalization and Women's Poverty* (2002) where Kingfisher argues, along with other contributors, that the neo-liberal project of welfare reform is contributing to the feminisation of poverty as well as creating new forms of cultural and personal identities globally. While she is not exclusively reliant on governmentality theory, Kingfisher uses Foucauldian theoretical insights to draw attention to constructions of personhood and agency to broaden her discussions and situate them in wider mentalities of rule.

In *Unemployment and Government: Genealogies of the Social* (2000), Walters uses a governmentality approach to show how unemployment has formed as a "conceptual object" (Walters, 2000:36). The genealogical approach used here challenges welfare state theories as Walters examines institutionalised practices as "technologies of power". Walters outlines how the phenomenon of "unemployment" developed in the twentieth century and how it came to be conceptualized as a "social problem". As Walters looks at how the problem of unemployment is constructed and how this has changed historically, he links this to the key transformations in how governments have responded to this problem. He points to the routine procedures, embedded in wider technologies, which are used to regulate those who are unemployed. Walters argues that policies and programmes designed to respond to situations of unemployment, also have the effect of "inventing" our understanding of unemployment and unemployed people.

Walters (2000) outlines some of the different mentalities of rule that have constructed the notion of "unemployment" as he traces the shift from a focus on managing the poor as people with character defects to recognition of unemployment as a problem of industry, requiring action at the national level by means of policies intended to regulate the labour market. Alongside changing circumstances and the materialization of different mentalities of rule, a new sense of collective identity emerged in the latter part of the nineteenth century as the unemployed forged themselves into a political movement with definite demands and authorised spokespersons. Thus people began to *identify themselves* as "the unemployed" and to make demands on this basis (Walters, 2000: 21). A new way of governing was needed to respond to these emerging political movements and industrial

conflict and so "unemployment" was constructed as a new object of governance (Walters, 2000: 22). In this genealogical analysis of unemployment, Walters is able to look behind some of the taken for granted assumptions we have about the nature of unemployment and the unemployed person and expose how notions such as "unemployment" or "poverty" are socially constructed vehicles for governing those that find themselves destitute.

In *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects,* Cruikshank (1999) employs a Foucauldian approach to analysis of state power as she looks at disciplinary practices imbued in social service programmes designed to produce subjectivity. As she reviews organised movements such as "self-esteem" and "empowerment" contained in social service programmes Cruikshank argues:

> biopower operates to invest the citizen with a set of goals and self-understandings and gives the citizen an investment in participating voluntarily in programmes projects and institutions set up to "help" them (Cruikshank,1999:41).

She outlines how forms of biopower she terms "technologies of citizenship" work to progressively transfer self-governing capability onto the morally responsible, autonomous subject that the state is increasingly seeking to forge. These "technologies" are both "voluntary and coercive at the same time" (Cruikshank, 1999:4).

Cruikshank demonstrates how, when used as an instrument in the struggle against poverty, the intention of the notion of "empowerment" is to shape people's behaviour towards a goal of self-responsibility. Poor people in particular are governed through the multitude of micro social relations activated by social policy initiatives including those contained in social service programmes. In these programmes the purpose is to employ professionals to guide marginalised people in how best to "empower" themselves. Therefore, in these organised programmes "power" is no longer only something that the poor are striving for, but also becomes "the will to empower" when it is something that others are trying to apply to those poor to create social order. Thus, in effect, Cruikshank argues that a notion such as "empowerment" can be detected as a form of governmentality that works through poor people's subjectivities to regulate social life.

This understanding of "empowerment" as less than a benign notion is drawn on in recent governmentality literature. In *Governing the Poor, Exercises of Poverty Reduction, Practices of Global Aid* (Ilcan and Lacey, 2011) the authors utilise governmentality theory to reveal how people become consigned to programmes of governance that are based on the efforts to globally quantify and generalise the nature of poverty and the experience of being poor. They argue that the poor are treated as a governed entity and are contained within a system of actors such as governments, international organisations, and private businesses. As the poor are presented globally in statistics and images as a problem to be quantified, managed and solved, Ilcan and Lacey claim they are subjected to the advanced liberal techniques of empowerment, privatisation and responsibilization enmeshed in programmes of reform and in the global aid regime. Based on field research in Namibia and the Solomon Islands and case studies of international organisations such as USAID and Oxfam, Ilcan and Lacey question whether socially just solutions to poverty are actually being offered in global aid programmes especially as such programmes are often met with resistance by those who are targets of the aid. As their fieldwork unearths the resistance and challenges by the poor to the "regimes of rule" contained in global aid efforts, the authors suggest that this kind of enquiry can move governmentality studies "towards an ontology of change rather than a focus on power relations antagonistic to social justice" (Ilcan and Lacey, 2011:231).

Governmentality as an Analytic Approach to a Social Issue such as Poverty

A governmentality focus can highlight how systems of ideas are combined with strategies of power, and how this works to shape the ways in which individuals are both managed and encouraged to self-manage. In this research, I am taking the position that there has been a history of social policy research and management practices regarding poverty that have resulted in policy actions and institutionalised governmental practices which have had real effects in shaping the nature of the way poverty has been made visible and *known* to us. In addition, these policies and practices have had real effects and outcomes on the lives of the people that they have been designed to manage. Early researchers, such as Booth (1892-1903) and Rowntree (1901), who investigated the conditions of poverty, were concerned with the material effects of poverty. Their intention was to make poverty visible and reframe it as a *political problem* of the *population* as opposed to it merely

being considered as a personal moral failing of the individuals who were experiencing it. Since the time of these early studies of poverty, knowledge about the material effects of poverty has led to historical practices that have let us come to see poverty as something that can be mitigated and managed – as something that is *governable*. Furthermore, although poverty has been extensively researched, there is a history of debate over how to measure it and who is to be considered as poor (refer to chapters three and four). There is no agreement amongst scholars or politicians about this and therefore there has been no single criterion established that has found a consensus as to what constitutes the essence of poverty. Thus, these debates over the constitution of poverty have become a part of a *discursive formation* that makes poverty perceivable in one form or another. This present research will hear the views of people in New Zealand communities, and aims to find out how they have defined poverty, what the criterion for poverty is for them and how closely this relates to government policy documentation, welfare institutional practices and research interests.

Conclusion

To develop a theoretical focus for the purpose of this thesis I will be drawing on the philosophy of Foucault and in particular the governmentality thesis to look at the categories, identities and practices that surround the notion of poverty and its management in New Zealand. A focus on government in the broad sense that is contained in the governmentality thesis can give us insight into some of our dominant expectations. It allows us to move beyond looking solely at centralised government as a unified and powerful entity to incorporate the micro politics of administration and practice in our systems of health, welfare and education. Foucault has given us a way to see that the governing of individual selves has changed and evolved and today there is a matrix of systems and discourse, which shape a person's selfhood, or sense of self, in a productive and regulated way. There is also insight given as to how the everyday struggles of individuals against forms of power and objectification, and the intensity of the disciplinary activity surrounding this, can make individuals into resistant subjects. These theoretical concepts, advanced by governmentality scholars such as Rose, Miller, Dean and Cruikshank, will serve to inform this thesis and will facilitate a discussion that locates our understanding of "poverty" alongside the notion of "citizenship" as a governmental technique of advanced liberal rule. The following two chapters, three and

four, will be concerned with looking at what has been said in the literature on poverty both at a general level and more specifically in the New Zealand context and making some connections with this body of work to Foucault's notion of discourse, *discursive formation* and governmentality.

Chapter Three

Scholarly Notions and Ideas about Poverty

Foucault's genealogical analysis, developed in the 1970s, involved looking at the interplay between power, knowledge and the body in modern society. He used this method in conjunction with his earlier focus on historically located instances of discourse and discursive statements to demonstrate that "history" did not have to be examined as if human beings are on a steady, inevitable pathway involved in discovering essential "truths". Thus he maintained that various systems of thought and the practices that create and support these are at once localised at a certain point in history as well as leaving an impression on what follows. Further, breaks or "discontinuities" with systems of thought and practice often have an inadvertent quality and should not be regarded as part of a larger inevitable trend involved in "progress" (Drefus and Rabinow, 1982). Authors such as Dean (1991, 1992), Fraser and Gordon (1994) and Schram (1995, 2000), have employed variations of Foucault's genealogical approach to the examination of history, to trace how combinations of ideas and practices form and transform over time to shape the notion of "poverty" and governance of those defined as "poor". The study most applicable to my thesis is the work of Dean (1991, 1992) who traces the constitution of poverty from an "event" of *pauperism* to show how the creation of "poverty" became a field of knowledge and intervention through the emergence of a "liberal mode of government" in the early nineteenth century. Another seminal piece of work relevant to this thesis is Fraser and Gordon's (1994) genealogy of dependency, which uses a variation of Foucault's methodology to trace the use of the term dependency historically from an early meaning of subordination through to the use of the word in contemporary debates about "welfare dependency". By using a genealogical approach Fraser and Gordon are able to establish how the meaning of the word "dependency" reflects broader sociohistorical changes such as the "modern emphasis on the individual personality" (Fraser and Gordon, 1994: 332). As Fraser and Gordon demonstrate, the use of words such as "dependency" change in meaning over time but also serve to carry the weight of the past in the way they are deployed in current welfare policy debate. Genealogical methodology is also used by Schram (1995) who analysed how welfare policy is set and evaluated in the United States, demonstrating how policy formation is captured by the

social sciences. In further work, Schram (2000) examines the cultural dimensions of social welfare policy by looking at class, racial, sexual and gender biases in policy debates and asking how "cultural anxieties leave their traces in the texts of social welfare policy" (Schram, 2000:3).

For this chapter, while not undertaking a formal genealogy of the constitution of poverty, I will be engaging with the philosophy underpinning the genealogical approach by recognising that history has a contingent quality and that "discursive practices make it possible for some things and not others to happen" (Schram,1995:xxxix). Therefore, I argue here that the notion of "poverty" cannot be reduced to a single category and that the understanding of such a concept will vary over time along with the state response (or lack of response) to it. Further, a prevailing political rationality, of "liberalism" as articulated by Foucault (2004) as being both the principle and practice of exercising the self-limitation of government, sits behind how a notion such as poverty will be conceptualized and acted upon. The following literature review is not intended to be a comprehensive and exhaustive review of all the nuances in the debates about poverty, but is designed to provide a sense that the notion of poverty has repetitive themes while keeping in mind that those themes are subject to transformation over time. The review also serves to contextualise how the processes of conceptualizing, defining and measuring poverty are part of a wider *discursive practice* combining to form an understanding of "poverty" as a social object. Because this review was completed prior to commencing the fieldwork it shaped how I came to approach the study and was central to the formulation of a set of questions for participants.

Conceptualizing Poverty: Understanding Poverty and Governing the Poor

In this section, I will discuss how poverty has been conceptualized in academic literature. Basically, the following conceptualizations of poverty incorporate debates about what causes poverty, what poverty means for a poor person, what poverty means for the non-poor population and what sense of moral obligations (if any) a society has towards its poor. Therefore, this part of the review will be including a combination of philosophical understandings of the human condition, debates about the interaction between the wider social system and its poor and debates about the relationship between the poor and the

state. These conceptualizations will be divided into three general areas, in which I loosely categorise the ways in which ideas about poverty and its management have been debated. The first of these categories includes the classical liberal thinking of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, of poverty as a natural and inevitable occurrence, and its contemporary neo-conservative flavour. Next, Marxist views and ideas of a social liberal and Fabian socialist nature, of poverty as a result of economic and political structures, which dominated post war political and academic discussions of poverty, are outlined. Following this, contemporary explanations that have a focus on the individual in poverty and how their behaviour can contribute to their situation (and to its resolution) are discussed, highlighting the emergence of agency as a consideration in recent poverty debates.

Poverty as Inevitable – An Argument for Minimal State Involvement

One way of viewing poverty is that it is a part of the human condition, a result of the inevitable outcome of the flaws in human nature and a corresponding natural scarcity of resources. When looking at poverty through this lens, people can be seen as being motivated primarily by self-interest, as largely unwilling or unable to change their behaviour or habits easily and a somewhat harsh outlook on life is articulated. Choices are understood as being made within a limited sphere and those in poverty can be perceived as "choosing" a self-destructive life style that leads to a life of poverty.

This way of explaining poverty has its heritage in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century British society, with the attitudes that were embodied in the Poor Law reforms of 1834. Prior to the reforms, from the sixteenth century onwards, the poor had begun to be classified into the "necessarily" and the "voluntarily" indigent. Welfare provision was paternalistic in nature, based on the Elizabethan Poor Law, which obliged parishes to support the old and disabled with a basic distinction made between the "able bodied" and the "impotent" poor (Scott, 1994). This interest in dividing the poor into moral categories was also reflected in the "New World" of North America (Katz, 1995:66). The effect of these moral categories was to begin to tarnish all the poor as morally defective in some way (Lister, 2004). By the time of the Poor Law reforms of 1834, the Elizabethan Speenhamland system of a family wage subsidy for poor relief was falling out of favour with a growing middle class. Exerting a large influence on the Poor Law reforms, were

the classical political economists, Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo, who in their turn had been influenced by the earlier works of Adam Smith, who had promoted a "laissez-faire" style of economic management. Smith's book: *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Smith, 1776), had developed the idea of liberal individualism as a natural and normal part of the character of economic arrangements, with the market system as its central element. Dean (1991) argues that the work of these authors helped to expound "poverty" as we know it today.

Thomas Malthus began his career as a Curate in Okewood where he had a chance to observe the poor of the parish and to study the records of their births and deaths. The information he obtained there formed the basis for his later theory of population. This theory was outlined in his most well-known writing *Essay on the Principle of Population* (Malthus, 1798) in which he calculated that the population was growing at a faster rate than was the food supply. He saw the benefits of poor relief would only be short term and would only delay the inevitable problems of overpopulation, if not actually accelerating them by encouraging breeding among the poor. He painted a dark picture of the human condition and is noted for his pessimistic assumption that any improvement in the living conditions of the poor would lead to a rapid and unsustainable growth of the population. He viewed any increase in the population as surplus to requirements, arguing that this surplus population had no use and that the "market" was the "epitome of rationality" (Byrne, 2005: 7). Malthus believed that although the existing Poor Laws often relieved distress they created a situation whereby misery was spread over a large area. Furthermore, he blamed the Poor Laws for forcing many "independent labourers" downward into pauperism. Malthus therefore proposed that the Poor Laws should be removed and that the person receiving aid should not be better off than the independent labourer (Avery, 1997). Avery argues that "*Essay*" "appeared at exactly the right moment to capture the prevailing mood of England" (Avery, 1997:63).

Ricardo (1951) agreed with Malthus that poor relief only served to make everyone in a society poorer and that this undermined the position of the "independent labourer". He also argued that poverty is a necessary phenomenon that adjusts the population to the available quantity of capital and therefore human poverty parallels a natural scarcity (Dean, 1991). These ideas were supported by a theory of an "Iron Law" of wages, whereby labour is viewed as a commodity like grain or timber and the price of labour will

follow the laws of supply and demand. Accordingly, Ricardo argued, workers must live at the starvation level and if they do not, more children will survive. This will have the effect of increasing the population, and the supply of labour will become greater than demand, causing wages to fall again to starvation level (Avery, 1997). Both Malthus and Ricardo believed that the benefits of economic progress would inevitably be defeated by population growth and therefore poverty was an inevitable part of the human condition (Avery, 1997). The Poor Laws of 1834 have been seen as a combination of the pessimism contained in the warnings of Malthus against encouraging a reproducing poor, the individualistic market logic of Ricardo, and Victorian morality (Byrne, 2005).

Platt (2005) outlines how the reorganisation of the Poor Laws in 1834, with a much stronger emphasis on institutionalisation, rendered *paupers* a clearly identifiable and distinct body apart from the morally acceptable poor. The term *"Pauper"* was used to refer to someone who made a call on the Poor Law. Paupers were seen as being in economic dependency in contrast to the "self-provision of subsistence" achieved by the "independent labourer" (Dean, 1992:237-8). Paupers were regarded with suspicion and another label the *residuum* was also used that described paupers as a "dangerous class" of dirty, diseased criminals. As well as these more stringent forms of classification contained in the Poor Law reforms, the increasingly institutionalised nature of poverty management involved the reorganisation of the workhouse system so that it would only contain the truly destitute. Within the workhouses men and women were separated and children were separated from their parents. This policy was implemented to try to prevent further reproduction and to remove the children from what was seen as the bad influence of their parents. The workhouses were based on the principle of "less eligibility" as a deterrent to pauperism. This meant in practice that the conditions in the workhouse for the "able-bodied" pauper should be less desirable than those conditions experienced by the poorest "independent labourer" (Lister, 2004:105). A basic distinction was thus made between the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor, with "outdoor relief", that is provision outside the workhouses, only given to those categorised as deserving. Commentators have viewed the Poor Laws of 1834 as the first attempts at a major piece of social policy which was empirically based (Platt, 2005:14). It can be said that from the implementation of these laws the state accepted some responsibility for both determining and supplying poverty relief. As Scott (1994) argues the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 provided a framework for debates on poverty which are still present today – the construction of

poverty as a social problem, and as an object of social policy, is in part, a product of nineteenth century attitudes and practices.

Contemporary debates on why there are poor people and what to do about them contain elements of the above nineteenth century views. In particular, these views are embodied in explanations of an "underclass". This underclass is comprised of what the British writers of the early nineteenth century had previously described as the undeserving or disreputable poor (Scott, 1994). Neo-conservative authors such as Charles Murray (1984) reflect and reiterate the concerns of Malthus and Ricardo of a redundant population of poor people and the Victorian Society's opinion of this population's questionable morality. The current discussions of an underclass have their immediate origins in the concept of a "culture of poverty" a term coined by Oscar Lewis (1966). When investigating the lives of poor Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in America, Lewis argued that a "culture of poverty" insulated the poor from the wider national culture and created a high degree of alienation and apathy among them. This caused the poor to become disengaged and to reject dominant values (Scott, 1994). Dean and Taylor-Gooby (1992) contend that Lewis did not intend to locate the blame for poverty on the poor; his conceptualization of a culture of poverty was formulated in an anthropological sense and should have been recognised as a problem solving structure in poor communities. However, as Welshman (2006:91) notes, despite the intentions of Lewis, conservatives in search of a modern label for the undeserving poor easily appropriated his theories. Scott (1994) argues that the current idea of a "culture of poverty" has since become a central part of the intellectual armoury of a neo-conservative tradition that tends to use value-laden language to describe groups in poverty. The predominant view in the neo-conservative literature defines a group, which, it argues, rejects the norms and values of mainstream society and whose poverty is self-inflicted through intergenerational transmission. This contemporary view of the poor as undeserving has its origin in the United States and has a strong racial component. Morris (1996) argues that the American underclass is said to be located in inner-city slums with a population that is largely comprised of black, single women and minority groups.

Conservative author, Charles Murray, opened the door for contemporary underclass discourse in his publication *Losing Ground* (1984). In this book, Murray argued that through encouraging patterns of dependency and deterring people from working, welfare was a large part of the problem rather than the solution (Welshman, 2006). The poor, he

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argued, are encouraged by the welfare state to behave in ways advantageous in the short term but destructive in the long term. Welfare policy both causes and masks these problems and undermines the institution of the family. Murray essentially reiterated the Malthusian and Ricardian account of the origins of the underclass. He saw that welfare benefits promoted a culture of dependency and that young women "settled down" on benefits to bring up a successive generation who are acculturated to behave in the same way (Byrne, 2005:24). By giving these people money, he argued, the welfare system will only help them to produce more poor people. Murray identified three key indicators of the underclass as a group; those who had dropped out of the labour force, those who had high rates of illegitimacy, low levels of education and who frequently participated in crime. He gave an example of a young fictional teenage couple, Harold and Phyllis, who discover that Phyllis is pregnant. Murray argued that this pregnancy in the days prior to the 1970s would be a source of shame for the couple who would be faced with the choice of getting married or adopting the child out. Today, however, he argued, it makes better financial sense in the short term for Phyllis to keep her child and draw on the welfare system, with Harold sometimes sharing her bed but not supporting her financially. Murray's main assumption was therefore, that young women have become better off living independently from men on welfare because the welfare system has been "cleansed of stigma". For Murray the solution to poverty is not money, training or education but rather a radical dose of "self-government". He presents a case for the return of social stigma and other disincentives in order to dissuade people from drawing on the welfare state, with the long-term aim of reducing the welfare state to a bare minimum. Murray's argument has been extensively critiqued (see Greenstein, 1985 and Ellwood and Summers, 1986), mainly on the grounds that it lacks solid empirical evidence, but political and ethical objections have also been raised.

Poverty as Structural – Welfare State Governance and Poverty

In another broad categorisation of explanations, poverty is viewed as the result of structural economic or political causes, rather than as the fault of the individual in poverty. The mid nineteenth century saw the development of Marxism as a reaction to the laissez-faire principles of Adam Smith's classical liberalism (Cheyne, O'Brien, and Belgrave, 2008). Marxist explanations for poverty see it essentially as the inevitable result of the capitalist mode of production. Under a capitalist system the working class are seen

as being forced to sell their labour for less than what it is worth to the capitalist class who do not need to work because they own the means of production. Marxists see poverty as one of the key outcomes of this inequitable system, which favours the owners of the means of production and exploits the poor. Fabian socialist ideas about equality of outcome and social liberal notions of citizenship and equality of opportunity also use structural explanations to focus on the inherent inequities in class structures, gender relations and ethnicity. However, in contrast to the Marxist belief in the inevitable overthrow of capitalism by the working class, they tend to look to state intervention and employment policy as the key factors involved in resolving these inequities (Cheyne et al, 2008).

In general, the literature containing writing from a structural perspective on poverty favours social justice and the redistribution of wealth contained in a collectivist vision of social policy practice. For several decades there appeared to be a political consensus in many developed industrialised countries, that the management of social policy could be undertaken in a collective spirit, with the belief that this would mitigate the worst effects of capitalism and reduce poverty. This idea was both generated by and supported in the academic literature of the time. In what Deacon (2002) refers to as the quasi-Titmuss paradigm, there was resistance by British academics who were concerned with poverty (such as Peter Townsend, 1979) to the idea that poverty might have anything other than structural causes. Deacon (2002) argues that this paradigm dominated welfare thinking for much of the post war period in Britain and America. Deacon (2002) notes that authors closely following in this tradition saw that the central goal of welfare was to reduce inequalities, and they downplayed any attempt to explain the growth or persistence of poverty in terms of the behaviour and attitudes of the poor people themselves.

Richard Tawney (1913, 1931) was a key figure in the development of the idea of a collectivist social policy, and both Fabian socialists and liberal social democrats have drawn on his ideas. He saw that the introduction of state welfare services and redistributive tax policies would bring about social justice (Kane and Kirby, 2003). Tawney's struggle against poverty had moral as well as practical dimensions and he set out the case for equality from the standpoint of Christian Socialism (Deacon, 2002). He saw that the problem of poverty was not a problem of individual character and its flaws but a problem of economic and industrial organisation (Deacon, 2002). In an inaugural lecture in 1913 entitled *Poverty as an Industrial Problem* Tawney argued that modern

poverty is associated "not with personal misfortunes peculiar to individuals, but with the economic status of particular classes and occupations" and poverty should be studied therefore, "first at its sources, and only secondly in its manifestations" (Tawney: 1913 cited in Welshman, 2006:36). Lister (2004) recalls Tawney's well-known saying that "what thoughtful rich people call the problem of poverty thoughtful poor people call with equal justice the problem of riches" (Tawney, 1913, cited in Lister, 2004: 52). In his most well-known work *Equality* (Tawney, 1931), written during the depression, he outlined theoretical arguments in favour of the creation of a society based on the principles of equality. He argued that a Social Democracy should pursue the ideal of equality of opportunity, and that even though some inequality has to exist, this should be kept within tight bounds (Tawney, 1931). A good example of a comprehensive piece of work that focussed on structural constraints is Scott's contribution to the poverty discussion in *Poverty and Wealth: Citizenship, deprivation and privilege* (Scott, 1994), in which he reiterated Tawney, when he concluded that the causes of poverty are inseparable from the causes of wealth.

Early twentieth century Fabian socialists, such as Sydney and Beatrice Webb (1975), saw that poverty was the result of class inequalities and envisioned the amelioration of poverty through a gradual progress towards socialism that involved a large degree of state owned and regulated industries and services. Within this discourse, state welfare was seen as the means of collective provision. Fabian socialists were aware that the prevention of poverty required a determined strategy by government to secure greater equality. Their main aim therefore was to enhance state intervention and control a progressive development of a welfare state (Alcock, 1997). Richard Tawney had a profound influence on the thinking of Richard Titmuss (1970), who was a significant post World War Two socialist. Titmuss was optimistic about human nature and the implications of future economic performance. He strongly rejected any attempt to explain poverty in terms of the failings or weaknesses of the poor themselves and always emphasized the duties of the state to the individual and not the obligations of the individual to the state (Deacon, 2002). He saw that welfare must contribute to a broader redistribution of resources and opportunities and that a reduction in social inequalities is a precondition for the formation of a common culture. His well-known book *The Gift Relationship* (Titmuss, 1970) argued that the defining quality of welfare was its focus upon institutions that promoted an individual's sense of identity and participation in the community. He used the example of

blood transfusions to argue the case for social exchanges based on reciprocity and altruism. Welfare, as he saw it, had to be universal and non-judgemental, as distinguishing between the deserving and the undeserving poor would prove to be divisional and alienating. He argued that the key aim of social policy should be to create a welfare system that could redistribute social rights without stigma (Titmus, 1963). As Deacon (2002) argues, Titmuss advanced the establishment of social policy as a discipline by looking at the moral choices underlying policy decisions and defining the purpose and scope of the subject.

Politicians, economists, academics and commentators coming from a liberal social democratic tradition have also regarded poverty in structural terms. Influential work that has provided ground for much debate came from T. H. Marshall who theorised about an historical evolution of citizenship rights in *Citizenship and Social Class* (1950). Marshall, a writer in the liberal tradition, saw that the citizenship of a nation state has evolved to include *social* rights. Marshall argued that social inequalities based on class divisions could be ameliorated through the development of social citizenship rights that would sit alongside the well-established civil and political rights. Marshall, in a similar fashion to Tawney, saw in the achievement of social citizenship a strategy to reduce inequality and poverty by the assurance of minimum standards through state welfare (Alcock, 1997: 256). He argued that the emergence of social rights signalled the extent to which laissez-faire capitalism had been superseded. Dean (2002) argues that although socialists have drawn on his work, Marshall's concept of citizenship is not necessarily consistent with socialist thought as, unlike the Fabian socialists, Marshall saw equality of status as more important than equality of income. He saw that social citizenship rights were obtained through the effects of a meritocratic state education system, and were a good alternative to a class based system as a way to stratify social groups. His vision of the good society therefore, was one based on status and desert rather than contract and mere good fortune (Dean, 2002).

Social democracies were the predominant mode of political economy from World War Two through to the 1970s for much of the developed world. The economic policies during this era made it possible and sustainable to have a vision of social policy that would promise to counteract the worst effects of the inequalities associated with capitalism and make feasible the continual development of welfare states. The initiators

of the Anglo-Saxon welfare states recognised that the foundations of social welfare were in the formal labour market and that full employment was the key to economic well-being (Williams and Windebank, 2003). Keynesian economic theory supported and justified social democratic policies, and has been seen as a middle-way compromise between socialist and liberal thought that involved a state-funded, demand-side economic policy (Welshman, 2006). The key objective of Keynesian economics was to fully utilise economic resources. This was achieved by the stimulation of consumption with the maintenance of full employment, which meant in practice the preservation of a family wage for a largely male workforce. Welfare provision supplemented these full employment policies which often involved a high level of state expenditure. Keynesian economic policies supported the idea that poverty could be avoided. The belief was that government could and should, stabilise the economy and thereby mitigate the effects of the economic recessions, seen as the major cause of poverty. A contemporary field of inquiry seeks to come to some understanding of the dilemma of increasing poverty levels in wealthy nations with well-developed welfare states.

Esping-Andersen (1990) produced a theory of welfare state development, building on Marshall's discussion of citizenship rights and the Titmuss socialist paradigm, which gave some insight as to why poverty has become an issue for welfare states. He argued that while reducing poverty, welfare states also had the effect of creating a system of stratification that has had a significant effect on social relations. As he pointed out, there will be a group of citizens who rely on state transfers and a group who do not which has the effect of creating a social dualism. He demonstrated that labour tended to be more highly commodified in the welfare states of a residual or liberal nature that relied on a high level of employment to support their welfare state, whereas countries with more generous universal welfare provision had a labour force that was correspondingly more de-commodified. Esping-Anderson argues that "de-commodification occurs when a service is rendered as a matter of right, and when a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market" (Esping-Anderson, 1990:21-22). Those welfare states that rely on a high level of commodified labour are particularly vulnerable to changes in employment conditions and tax structures. Although it is acknowledged his work was a significant contribution to the understanding of the function of welfare states, like his predecessor Marshall, Esping-Andersen has also been critiqued for his gendered assumptions about welfare provision (Lister, 2003; Williams, 1994).

Esping-Andersen (2002) extended his analysis to argue for a child-centred social investment strategy. He demonstrated that poverty levels rise when the overall level of inequality in a society increases and that the duration of time spent in poverty is inextricably linked to overall levels of poverty. He observed the increase in the concentration of poverty in families with dependent children and how detachment from labour force participation has become a key contributing factor in this. While acknowledging that a lack of skills and knowledge is linked to current poverty, Esping Anderson foresees that this will become an even more apparent cause of poverty in the knowledge economy of the future. He thinks that the answer is not to engage people in work for its own sake but rather to have a focus on a combination of strategies to fully address poverty at its cause. Foremost, he stresses the need for redistributive policies that have a focus on ensuring adequate income levels working in conjunction with encouraging increased access to participation in the workforce for women in particular. In the long-term however, the next generation of children who are at an increased risk of poverty, should be protected from poverty while growing up by the provision of adequate family benefit packages. As well as having their material needs meet there should also be a concentration on increasing children's "social capital". This could be achieved by ensuring that all children are fully educated to gain marketable skills, which would lessen the increase of future "unemployable" citizens.

A Postmodern Welfare Policy Environment

The debate on the relationship between poverty, citizenship, the welfare state and the redistribution of wealth, has been extended further due to the influence of post-modern ideas of diversity and difference. A key theme running throughout Lister's *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives* (2003) and contemporary social policy literature is that of the universal and the particular. With reference to welfare states this focus requires a debate on the extent to which services should be provided in a universal, uniform fashion at the expense of the recognition of difference. Lister (2003) questions ideas of universality and particularism on a number of fronts including gender, ethnicity, sexuality and age. She argues that the universalism contained in the concept of citizenship has been exposed as a concept that justifies patriarchal structures. For Lister, the ideal of the universal character of the welfare tradition is worth retaining but within this universalist approach there needs to be recognition of difference. This difference confronts policy makers, Lister argues,

with the necessity of a focus on the particular. After discussing concepts of diversity, division and difference in the light of postmodernism she presents a case for taking the strengths of both universalism and difference and combining them. Thus, in Lister's view, there is a creative tension between the universal and the particular, which can be embodied in the notion of a "differentiated universalism" (Lister, 2003:91). This notion is certainly connected with issues of how effectively services to alleviate poverty are seen to be organised and managed in welfare states.

While Lister (2003) does not fully endorse a post-modern analysis, she utilises the insights afforded by post-modern critiques to support and sustain her arguments and explore the issue that has come to be known as the "feminisation of poverty". For example, she discusses how the agenda black women bring to the debates on social welfare and citizenship rights will be different from that of white women. In a similar vein she looks at the disabled people's movement highlighting their different expectations, needs and aspirations. Lister effectively highlights how the needs of different women in the category called "women" can actually come into conflict. She uses the campaign by the disabled people's movement for the right of self-determination as an example. In practice self-determination could come to mean giving disabled women the right to choose who would be their caregivers and the money could be given to them to distribute at their discretion. There is a potential hazard inherent in this practice of individualising contracts for services, Lister argues, which is the possible exploitation of the largely female population of caregivers who may receive (and thus come to expect) less remuneration for their services. Lister states that welfare policies can and should be flexible enough to address the conflicts of interest in an increasingly diverse policy environment and that requires attending to both universal and particular requirements.

Poverty and Agency – The Individual and Governance

A further way of conceptualizing poverty and its management is to focus on the role of the agency of an individual, in other words how the behaviour of the person in poverty is contributing to their situation. When conceptualizing poverty in this way, views range from versions which tend to "blame the victim" through to discussions that seek to balance ideas of human agency and its relationship to poverty located within structural constraints. Deacon (2004) argues that the role of agency has been neglected in much

research and writing on social policy. This resistance to discussing agency for some authors, is based on the idea that agency is linked with a moralistic and judgemental approach to welfare provision. Deacon (2002) notes William Julius Wilson's (1997) observation that the lack of discussion of agency in post war policy debates left a discursive gap, which the conservative right easily filled. What follows is a review of two different interpretations of "agency" found in the literature - a neo-liberal version, best expressed in the writings of Mead (2004), and a contrasting emerging version of agency as recognition of power and respect as articulated by Lister (2004).

Mead is a writer who takes a paternalistic approach to welfare provision. Unlike conservative writers such Charles Murray (1984), Mead supports the continuation of some form of a welfare state. The ideal welfare state however, would need to focus on a "carrots and sticks" approach to welfare provision, to be run efficiently and constructed in such a way as to move on those who have become "dependent" on it. The poor in this view should be obliged to work for their money and welfare provision should be used in a way that encourages a work ethic and discourages "welfare dependency". The political expression of this view on poverty has been seen in the structures of neo-liberal "hard" and third way "soft" workfare policies designed to encourage the work ethic and change the behaviour of the poor by tying the social rights of citizenship to "correct behaviour". Competing approaches to workfare are discussed at some length in Lodemel and Trickey (2001). In *Beyond Entitlement* (1986)*,* Mead argued that it is the character of the poor themselves and a welfare state that allows for self-destructive behaviour that is at the root of poverty. He argued a case for an exercise of authority to change the behaviour of the poor. Welfare should be about compelling the poor to behave in ways that have long-term advantages for themselves and the rest of society. Mead justifies the use of force in welfare provision as a way of re-integrating an "underclass" that he defines as those people on a low income, who cannot function and meet their obligations. He argues that the poverty found in this underclass can be attributed to their behaviour, that they have in fact, excluded themselves by choosing dependency on welfare. This underclass can only be helped to escape from their self-imposed stigma of dependency, by a paternalistic approach to welfare provision.

The assumptions in Mead's arguments are that the poor are not working because they lack character and that this character deficit is the central cause of their long-term poverty. He

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seeks to locate this issue within citizenship debates, which he argues have neglected the social *obligation*s of citizenship. Although he recognises that not everyone is able to succeed in a society, Mead sees welfare provision as a way of requiring everyone to meet common social obligations inherent in raising a family and participating in the community. He thinks that this process can be achieved by making the availability of benefits conditional on certain behaviours. An example of this conditionality is the workfare policies for the unemployed. Mead (2004) in *Government Matters: Welfare Reform in Wisconsin* congratulates the achievement of the Wisconsin workfare policies in reducing welfare caseloads as a success of good government. The Wisconsin programme was run on principles close to Mead's ideas, with work as a precondition of welfare aid. The alleviation of poverty is not the main concern in these programmes however because they have essentially replaced "welfare" with a low paid workforce. Welfare agencies in Wisconsin have become, in effect, employment maintenance organisations. Mead contends that this is a good example of public policy that is ensuring the obligations of citizenship are being met. The central features of agency in Mead's account therefore, are the acceptance of responsibility for self and dependants and the willingness to fulfil the common obligations of citizenship best expressed in a connection to the workforce, with the exercise of force if an individual is not willing to meet those work obligations.

Lister (2004) recognises that there is a fine line to walk between the recognition of agency in poverty debates and blaming the poor for their poverty. She contrasts the idea of agency that is driving conservative underclass debates that has a focus on the individual as the "economic rational man", with the different views in an emerging welfare research paradigm that recognises the interplay between structure and agency. She argues a case for presenting people experiencing poverty as creative and reflexive agents who are located within structural constraints. Lister (2004) identifies four dimensions of agency in the literature, which she categorises as *getting by, getting back at, getting out and getting organised* that range from the short-term "coping" forms of agency to long-term "strategic plans". She is careful to note that these are not fixed, static, life coping forms, but are on a continuum and any one individual can be exercising any one or all four forms of agency at any one time.

Getting By is agency as a form of everyday personal coping that refers to how people manage on a low income. Coping strategies include how people manage their material

resources and their personal traumas associated with the stress of living on a low income. Skills such as budgeting, shopping and planning meals can involve a considerable level of expertise when managing without access to many resources. Social networks and the informal economy can become a crucial part of the coping mechanisms of the poor, reciprocal childcare arrangements being a prime example of this. *Getting Back At* refers to the forms of everyday resistance to the constraints imposed on people experiencing poverty by the wider economic structures. Forms of resistance can range from participating in the informal economy to benefit fraud. Lister (2004) notes the debates in the literature over this idea; for example Dean and Melrose (1997) dispute the notion of benefit fraud as a form of "resistance" but see it rather as a form of adaptation to the socio-economic order. She contrasts this notion of resistance with the focus on micro-processes of power relations in literature that follows the work of Foucault, which sees agency as "resistance" even if it is not politically motivated (Leonard, 1997). By *Getting Out* Lister is referring to the ways people exercise their agency to overcome the barriers, both personal and structural, to move beyond poverty. She notes how issues of access to and belief in education as a route out of poverty have been extensively studied, as have the routes of employment as a pathway to success. Lister (2004) argues that the interplay between agency and structure is at the heart of recent theorisations of poverty dynamics and that more micro level analysis of agency is needed to balance the longitudinal macro-level studies. *Getting Organised* involves the forms of collective action that people experiencing poverty can become involved in at a local community level and in a wider political capacity. Lister acknowledges the constraints on people in getting organised politically, in particular the unwillingness for people to identify with and march under the common banner of "the poor". Also often "the poor" are represented in diverse marginalised groups who are varied in their experience and aims, ranging from members of the disabled community to ethnic minority groups.

For Lister, the recognition of agency in poverty debates is an important way to get past the idea of the poor as "passive victims", to see that they are in fact "experts" in managing their lives. Further, discourses of empowerment should involve people in poverty themselves as a social acknowledgement of their agency. She argues that this information is valuable when looking at developing a politics of poverty that voices the need for respect in power relations as well as the right of access to material resources. Lister agrees with Fraser (2003) in that "the struggle for social justice requires an

integration of a politics of recognition and redistribution" (Lister, 2004:188). This means when debating issues of poverty that a politics of material redistribution is inextricably linked with a political discourse of voice and recognition.

Summary

Appreciating the role that larger conceptual ideas have played in how situations of poverty are discussed is an important component in a study of poverty and an awareness of these differing ways of considering poverty shaped the focus of this research and my understanding of poverty. Here I have argued that how the concept of poverty is construed as a social object is open to change over time. As Dean (1991, 1992) argues, the constitution of poverty underwent a radical transformation in the early nineteenth century towards liberal modes of governance that work to shape the concept of poverty as we now know it. In this section I have overviewed key ways that poverty as a concept has been discussed, from the understandings contained in the late eighteenth century literature through to the more contemporary notions that debate the extent of the influence of structure and agency in situations of poverty. Concepts tend to build on each other over time and there is always an overlap of ideas, however for ease of presentation I have delineated concepts about poverty into three separate clusters. Although this section has only provided a brief selection of all that has been written and thought about poverty, the aim was to highlight how the conceptualizing of the inevitability of poverty, of its structural base and the part the individual plays in their poverty, has historical roots and is played out in contemporary debates. The early writers concerned with poverty, such as Malthus, generated the idea that society could be managed in some way to mitigate the growth of the numbers of poor people and the way this was presented was not that dissimilar to some of the contemporary discussions of how to best manage poor people by engaging their agency through enforcing their responsibility. The next part of this chapter is concerned with the attempts in the literature at theorising about more precise ways to define the boundaries of who is constituted as poor in a society.

Definition: Distinguishing Poverty from Non-Poverty

In literature regarding the definition of poverty, authors have tended to identify two general approaches that categorise the way that poverty has been defined – in *absolute* or in *relative* terms. In a purely academic sense these approaches can be isolated into different compartments, whereas in research and policy practice, when attempts are made to quantify poverty, these notions overlap. Furthermore, Amartya Sen's concept of poverty as a gauge of *capability failure* raises a challenge to the long held dichotomy perceived between these absolute and relative definitions.

The Absolute - Relative Dichotomy

Definitions of absolute poverty have been commonly associated in the literature with the work of Charles Booth (1892-1903) and Seebohm Rowntree's (1901) studies of poverty in York undertaken in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A person is said to be defined as being in absolute poverty when they lack the money or resources to meet the basic biological needs of survival. This notion has been viewed as a subsistence approach to defining poverty with a "basket of goods" containing a list of essential items defined as necessary for the preservation of life. The most basic of these goods is food, so it has been argued that people can be defined as poor in *absolute* terms if they are identified as being unable to afford to eat. The idea of defining poverty in this way is open to being challenged on the grounds that it overlooks geographical and cultural differences as well as the inherent difficulty in compiling a historically transferable list of items deemed necessary for survival. Cross-national comparison is revealed as problematic when endeavouring to regard poverty in absolute terms as for example the list of goods required for survival in a culture in sub Saharan Africa would be different from what is necessary for survival in a modern New Zealand city.

The leading proponent of what has come to be known as a *relative* approach to defining poverty is Peter Townsend. In his 1979 book *Poverty in the United Kingdom* he critiqued the notion of an absolute definition of poverty and defined poverty as "relative deprivation" as follows:

Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns and activities (Townsend, 1979:31).

Thus, when regarding the notion of relative poverty the emphasis has been on a deviation from a social norm of well-being relative to a particular society at a particular time. *Social participation* becomes a key factor and people are defined as deprived when they cannot achieve or obtain the necessary things that allow them to participate in their society because they lack the requisite resources. Townsend argued however that relative poverty is not the same as *inequality*.   In theory therefore (if not in reality) there could be a society with its resources distributed unequally without the condition of poverty existing if all the members of the society had their social needs met. Bauman (1998) extended the argument of poverty as being relative to a particular society by theorising that the poor in modern consumer societies could be viewed as "flawed consumers" who are excluded from keeping up with contemporary consumption patterns. Bauman's ideas bring an awareness of the changing nature of consumption patterns, and the increased value attributed to brand names, which seem to matter in today's social world to a far greater extent than they have mattered previously. The idea of defining poverty in relative terms therefore, has asked us to look at poverty as the incapacity to meet social needs and changing aspirations and expectations (broadly defined) as well as basic needs, which includes considering basic items such as food as a socialised need.

The delineation in the literature between definitions of poverty as absolute or as relative has been reconciled to some extent however. Scholars such as Veit-Wilson's detailed rereading of Rowntree's studies revealed that he used a basic list of goods to show that "the life style of the poor was at least in part caused by low income and not by improvidence" (Viet-Wilson, 1986:69).   Furthermore, Mack and Lansley (1985) argued that the original poverty studies of Rowntree did not ignore social needs and that he included "social" items such as tea on his list of needs. They revealed that Rowntree was aware that people "cannot live on a fodder basis" and that his studies showed that the

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poor often ignored what were defined as their "basic" needs to meet their "social" needs. In light of this shift in understanding poverty definition, Lister (2004) argues that it is more accurate to regard Townsend's notion of relative poverty as building on Booth and Rowntree's studies rather than as replacing them.

Amartya Sen and the Absolutist Core – Poverty as Capability Failure

Sen offers a way of defining poverty that utilises both absolute and relative notions. He critiques the use of a relative definition on its own as it can serve to downplay the level of subsistence poverty in third world countries. Essentially, Sen sees that defining poverty in terms of income and living standards is not of interest for its own sake, as these things are just instrumental to what kind of life a person can lead and what choices and opportunities are open to them (Sen, 1999). Sen believes that while acknowledging relative deprivation in a society, poverty must be defined in absolute terms. Poverty, he argued, must always be seen as having an irreducible *absolute core* that is manifested in starvation and malnutrition (Sen, 1983). This means that people defined as in poverty will lack a basic opportunity to "be or do" in vital ways, regardless of comparisons with others within or without their society. Sen (1990, 1992) uses the notion of *capabilities*, which relates to what a person can do or be - the full range of possible choices available to them. This concept is related to both the external opportunities available to the person but also to the person and their ability to exercise their personal agency effectively. Thus, *capability failure* can refer to the relationship between low income and the ability to live a life of value, as well as interpersonal variation and the effect of this in any given population. Sen's concept of an *absolute core* of poverty is located in this space of capabilities - what a person is able to do or be given their situation. He argues that the role of money in a society depends on the extent of the commodification of goods and services and that this varies between societies. The relationship between money and capabilities depends on how easily individuals can convert money into capabilities and this also varies according to personal factors. Although he views money as not the only factor involved in poverty, Sen proposes that it is sensible to view low income as a major cause for a person's capability deprivation. Thus, he argues, that poverty can be seen as *relative* when talking about access to commodities, as those things that are needed to translate *absolute ability* into being do vary in a social and historical context (Sen, 1999).

Living a life of value is a fundamental factor in Sen's analysis of what constitutes poverty. Arguably, this definition has a positive emphasis by asking us to look at how people can achieve a life where they can flourish rather than a negative emphasis on looking at a lack of material resources in a society. Poverty as *capability failure* however, has been critiqued because of the difficulty in separating what is conventionally known as "poverty" defined in terms of low income and living standards, from other conditions, for example "disability", that weaken capabilities (Lister, 2004). In addition to the somewhat ambiguous nature of defining the relationship between "poverty" and "capability", theorists are concerned that downplaying the importance of income when defining poverty may lead to policies that do not encourage an increase in the incomes of those in poverty. Thus, Lister argues that capabilities with a focus on agency need to be located within a structural analysis to avoid an emphasis on individualism and neo-classical economics (Lister, 2004:20).

Summary

In this section, I have overviewed key understandings and debates contained in the literature about how poverty can be more precisely defined and the difficulty in reaching a consensus about this. Absolute definitions tend to assume a scarcity of basic resources; relative definitions have a greater focus on the social component of poverty, while a focus on capabilities invites us to take a closer look at how the individual is managing poverty and how their life is affected by poverty. Defining poverty facilitates how the broader concepts that surround the nature of poverty are translated into policy practice in a society. Furthermore, the way poverty comes to be defined will feed back into how it is thought about and acted upon. In the next section of the chapter I will be taking a look at the various ways that poverty has been measured. Measurement forms an integral part of the *discursive practice* that surrounds poverty and its management.

Measurement: The Operationalization of Definitions

The measurement of poverty is commonly justified by a moral and political requirement to find out its extent and depth in order to persuade government and the general population either to do something to lessen it, eliminate it, or to retain the status quo.

Often the measurements used are a reflection of the broader conceptualization and definition of poverty in a society and these measurements in turn can have an influence on those conceptualizations and definitions. In other words, measurement is more than a simple technical exercise. Lister (2004) argues for the importance of noticing the broader conceptualizations of poverty when poverty is measured, as is often the case in qualitative and participatory research. She also highlights the value of taking the non-material aspects as well as the material aspects of poverty into account, by viewing poverty as a shameful and corrosive *social relation* as well as a disadvantaged *economic* condition (Lister, 2004: 7).

Concepts of poverty determine its definitions and flow onto its measurement. Politicians and researchers are usually interested in finding out how many people are poor, how poor they are and how long they have been poor. Importantly, what they choose to measure and how, leads to the shape of the policies implemented and the statistical data gathered. In an effort to standardise policy outcomes, policy formulators and researchers have endeavoured to develop *poverty lines*, which are the threshold below which people are counted as being poor. Alcock (1997) notes that there is often a large difference in the amount of resources allocated to poverty alleviation depending on which poverty line is used. Debates about the construction of poverty lines arise when trying to quantify the *depth* or intensity of poverty that exists below the "line". Whether the gap between the line and the poor population is large or small or in other words how many people fall into the range just below the line and how many are situated several percentages below it will be both effected by and affect the policies implemented.

When trying to quantify poverty researchers have often used *indirect* ways of measuring poverty by looking at the distribution of income levels in a society and fixing a point at the lower end of the income scale that is recognised as not being adequate enough to avoid hardship. Because income levels are not the sole determinant of consumption, *direct measures* of expenditure and consumption levels to determine actual living standards have also been developed and utilised (Veit-Wilson, 1987). Indirect and direct operationalizations of poverty measurement have been perceived as separate and distinct measurement tools in policy formulation by governments and researchers in the past. However, research has found that there is often a sizable discrepancy between levels of poverty measured by utilising an indirect income approach and levels measured directly

in terms of observed deprivation or low living standards (see Perry, 2002: referred to in New Zealand context in chapter four). In view of this understanding, both direct and indirect measures are used increasingly in a combined approach in an attempt to gain a more holistic understanding of the breadth and depth of poverty for policy formulation.

Quantitative Methods

Several methods have been developed to translate absolute and relative definitions of poverty into operational standards for the purpose of measuring the breadth and depth of poverty. *Budget Standards* measure expenditure patterns: a list of necessities is drawn up and people are defined as being in poverty if they are unable to attain these necessities. A budget standards approach has been typically known as a weekly "basket of goods" method, where a poverty line is determined with little expectation that people will deviate from the necessities when unexpected events or costs occur. Although these standards have often been associated with absolute definitions of poverty and minimum subsistence, they have also been used to represent socially determined needs (Bradshaw, 1997). A variation of a budget standards approach is what is commonly referred to as a *Basic Needs* method, which utilises a list of basic needs expressed as income thresholds. The most well-known example of this is the American Orshansky scale, in which weekly levels of income are estimated as being necessary to maintain weekly living norms; this includes the basic needs for food plus a proportion for non-food (Orshansky, 1965). These needs are defined by experts or by various consensual procedures.

The approach developed by Peter Townsend (1979) used *Relative Deprivation Indicators* to define and operationalize a deprived lifestyle as an expression of relative need. Those people whose resources are seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family, and are thereby excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities are measured as in poverty. Piachaud (1981) critiqued Townsend's approach because it set the researcher up as an expert on what is considered as an "acceptable" standard of life. Subsequent to this critique there have been attempts (for example Mack and Lansley, 1985) to develop a more *consensual* methodology. This method has taken various forms, ranging from surveying large populations on what items they consider as necessary to avoid a deprived lifestyle, to asking people in poverty themselves to list what they think they are deprived of.

More suited for large-scale studies and international comparisons are *Household Income and Expenditure Measures*. In these studies, official surveys of household expenditure patterns are used, surveyed participants are ranked and a cut-off point is chosen usually between fifty to sixty per cent of the median income or expenditure. Existing data sets are often used such as national household expenditure surveys as these are a more cost effective way to gain information than by generating fresh data. As Alcock (1997) notes however, the variance in the quality and type of this research poses difficulties with comparative research. The New Zealand Household Expenditure Survey (HES) is an example of a household living standard measurement and is highlighted again in chapter four.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research can balance and complement the previously outlined quantitative approaches, by adding the depth and appreciation of the wider conceptualizations of poverty. Lister (2004) argues for the importance of qualitative analysis especially for exploring the relational, experiential and symbolic dimensions of poverty. Qualitative research can explore discourses of poverty from the perspectives of both those who have experienced poverty and those who have not. She notes that a qualitative focus can challenge the "hegemony of the measurable", the statistical paradigm of poverty research that can suppress other forms of "poverty knowledge", and provide meaning and insight into how poverty is conceptualized (Lister, 2004: 38). A rich area for qualitative research, she suggests, is in the area of poverty dynamics, to get a better understanding of the ways in which individuals exercise their agency to "get out" of poverty and how they "get by" and "get organised". Alcock (1997) highlighted how qualitative methods can help us to understand what the poverty statistics mean to real lives and how leading poverty researchers such as Rowntree, Booth and Townsend all included descriptive material, which complemented their statistical data showing the impact of poverty on the participants. Alcock (1997) also discussed how the development of different media gives researchers the opportunity to reveal the effects of poverty in a qualitative fashion. Real and fictional accounts of poverty can now be transmitted via television to a large audience.

Participatory Research

Consensual methodology, such as developed by Mack and Lansley (1985) involves gaining a wider public consensus of what standard of living constitutes being in poverty as opposed to relying exclusively on the judgement of experts. A participatory approach to poverty research means making a choice when researching poverty to use the research as a form of empowerment by involving people who have experienced poverty in the research process. So far, the influence of this line of thought has been greatest in the development context (Lister, 2004:181). One way this is happening is by ensuring the views of people in poverty as research participants find an expression in the writing up of the research so their perspectives are reflected and thus policy is better informed (Lister, 2004:181). On another level people are becoming involved in the research process itself, and are having more control over how the research is executed from the initial formulation of questions through to the writing up of research findings. Essential to this practice is the idea that people are *participants in* the research rather than the *objects of* the research. This process pushes the issue of ethics to the foreground, with ethical dilemmas such as people not wanting to be labelled as "poor" becoming more apparent (Lister, 2004).

Lister and Beresford (2000) drew on their experience of including the views of poor people in poverty research, arguing that research into poverty cannot be politically or morally neutral. They discuss how research should be inclusive, which means the analysis would incorporate the *views and perspectives* of those interviewed and not just simply their *descriptions* of the effects of poverty (Lister and Beresford, 2000:286). By investigating poverty as a result of "restricted citizenship" recognition is given to the notion that research participants and professional researchers are equals in the research relationship and should be given equality of status and respect. Because, they argue, the research process can serve to disempower the poor, a research focal point should be about the political empowerment of the poor. This means a shift away from a "structural determinism" that holds a view of those in poverty as powerless victims and a move towards balancing structural constraints with recognition of agency.

Lister and Beresford (2000) also outlined how epistemological arguments for the inclusion of those with experience of poverty in research recognize the validity of

different kinds of analysis and knowledge and that people with experience of poverty have a particular kind of knowledge. Knowledge therefore, must include the expertise of those with poverty experience as well as the knowledge of academics. Participatory research can provide people with an opportunity to intellectualise about their own situations, which problematizes the relationship in the traditional research paradigm. Conventionally, participants have provided data or are allowed to expand in depth on the effects of poverty but are rarely asked what they *think* about poverty and for their views on relevant issues.

Lister and Beresford (2000) argue that using grounded theory, where the theoretical driving force of the research can be developed at least in part from the research participants' perspectives, could reinvigorate poverty research. Poverty debates would be better informed if the research on which they draw was guided by and incorporated the views of those who have experienced poverty. The position of anti-poverty action would, by this means, be strengthened (Lister and Beresford, 2000). Beresford (2002) extended the argument by talking in general terms about user involvement in research and evaluation. He highlighted how the disability movement takes an "emancipatory" approach to research and they have a compelling argument for studying the *disablism of a society* rather than studying *disabled people*. This means looking closely at the reciprocity in the research relationship particularly when researching vulnerable groups.

Summary

The measurement of what is considered as "poverty" is another piece in the jigsaw of *discursive practice* that forms the social object that constitutes "poverty" as we understand it. In this section I have overviewed key ways that poverty has been investigated and measured. Quantitative measurement involves looking at the extent of poverty in a society while qualitative approaches can complement quantitative analysis by taking a closer look at the effects of poverty on the individuals experiencing it. While measuring poverty carries a wider moral and political justification it is also a reflection of the individual researchers' understanding and definition. One of the key effects of researching poverty is to generate new understandings and shape the nature of further research. This is particularly noticeable with a contemporary move towards participatory research where researchers are designing studies to include and empower poor people.

Conclusion

In this chapter by looking at what has been said about poverty in the past I have highlighted how these ideas have influenced today's thinking and will help to shape thoughts in the future. At a conceptual level poverty can be understood as inevitable, a product of structural inequities, as the responsibility of the individual experiencing it, or as a combination of all of these things. The difficulty inherent in pinning down and reaching a consensus about the nature and extent of poverty both as a concept and as a lived experience is revealed in the debates over its definition. Notably, while definitions of poverty both reflect and recycle broader conceptual understandings of it, perspectives on poverty have often taken on either a structural or individualistic form in the literature. Additionally, attempts that are made to measure the extent and nature of poverty in a society will contribute to and be reflective of how the poor are perceived by the non-poor, which is particularly evident when a participatory approach to researching poverty is taken.

Utilising an understanding of discourse made known by Foucault is informative when reviewing the literature and research concerning poverty generated by the human and social sciences. These theoretical and statistical efforts to understand poverty and regulate the poor can be seen as *discursive practices* that combine to form an object of knowledge "poverty". Examining some of the *discursive practices* that have shaped or made visible the object of "poverty" and framed who might be seen as "poor", highlights how these practices have some bearing on how people are regulated, controlled and punished in the community as well as establishing who is considered to have authority to speak about poverty. Foucault's examination of history revealed that social practice and an underlying consciousness of any given period can be simultaneously similar to, but also quite unlike, what has gone before. Thus, as Dean argues, the early nineteenth century "discussion on pauperism, in which the constitution of poverty can be discerned, stands at the centre of a political and epistemic complex from which contemporary modes of governance emerged" (1991:3). Further, researchers such as Charles Booth (1892-1903) and Seebohm Rowntree (1901) followed by Peter Townsend (1979), framed poverty as something that is possible to define, measure and respond to. Today in the increasingly sophisticated ability of available techniques used to define and measure poverty, there are conventions

that prescribe what is "known" about poverty at this particular historical moment, which can give us a different basis for understanding than was possible in the past. The following chapter will serve to explore and locate how shifting political rationalities and *discursive practices* have shaped how poverty has come to be known in the New Zealand context.

Chapter Four

New Zealand Dialogue and Debate 1970 - 2008

In this chapter I will overview the public debate on poverty that has developed since the 1970s to situate my research in the New Zealand context. As I review the time spanning 1970 through to the time I completed the participant interviews in 2008, I will describe how poverty and governance of the poor has been discussed in New Zealand by drawing attention to key debate and literature by academics, politicians and community leaders. Through the chapter I employ the word "discourse" to denote the type of language used in the public debates. Additionally, in keeping with a Foucauldian framework, I will also be interpreting a growing interest in poverty research as an expression of biopower at work facilitated by the social sciences (Foucault, 1978). The institutionalisation of the "social sciences" across universities and government departments facilitates an interdependent relationship between these organisations which is reflected at times in the "discourses" that they produce. In a Foucauldian sense therefore, the social sciences form part of a *discursive practice* that shapes perception and knowledge of "poverty" as a social object that can be studied. The social sciences thus become a key technology drawn on to inform governance. For this review, I have drawn on official publications and not included coverage of any specific media presentations of poverty. Academic literature reviewing structural reform by government is drawn on to provide a contextual backdrop to the policy environment during this time. Debates over the measurement of poverty, including the search for an official poverty line, are included as I summarise local research commissioned by government and community agencies. I will conclude this review of poverty debates by identifying a shift in official policy discourse; a discourse that reflects the political rationalities in operation that shape our contemporary understanding of the nature of poverty and the poor, and how they should be governed.

I have separated the timeframe of this review into three general ranges: 1970-1990; 1990-1999; 1999-2008 that reflect the shifting landscape of political rationalities shaping the nature of the debate about poverty. I argue that during this time there was a move away from framing poverty alleviation in terms of collective responsibility towards a focus on individual responsibility consistent with political rationalities associated with advanced

liberalism (Rose, 1996, Dean, 1999). I chose the 1970s to start my review of poverty debate because it was at this time that an interest generated in the social sciences fostered a greater development of research into poverty in New Zealand. Prior to this time, social, cultural and legal forms inherited from colonisation processes, such as the English Poor Laws were in place and these shaped consciousness and debate in the nineteenth century in New Zealand. In the 1890s, the efforts of William Pember Reeves as Minister of Labour pushed ahead industrial laws such as the *Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act* (1894) which introduced compulsory arbitration in industrial disputes and encouraged the formation of Industrial Unions and Associations. In response to the poverty experienced in the Depression of the 1930s, *The Social Security Act* (1938) established the Welfare State in New Zealand. Consciousness of poverty was raised by William Sutch who published widely on social issues including *Poverty and Progress in New Zealand* (1941) and *The Quest for Security in New Zealand* (1942). However, prior to the 1970s while there is no doubt that poverty existed in New Zealand, and legislative measures were introduced to address it, "poverty" as an object of study was yet to be extensively investigated in local research. The time period I have selected also saw a climate of change sweeping through that modified social security provision in New Zealand, a change reflected in substantial shifts in political rationalities towards the governance of the poor. Additionally, significant global shifts in the early 1970s such as the United Kingdom joining the European Economic Community in 1973, the increasing cost of oil and rising levels of unemployment had an effect on the general prosperity of New Zealanders. This shift in New Zealand's economic situation, along with significant social legislative initiatives in New Zealand such as the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security, the Accident Compensation legislation in 1972, the domestic purposes benefit in 1973 and National Superannuation in 1977 also provide key reasons for commencing this review from the 1970s.

1970 – 1990

From ideas of Collective Responsibility to a greater emphasis on Self-Reliance

It is widely regarded (for example Waldegrave and Frater 1997, McClure 1998, Easton 1995) that the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security set a scene for defining

poverty in New Zealand in relative terms. The 1972 Royal Commission's definition of poverty set a political precedent that framed "poverty" as an issue that the community had a responsibility to alleviate and this underlying belief facilitated an extension of social welfare provision in New Zealand throughout the 1970s. Chapter three of the Royal Commission report discussed the principles and aims of social security and stated that one of the aims of a social welfare system should be:

> within limitations which may be imposed by physical or other disabilities, that everyone is able to enjoy a standard of living much like that of the rest of the community, and thus is able to feel a sense of participation in and belonging to the community (Royal Commission on Social Security, 1972:65).

There was not a large amount of empirical research undertaken on poverty in New Zealand prior to the 1970s. The 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security pointed to a lack of available data that would be of use in a study on poverty and anticipated that the newly formulated Household Expenditure Survey would go a long way to address this issue.   Similarly, Easton (1995) suggested that a lack of research was not because there had been no instances of poverty in New Zealand but rather a lack of measurable data and little attempt at a systematic approach to quantifying poverty. The early poverty studies of the 1970s were mainly concerned with developing a reliable measure of poverty by experimenting with different forms of equivalence scales and estimating the numbers of people who fell below a defined level. Cuttance (1974) stands out as being the first study of this nature in which large families living in Hamilton were surveyed and compared with what was considered a representative sample of the nation. Another significant study at this time was a nation-wide comprehensive investigation into poverty amongst the elderly which looked at the financial and material circumstances of people aged sixty five and over (Department of Social Welfare, 1975). Brian Easton's 1976 research and much of his later work was also concerned with developing a reliable measure of poverty (Easton, 1976).

Sitting alongside a growing research capacity and the 1972 Royal Commission's definition of poverty as relative, academic commentary contributed to awakening a public awareness of the nature of poverty in New Zealand.   The following two publications shaped a discourse of poverty as relative and as a problem that could be attributed to a

declining welfare state. In *The Responsible Society in New Zealand*, Sutch (1971), pointed to the downgrading of the health system and the general decline of welfare provision in New Zealand as a leading cause of poverty. The New Zealand poor are seen by Sutch in the deprivation found in children and the elderly. Sutch warns that there is a return to Poor Law attitudes with the decay of the welfare in system in New Zealand and that poverty will only be circumvented if the wealth of the nation is shared responsibly through the social security system. In a similar vein in *The Widening Gap: Poverty in New Zealand* Bryant (1979) argues that even though the government and many New Zealanders would prefer to ignore the issue, poverty was becoming a chronic reality for many in a land of plenty.

In conjunction with quantifying overall levels of poverty and a discourse concerned with how the economic and social security system were failing to protect people from poverty, from the 1980s onwards interest developed in measuring variance in levels of poverty across different sectors of the population. This process was facilitated by the Department of Statistics developing a greater capacity for the use of social indicators in research. The 1980 – 1981 Social Indicators Survey provided a basis for comparisons of income levels across different social groups (Department of Statistics, 1985). Potentially vulnerable groups could now be assessed on a range of indicators and "areas of particular social concern" were now identifiable. These potentially vulnerable groups included the retired, women, Maori, Pacific peoples and low socio-economic groups (Davis, 1988:357). Government began to use social indicators to report on income distribution with the New Zealand Planning Council publishing two reports, *For Richer and Poorer* (1988) and *Who Gets What?* (1990). These reports compared the difference in income between male and female and between Maori and Pakeha. Women and Maori were shown to be economically disadvantaged with their position deteriorating throughout the 1980s. The use of social indicators was evident in a discussion of the relationship between ethnicity and poverty by Waldegrave and Coventry (1987) in *Poor New Zealand: An Open Letter on Poverty*. Poverty is defined here as relative to current community standards as the authors aimed to dispel myths about New Zealand being a prosperous, egalitarian country for *all* citizens. The poor are defined as those who cannot fully participate in the community and poverty is shown to be especially evident in young families and in Maori communities. The authors argue that government should be actively involved in maintaining a system that eliminates poverty in all sectors of the population.

While attempts at quantifying levels of poverty tended to dominate early poverty studies, the 1980s saw the emergence of descriptive self-report studies of a more qualitative nature. In the *Survey of Low-income Families* (Crean, 1982), a sample of fifty-three families with children on low incomes in Christchurch were interviewed. Families with children were selected because of the claims by Cuttance (1974) and Easton (1976) that this was the most likely group to be experiencing poverty. The study concluded that the families interviewed struggled in many areas of life on a low income. In the Department of Social Welfare *Survey of Living Standards of Beneficiaries*, 1114 beneficiaries were surveyed (Rochford, 1987) The results of the study, which included Domestic Purposes Beneficiaries and those on the Unemployment Benefit, indicated a high level of financial difficulty.

Discourse of an individualised nature that began to place a greater responsibility for poverty on the person experiencing it began to gain traction in government departments from the early 1980s onwards. This approach to the management of poverty contrasted sharply with earlier discourse that had tended to focus on an idea of poverty that was something the community had a responsibility to mitigate in the form of the welfare state. An expression of the change in social policy direction recommended by Treasury can be seen in their document *Economic Management* (1984), which advanced an argument on how social problems such as poverty should be managed. Treasury (1984) contended that state intervention should be seen as a last resort and social welfare would work better and be more cost effective if resources were targeted at those with the greatest need.

Further individualising policy recommendations came from The New Zealand Business Roundtable, a notable political influence, which generally promotes the idea of social welfare as being a disincentive to paid work. Of particular interest to this group are labour market conditions and tax reforms. In 1988, they produced a report entitled *Unemployment Income Support in New Zealand: Options for Policy Reform,* (New Zealand Business Roundtable, 1988). This report recommended that benefits be reduced and labour market reforms introduced to allow for a reduction in wages. Here social issues (such as poverty) are placed in the context of what was seen as a necessary shift in the New Zealand economy, due to the inevitable forces of globalisation, towards becoming part of a competitive global business community. The discourse contained in the above policy recommendations assumed a narrow definition of poverty, by advising

that only those who cannot secure their basic needs should be considered as poor. The general argument advanced was that taxpayers' money would be better used by managing poverty and the poor through limited government assistance that involved targeting resources only to where they were most needed.

The Fourth Labour government elected in 1984 had adopted a participatory style of government by inviting wide public consultation in areas of social policy under review. Government reviewed several areas of policy that were closely related to the well-being of the poor of New Zealand in the mid-1980s (see appendix 11). The 1988 Royal Commission on Social Policy was part of this process of consultation and review. Set up in 1986, with a broader focus than the preceding 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security, the 1988 Commission set out to welcome varied opinion. There are numerous submissions contained in the four volumes of the "April" report from various community groups throughout New Zealand wanting an increase in public spending and accessibility to social security. The discourse used in the 1988 Commission generally reaffirmed the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security's objective of enabling people to belong and participate in the community as it promoted new forms of state support in the form of a carer's allowances for unpaid parenting and care of the disabled and the elderly. Poverty was again defined in relative terms and ending unemployment was signalled as the basis for meeting the increasing costs of funding the social security system. However, despite the inclusive approach and language of the Commission, policy changes in the mid-1980s reflected a political environment that promoted employment and economic incentives to address poverty over ensuring the maintenance of adequate social security benefits. The introduction in 1986 of the goods and services tax (GST) and of a targeted Family Support system reflected the shift in political rationalities and the corresponding policy direction that began to emerge at this time. As O'Brien and Wilkes (1993) observe, during reviews of social policy the Labour government invited public consultation as part of their participatory style but they did not appear to take much notice of the submissions when forming policy initiatives.

Corresponding with a shift in policy direction, the 1980s saw an increasing gap surfacing in the income level and purchasing power between the wealthy and the poor. Evidence of this came from Snively (1987a, 1987b, 1988, and 1993) who analysed government budgets throughout the 1980s to assess their redistributive effect. Findings suggested that households with children were receiving a low market income after adjustment for the

government budgets. Single parent households were shown to have the lowest share of market income. In another study (Saunders, Hobbes, and Stott, 1988) researchers used the comparative analysis of the Luxembourg Income Study (LIS) to compare the redistributive impact of direct taxes in New Zealand and Australia with that of Canada, Germany, Norway, Sweden the United Kingdom and the United States. When adjustments were made for family size, New Zealand rated below the Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom. The growing gap in income was confirmed by the Department of Statistics (1991) reporting that the purchasing power of the top income group increased by ten per cent while the bottom income group experienced a decline of four to six per cent between the years 1981 to 1990. It was noted in this report that paid employment protected the earner from poverty. Basing their discussion on empirical data, O'Brien and Wilkes (1993) reviewed income distribution from 1984-1990 finding that inflation increased at a higher rate than benefit levels throughout this period. Income levels showed a decrease for those in a lower income bracket while higher income earners had an increase (O'Brien and Wilkes, 1993). They argue, "securing paid work became more important than the relief of poverty" during this time and that the government paid little attention to discussing the matters of redistribution or inequality (O'Brien and Wilkes, 1993:88).

Summary of the period

Social research from the 1970s onwards contributed to shaping an awareness of poverty in New Zealand. Poverty was defined in relative terms by the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security and this flowed into how attempts to measure it were designed. The 1970s also saw a number of policy initiatives to address poverty reflecting the emphasis on participation and belonging set out in the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security. McClure (1998) describes the period from 1970–1983 as the "generous years" where new welfare entitlements became available in the form of the Domestic Purposes Benefit in 1973 and New Zealand Superannuation in 1977. Easton (1981) in a similar vein describes the 1970s as one of three "periods of innovation" in social security development. However, Easton argues that although the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security had outlined the relief of poverty as a concern, practical responses to needs determined the path of social security throughout the 1970s, rather than a sustained response based on

the Royal Commission's framework that had defined poverty in relative terms (Easton, 1981).

A greater research capacity developing in the 1980s saw social statistics demarcating groups in the population and identifying areas of social risk, a practice which facilitated public awareness and debate. Official discourse at this time focussed on economic policy direction and less attention was paid to the desirability of maintaining social security benefits at a level that would embrace previous notions of participation and belonging. When explaining the changes that occurred in social policy direction through the 1980s, McClure (1998) argues that the new Family Support scheme was a clever manoeuvre by government, simultaneously softening the blow of the new goods and services tax (GST), while introducing access to income support via the taxation system rather than through the social security system. Thus the way was paved for a new form of welfare that was now administered through the tax system arguably as a means to protect the "dignity of working people" (McClure, 1998:218). Government discourse and policy direction reflected a shift in political rationalities from notions of collective responsibility to a greater emphasis on the individual and on work incentives. This change in approach to social security provision was set in the context of growing levels of inequality and unemployment in the 1980s. As Belgrave (2004) argues, the "full employment pillar" of previous decades was displaced quickly and "for the first time since 1898 expanding the state in response to swelling needs was no longer a credible option politically" (Belgrave, 2004: 36). Belgrave (2004) further outlines how the provision of welfare moved from a citizenship rights based model of the 1960s and 1970s to a market-based consumer as "customer" model of welfare provision in the 1980s.

1990-1999

National and National-led Government – Moralising Welfare as Dependence

It was during the 1990s that the issue of poverty as a social problem in New Zealand began to be widely debated. The decade commenced with the incoming National government looking to other western government leaders (in particular the USA) and their worries over the direction of social security and concluded that social security encouraged a "culture of dependence" (McClure, 1998). The December 1990 economic

statement *Economic and Social Initiative* outlined the new Government's direction that involved the reform of social security and the labour market. Jim Bolger and Ruth Richardson talked of "redesigning" the welfare state in their statements accompanying this economic statement. The term "welfare dependency" began to appear in policy documents and political debate. In the 1991 budget paper *Social Assistance: Welfare that Works,* the Minister of Social Welfare Jenny Shipley talked of "freeing" New Zealand families by providing an environment that would enable them to reduce their *dependence* on state welfare (Department of Social Welfare, 1991). The budget paper outlined the Government's intention of providing a "modest safety net" to support people when necessary at an amount which was to be adequate to maintain their needs rather than their desires (Department of Social Welfare, 1991). This change in official welfare discourse and direction was accompanied by a cut to welfare benefits in what came to be known as the "Mother of All Budgets", announced in December 1990 by the then Finance Minister, Ruth Richardson. A large number of individuals and community groups around New Zealand protested at the effects of these cuts to welfare benefits and a Peoples Select Committee was established to give a voice to the concerns of the people (Craig, Briar, Brosnahan and O'Brien 1992). Further significant policies implemented by the National government such as the Independent Family Tax Credit in 1996 (renamed Child Tax Credit in 1999), given only to low income families in paid employment, supported the idea that waged work increased a person's *independence* from the state.

The discourse of poverty and the poor was framed in government department terminology through the 1990s in a way that moralised the issue by presenting it as something that could be solved by behaviour modification. In conjunction with social security reforms, in 1993 a new culture of managing social security under the caption of "welfare to well-being" was initiated. The Social Welfare Departments new logo showed two hands; an "adult like" hand reaching down to help a "childlike" hand symbolising the idea of the Department giving a "hand up rather than a hand out" to its clients (Player, 1994). As the title suggests, the Social Welfare Department's *Beyond Dependency* conference held in March 1997 framed poverty and the poor in terms of a social problem of welfare dependency (Department of Social Welfare, 1997a). Speakers at the conference addressed concerns about high levels of welfare recipients by arguing that the answer was to modify the social security system so that it would create an environment that incentivised people into finding employment (refer to the discussion below regarding the alternative

discursive framework for poverty argued for at the *Beyond Poverty* conference). A moralising tone was also present in the 1998 *Code of Social and Family Responsibility*, in which 1.339 million booklets were distributed containing information on how to be a good citizen by being a responsible family person (Department of Social Welfare, 1998). Davey (2000) traced the development of this Code through successive policy documents such as the *Strengthening Families for Well-being* agenda (Department of Social Welfare, 1997b) to show a movement in government towards prescribing a code of conduct for its citizens. Angus (2000) argues that there were close links between the policy formation of work on parental responsibilities and the initiatives to reduce benefit dependence, and that the contents of the Code were undoubtedly aimed at beneficiaries in poverty.

While government was framing poverty in moral terms, debates in research on poverty in the 1990s were often centred on comparing *distributional* measures of poverty such as fifty or sixty per cent of the median equivalent disposable incomes with *benchmark* measures of poverty such as the Benefit Datum Line (BDL) to obtain a poverty threshold. The BDL is based on the recommendation made by the Royal Commission on Social Security (1972) for setting the rates of social security benefit levels. Their recommendation was to set benefit levels at eighty per cent of the wages paid to building and engineering labourers with the lower quartile of adult male earnings to be the major reference point. In 1995, Krishnan, an analyst from the Social Policy Agency, compared the two measures. Krishnan's (1995) preference was for the BDL measurement, which showed 19.5 per cent of households in 1992-1993 as falling below the BDL poverty line. Krishnan argues that the distributional measures "are not as sensitive in monitoring changes in the income circumstances of the population over time" (Krishnan, 1995:95). Stephens, Waldegrave and Frater used a *distributional* approach to undertake a major study funded by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology during the 1990s (Stephens, Waldegrave and Frater, 1995). The *New Zealand Poverty Measurement Project* aimed to find a reliable poverty measurement instrument using a combination of micro and macro analysis. The bottom up microanalysis consisted of a focus group approach comprising people on low incomes. The data coming from the focus groups suggested that an appropriate poverty line would be sixty per cent of the median household income or expenditure after housing costs. The initial results of this project were released in 1996, indicating that 32.6 per cent of all New Zealand children were living below this poverty line.

The methodology used by the *New Zealand Poverty Measurement Project* attracted criticism from government who argued that the poverty line would be more accurate if set at fifty per cent of the median household income (Legat, 1996). Easton also critiqued the approach taken arguing that the sixty per cent median figure was in fact an arbitrary line, one preferred by the researchers, set at a level that was not well supported by the small sample taken in the focus group approach. Easton also argued that the focus groups would only ever be able to provide information based on their current consumption, which would vary in relation to the median income level over time (Easton, 1995). Stephens, Waldegrave and Frater (1997) responded to Easton's critique, defending the statistical and empirical reliability of their focus group methodology, their choice of equivalence scales and their opinion that sixty per cent of the median measure of income is an appropriate poverty line. They highlighted the central point of their method which is to gather budgetary information from those on low incomes to offer an empirically based approach to measuring poverty in New Zealand. They argued that this approach is reflective of the contemporary experience of those on low incomes rather than relying exclusively on the expert opinion contained in out-dated methods such as the Benefit Datum Line developed in 1972.

Throughout the 1990s, academics and community groups objecting to the moralising tone in political discourse held a range of conferences to draw on empirical evidence that provided an increased understanding of the form poverty was taking in New Zealand communities. Poverty was addressed here in relation to the structural and ideological changes conference organisers saw being implemented in government policy direction. The policy changes seen as most significantly detrimental to the poor were the 1991 benefits cuts, the shift to flexible labour conditions in changes to employment policies contained in the 1991 Employment Contracts Act and the introduction of market rentals in state housing. The Children's Coalition held a conference in 1996 at Massey University's Albany Campus on the *Multiple Effects of Poverty on Children and Young People* (Hassall, 1996). A range of speakers including academics and workers in the community, spoke of a re-emergence of poverty in New Zealand with particular reference to its damaging effects on childhood health, education and welfare. Researchers attended the *Socio-economic Inequalities and Health Conference* held in Wellington in 1996 with the aim of facilitating a linkage between research and policy (Crampton and Howard-Chapman, 1996). At the *Work Families and the State: Problems and Possibilities for the*

21^(st) Century conference held at Massey University in 1997 a large focus was on how government policies had affected a family's ability to combine paid and unpaid work (Briar and Gurjeet, 1997).

Of particular note were two conferences organised in opposition to what was seen as a shift in government principles on the management of welfare and the relief of poverty. Conference organisers were especially concerned that moralising terms such as *dependency on welfare* were becoming increasingly commonplace in government documentation and public relations. The *Beyond Poverty* conference (O'Brien and Briar, 1997) was organised in response to the Department of Social Welfare's *Beyond Dependency* conference. The *Beyond Poverty* conference was organised by a group of community workers and academics and was held at Massey University's Albany campus in March 1997. Speakers addressed the issue of housing reforms, the meaning of "dependency", employment issues and other topics related to poverty (O'Brien and Briar, 1997). In 1998 the *Social Responsibility: Whose Agenda?* (O'Brien, 1998) conference was also held at Massey University's Albany campus in reaction to the government's *Code of Social and Family Responsibility* (Department of Social Welfare, 1998). These conferences attracted public attention and framed increases in poverty as systemic and as part of ongoing fallout from government policy direction.

As well as engaging in formal dialogue, throughout the 1990s people working in areas of health, education and housing began to speak out about increasing levels of the observable effects of poverty in the communities they were engaged with. A growing volume of media coverage discussed the concern amongst these community groups about the increase of poverty in New Zealand. For example, health professionals talked about increasing levels of third world health problems appearing, in particular common childhood illnesses left untreated due to a combination of factors such as poor nutrition and poor housing associated with poverty (Legat, 1990). Those working in schools noticed the effect poverty was having on school attendance levels and the increased transience of children in low decile schools (Legat, 1996). Housing workers pointed to the increasing proportion housing costs were taking in poor people's budgets. They argued that this situation was brought about by the new housing policies and was a significant factor in the increasing levels of deprivation experienced in the community (O'Hare, 1996).

In conjunction with speaking out against poverty, social agencies collated accounts of poverty, for example the New Zealand Council of Social Services published *Windows on Poverty* (1992). The Women's Information Network (WIN) ran a campaign from October 1996 to March 1998 on the issue of poverty; a summary of the process and recommendations was provided in the *WIN on Poverty Report* (Allwood, 1998). In 1993, concerned Church leaders representing ten denominations of the Christian churches met to discuss a response to the general direction of government policy. This movement became known as the "Social Justice Initiative". Two public statements were released and a book published entitled *Making Choices: Social Justice for Our Times* (Smithies and Wilson, 1993). The Hikoi (or walk) of Hope was another church initiative that called for income and benefit levels to be sufficient to move people out of poverty. The Hikoi began in September 1998 and marchers from the North Island and South Island converged on Parliament buildings. People were also invited to hand in their written stories of need. All of the above publicity served to draw public attention to poverty as a social problem that government should be addressing (Guy, 2011).

However, some authors advanced the argument that civil society rather than government contained solutions to situations of intergenerational poverty in the 1990s. Journalist Lesley Max published a book entitled *Children: An Endangered Species? How the needs of New Zealand Children are being seriously neglected: a call for action* (Max, 1990). In this book, which was written for a general audience, Max discussed a range of issues affecting children including poor health outcomes, child abuse, youth crime, poverty and a damaged "cultural environment of childhood". *In Children of the Poor: How Poverty Could Destroy New Zealand's Future,* Mike Moore took a similar approach to Max arguing that New Zealand had a substandard approach to investing in its children and asked "who speaks for the children?"(Moore, 1996). Moore outlined an "agenda for the children of the poor" in the conclusion of his book calling for more civil engagement in the community to provide greater support and education especially with regard to parenting skills. Both of these authors took the approach that the cause of poverty is to a large extent located in the behaviour of those experiencing poverty and the solution is to be found at a community level.

Meanwhile the Business Roundtable continued to promote a view of the desirability of reducing state involvement and collective responsibility for poverty reduction with the

publication of a book entitled *From Welfare State to Civil Society* (Green, 1996). This book was widely publicised and attracted considerable critique in the Social Policy Journal of New Zealand (refer to Hyman, 1996; Chapple, 1996; Stephens, 1996). The author, David Green, argues that the Welfare State was denying individuals the freedom to be responsible for themselves and their families. Green's answer was to limit the amount of state involvement in the community and replace it with a return to relying on civil society. He drew on the work of American authors Charles Murray and Lawrence Mead and tended to moralise the issue of poverty by dividing welfare recipients into those in poverty who were deserving of charity and those who should be expected to help themselves. A further book was published in 2001 entitled *Poverty and Benefit Dependency* containing an extension of the ideas he raised in his first book (Green, 2001). Green typically looked at the issue of poverty from a behavioural perspective and argues that researching of poverty diverted attention from what he considered was the real issue – welfare dependency.

Numerous books published throughout the 1990s expressed academic views on the ongoing effects of government restructuring undertaken in the previous decade and the perception of a link with this restructuring to an increase in levels of poverty. Jane Kelsey's *Rolling Back the State: Privatisation of Power in Aotearoa/New Zealand* discussed how privatising the structures of power had "meant pain for the poor to achieve gain for the rich" (Kelsey, 1993:11). Her later book *The New Zealand Experiment: A World Model for Structural Adjustment* further questioned the direction the New Zealand government was taking the country by giving detailed examples of how many important decisions were heavily influenced by neo-liberal economic theory (Kelsey, 1995). In *The Decent Society: Essays in Response to National Economic and Social Policies* (Boston and Dalziel, 1992), followed by *Redesigning the Welfare State in New Zealand: Problems, Policies, Prospects* (Boston, Stephens and St John, 1999) the authors took the National government's slogan of a "Decent Society" to highlight how in their opinion the National Government was not operating in a decent nor a fair manner. Further academic publications during the 1990s included *The Tragedy of the Market* (O'Brien and Wilkes, 1993), Brian Easton's *Commercialisation of New Zealand* (Easton, 1997) and Bruce Jesson's *Only Their Purpose is Mad* (Jenson, 1999).

A report commissioned by UNICEF in 2002 consolidated many of the sentiments that were expressed in the above academic publications of the 1990s. The report entitled *When the Invisible Hand Rocks the Cradle: New Zealand Children in a Time of Change* (Blaiklock and Innocenti Research Centre, 2002) investigated the impact of economic and social reforms in New Zealand since the 1980s on the well-being of children and young people. The authors argue that there had been a shift in the government's approach to welfare provision which had led to detrimental effects for New Zealand's poorest citizens; they also framed these changes in terms of a move towards neo-liberalism.The title of the report in itself reflects the perception of a shift in political rationalities, shared in all the above mentioned publications of the 1990s, towards the rationality of the "invisible hand" of the free market. Receiving extensive publicity, the report concluded that the "reforms have been associated with growing inequality and levels of poverty" (Blaiklock and Innocenti Research Centre, 2002:47).

Summary of the period

During this period the shift in political rationalities from favouring collective responsibility to a greater emphasis on individual responsibility and paid work continued, now with a moral flavour explicitly present in government discourse on the management of the welfare state and of welfare recipients. Social researchers now well armed with information on the population groups most at risk of poverty worked towards formalising poverty lines. At this time the growth in inequality, exposed in social statistics and by social service providers drawing attention to poverty in the community, became difficult to ignore in political debate. The government response to rising inequality was to increasingly target welfare recipients in a discursive shift towards a greater individualising of responsibility for poverty and to defend the widening inequality as resulting from the work of the market and individual effort. Academic assessment of the period tended to centre on explaining poverty in terms of a consequence of a neo-liberal regime of governance that was concerned chiefly with a return to minimal state assistance for poverty reduction. Terms such as "dependency" on welfare were widely regarded as part of an ideological shift in government towards rolling back the state to allow the free market to reign. As Peters (1997), argues in *Neoliberalism Welfare Dependency and the Moral Construction of Poverty in New Zealand* during the 1990s the government shifted the welfare policy discourse from the predominantly economic discourse of the 1980s to

one that was predominantly moral. The welfare policy developments of the 1990s contributed to an intensification of moral regulation as they aimed to "responsibilise" individuals and families. Thus while a minimal state was argued for by a neo-liberal government, a moral code was also prescribed to individuals to learn to refashion themselves as entrepreneurs, to take individual responsibility and to continue to participate in a competitive society now construed in consumerist terms (Peters, 2000).

1999- 2008

Labour-led Government – Social Development and Opportunity

The incoming Labour-led government at the turn of the century outlined its policy framework in *The Social Development Approach* in which policy interventions were to become more integrated across sectors, including the economy, education, housing and health (Ministry of Social Development, 2001b). The aim of improving the overall level and distribution of "well-being" in society was outlined as a key objective of government. *Social exclusion* rather than *poverty* was addressed in the document with a social exclusion strategy discussed. Social exclusion was defined as "where people fall below some minimum threshold of well-being and are hindered from fully participating in society" (Ministry of Social Development, 2001b:3). A government document entitled *Pathways to Opportunity from Social Welfare to Social Development* compared the traditional welfare model with the new model of Social Development (Ministry of Social Development, 2001a). Old welfare was outlined as having an income assistance focus on the individual and a centralised form of delivery that was aimed at alleviating poverty. In contrast, a Social Development approach would have an objective of helping and supporting people to lift their skills, focusing not just on the individual but also their family *and* community with local partnerships and individually tailored assistance. Poverty would be alleviated alongside the development of "participation skills". Academic opinion of the new welfare model was cautious. As Duncan (2005) noted, the rationality of the *Pathways to Opportunity* document is not entirely convincing when describing traditional welfare as aimed at "poverty alleviation" when:

past reviews of social security in New Zealand, as well as old age pension policy, have traditionally set the higher ground of aspiring to ensure the more socially inclusive standard of participation and belonging (Duncan, 2005:348).

As part of its objective of improving well-being, the Labour-led government made a commitment to monitoring the social indicators signifying well-being. *The Social Report* produced annually from 2001 through to the latest edition in 2010, while not reporting directly on levels of poverty, gives information on how well the population is doing on a range of indicators of well-being including health, knowledge and skills, paid work, economic standard of living, civil and political rights, cultural identity, leisure and recreation, physical environment, safety and social connectedness. Government research agencies have given attention to looking at the relationship between income level in the family of origin and child outcomes. Mayer was commissioned by the Ministry of Social Development as part of a research series "Raising Children in New Zealand". Mayer's research separated out other influences of family structure and parental education to examine how much influence parental income has on children. In her report entitled *The Influence of Parental Income on Children's Outcomes* (2002), Mayer outlined how the evidence suggested that the amount of parental income does have a significant effect in determining good outcomes for children.

The search for the definition of an official poverty line based on income levels continued into the new millennium with the Labour-led government. Waldegrave and Stephens now worked alongside government agencies to further develop their focus group method of enquiry into levels of poverty in New Zealand communities (refer to earlier discussion for details). Regular reports have been published as part of their *Poverty Measurement Project;* for example in 2003 *Assessing the Progress in Poverty Reduction* looked at the levels of poverty from 1993 to 1998 (Waldegrave, Stephens and King, 2003). The authors concluded that the Labour-led government had initiated several policies that would substantially reduce the incidence of poverty. They stipulated however that there was much work to be done in the area of housing, as policies addressing poor housing conditions would have the most impact on families with dependent children. The *Poverty Measurement Project* was completed in 2007.

While the above researchers were working on poverty thresholds based on income distribution, another investigation had explored levels of disadvantage based on deprivation theory (Townsend, 1987). The Health Research Council had funded a project to develop a poverty measure based on census figures, to derive a geographical indicator of areas of deprivation. An Atlas was produced based on the 1996 census figures that provides a profile of socio-economic deprivation broken down to the community level (Crampton, Salmond, Kirkpatrick, Scarborough, and Skelly, 2000). Variables of measuring deprivation were used such as having no telephone access, a low income level, being unemployed, lack of access to a car, receiving little family support, having few qualifications, lack of home ownership and inadequate living space arrangements.

Alongside the discussion about implementing an official poverty line, there has been the development of a living standards index. In 1999 the Super 2000 Task Force initiated a research programme on the living standards of older New Zealanders. This project formed the basis for the development of an *Economic Living Standard Index* (ELSI) scale by the Ministry of Social Development (Jensen, Spittal, Crichton, Sathiyandra, and Krishnan, 2002). This scale takes an "outcome" approach to measuring current standards of living by directly focusing on the consumption of goods and services, the ownership of items, the activities that require direct expenditure and the sense of satisfaction with living standards. The ELSI scale uses a set of items that are part of living standards and consolidates this information to give a numerical score about different aspects of standard of living. Three *New Zealand Living Standards* surveys have been undertaken that use this scale. The 2006 report, based on 2004 survey data showed a rise in the numbers of people who reported living in conditions that fell into the category of "severe hardship" (Jenson et al., 2006). The most recent survey undertaken in 2008 showed that hardship rates for sole parent and beneficiary families were four to five times that of two parent families in work (Perry, 2009). Perry (2002) found a significant mismatch in levels of poverty measured by using an indirect income approach with the levels of poverty measured by using direct indicators of low living standards such as the ELSI and he advocated:

> "the use of a suite of measures rather than a single measure to better capture
> the multi-dimensional nature and complexity of poverty, and especially to
> assist with the understanding of the factors and processes that contribute to

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the exclusion of citizens from a minimum acceptable way of life in their own society because of inadequate resources" (Perry, 2002).

While the majority of local research into poverty has been conducted by government or in close collaboration with government agencies in recent years, there has also been non-governmental research. The *Poverty Indicator Project* (PIP) was a longitudinal project that was run over four years by the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services. The project used food bank use as a proxy measure. The final report of the project indicated that there was still a need for food bank assistance and highlighted the complex problems that people using food bank services often experience (New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, 2005).

The swift fulfilment by the newly formed Labour-led government in 1999 of their election promise to abolish market related rentals on state housing was a significant policy response designed to relieve the hardship of some low income families. Additionally there was an on-going commitment by the Labour-led government to raising the minimum wage through the 2000s. However, perhaps the most significant policy application designed to address poverty and social exclusion, has been the Working for Families benefit reform package (WFF) announced in the 2004 Budget. The package aims to raise the incomes of low to middle-income working families with dependent children. There are four types of payments. The Family Tax Credit is a payment for each dependent child eighteen years or younger. The In-Work Tax Credit is a payment for families who normally work a minimum number of hours each week. The Minimum Family Tax Credit is a payment for families who earn up to $22,204 a year after tax from salary or wages, and who work a minimum number of hours each week. The Parental Tax Credit is paid for the first fifty six days after a baby is born. These tax credits are available for families with children whose income is under a certain amount. Eligibility incudes sole parents who are in paid work twenty hours a week (as long as they are not receiving any benefit assistance) and couples working thirty hours a week or more. Residence rules apply. The idea of *making work pay* is a core component in this package, which sits well within the Social Development approach of participation through employment. In this policy framework, paid employment is considered as work while care giving of children or the elderly does not receive this recognition.

In response to the above reforms, the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) argue that they did not sufficiently address the structural changes and reduced social security provisions that they maintain are a leading cause of child poverty. Further, they argue that the WFF package discriminates against those not in paid work. They released several reports commenting on the situation of New Zealand's children during the time of the Labour-led government. *Our Children the Priority for Policy* 1st and 2nd editions were released in 2001 (St John, Dale, O'Brien, Blaiklock and Milne, 2001), and in 2003 (Child Poverty Action Group, 2003) highlighting the many effects that poverty was having on children in New Zealand communities. The WFF package, in particular its central component the *in work payment*, is critiqued in *Cut Price Kids: Does the 2004 Working for Families Budget Work for Children?* because families relying on a benefit are excluded from the payment (St John and Craig, 2004). The CPAG has since taken legal action over the WFF policy, which it claims is discriminatory against the children who happen to have a parent receiving a benefit, with 175,000 children affected by the policy. Economist and CPAG member St John argues that the WWF is simply an extension of the 1996 Child Tax Credit, but that it is even less equitable because it further widens the gap between the working poor and the beneficiaries who are becoming poorer. A legal case challenging the In-Work Tax Credit (IWTC) and its predecessor, the Child Tax Credit was heard in mid-2008 by the Human Rights Review Tribunal in Wellington. The Tribunal did find that the IWTC is discriminatory because it is available only to working families and that this disadvantages children in beneficiary families, but ruled this discrimination was justifiable. CPAG appealed this decision. The High Court agreed it was justifiable discrimination, but gave CPAG some concessions. The case will be heard in the Court of Appeal in May 2013.

Voluntary welfare organisations such as Save the Children New Zealand have also continued to speak out about child poverty and its entrenchment in New Zealand communities. Save the Children called for the Government's *Agenda for Children* (Ministry of Social Development, 2002) to make a real difference and to put a timeframe on eradicating child poverty within ten years. *Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa* (2003) was a report by a coalition of voluntary welfare organisations to the United Nations Committee outlining what needed to be done to implement the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child, which included the right to an acceptable standard of living for all children. The issue of child poverty was promoted prior to the 2005

general election by "Every Child Counts" a coalition of non-governmental organisations engaged in bringing children's issues into the centre of policy discussions. They specified four priorities; putting children at the centre of policy, ensuring children get a good start, reducing child abuse and neglect and ending child poverty. Further concern about child poverty was raised in a report commissioned by the Children's Commissioner and Barnardos. *Actions to address child poverty in New Zealand a Fair Go for all Children* (Fletcher and Dwyer, 2008), was composed with the help of people with knowledge in the areas of child health, housing, social policy, education and child welfare. In tandem with the writing of this report, selected groups of children and young people from around New Zealand worked on defining poverty from their perspective. Some of their perspectives are reflected in quotes within the report. The report outlined measures to ensure children get a good start in life, to support parents into work, to support families with children financially, and to establish goals and targets regarding child poverty.

Summary of the period

Political rationalities emphasising individual responsibility and participation in the paid workforce have continued into the new millennium. Government now made a commitment to monitoring social statistics, defining and grouping the population and identifying areas of social risk. Using these statistics organisations such as the Child Poverty Action Group, point out growing levels of child poverty. This group has continued to generate public debate over the injustice of this situation, the government's role in addressing poverty and the long term effects of child poverty in the wider community. In *Poverty, Policy and the State: Social Security reform in New Zealand,* O'Brien gives a comprehensive explanation of structural changes to government policy direction from 1972 through to 2008 (O'Brien, 2008). He argues that while the government promotes an idea of "opportunity" to participate in paid work in this discourse, less attention is paid to the adequacy of the income received for paid work or the security of those people relying on social security benefits. The move to active citizenship and to promoting participation through the paid workforce has replaced the notion of participation and belonging in the community that the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security had espoused.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined public debate, government discourse and policy initiatives, and local research regarding poverty in New Zealand and its management that have emerged from the early 1970s to 2008. I have argued that the official policy response to poverty has shifted from the time of the 1972 Royal Commission on Social Security that framed poverty as a concern which the wider community had a collective responsibly to mitigate in the form of state welfare policies. By 2008, Government discourse tended to favour self-reliance through policies designed to impose work requirements while promoting a reduced emphasis on government responsibility for securing citizens against poverty. Public debate increased over this time with community groups and academics often vocal in their opposition to government policy direction. Debate on poverty was prolific throughout the 1990s, and this discussion has continued into the new millennium, with a particular focus on the unacceptable levels of child poverty. A change in policy direction reflects a general shift in political rationalities towards an advanced liberal programme of governance aimed at promoting the responsibilization of the population through self-directed means (Rose, 1996, Dean, 1999). As part of this process of responsibilization a moralising tone has often been directed towards social welfare recipients in government discourse.

The conceptual and definitional attempts to understand poverty formed in the social sciences shape how poverty in New Zealand has been discussed and investigated and can be regarded in the light of Foucault's theories of how knowledge is formed, as being part of a *discursive practice* (Foucault, 1972). In this chapter, alongside public debate and policy initiatives I have tracked some of the key pieces of research into poverty in New Zealand from the early studies of the 1970s through to contemporary government based investigations. Initial research into poverty in New Zealand by researchers such as Cuttance (1974) and Easton (1976) generated further research and also helped to move the issue of poverty into the public arena for debate. This interest formed in the social sciences was followed through in government based research that uses comprehensive techniques to define and measure poverty and living standards that give us a different basis for understanding poverty than was possible at the time of the earlier efforts of the 1970s. The 1972 Royal Commission on Social Policy defined poverty in relative terms

and this flowed into how researchers attempted to measure its depth and extent. Although there is yet to be a consensus over where an official "poverty line" is best situated, work undertaken in this area produces information on how many New Zealanders are considered as "poor" at any given time. As the volume of research into poverty has increased, it has become increasingly sophisticated including both small-scale studies as well as large-scale mixed method explorations used for policy formation. During the time period I have reviewed, social statistics were formulated to provide a breakdown of social indicators of wellbeing and poverty in different groups of the population. So, for example Maori, women and children are shown to be sectors of the population most at risk of poverty. Further, statistical analysis of how income is distributed across the population has been developed revealing a growing gap in income between the wealthy and the poor. Using these comprehensive social statistics, regular government based social monitoring reports are undertaken and results are made public, generally through media release. Additionally, researchers employed at social service agencies also continue to research and routinely release information about poverty. As these social statistics and research findings contribute to and influence the shape of public discussions, policy formation and subsequent research endeavours, they enable important shifts in perception of the nature of poverty and who is poor in New Zealand. After this exploration of the literature, research, policy initiatives and public debate on poverty in New Zealand I wanted to know how this information or "knowledge" about poverty was perceived and taken up by people in New Zealand communities. The following chapter five outlines how I went about finding out how people in New Zealand communities construe the concept of poverty.

Chapter Five

Fieldwork Process and Analytical Method

As demonstrated in the theory and research activities previously outlined in chapter two, through applying a governmentality lens it is possible to examine how the broad systems of thought contained in notions such as "liberalism" become apparent in the micro practices of everyday social life and how those practices, in turn, work to create and reinforce macro rationalities (McDonald and Marston, 2005). For this research, I was interested in examining social practice as made evident in the rhetoric advanced during interviews exploring the notion of poverty in New Zealand.   In this chapter, I will outline the research processes of ethical approval, participant selection, data gathering, and analysis that I used to investigate the conversations that involved the participants' ideas about poverty in New Zealand.   The primary method of enquiry in the study was interviewing thirty-seven individuals on their perspectives on poverty in New Zealand. For the duration of the research I also collected and reflected on media coverage and government policy packages presenting some of this information alongside the analysis of the of the interview conversations; any links I found between these documents and the themes emerging from the participant interviews are highlighted. Media representations, however, were not analysed in their own right. The range of people the project encompassed included those with a low socioeconomic status through to those with a mid to high socioeconomic status. The approach taken to the interviews was qualitative, which involved looking in some depth at the meanings people give to poverty in New Zealand society and the language resources that they drew on to describe the idea of poverty. The information collected was analysed by looking for common themes and interpretations as presented by the participants.

Qualitative Research and Discourse Analysis

While there is plenty of discussion and debate in the literature on how to best understand the epistemological position of Foucault, (see Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982; Cousins and Hussain, 1984; Burchell, Gordon and Miller, 1991; Bevir, 1999; Lemke, 2001) the Foucauldian literature does not offer an explicit methodological guideline towards the

analysis of interview conversations. Foucault's genealogical methodology in the main involved the analysis of historical documents. Further, the analysis of interview conversations in this thesis, also addresses something of a gap in the *governmentality* research methodology; which has been more involved in studying texts concerned with programmes and technologies used to put particular rationalities of government into effect. Less attention has been paid in the governmentality literature to how people in communities are reflecting on and discussing their position and the position of others involved in living within the consequences of governmental rationalities. Thus this gap in the governmentality literature becomes significant because it means that little has been documented about the "conduct of conduct" at a grassroots community level and how this interplays with policy apparatus.

There are a number of qualitative research methodologies. Discourse analysis is the particular form of qualitative approach and system of analysis, which I utilised in this research. I took into account several different methodological options for conducting a discourse analysis of the interview information and authors such as Norman Fairclough (1995) offered a conceptual guide.   However, I predominantly relied on the techniques and ideas advanced by discursive psychologists, Potter and Wetherell (1987, 1995), Edwards and Potter (1992) to provide a methodological guideline to analysing the information obtained in the interviews. A key reason I utilised their approach to analysis was because it provided a comprehensive, systematic, practical guideline for the analysis of interview texts. Additionally, the work of Potter and Wetherell (1987) explored the notion of "racism" in the New Zealand setting by using interview "conversations" as a basis to explicate the power relations embodied in our social and institutional arrangements. I quickly drew parallels with how the methodology used in this body of work could be used to explore the notion of "poverty" in my interviews. In particular, their notion of *interpretative repertoires* captured my attention, which is linked to an understanding of discourse as a social activity in which common-sense understandings are generated and passed on. Potter and Wetherell (1995:89) define interpretative repertoires as:

> Broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of
> speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images. In more
> structuralist language we can talk of these things as systems of

signification and as the building-blocks used for manufacturing versions of actions, self and social structures in talk. They are available resources for making evaluations, constructing factual versions and performing particular actions.

I found the notion of interpretative repertoires useful for this research because they can be identified in ordinary talk (and interviews) as recurrent patterns of speech as people often use a limited number of commonly related terms when discussing a specific topic such as poverty. For the purposes of analysis I worked with a notion of "discourse", as defined by Burr (2003:64) which:

> Refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. It refers to a particular picture that is painted of an event, person or class of persons, a particular way of representing it in a certain light.

This understanding of discourse is seeing discourse as not just being limited to studying the words used, but also to considering the wider effects of using those words. Thus, it can be argued, that surrounding any one object there are a multitude of different ways of perceiving that object and a variety of discourses available to represent that object. A discourse analysis therefore involves identifying the multiple discourses that a language event is ordered around. In this instance, the language events were the discussions about the notion of poverty held in my interviews.

The above notion of discourse and of discourse analysis as a method is not quite the same in meaning as Foucault's use of discourse or *discursive formation* (previously outlined in chapter two). The Foucauldian notion of discourse is involved with noticing how *subjects are produced in discourse* whereas a discourse analysis is more concerned with seeing subjects as the *actors who are using discourse*. However, Wetherell (2003:25) justifies the usefulness of conducting a discourse analysis on interview conversations to gauge information about wider social practices and social identities that constitute the subject. She argues that the methodologies developed in discursive psychology draw together

macro and micro understandings of the nature of society into a framework for broader theoretical discussions as follows:

> We can see how interview talk can be generalised beyond its immediate occasioned activities. When over a large corpus of data the same kinds of constructions are repeated, it becomes apparent, as noted earlier, how the social (collective) practices are not outside, but infuse, the individual voices of the interview. Interview talk is in no sense self-contained. The interview is a highly specific discursive genre, but it also often rehearses routine, repetitive, and highly consensual (cultural/normative) resources that carry beyond the immediate local context, connecting talk with discursive history. Speakers do not invent these resources each time. The argumentative fabric of society is continually shaping and transforming, but for recognizable periods it is the same kind of cloth.

Researcher Reflexivity and Interviewing as a Social Process

As argued by Lawlor and Mattingly (2001:147) qualitative research in particular often "involves the creation and on-going renegotiations of relationships" between participants and researcher. Acknowledging this relational aspect also entails recognising that interviews conducted in qualitative research are not passive ways of gaining information but are active social encounters (May, 1997). As in any social encounter, each person in the research relationship is affected by the other's presence and actions. This was especially relevant in the case of this research as the type of interviews that I conducted with participants were "semi-structured". Although I followed an interview guide (see appendix eight), at times the interviews developed into "conversations" and my "role" as an interviewer became almost redundant (Oliver, 2010:107). However, I was also keenly aware of my position as "the researcher" in the interview process, that I was not simply there as a passive note taker, or an interested passer-by. Further, my interview guide did have a significant influence on the course of those "conversations" and prior to the interviews this guide was shaped by my position as a researcher, my background and personal interests. I was aware that as the instigator of the research relationship, at times

my own viewpoints steered the direction the participants were taking as we progressed through the interview schedule. These viewpoints were shaped by my personal identification as a doctoral student interested in social justice, as a married woman living on a shared low income and through the experience of being mother of a child of mixed "race". A significant individual who influenced my viewpoints on poverty was my husband, who was brought up by a solo mother in a state house in the Auckland suburb of Mangere in the 1970s as one of eight children. Later, his involvement with emergency housing in Auckland throughout the 1990s sparked an interest for me in issues of social justice and poverty in New Zealand as I studied social policy at Massey University.

Any social encounter, such as an interview, involves a reciprocal relationship. The interview as a situated social practice involves the co-production of information which not only springs from the agenda and background of the "researcher" but also from that of the "researched". Thus the participants also had their prior reasons and motivations for wanting to participate in this study. For some, it seemed they just wanted a listening ear and validation for their situation, others more overtly wanted sympathy. Then there were those who had strong opinions about the "state of the nation" that they wanted to share (or vent) with me. Still others shared with me a concern for "social justice" and a desire for more collective participation in the "good life". The challenge for me as "the researcher" in the relationship was to maintain an on-going awareness of how my "voice", as the author of this thesis, is the interpreter and ultimate authority of what comes to be "heard" of those other "voices" in the research relationship (Hertz, 1997). Following the interviews, as I progressed through the data analysis and writing phase of the thesis I made every effort to compile what I considered to be a fair representation of the "voices" of the interview participants as well as to keep explicit my own position.

Ethical Dilemmas Considered

For this research I had to gain ethics approval from Massey University's Human Ethics committee comprised of university staff members and members of the local community (see appendix 1 for ethics application). This process proved to be more challenging than I had anticipated as it seemed to me that there were several preconceived notions held about socio economic status. However, although it was frustrating that the ethics

committee did appear to be uncritically privileging a particular set of assumptions about the nature of poverty in New Zealand, this did provide me with some qualitative evidence about how New Zealanders construe poverty that pre-empted the findings of the interviews as follows:

1) There was an assumption made by the ethics committee that a study on poverty in New Zealand would by definition necessarily include and/or be about Maori and Pacific cultural groups. The first Ethics application was rejected in part on these grounds:

> The committee suggests that in a study on this topic it is likely you will have Maori participants. Consultation therefore must be undertaken. We suggest you refer the HRC Guidelines for Researching with Maori. At a minimum there should be a more specific statement about managing Maori involvement in terms of protecting Maori culturally and ensuring that negative stereotypes are not reinforced in the process of this study and its outcomes.

Ironically this statement made by the committee seems to rely upon what might be classed as a negative stereotype - that Maori are poor.

The second application was also rejected on the grounds that I had not actually undertaken some sort of formal consultation with local Iwi. Only after a third ethics application did the committee finally concede that this was probably an unnecessary stipulation given that I was not actively seeking Maori and Pacific participants for the study. However, because I had now become aware of the uneasiness that contemplating researching a different culture generates, prior to starting the interviews I did consult with Maori and Pacific academics as to any cultural sensitivities that I should be aware of while interviewing Maori or Pacific people. I kept in mind their advice that any culturally specific language needed to be clarified if I was to use it in the thesis and that further consultation with Maori or Pacific academics might be necessary to ensure the correct usage of cultural terminology. As it transpired, in the study I did have three participants who identified as Maori and five participants who identified as being of Pacific origin. I did not experience any difficulties with this and did not get any sense from the participants that I had misunderstood them in any way.

2) The first Ethics application was also rejected in part because I said that I wanted to have a quota of what I had termed as "the poor" defined as those relying on a social security benefit in my study. I had reasoned that deliberately seeking out participants in receipt of a social security benefit was one way of ensuring that some would have an experience of hardship first-hand. The ethics committee was wary about the wording of this, even though I had not stated any intention of identifying anyone as "the poor" person. The committee did not want me to appear to predefine participants as poor and then solicit their participation. They asked me to seek inclusion of a wide range of socio economic backgrounds and allow participants in the course of the interview to reveal the facts about their circumstances. The committee subsequently proved to prefer the phrase "living on a low income" on the ethics application form.

3) Lastly, there was an assumption made by the ethics committee that a study on poverty interviewing participants would necessarily become a risky endeavour:

> Whilst we acknowledge your willingness to manage the risks involved in making your home phone number known, the Committee has grave concerns with this approach, given the public nature of the advertisements.

I happen to know that another student advertised publicly for research participants at the same time as myself but there was no concern about them publicising their home phone number. I can only speculate that this meant there was some kind of presumption made about the character of the type of participants that would reply to my advertisement. I wondered whether the ethics committee believed "the poor" would be overly needy or perhaps even criminal people. I followed the committee's advice and kept my home phone number private. I did not encounter any unwelcome behaviour from the participants who contacted me.

Beginning the Research

After an extended ethics process I felt it was necessary to gain a greater understanding of the field of inquiry I was going to be exploring by visiting social service agencies across the Auckland district. I thought that having conversations with representatives from social

service agencies was important and relevant to the research because these agencies are in the "business" of looking out for the interests of "the poor" (however they may be defined) in New Zealand communities. I was also aware that these agencies play a central role in presenting a view of poverty to the media and in turn to a wider audience of politicians and the general public. As well as discussing my research with them I was keen to recruit participants for the research via the agencies. I sent out introductory letters addressed to the managers of five social service agencies explaining the purpose and scope of the research (see appendix 2). I followed these letters up with a telephone call one week later. I was able to arrange meetings with management at all the social service agencies I contacted. In general these meetings were productive and interesting and support for the research was offered by all the agencies. Although each agency has a particular culture and frame of reference that defines its approach I found that in all the conversations I had with agency representatives there was a strong drive for an ideal of social justice. Five of the participants subsequently interviewed for the research were sourced via these agencies.

Recruitment Process for Participant Interviews

Prior to actively recruiting participants, in order to protect my privacy as recommended by the ethics committee, I set up a telephone mailbox answering service through Telecom, which had a recorded message explaining the purpose of the study and asked potential participants to leave their details.

The next course of action was to advertise for participants. I achieved this in two ways. The first approach was to leave posters on the notice boards of social service agencies, community centres, libraries and supermarkets across Auckland (see appendices 3 and 4). The second approach was to advertise the study in community newspapers. This was organised through the Massey University public relations department who contacted Suburban Newspapers on my behalf. The article (see appendix 5) was printed in several community newspapers across the wider Auckland district. The response generated from the advertisements was somewhat overwhelming; over seventy individuals left a message on the answer phone expressing their interest in participating in the research. I telephoned back all the respondents, asked them some general demographic questions and inquired

why they were interested in participating to assess their suitability for the study. The criteria and rationale for the selection process was to endeavour to get a spread of participants along several demographic characteristics such as gender, age and ethnicity. These demographic characteristics were not however intended to be used as analytic categories (see following section). Of particular interest was the participants' voluntary report of their socio economic position. I questioned respondents on their occupation to gain a sense of how much access to financial resources they might have and also because I was interested in including the viewpoints of a range of participants who work with people on a low income in a professional capacity. Prior to advertising I had decided that a maximum of forty participants would be an adequate number of people to deal with in the time I had allocated for the interviews. From the seventy respondents there were thirty-seven participants that fitted the selection criteria and I arranged to meet with them for an interview. I sent out information sheets (see appendix 6) to all these participants prior to the interviews.

Information Collected and Reviewed

The primary source of information gathered in this study was obtained by conducting interviews. The number of people involved needed to be at a level that was manageable given the timeframe and resources allocated to the project and of sufficient size to allow for adequate information to be gathered and for general patterns to be discerned. Thirty-seven participants were selected on the basis that they would provide enough variation to optimise the chance of a diverse response to the research questions and would provide plenty of information for comparison and analysis. As this research was qualitative, the interest was not focused on obtaining a representative sample of participants to generalise from but efforts were made to gain a range of demographic variance to enhance a sense of the consistency and strength of the results.

Wood and Kroger (2000) advised that when assembling a participant sample for conducting a discourse analysis, the focal point should be on ensuring the inclusion of a range of discourses relevant to the phenomenon of interest. For this research the phenomenon of interest was how poverty is construed in New Zealand communities. Keeping this in mind I endeavoured to gain a spread of participants along several

demographic characteristics (see appendix 10) hoping to encompass the variety of different lifestyles, life stages and political outlooks that might be present in a New Zealand community. In conjunction with keeping this focus on a variety of opinion, I wanted to include a section of people in the study who could speak about poverty from having had a personal experience of it, and a range of people who have had the experience of working in a professional capacity with individuals positioned as being in a place of poverty. However, although gaining some variance in the participant sample was important, I also recognised the approach of Potter and Wetherell (1987) to discourse analysis when they suggested that a discourse analysis is focused on *language use* rather than on *language users* and that the units of analysis are texts or parts of texts rather than participants. In this sense, any one participant could (and did) speak to a range of different perspectives and therefore could give similar discursive information as another participant who came from quite a different demographic and experiential background. Therefore, I endeavoured to approach the selection of participants with an open mind and attempted to hold back any prior assumptions I might have had about the persons who were to generate the discourse.

Information was also obtained from newsprint media and government policy reports. I began to collect and review newspaper articles related to poverty from the commencement of the study in February 2006. The articles were sourced from the New Zealand Herald, The Sunday Star Times, The Central Leader and the Aucklander. I chose the New Zealand Herald because of its wide distribution as it is a nationally distributed newspaper that reaches a broad audience and is also available in an electronic form online. The other three media are distributed throughout Auckland city and combined attract a broad audience. In addition, the Central Leader and the Aucklander are distributed free of charge to Auckland households and I reasoned that the information published in these media may be read in the households that do not otherwise purchase newspapers. Most of the information I found that referred to poverty was in the New Zealand Herald and the Sunday Star Times. However, there were a few key articles published in the Central Leader and the Aucklander from social service agencies and council representatives that tended to have a human interest focus on a particular individual or family struggling with financial hardship. I collected these articles as I thought that the media presentation of a social problem like poverty is important because of the impact that such accounts may have on public attitudes and for many people the

media could be their main source of information about poverty. I also thought that the media presentation of poverty could be useful as a source of information as a reflection of commonly held assumptions about the idea of poverty in the community. Key government texts were also overviewed during the process of the research including the Working for Families package, the annual Social Report and three Living Standards Reports published in 2004, 2006 and 2009. The government's general approach to welfare and well-being contained in Pathways to Opportunity a Social Development approach was also reviewed. As noted above, although I collected and reviewed media information and policy documents and I regarded these as an informative component in the study, a systematic analysis of this information was not undertaken. From time to time through the data presentation chapters and in the final discussion some of the policy and media information is referred to briefly, to highlight a point or to provide an example. However, a causal connection between policy documents, media presentations and community perceptions was not explored. Data collection ceased in February 2008 when I assessed it had reached saturation point and that there was no benefit (in terms of gaining additional information) in holding any more interviews or reviewing any more written data.

Participant Interview Process

From late 2007 through to early 2008 I met with participants usually in a neutral space such as a library or café. I also conducted some interviews in participants' homes. The interviews were generally about one to one and a half hours long. Prior to the interview, I gave participants a consent form to sign (see appendix 7) and checked that they had read the information sheet (see appendix 6) and were clear about the purpose of the research. Before the commencement of the conversation, I read through the interview schedule with participants and described the five general areas that I was interested in to give an overview of the direction of the conversation that we were going to have. When both the participant and I were ready to proceed with the interview I confirmed that recording the conversation was acceptable before turning on the audiotape.

I used a general interview guide approach (Patton, 2002). Interviews were "semi-structured" around five general areas (see appendix 8) that related to information and understandings that I had gleaned from reviewing the literature on poverty (refer to

chapters three and four). Within these five general areas, I had a set of questions that I went through with each participant that I had developed to draw out some of the potentially repetitive elements in conversations held about poverty. The questions were informed by the literature but also by my own familiarity with the kind of questions that are raised in conversations about poverty in New Zealand communities. This list of questions was generally followed but the order and the language used was adapted to each participant in order to generate the best conversational flow. I used open-ended questions as much as possible to get the participants to express their understandings of the topic in their own terms and I tried to adapt to the jargon used by participants in order to gain greater rapport.

In order to contextualise ideas, I used illustrative examples at times during the interview to draw out participants' understandings. In the interview schedule I included a standard example of a political manoeuvre made by John Key who was then the leader of the National Party in opposition in January 2007 that espoused a particular conceptualization of the notion of an "underclass". The conversations were generally kept at the level of opinion and knowledge about the topic of poverty. However, some participants did choose to express themselves on a more emotional and personal level as they gave examples from their life experiences. This level of personal expression gave me as the researcher a valuable insight into a wide variety of lived experience but it did at times become emotionally draining. Often in the interview, I would deliberately get the participant to dissociate from the question to make it less personal and probing, for example asking them "what do you think someone else (a neighbour for example) would say about this?" In this way the participant was invited to become an observer and this encouraged them to express their opinions in a more detached manner. I also used this technique to draw out opinions from participants who seemed reticent about speaking on a certain subject. Once some distance was placed between them and the subject matter they were often able to express opinions that they might not have otherwise owned personally. All the interviews were tape recorded with permission from the participants. Participants were given a twenty-dollar grocery voucher as a token of appreciation for their time and contribution to the study.

I subsequently transcribed the interviews in full to convert them into "text" for analysis. Basic grammatical structures such as commas and full stops were used to help with the

readability of the transcript. Excessive detail such as transcribing every "um" or "ah" was not always included following the suggestion from Potter and Wetherell (1987) that excessive detail in a transcript may distract from the readability of that transcript. However, some non-verbal behaviour was noted, such as when a participant paused for any length of time to reflect and when they laughed. Noting these non-verbal behaviours was done to help identify underlying feeling tones and contextualised the interview conversation. This was helpful when I read over the transcripts at a later date serving to keep a clear picture of what the participant was actually trying to convey to me at that point in the conversation. Following the transcription the transcripts were given to those participants who had wished to check their transcripts. Some participants wanted to make minor changes to their transcription.

Tools for Analysis

While the governmentality thesis of Michel Foucault (previously outlined in chapter two) was kept in mind while undertaking analysis of the information gathered, in order to identify dominant constructions about poverty and wealth at a practical level, I found Potter and Wetherell's (1995) discussion of six central themes of conducting a discourse analysis to be useful while analysing the interview transcriptions:

 (1) **Practices and Resources**

An analysis of discourse is not just about looking at the words that are used but the meanings of those words and their effective *practices* – what people do with their talk, and their writing. An example of a practice can be seen when a particular version of actions or situations is mobilised to shift the responsibility for those events elsewhere. For example, I found that when talking about poverty a participant could vary their response throughout the course of the interview as to where they situated the responsibility for the existence of poverty depending on the immediate context of the conversation. *Resources* are the category systems, narrative characters and *interpretative repertoires* people draw on in their conversations. I used this notion of resources to identify several "common sense" explanatory clusters of ideas that participants used when discussing poverty with me. The use of these discursive resources had the effect of enabling the conversation

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between us to flow easily because we had a shared understanding of these ideas and they did not need elaboration.

I kept the above notions of language practices and resources in mind as I noted participants' reference points, whether they spoke from their own experience, and the degree of self-reflection they used to justify their position in terms of their own life narratives. I queried whether they might have used information picked up from friends and the media or discussed the issue of poverty in terms of commonly held ideas about broader social theories or a combination of all of the above. I looked at the different levels of anecdote when a participant grappled with a question and asked whether they had applied the question to themselves, to others or made sweeping generalisations about the nature of human societies.

(2) Construction and description

Discourse analysis is concerned with how discourse is constructed, with how people assemble versions of the world as they perform social actions and how those versions work as building blocks that become rhetorically sustainable over time. This notion brought to the analysis awareness that the way that participants were prepared to discuss poverty with me in the interview would provide information about how poverty could be discussed on a broader level and of the influence this discussion has on wider versions of what is perceived as the "truth" about poverty. In conjunction with this focus on construction therefore, a discourse analysis "is concerned with methods of description and with how particular versions can become established as solid, real and independent of the speaker" (Potter and Wetherell, 1995:81). In this sense, I found that the way a participant described poverty could link into and reinforce a particular version of poverty, which had a shared understanding as being common "knowledge". At this point in the analysis of the transcripts I started to think about how this "knowledge" reflected the normalising influence of legal-administrative institutional rationality and practice that forms around social security and employment.

(3) **Content**

Connected to an emphasis on social construction is an emphasis on content. So the content of the discourse is treated as where the social action is and there is not a huge focus on looking "behind the talk" to analyse possible effects of an individual participant's personality or cognition (Potter and Wetherell, 1995). So here the focus was on taking the views that participants presented to me about poverty at face value. Although I did pay attention to the fluctuating level of emotional arousal during the course of the interview I did not dwell on whether a participant "really" meant what they said, if they had some hidden agenda or predisposing attitude to the topic of poverty or to the interview process in general. The key rationale for the research was finding out what could be said about poverty in the social space of New Zealand communities.

(4) **Rhetoric**

A discourse analysis is also concerned with the "rhetorical or argumentative organisation of talk and texts" (Potter and Wetherell, 1995:82). Rhetorical analysis is a helpful tool in highlighting the way "people's versions of actions, features of the world and of their own mental life, are designed to counter real or potential alternatives" (Potter and Wetherell, 1995:82). A focus on rhetoric reveals a world of social conflict and encourages an interest in the organisation of ideology. Edwards and Potter (1992) offer several techniques for the analysis of rhetoric including looking for the use of category entitlement, extreme case formulations, rhetoric of argument, lists and contrasts, systematic vagueness, vivid description, narrative, empiricist accounting, consensus and corroboration (see appendix 9 for details). All of these techniques were helpful in identifying the argumentative and persuasive language used by participants when discussing poverty. The use of rhetoric was present when participants espoused a view designed to counter a dominant but established alternative to their particular version of poverty.

As I examined the texts I kept the above mentioned rhetorical analytic techniques of Edwards and Potter (1992) in mind. I also looked for classic disclaimers such as "I am not racist but…" I assessed whether participants were responding to the descriptive questions on the interview schedule with prescriptive language to moralise by using words such as "should" and "ought". I looked for instances of divisive language such as

"us and them" and the use of third person terms or "out group" designations such as "they" "those" or "their". I noted when a participant used language to distance him or herself from the topic for example by saying "you…" or "they…." when they were talking about themselves and their own (often difficult) situation. I identified alternative speaking positions that could be seen as evidence of a resistance to (or an acknowledgement of) a dominant meaning making activity for example when a participant said "it's not just" or "it's not only" or "as well as".

(5) **Stake and Accountability**

A focus on social conflict as evidenced by the use of rhetoric brings to the fore in the analysis of a discourse an emphasis on the acknowledgment that "people treat each other and various kinds of collectivities as agents who have a stake or an interest in their actions" (Potter and Wetherell, 1995:82). The significance of a social action can be discounted by reference to stake or interest. I found examples of this when a participant discounted an offer of help by an authority to be merely an attempt to influence the person who is receiving the assistance. Additionally, people can attend to their accountability by designing their accounts or conduct so as to display a lack of stake in some outcome. An example, of a lack of stake participants displayed in the outcome of poverty alleviation was evident as they expressed a reluctance to "waste taxpayers money" on reducing levels of poverty for a person.

(6) **Cognition in action**

Rather than considering that a person has a fixed *attitude* towards an issue a discourse analysis is focused on looking at the construction of accounts of social action. Keeping this in mind while analysing the transcripts, I looked for instances when the participants' discussion of poverty became bound up with concerns about stake and the construction of versions, and thereby taking the standpoint of "that is not just what *I think* about poverty, that is just the way it is". Potter and Wetherell (1995) suggest that this type of stance can form part of a wider, continually circulating ideological structure in which the person both takes up a position and is positioned. Wood and Kroger (2000:100) argue that:

positioning refers to the constitution of speakers and hearers in particular ways through discursive practices; practices that are at the same time resources through which speakers and hearers can negotiate new positions.

Building on this notion of positioning is the idea of a "subject position" defined by Davies and Harre (1990:62) as "a possibility in known forms of talk; position is what is created in and through talk as the speakers and hearers take themselves up as persons."

Attention was given to how participants positioned themselves and others with regard to poverty and to how different subject positions outlined in participant conversation might give a reflection of the nature and experience of the contemporary poor person in the New Zealand context. I looked at what participants told me were common characteristics of the poor and how they tended to classify poor people. Within this content I assessed the slant that an individual participant was taking towards the perceived contemporary poor person asking whether the explanations participants gave were sympathetic or harsh. I looked at the extent to which the poor were perceived as victims or as architects of their own misfortune, whether they were seen as objects of pity and unfortunates or as more shrewd and able to use their situation to their advantage.

Themes Developed

The strategy I decided on after gathering the research information was to initially take an inductive approach to analysing the texts that had been generated by the research. I read through the transcriptions frequently, searching for cross sectional themes and concepts in conjunction with deciphering how individual participants positioned themselves inside these themes and ideas. I was mindful of how I was positioning myself in relation to the information I was analysing, aware that as a researcher I bring my own account of poverty to the analysis and this inevitably has had some bearing on the choice of themes developed. To gain some sense of the overriding themes present in the interview information I kept in mind that poverty could be an emotionally arousing concept. Part of the process therefore of identifying commonly held ideas involved questioning where participants' anxieties were directed and what they seemed to be concentrating on. As I read through the transcripts I identified instances when I had asked a participant a question about something and they had spontaneously focused their talk towards another

topic or theme. Contradictions in the interviews were also present and exploring the kinds of self-contradiction that participants held that had become repetitive themes throughout that interview was another way I identified important themes.

As I drew out themes from the transcripts I assembled them together around *four key phrases* that were present in the interviews that I had with participants. Further, based on my experience as a person who lives in New Zealand, I think these phrases are commonly used and "make sense" in the New Zealand context. The struggle for consensus about definition and measurement of poverty was presented in the literature review (refer chapters three and four) and the phrase "*There is no real poverty in New Zealand*" draws together some of the tensions and contradictions presented by the participants as they attempted to define poverty and categorise the poor. *"It's not just about money"* was a repetitive phrase that I have used to present a strong theme that came through from the participants of the morality surrounding consumption practices and the relationship with this to situations of poverty and the representation of the poor person in New Zealand. The literature on poverty is inextricably intertwined with discussions about the role of the welfare system and the administration of welfare beneficiaries. The phrase "*Learn how to work the system*" allowed for the juxtaposition of the "systems" associated with both poverty and wealth as presented by the participants, with the common theme that rich and poor alike use the "system" in some way. Lastly, *"Work hard and get ahead"* reflects the answers to my questions about the gap in income and the redistribution of wealth capturing some of the discussion and ethics presented by participants around the possibility of social mobility. I used these key phrases in the headings for the data presentation chapters six through to nine.

Following the initial inductive phase of analysis I brought a Foucauldian theoretical lens to the forefront as I went over the interview transcripts again. Governmentality is an approach that asks how the state and individual subjects are constituted in a particular point in time. This involves looking at how ideas such as "poverty" are constructed in various programmes and areas of government as well as a focus on the construction of identities for those who are the "targets" of such programmes and policies (McDonald and Marston, 2005). Following Wetherell (2003), for this research I took the position that the *interview conversations* generated information about wider societal practices around poverty including both macro and micro governmental processes. As social practices

involving forms of *governance* were referred to explicitly in an individual interview transcript, I took note of them and their positioning effects. Several of these governing processes are highlighted as they appear in the data presentation in chapters six through to nine.

After I established a thematic structure, I relied on the methodology of discourse analysis developed by Potter and Wetherell (1987) to analyse, assemble and present the information gathered from the interview conversations as it related to the key themes represented in the phrases used in the headings of chapters six through to nine. The notion of *interpretative repertoires* (discussed above) was helpful and I used it to interpret the repetitive contradictions I found in the interviews as being the *language resources* that participants could select from in order to argue their point. Each of the following data chapters, six through to nine, identifies and names two *interpretative repertoires* that were drawn on by participants to argue their position in relation to key themes represented in each chapter. For these data chapters, I will employ the word "discourse" to present these language resources or *interpretative repertoires* I found in the interview conversations. The conclusion to each of the following data chapters positions those identified "discourses" in the Foucauldian framework thereby preparing a link for further discussion in chapter ten.

Chapter Six

"There is no Real Poverty in New Zealand"
Defining Poverty and Categorising the Poor

The literature review in chapters three and four contained an argument that knowledge of "poverty" and "the poor" as conceptual "objects" is supported in a *discursive formation* involved in the formulation of theoretical ideas and in the production of social research. This knowledge allows poverty and the poor to be made visible as something that is "governable". Social researchers such as Ruth Lister explain and define concepts of poverty, those who can be construed as "poor" and how this should be managed. The participants in this study are informed about the nature and extent of poverty by the information that social researchers produce. Importantly however, they also have their own lived experiences to draw on that shapes how they perceive a social issue such as poverty. This current chapter will focus on what participants in an urban New Zealand setting reported were the likely circumstances of poverty and the categorisations that they drew on to identify and define poverty and the poor. These categories, while similar to those produced in social research, tended to draw on distinct colloquial descriptions and constructions rather than on statistical evidence. I identified two main discursive resources contained in the language patterns for categorising "poverty" in the interview conversations that I had with participants; *Third world poverty* and *New Zealand poverty as "relative"*. Although these patterns loosely fit into the understanding of absolute and relative definitions of poverty previously outlined in chapter three, they also serve to frame a perception of poverty that is particular to the New Zealand setting. Although there was a mosaic of perceptions running through the interview conversations, these two ways of explaining or categorising poverty occurred across the corpus of the interview information I collected. These two categorisations of poverty were language resources that could be drawn on at any time, by any participant and account for some of the tensions and contradictions that presented in the interviews. Thus, highlighting the use of these language resources helps to explain contradictions occurring across the interview information as well as those internal to an individual participant's interview as they managed conversing with me about the notion of poverty present in differing contextual

settings. In this chapter I will firstly typify these two ways of categorising poverty with quotes from participants. I will then break down the second discursive "category" of poverty described as "relative" in order to give an account of how a "New Zealand type of poverty" was described and identified in the interview conversations and how those who are recognised as being counted amongst the "New Zealand poor" are construed.

Is there Poverty in New Zealand?

In general when asked to respond to the statement "there is no poverty in New Zealand" most participants described poverty in New Zealand as "not real poverty". They answered that yes, there was poverty, but it was not at the level of the "real" poverty found in third world countries. Only four participants said they did not think there was poverty of any sort in New Zealand and therefore agreed completely with the statement "*there is no poverty in New Zealand*". The other thirty three participants replied that they thought there was poverty in New Zealand with over half of these qualifying this with defining New Zealand poverty as "relative" compared to the poverty found overseas which was in general explained in more "absolute" terms. The following quotes were typical of the initial response to considering whether poverty was present in New Zealand:

> **Well I think it is probably relative. There is probably no poverty compared to some very poor countries overseas. But there is definitely what I would think would be an unacceptable level of poverty.**

> **I think there is poverty in New Zealand. It's just different to poverty in other countries and we tend to look at other countries and think that they are worse off than us but the fact is when you are living in a country or a situation everything is relative to yourself. Therefore if we see someone living in a shed or a garage or something then they are living in poverty.**

Real Poverty as "Third World"

Definitions and categories of poverty were offered by participants to construct boundaries in the conversation around who could be seen as poor and who could not, where those

poor might be located, as well as who was perceived as deserving of help. The discourse that offered a "third world" definition of poverty was often drawn on in the first instance when asked to define and explain poverty to me. When drawing on a language resource that explains poverty in "third world" terms the contemporary "poor person" was positioned in a remote location. "Real" poverty was therefore predominantly constructed in a global sense and as being located outside of New Zealand. Third world poverty was argued to be a different "type" of poverty to what might be experienced in New Zealand. Typical responses that included categorising poverty in this way were:

> **Why I agree with the statement that there is no poverty in this country is because what I regard is poverty. I have seen images of children in Mexico sorting through piles of rubbish trying to find scraps of food. I have seen people in the Sudan dying of starvation, and in Biafra. That... you can apply the word poverty to those places not to New Zealand.**

> **Third world images are the first thing I think of, and then the next thing is State Housing in Glen Innes. Which I have to say in the scheme of things when you are comparing the two doesn't look so bad.**

> **Some people have always been better managers than others it's partly that. But yes probably in society there has always been, again it is relative because I mean poverty in New Zealand is not the same as poverty in the third world countries is it? There is a safety net that the government has. You can exist anyway; you don't starve to death or anything like that but. So it is relative to where you live really.**

This quote draws attention to how the government appears to distance poverty to other countries:

> **I think the government can do a lot more than they do and instead of looking overseas they should look here first. Clean up their own back yard before going to try and help others. I don't begrudge it when it is an earthquake or hurricane - an act of God. But we have enough hurricanes**

in New Zealand but we just pull the carpet over everybody's eyes "oh that's not happening" and poverty is one of them (a hurricane).

However, this type of distant "real third world poverty" did become localised when it was recognised as being embodied by Auckland's street sleepers. Participants readily recognised homelessness as being present in Auckland, and descriptions of homelessness (when defined as "sleeping rough") drew on the discursive resource of the "real" poverty found in the third world. Typical comments about homelessness included:

The homeless people are definitely poor after that it starts to get a little bit fuzzy.

I suppose in the natural, my interpretation of someone poor would be someone living on the street, someone homeless. You know that is what I would determine as someone being poverty stricken.

In general, the New Zealand homeless (when described in similar terms to those in "third world" poverty) were discussed using distancing language. "They" were articulated as separate and distinct from "us":

Well one of the street people for a start, they have to be poor. Whether or not it is because, what might have been an addiction of some sort, that may or may not have been their fault originally, they are certainly poor now. And they are not an easy problem to fix. Because if you haven't got the clothes and you smell, not many people want anything to do with you.

If you go underneath the viaduct that goes across Victoria Park at night you will find people sleeping on the bark gardens. They sleep on the bark because it is still warm; it holds the heat. And they are just wrapped up in all these blankets and are asleep. But they favour underneath the viaduct because it has got shelter. They tend to be there in clusters. You become aware of this if you walk your dog through the park. That is how I found out about those people. That to me is poverty.

"New Zealand Poverty" as "Relative"

The above responses of poverty as "third world" were typical of participants' initial answers to my probes into how they conceptualized poverty. However throughout the interview most participants also conveyed an understanding of how poverty could be identified in a New Zealand context in "relative" terms:

Relative poverty in New Zealand can be defined (because I think it is relative in New Zealand really isn't it?). Because if you say there is poverty it evokes images of people not having enough to eat, not having enough to have the basics really - shelter, food warmth. I think by and large poverty in New Zealand is relative to people's expectations, desires and aspirations. And for those people in a state unable to help themselves or who lack the ability and resources, it's relative to resources, education. It's relative to access to healthcare, education and welfare generally.

The following quotes sum up nicely how difficult it is to discuss "New Zealand poverty" as a "relative" type of poverty without making reference to "third world poverty". Some of the contradictions inherent in trying to explain the different "types" of poverty are present here:

Yes I think there are people living in poverty in comparison to the rest of New Zealanders. But in comparison with people in other parts of the world I don't think there is poverty. Yeah there is poverty in New Zealand.
I suppose like most people it's more remote and you think of extreme poverty like say the kids in the Philippines doing rubbish heaps, India and Darfur and third world. That brings to mind real poverty and I don't think we have anything here. But that's an extreme. Poverty is relative to the society you are living in I suppose.

That is a hard question because it is people's perception of poverty and as I said to you the other day on the phone children say in countries overseas

they have got no housing, no food, no clothes, the future is pretty bleak. I consider that the true meaning of poverty. But compared with people's income in New Zealand you could say there is a type of poverty amongst the lower socio economic. It's a form of poverty. But not true poverty. Everyone here is provided for in health, income, food, and shelter, so that is not true poverty.

The remaining sections of this chapter will highlight the main categories that participants used to identify and describe who the poor in New Zealand are likely to be and where they are likely to be found. These descriptions highlight how there is a well-developed shared understanding in the community about a group of people who are socially marginalised.

Who are the "New Zealand Poor"?

The interview transcripts contained a general assumption that if there was poverty in New Zealand, welfare beneficiaries would be the main group of people that would be classified as falling under the umbrella of being poor. Thus the beneficiary population was known to be the poor sector in New Zealand society. This perception of the "poor beneficiary" is also a reflection of how an understanding of "poverty" and "the poor" is institutionalised and how it is difficult to articulate ideas about poverty without reference to the social welfare system. Several participants articulated an understanding that a benefit is not enough to live on. Although this contrasted with formulations of poverty as not being "real" in New Zealand, participants were able to draw on the discursive resource of "relative poverty" to maintain this argument:

I guess people on benefit are the poorest of the poor in New Zealand. It's not enough to live on in today's society; even the best budgeter living on the benefit doesn't make ends meet if they have to go to the doctor or you know. It's user pays, there is no relief there is no refund on GST on essential services for food, power, telephone, any of that stuff. We all pay the same rich and poor….

Here a participant positions themselves as the "poor beneficiary" as they describe how Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) does not do enough to help them:

Me, me (laughs). Do you want to know why? Because the benefit is not enough. It is not supporting me enough; it's not supporting my son enough. I know that as far as WINZ is concerned that is just tough luck, they give me what they can give me and I have got to make the best of it. But simply because of day-to-day living, it is just not enough. I have got debts, I have got student loan, you know, I have got car payments, I have got stuff I brought that I probably shouldn't have brought that I am paying off. WINZ won't help me with those things. Yeah, so there is not enough support and not enough money.

A sense of the social stigma attached to being a "beneficiary" was a basic understanding that was expressed during the course of most interviews both with the participants who were beneficiaries and those that had never been on a welfare benefit. Beneficiaries conveyed an awareness of being "looked down on" by family members and the community in general and thereby made to feel like "second class" citizens. They told me that there was a general lack of understanding in the community of the beneficiary situation unless "you have been there". The following quote exemplifies the stigma that surrounds drawing a benefit. It also highlights how distancing poverty to third world places such as Africa has the effect of construing overseas poverty as more deserving of charity than New Zealand poverty:

A lot of people I socialise with are actually quite wealthy. I grew up in a wealthy area before I lived in Glenfield. I grew up in St Heliers and all my friends from school age are all returning there. I think a lot of my wealthier friends view beneficiaries with contempt and poor people with contempt generally. They have got no sympathy for them. They would actually donate money to Africa rather than look after a New Zealand poor family. You are not deserving even if it is circumstances beyond your control. They generally don't understand about it.

A number of participants argued that attitudes can get more polarised the wealthier a person becomes and the poor can come to be looked down on by those in more fortunate circumstances. The wealthy can often appear not to understand and are ignorant when it comes to knowing about situations of poverty. Thus wealthier members of society can easily distance themselves from poverty and at times view "those people", the "dole bludgers", with some contempt:

> *Sheryl* **So thinking about the people you socialise with (your brother for example) what do you imagine that they are saying about people who are wealthier or poorer than them?**
>
> *Participant* **… I have been at my brother's house and listened to them talking business man to business man about the situation in New Zealand and I just smile because they have no concept whatsoever of how people like myself or people less fortunate than myself are suffering. They have no idea whatsoever. The comments are "Well there's plenty of work out there" "Oh they are lazy" "They are dole bludgers" this that and the other. And yes there are people that are dole bludgers, there are people that don't want to work but you can't put everybody into that same category…**

The wider sense of social stigma associated with being a beneficiary is also present in conversations amongst family members. Evidence of the "conduct of conduct" was especially present at the level of the family. Often someone living on a benefit hears that they should learn to manage their money better:

> *Sheryl* **Thinking about the people you socialise with, what do you think they are saying about people who are wealthier or poorer than them?**
>
> *Participant* **"Well my brother said this when I went on the invalids benefit "The day you can live without living from Thursday to Thursday is the day you have learnt something". He said, "I don't live from payday to payday". Hard work begets glories I suppose is his thing. I know he was looking down on me when he said that".**

In particular, women living on the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB) attracted stigma. There was acknowledgement that some women could use the benefit as a temporary measure but also that it can become a "career choice" or profession and a "hand-out". Once again governing practices are seen in operation here, working to shape how a beneficiary should be subjecting themselves to dominant expectations of paid employment. "Career" options are seen as occupying a domain outside of the home and beneficiaries are expected to provide some evidence that they are adhering to these expectations. The following two quotes highlight how participants had to manage a dilemma of wanting to believe that the benefit system was fair and necessary as well as being aware of the different ways it could be used:

> *Participant* **Yes, it should be helpful but it can also make professional welfare dependants. But it should be helpful and I think it is a fair thing but this is unfortunate by product. I do know actually a lady who actually lives by it she has a child to get the welfare benefit and when the child gets old enough she has another child. And no father in sight. And of course I personally say that the DPB should be subject to identifying the father. So that the father can also contribute. Yes I think there is an underclass there.**
>
> *Sheryl* **What are your thoughts about the children who are living in that way?**
>
> *Participant* **Well I think it is a sad story. There you are they are disadvantaged. Yeah. But at the same time I do know some women who have done very well and my granddaughter is one of those cases. Her father was my son but he has passed away and her mother has done a very good job. So there you are. But in many cases…she was on the welfare benefit while the girl was small but later she got a degree and then she got a well-paid job in Wellington. But the other girl I was telling you about, well she is a nice lady too but (laughs) well she is living on the DPB as a profession.**
>
> **I am not really bashing solo mothers because some of them need it because for various reasons. But I think what really gets to me is the young girls that go and get pregnant, go on it (the DPB) that child is**

nearly ready for school and they go and have another child. And it becomes like a cycle. That's when I really get annoyed because they make it their career basically. I think that just needs a bit of tidying up. Not do away with benefits at all but just be a little bit more yeah…

People in receipt of the National Superannuation were not construed as "beneficiaries" and this allowed for positioning the elderly as a deserving sector of the population. Participants considered whether the National Superannuation was enough to be able to fully participate in today's society especially if the elderly person did not own any assets and their sole income was sourced from the National Superannuation. While those on the DPB were seen as needing more money management skills, those on the National Superannuation were more likely to be construed as just not having enough money to manage. Therefore the discursive resource of poverty as "relative" or as an inability to participate was drawn on readily when talking of the elderly. This contrasted to some extent with using comparisons with "third world absolute" categories for other members of the beneficiary population. The following two quotes are typical of how the elderly who were poor were identified:

Being elderly, a large percentage of the elderly are poor because they have been shafted by the government with their social security benefit. It's not enough.

Sheryl **So could you describe to me a person that you would consider poor in New Zealand?**
Participant **Yeah, I think some of the elderly just living on the pension. I don't think that the National Superannuation level is high enough to cope with adequate housing, food and general costs; I don't think that has kept up enough. I never worked with Superannuitants but I know what their budgets are and how they manage I have no idea…So yeah I think the money is there, apart from Superannuitants, in a lot of cases the money is there if they spent it wisely.**

Therefore, typically there was compassion expressed for the elderly especially if they were sick or disabled, they were considered as deserving of claiming a benefit. There was no stigma attached to these people being poor:

> **And another reason I think that poverty exists in this country is when I think about some of the conditions of the elderly people when they were bought into ... The physical state of them, the self-care was very low and they were poor. They were struggling on pensions.**

While in general "beneficiaries" were construed as "the poor" of New Zealand, during our interview some participants also maintained that wages were not keeping up with the rising cost of living. They argued here that for families this often meant that both parents had to work long hours to keep the family unit economically viable. The "working poor" were identified as those working on a low wage where "the system" has become a site of struggle which people never quite manage to overcome or make "work" for their families:

> **I would have said it was families living in state houses. Two parents working long hours probably two jobs to try and keep the kids in school, food on the table that sort of thing. Families that are struggling on two jobs where the income is not quite enough to pay for everything as a family.**

Additionally, the implication was that it is in this context that our community has generally undervalued childcare and that this is contributing to the social problems associated with poverty. I was struck by how this concern for the children of "the working poor" contrasted with the pressure applied to women on the DPB to find paid employment outside of the home. Overall, those employed on low incomes were construed as not only poor in monetary terms but also as "time poor" as the following two quotes demonstrate:

> **But there are people that are working their guts out eighty hours a week to make ends meet and they are poor because they haven't got time to spend with their family. So I would define that as poor as well.**

In my part of the world, most of the parents are working long hard hours and then they get home and they are tired and have no time for the kids. So the kids suffer in quality time with the mums and the dads. They try and attend as much as they can to school stuff and things like that but part of the time they miss out on that too. The kids miss out on things like, different community things, because you have to pay some kind of price for most of them you know, the free stuff is few and far between. Even the holiday programmes. If the kids could get good free holiday programmes that would be so fantastic. So spending time with their mums and dads, having guidance, because the guidance just isn't there from older people. Lots of them are just left to run around by themselves and as I say the low-income earners and the ones on the benefits they are trying so hard but just getting nowhere.

The identification of the "working poor" as those lacking in time to spend with their children, is included in the Salvation Army's 2008 State of the Nation report (Johnson, 2008). This report argues that although the governments Working for Families package has enticed parents into paid employment this has meant a decline in their children participating in early childhood education centres such as kindergartens, play centres and Kohanga Reo because of the necessity of fulltime day-care for the children of working parents.

"New Zealand Poverty" and Ethnicity

Of significant interest, although there were no questions on the interview schedule that asked people to comment on the relationship between ethnicity and poverty during the interview process nearly all participants spontaneously raised ethnicity as an issue or topic for discussion associated with poverty. They found different ways to manage this in our conversation. It became evident therefore that while talking about poverty in the New Zealand context, ethnicity becomes a significant factor reflecting a wider discursive understanding of socio-economic status and ethnicity. In general, participants routinely observed that Maori and Pacific peoples were notably disadvantaged sectors of the

population. This quote succinctly expressed the overall perception regarding ethnicity and poverty that I found throughout the interview transcripts:

> **First of all I immediately thought of the people we see in Africa. Absolutely starving children and mothers who can't breastfeed their babies that sort of thing. And then it is interesting because straight away for New Zealand I thought of a Maori family, or not so much a Maori family I immediately had a face in my mind a Maori woman who was middle aged and not managing well.**

In particular, racialised terms were used to describe the relationship between the welfare system and Maori. The following quote exemplifies the racialised tone that was present throughout the interviews. By noting that a "white" person could also be capable of abusing the system this quote contains an assumption that it is generally "the darker races" that both occupy and "abuse" the welfare system:

> **I know that they have criteria that people have to meet to get certain things but by the same token someone of the darker races might find it easier to get than someone from a white background because there is racism in New Zealand. And just from what I have seen there is definitely a heavy bias towards favouring the Polynesian and Maori people than there is to helping a white person who may genuinely be down on their luck. But in saying that too there are also quite a few European people who are doing things that they shouldn't be doing. Like the gentleman I mentioned earlier who didn't want to work but was quite happy getting money under the table for doing carpentry jobs but he couldn't work because he had a bad back.**

A discursive association between poverty, ethnic category and colonisation processes was also drawn on to explain the relationship between Maori and the welfare system. This allowed a participant, to acknowledge a notion of benefit system abuse by Maori but simultaneously give a justification for it:

> … And I know that there is a lot of talk about Maori abusing the system,
> but when you look at... I get really angry about that because there is such
> a history of racism in New Zealand that we don't acknowledge, and until
> we do and say okay what happened in the past has happened, there is
> nothing we can do about that but we can change it from now on. So let's
> look in partnership with Iwi/Hapu to move on, but I don't know.

A more overtly racist dialogue was also present in some of the interview conversations I
had. Here a connection between ethnicity and an understanding of poverty as a "sub
culture" embodied by Maori and Pacific people was expressed:

> I call it a dysfunctional family to actually stay in that situation. When
> they live off the government, when their children are suffering and there
> is a lot of that, dysfunctional families. Poverty, overcrowding in a house,
> ten people in a three-bedroom house.
>
> *Sheryl* Have you seen much of that?
>
> *Participant* Next door. Maoris and because of that I want to move. It's like
> we are the white piece of meat in the two slices of brown bread. Islanders
> one side Maoris the other and I don't like it. So we are looking for
> somewhere where there are not so many Maoris and Islanders.
>
> *Sheryl* Do you associate this with poverty?
>
> *Participant* Yes, scum of the earth I call them. But I keep myself to myself.
> I have got my TV. So yeah to me that is poverty having ten people living
> in a three bedroom house. They are buying it but you would think that
> they would put it back on the market and get something suitable
> wouldn't you? But instead they are staying there.

The following two quotes highlight an awareness of how a racialised notion of poverty is
well understood in the community. Even if it does exist "European" poverty is not often
talked about:

> I think that media portrays it as an ethnic problem perhaps more than
> what it actually is. It's a Kahui problem, you know, they are brown
> people, they are Pacific Island or Maori, and they don't work and it is all

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about alcohol and gambling and drugs and gangs, but I suspect that (and from things that I have also heard through working in medicine) that there is a lot (of poverty) amongst European as well. But it is just not as obvious because for whatever reasons the (for example the child abuse problem) cases that come to light are always amongst Pacific Island or Maori families and yet there is a high percentage of representation amongst European but you don't really hear about them.

Thus "white" people can be poor but their poverty is not on public display it is usually hidden:

It's not that all of the Palagi are rich, some of them are poor but they hide themselves in their homes. They don't come out. Like my culture, if they are poor they don't go to some of the people that help out, food parcel things like that. The Niue people don't want to go to WINZ to look for help.

"New Zealand Poverty" and Crime

Although (as with ethnicity) there were no questions on my interview schedule asking for the participant to reflect on an association between poverty and crime, discussing poverty tended to create links to ideas about criminal activities and domestic violence in a participant's interview conversation with me. The following comment drew a causal link between crime and poverty and illustrates an impression present throughout the interview conversations:

Sheryl **So how would you know if there was poverty in your community?**
Participant **Another way of knowing is the crime. People are always disturbed by crime and it's what gets the publicity. Sometimes things hit the local papers about, papers generally, you know media, about children being hungry, not very often. But... I think when there is unprovoked crime, particularly violent crime, there are social reasons for that, which is my personal opinion here. Which a lot of people won't recognise, a lot**

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of ordinary people feel that it is a lack of discipline or lack of this, or a lack of that, in society. But I think it often (not always) stems from poverty. It's a symptom.

Associating poverty with criminal behaviour creates an identity for the New Zealand poor as a group that generally lack regard for those who are able to display signifiers of wealth and social status. The following two quotes exemplify a common understanding expressed in the interview conversations that the poor resent those who have greater access to consumer items and this is most likely to show up in criminal activities:

Sheryl **So thinking about the people you socialise with, what do you imagine that they say about this whole issue of poverty and people who are wealthier and poorer than them?**

Participant **It's quite interesting actually, one thing I have noticed at a dinner table, you know the evening starts to run out and vivacious conversation and it gets down to "What's the next thing", "Oh well we will have something nasty to say about people who stole something off us or something". That feeling that there is a judgemental value and it usually is that, "we were made to be the victim and we don't like that and the people that did this to us they are the unwashed, they are the…" what do you call it there is another word for it, another line...?**

Sheryl **Undeserving?**

Participant **Well undeserving, yeah it is but they don't use the word undeserving it is too indistinct. It's more something a bit cruder than that it's um, what is that fresh phrase that is used?.........ah, lowlife.**

The following quote about angry poor kids vandalising cars correlates interestingly with the above rendition of the dinner conversation about the "low life":

Sheryl **So do you think this gap between wealthy and poor people is affecting how people think about each other? Or in other words thinking about the people that you are with what do you imagine that they say about people who are richer or poorer than them?**

Participant **I don't know much about that, but do you know a lot of… I used to work at the shopping centre a while ago and all these kids they would just come and bop all the nice cars in the yard. And they were so angry at the cars, for nothing. You know, they said, "Why do they have nice cars" "Why don't we?" that kind of attitude".**

Sheryl **So they are quite angry with the people who have things?**

Participant **"Nice things, not knowing that those people have worked hard to get that thing. They have that kind of attitude. A lot of poor kids will go and rob people's house because they know they have got things to take.**

Sheryl **What do you think the people who have got things, you know the wealthy people? What do you think they might think about the less wealthy? What do you imagine they say about it?**

Participant **They are so angry, but there is nothing they can do. They just wish that the police would get that person to punish and things like that.**

When reflecting on an association between crime and poverty an alternative "poor culture" was identified. The following quote contains an argument that this "poor culture" provides the young New Zealand poor with an identity that gives them a sense of belonging and social status that they cannot hope to obtain by socially acceptable means. They then fall outside normalised forms of "conduct of conduct" and come to identify and govern themselves as "gangsters":

Well to take an example of the LA gang culture that is creeping in. all these guys that are rappers. And they even resurrect the Crips and the Bloods. There are Crips and Bloods on the Shore here in Birkenhead and Glenfield. I don't know which one is which but it even affects high schools. People go and bash each other up on the street. They are wearing these crooked caps, and they are trying to be Negro rappers you know? Gangster rappers and they wear all the baggy clothes and they have got attitudes. And then there is the violence that goes with that and all the "bling" and yeah so I think that is bad too. So they are relating themselves to those people from low-income houses 'cos it often affects Maori and Pacific Islanders. They are relating to poor people that came

from gangs in a corresponding country you know. There are all these poor people - it has given them the opportunity to raise their level. Suddenly they have got status through being a gangster. And I think that the gang rap is appalling and it is responsible for things like the blot on the landscape called tagging. It is a social cost. So there is an example of poor culture permeating New Zealand society.

The Geography of "New Zealand Poverty"

As this was an Auckland based study participants tended to draw on direct and obvious examples of poverty that they had come across in their daily activities in the Auckland region. During the interview participants did not routinely report on any difference between rural and urban poverty and ideas about poverty in New Zealand outside of the Auckland location. Although initially wanting to distance New Zealand as having any "real third world" poverty most participants were eager to mention where the "New Zealand relative" type of poverty might be found. When describing obvious and visible poverty in New Zealand it was, in general, discussed by participants as being located in "South Auckland" or in specific suburbs such as Mangere, Otara and Clendon that would come under the umbrella of a generic "South Auckland". A few participants did also report that this visible and obvious poverty could also be found on "The Shore" (Auckland's North Shore) but only in selected perceived lower socio-economic areas such as Birkdale and parts of Glenfield and Northcote, which seemed comparable to "South Auckland" in the way they were described. Shabby inadequate houses and suburbs with high rates of crime were the general ideas that participants had about how poverty might manifest in these lower socio-economic areas:

> *Sheryl* **So you are saying that there is not any real poverty in New Zealand like in third world countries so I guess you have answered this next question but if you could expand on what you have said. So if there were poverty in New Zealand what would that look like?**
> *Participant* **Drive through South Auckland. Basically drive through all the Housing New Zealand suburbs in New Zealand and that is where the poorest of the poor in New Zealand are in the Housing New Zealand**

suburbs. And you would see poverty from the street. You have got unkempt, totally unkempt, backwater suburbs. Rough and graffitied.

When describing poverty in places like South Auckland it seemed that participants were drawing on and reflecting a wider and well established understanding of socio-economic status and geographical location in which wealth and poverty are well known and taken for granted as being spatially polarised. These specific places were construed as containing more individuals living in poverty who have to meet the associated problems of crime and substandard housing on a daily basis. Participants told me that generally people do not associate with those outside of their income bracket as geographical areas and educational background are often seen to define us. People generally live in their own world and in general poverty is out of sight, out of mind. People on the North Shore socialise with similar groups and "you wouldn't go south" for a Sunday drive:

It is out of sight out of mind too with the poor. As I said you can drive for weeks and weeks down there (South Auckland) and I am the only Palangi. People just don't go into those suburbs and they say, "God if we have to drive through Otara we have all our doors and windows locked". Otara is actually quite a safe suburb. I mean if you hang around the shopping centre at two o'clock in the morning you might have problems but we have delivered flyers and things like that through Otara at night time – very quiet. Mainly huge families in there and they all go to bed quite early. I never, ever have felt unsafe in Otara. I would feel less safe in probably Clendon part at night-time, maybe. Manurewa. Bits of Papakura are not too hot at night-time. But people don't really know 'cos they don't go there. I mean you wouldn't go there for a Sunday drive but you would go to the North Shore for a Sunday drive or East Auckland. You wouldn't go south.

Policy initiatives aimed at targeting poor areas with extra funding for requirements such as health services, with the purpose of reducing poverty based on formulaic understandings of geographically based deprivation, were perceived as problematic for the individuals living outside these areas who may be struggling financially. Here is a description of a negative effect of policy aimed at alleviating the poverty in perceived

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poor areas with reference made to the stigma attached to living in a place associated with poverty:

> **It varies from suburb to suburb too, because I know when I was helping a family, because we lived on the Shore and the Shore was perceived to be an affluent area. It was harder to get help at that time, because the doctors' fees were dearer here than they were in South Auckland because there wasn't supposedly the need here. So it just depends, areas are different and a lot of things are cheaper actually in the country. Doctor's fees, veterinary fees things like that, than in Auckland. But let's face it people don't always like to live in low income houses and if they can they try to get out of the way of that. They don't want to live in one of those streets unless they have to.**

Awareness that there were people struggling financially outside of poor areas contrasted with the descriptions of the obvious and visible poverty located in places like South Auckland. Participants observed that poor people are often located in perceived affluent areas such as "The Shore" and that they often go unnoticed. Therefore, contrasting with a general notion of poverty as being exclusively located in the slums of South Auckland, participants also construed poverty in New Zealand as hidden in more prosperous places with people struggling financially but keeping up an appearance of wealth:

> **But sometimes, you can't see poverty here but there is plenty behind doors that you don't know about. You can see a little but there is more behind doors. Yeah.**

> **Sometimes the very poorest people have a way of covering up, so you wouldn't know until perhaps you got to know them a little better. You wouldn't know and there is a certain amount of pride that goes with it. And the face of it with many is that they just get further and further into debt. The use of credit cards is one way that they can see that they can cope, but credit card companies will eventually overtake them.**

Sheryl **So thinking about this poverty, how much of it is in your immediate community and how would you know?**

Participant **In this area (the Shore) it's bigger than you would think. On the Shore it is hidden easier because we are… New Zealanders think if you have got a house you must be rich. So at this end of the Shore a large percentage of the population live in housing that is one house to the traditional quarter acre section, so on the surface it looks like this part of the community is affluent. But when you dig just a little bit deeper you begin to realise that they are struggling as bad as someone who is living in a state house or a government provided apartment.**

This notion that there is significant poverty behind closed doors contrasted significantly with the presentation of there being no "real poverty" in New Zealand that was used when drawing on the "poverty as third world" discursive resource. In general participants did not want to position themselves as being amongst "the New Zealand poor". Throughout the interview conversations participants often alluded to their own circumstances and how they managed their own position to avoid an appearance of poverty. Here a participant highlights some of the self-governing practices that help to keep poverty "hidden":

Well I have been told I manage my money well and I sometimes look at people with money who fritter it away and they haven't got what I have got and sometimes I am very proud of myself because I do manage. And yes, I would say that there are families who have been brought up from generation to generation on the dole and on the benefit that definitely don't know how to manage their money but then there are others like me that do. But it is getting harder and harder. And the moment personally I worry because I have got to the point now where I have to resort to buying food sometimes on my credit card. And I have even had to resort to getting food parcels. This is something I never thought I would have to do. I have always been quite a proud person. And it was very difficult for me to have to ask for help. So I am getting into debt on my credit card big time and it is not through gambling, not through buying expensive toys, it's just day-to-day living. And it worries me sick. I would say there are a lot of people… So no I am not managing myself now. But people in the

service think I am. They don't know. They don't know because I don't tell anyone. You are the first person I have told. And I am talking about $10,000 in debt on my credit card; I am just committed to pay the bills.

Conclusion

I found that there was a widely held common set of understandings in the words used to describe poverty that contributed to how those who are considered as poor in New Zealand were identified and categorised. During the course of the interview participants presented ideas about what they considered as poverty and who they considered as poor by drawing on two main categorisations of poverty, absolute *"third world poverty"* and *"New Zealand poverty as relative"*. Having these two discursive resources available allowed a participant to argue that "real" poverty is mainly confined to third world countries but a type of "relative" poverty can be found in New Zealand. Particular sectors of the New Zealand population were recognised as being more likely to contain a "relative" "New Zealand type of poverty" with the categories most frequently mentioned being beneficiaries and ethnic minorities. Interestingly, "child poverty" did not emerge specifically as a "category" of poverty despite the recent public dialogue overviewed in chapter four. As they categorised poverty and identified the poor in the interview conversation, this gave participants a key way to explain the presence of dividing practices in New Zealand communities. Participants often drew on moralising imagery as they discussed poor people and there were several common understandings across the transcripts of the boundaries around which sectors of the population were likely to include deserving and undeserving poor people in their midst. The distancing language used in the interviews that tended to separate members of the community into "us and them" gave some indication of the divisional practices that are present in the community.

Foucault addressed how ideas such as "madness" and "sexuality" came to be "known" through a set of practices that marked them out in reality (Foucault, 2004). In a similar fashion a set of practices (such as categorising parts of a population as "the poor") makes it possible for us to know "poverty" both as a concept and as something that has become "inscribed in reality" (Foucault, 2004). As reviewed in chapter two, Foucault (1982) conceived of three modes of objectification that transform people into "subjects"; the

scientific mode of inquiry that objectifies and produces a "subject"; the use of dividing practices that separate the subject from others; and finally the process of subjectification where a person turns him or herself into a subject. The categories that participants used to identify poverty highlight how "the poor" are firstly identified as the "subjects" of a discourse surrounding poverty and are then exposed to practices that separate them from the wealthier members of society. As *social welfare beneficiaries* become positioned as "the poor" of New Zealand they then become the "subjects" of the discourse that identifies a "New Zealand type of poverty". As such they become subjected to specialised regimes of welfare and to stronger expectations about their own consumption practices (see following chapters seven and eight). Additionally, a level of social distancing was particularly noticeable when talking about social welfare beneficiaries who were often "othered" in the language used during the interviews as participants described the life style and daily activities of people reliant on social welfare. This was evidenced in the way social welfare beneficiaries are expected to self-regulate in ways that the speaker may not apply to him or herself, (a point further explicated in later chapters). Further, the allocation of poverty to "South Auckland" worked simultaneously to distance poverty and to confine it to a particular location. Thus, there was a well-developed understanding articulated throughout the interviews of the social, institutional and spatial separation of the wealthy and the poor. Discursive categorisations, such as *social welfare beneficiary* invite individuals to take up and position themselves in a place where the discourse makes the most sense (Foucault, 1982). The way poverty and the poor were identified and categorised in the interviews gave some information on how participants process information about poverty that is generated at an academic, political and social level and relate it to their own life experience. It also generated information on where those participants positioned themselves as they told me largely through the use of life narratives how they saw themselves in relation to other people in the community. Chapter ten will further explicate how categories form part of a wider discursive landscape involving practices that distance poverty and "the poor" combining to support a political rationality that promotes a notion of citizenship defined in active terms. The following chapter, chapter seven, takes a closer look at how those who are considered as poor are depicted in relation to consumer culture and considers how this understanding works to position the poor.

Chapter Seven

"It's Not Just About Money"

A Non-Material Definition of Poverty

Throughout the interview conversations, while the notion of "wealth" was predominantly construed in a material sense, the idea of "poverty" also attracted a non-material definition. Accordingly, participants portrayed to me that although a lack of money and resources can be an important factor in determining who is poor and experiencing poverty, there are other non-material factors to take into account such as the idea of social, cultural, emotional, spiritual, or psychological reasons for poverty. This chapter will focus on how the contemporary poor of New Zealand are identified in social conversation by drawing on a non-material explanation for situations of poverty. In order to explicate how a poor person is framed in relation to consumer culture I have identified two main language resources or discourses that the participants drew on when explaining poverty as being about something other than a lack of access to material resources. When engaging with the *spiritual poverty and the poor as disconnected* discursive resource, participants referred to poverty as a spiritual or emotional state that often (but not necessarily) accompanied a lack of access to material resources. Also embedded in the definition of poverty as involving non-material aspects, the discursive resource of a *mind-set and culture* of poverty emerged. Drawing out these two main discursive resources allows for competing explanations around notions of spiritual poverty, habits, choice and lifestyle and the relationship with these dimensions to consumption practices, to be gathered together in this chapter. Thus there are a variety of viewpoints presented here. These include comments of a personalised nature whereby poverty is attributed to individual choice, bad decisions and an impoverished state of being through to comments that consider it is wider social structures which create and reinforce situations of poverty.

Poverty Construed in a Non-Material Sense

Regarding the notion of poverty in a material sense is to see it as a state where a person is without money or food, a place to live or work. Although I found that the idea of poverty was well understood in this general material sense as having an effect on a person's material well-being, a way of seeing "New Zealand poverty" as being about something other than material also emerged in the interviews. In this non-material way of knowing about poverty and what it means to be poor, a lack of knowledge, education and life skills were emphasized over a lack of access to basic material resources such as food, electricity and housing. Therefore by drawing on a non-material explanation for poverty a lack of basic resources was regarded in terms of mismanagement by a person (or the state) of the income or resources that they have access to. Thus although poverty could be defined in the first instance in material terms, the non-material explanation was also drawn on as this quote demonstrates:

…. In New Zealand I think it would be what your house looks like. Whether you have got a car. Whether you have got material things. And they, I think people measure poverty by materialistic things, though of course there is emotional poverty. Although I think to me it is more a visual theme of having material things.

Participants made a point of stressing that poverty has generally been measured by government in a financial sense and they used the idea of a non-material definition in the interview to resist a perceived assumption that poverty is always due to a lack of money or access to material things. This quote summed up this argument:

…So that is perhaps another aspect of poverty you may or may not of thought about. Poverty is not just about money and I think you could put that on your fridge, poverty is not about money. And also too, this is the issue that government always brings up - money, money, money. But they miss the point. Poverty is not just about money….

Additionally the notion that material worth is a one-dimensional way to perceive poverty and wealth was drawn on at times in the interviews:

> **I think people are poor if they not happy within their life, you know what I mean. To me that is poor. If you have got no money but if you are happy and you can do what you want to do that's good, you don't have to be going overseas and all that sort of thing. If you can adapt your life to be happy with what you can do, well that to me is rich. So materialistically, if you have got all the flashy things you give the appearance of being rich but are you?**

Participants regularly visited the idea of "New Zealand poverty" as being more likely to comprise of a type of non-material poverty especially when comparing it with the "real third world poverty" found in a global setting:

> **I must say the poverty is relative. I have been to parts of the world where people have not had very much - third world countries - material resources. Once again kids go to school, well-groomed good posture, beaming smiles, looking forward with a positive outlook, wanting to do well in their lives. They will have had far less than what we have access to in New Zealand in terms of materialistic things but they have a positive state of being. They are happy and have an optimistic outlook on life. I think that it is important to weigh up how we consider poverty and that poverty of material things is perhaps easier to deal with than poverty of spirit. When you have poverty of spirit it is difficult to overcome. And that is where we can learn from other people who may have material poverty but have a great outlook, a great attitude and a great spirit about them. I have seen that and it was an inspiration to me. So that is how I will sum it up.**

Three participants mentioned an incident in May 2007 where Folole Muliaga, a Samoan mother of four, who relied on the use of an oxygen machine, died following the disconnection of the power to her home due to an unpaid power account. Those

participants who talked about this incident used it primarily as an example of how the "New Zealand poor" are lacking in education and life skills and therefore do not know how to manage and prioritise their spending habits to spend money on the basics:

… It's like there is some lack of awareness or lack of yeah…. Much as I felt really terrible for that Samoan lady who died with the electricity cut off, (I actually had the same doctor she had, 'cos yes I smoke) at the same time particularly when I was sick (I had really bad asthma) I had a phone and I had the electricity for the nebulizer. Boy they were first things I had to pay. Because I knew if they were off (and I had two young kids) I was dead. If I couldn't ring an ambulance or they (the kids) couldn't ring one for me. There was actually no way they couldn't have been paid. They were the number one bills. And I had to have them all on direct credit because I was in and out of hospital and unless you had them on direct credit you would get behind anyway and not keep track of them. And I did think, well I don't know how you didn't pay them if your life depended on it. I did find that amazing because having been in the same position there was, no way, no how that the money wouldn't have gone there because it was life or death. I mean I wouldn't have starved my kids but we were on a pretty strict plain diet…

The use of a non-material explanation for poverty contrasted with how participants defined wealth. Wealth was overwhelmingly presented in material terms defined as having a lot of money and having ownership of a lot of things, such as expensive cars. The geography of wealth in Auckland was well known with wealthy people understood to be living in million dollar mansions along the Waterfront and in Remuera, Ponsonby and Takapuna:

The first images that spring to mind of a rich person would be the people living in one of the mansions on the golden mile on Takapuna beach. They are right on the beachfront. They are huge houses that are worth millions two – four million. They would be the rich person. Two cars, three cars, swimming pool, fancy schools.

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There was a general theme running through the transcripts that the wealthy would want to be noticed as being wealthy. Accordingly, this was often expressed as a keen awareness and suspicion of the conspicuous consumption and snobbery of the wealthy. This sentiment was alluded to in this quote:

The last rich person I met was when I was helping my friend out in the Calico Christmas craft fair. She had some Father Christmases to sell amongst other stuff, and they were quite nice. But this woman stopped as she went past, 'cos Friday they have all the posh ones who pour out of Remuera and she looks down and goes to her friend Ahhhh I might have to buy that Santa. Because we haven't gone overseas this year I don't have a new Santa for this year (laughs). Yeep like you just go overseas every year and collect your new Santa, the Santa for 2007 (laughs out loud). You know now you are reduced to buying it for forty-five dollars or something at a craft fair – that's rich. I would say she has no idea probably of how people live.

Further, when discussing those who have wealth, participants construed that those who are wealthy tend to shut themselves away from people who have less, that they then become isolated in their wealth. This participant described how although wealthy people have their own unhealthy habits they are blind to these habits when discussing "those people", the poor. They see the poor as those who need to correct their behaviour:

Sheryl **So thinking about the people you socialise with, what do you imagine that they are saying about people who are wealthier or poorer than them?**
Participant **I would say the fairly wealthy ones that I know of and basically it is only one way and it is their way and I would say they just totally look down with very little understanding and very little compassion at people who don't have very much money or don't seem to be making a very good go of it or making sensible decisions at the time. And it's very much "those people" and they don't have to specify anything more than "those people". It could be race or it could not be. It's just like "those people" who aren't like us. It could be a lot of ways that**

**they are not like. Yeah, very lacking in compassion or understanding, I
would say. They really don't know how well off they are compared to
other people. They would think that people staying here would be doing it
only because they are gambling, drinking, don't like their kids and are
neglecting them and it's sort of like "end of story" no compassion. No
awareness that they could be all busy drinking just as much you know?
They are the same problems but different ways that's all. Much more
refined and not the same thing, if they even think about it. Yeah quite
nasty I think.**

A materialistic definition of wealth and the expectation that evidence of this wealth is to
be practised conspicuously, positions those on a low income as feeling left out and
lacking if they cannot hope to achieve status through their consumption practices:

**And the people that are on a low income, people that have come from the
Islands that have lived quite lovely simple lives and they could quite
happily live like that here except that they are exposed to what everybody
else is doing, the helicopters and fancy cars and the status and the pay
and display. Which is what I think is a brilliant picture of what Auckland
is about, pay and display.**

Spiritual Poverty and the Disconnected New Zealand Poor

A discursive resource that identified the poor as victims of both a disempowering system
and of themselves was drawn on by many participants across the interviews. "Poverty of
spirit" and "emotional poverty" were the terms coined in this discourse. Here the poor
were construed as hopeless, helpless and incapable, a group of people who are
disconnected from mainstream society. They were presented as being disempowered both
socially and by government organisations. The term "spiritual poverty" was often used to
describe a situation brought about by being disempowered by the welfare system:

**I think that poverty is relative, and through my work I have seen people
who live in poverty. And it's not just financial poverty, it's poverty of**

spirit and compounded by financial problems, compounded by their own lack of resources, compounded by the system that doesn't encourage them to find their own resources.

In this discursive resource the terms emotional and spiritual poverty and the idea of non-material poverty were closely connected to ideas of the poor described as being disconnected and marginalised:

Poverty of spirit. It's poverty, being marginalised, it's uneducated, not knowing what's out there, just not connected, totally disconnected from our society as we know it to operate and to have a place in the world.

Here is the perspective of a participant drawing on this terminology to discuss their experience of the difficulties in dealing with government agencies and the sense of social stigma they felt surrounding this:

…for instance one of the things that WINZ exacerbate is poverty of confidence, poverty of spirit; they make you feel at the bottom of the heap as far as social status goes. So anytime you enter a WINZ office you will come out almost invariably feeling poor in that respect…

So often, the victims of "spiritual poverty" were understood as having arrived in that state of being because of disempowering social and economic structures:

I live in Titirangi and it is a lovely part of the world to live and I don't see much evidence of poverty in Titirangi I have to tell you. But West Auckland there are families who are absolutely struggling, I know that through my work. West Auckland is littered with them. And as I said before it is not just financial poverty but it is poverty of spirit as well. And I think that financial poverty creates that and it's not just the money side of it but it is the system that people find themselves in, feeling disempowered, and feeling like they are actually accessing something that they shouldn't.

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However, participants also used this discursive resource to argue for a notion of poverty that is experienced as a gradual downward spiral that becomes increasingly *self-inflicted*. Thus the idea of a situation of spiritual poverty promoted a personalised and individualised definition of poverty and it portrayed poverty as a "state of being" involving a learned helplessness and a depressive state of mind. Individuals experiencing spiritual poverty are construed in a personalised way here in this description of how people despair and often appear to give up striving to get out of their situation:

> **…Children I think often have a degree of hope that sometimes through adolescence and early adulthood is lost. So adults who are in a state of despair over their poverty, over their situation, can see no way out of it. I think that that is an extreme form of poverty because that is what you would call spiritual poverty that becomes hopelessness and despair.**

The emotional component of a state of spiritual poverty is described in the following quote. Here it is argued that a person becomes trapped in the life that they have and cannot easily make changes to how they think and make a choice to live differently. A person increasingly becomes the life that has been presented to them; they take it up and cannot think about another way to live:

> **(Sighs). Well I mean a very basic way to measure it, is people that haven't got enough to get out of the confines of their very narrow and very tight and very un-giving existences really. The worst poverty is where you are trapped in a way, there is no front or back. The street is out there, you can walk out, you can walk away, but can you in your mind walk away? It is a bit difficult walking away when things are bad.**

Thus the way in which poverty can be construed as being both a personalised situation together with the awareness of how that situation is created and reinforced through social and economic structures was well articulated in the interviews. This quote captures some of the tensions between the personalised and structural dimensions contained in the notion of "spiritual poverty":

Sheryl **What might be the long-term social and physical effects of poverty on children?**

Participant **Oh huge. I can talk personally about that I suppose. Social effects. It can make them introverted I think. There is one of two ways you can go if you are in poverty. You can take on and use the system to get you out of it, to help you view things differently. I think poverty can be in the eye of the beholder type thing how you see yourself. I mean just because you don't have money doesn't mean that you are poor in a way. Even though it does if you know what I am saying.**

The above quote contains an argument that it can be how a person assesses themselves and their situation that will determine how they construct their identity and live their lives. Linking a notion of "spiritual poverty" with "self-perception" saw poverty as a "state of mind" and that the onus is on the individual to frame their experience in a positive way in order to best manage their external set of circumstances. When drawing a connection between self-perception and poverty participants considered that people who are living in a non-material "perceived poverty" situation were the people that were in most need of help and education:

…. I think in New Zealand we are very fortunate we have access to services, which help us overcome undesirable states, which might be associated with poverty. We have access through income support to funding for health, we have access to housing through housing agencies, we have universal healthcare that meets our basic needs. Our basic needs are well catered for in New Zealand and I do think that where there is the intention and desire we can overcome states of poverty whether it be a materialistic or a perceived state of poverty. And a perceived state of poverty does impact on people's mental well-being, impacts on their spiritual well-being and impacts on their self-esteem. And sometimes people have no self-esteem and it can affect their ability to function…

So while participants commented on the effects of distancing language used by wealthier members of society when conversing with, or about, poorer people they were also able to maintain that how a person perceives and responds to their set of circumstances was a key factor in how well they managed their situation. Thus a strong theme running through the

interview transcripts was that those on a low income did not have to construe themselves as poor even though they might consider that others may position them as such due to their low financial status. There was a sense of stigma surrounding poverty and a participant would distance themselves from identifying with a "spiritual" or "emotional" form of poverty. This participant did not want to identify with a notion of being in poverty or being a long-term beneficiary:

But then even when I was on the benefit and not working and at home with the children I didn't really feel like that either. But that is the difference between being born into that set of circumstances and being in that set of circumstances for a given time. I always knew I could get out of that. My needs were different then too. All I really needed to do was to be there for my children as babies and make sure they were fed and they were warm and all those really basic needs. So no, I never felt impoverished.

So a person does not have to identify as being in "poverty" and can choose to resist that label and category. The following quote highlights how a person can choose how they want to position themselves and construct their identity even if they suspect they might be considered as "poor" by others:

…. In terms of poverty, as far as money goes, I think there is a great deal of poverty in New Zealand. I mean I live on a very low income, but I don't consider myself to be poor. I mean I always struggle to pay my bills this week. But because of help from the community I have everything that I need in my house. I have had a car basically long-term lent to me, so I don't have to pay for the maintenance of it, I just pay for petrol. So on the whole mostly I can live with my children at a level that feels okay to me. But to another person that level would appal them because I mean I can't take my children out to do some of the things that other people can. I can't go on holidays, I can't buy clothes, and usually I have to get them handed down. So to me it's very much a question of what aspect of poverty………so in terms of money, yes there is definitely poverty, there are people, even myself, who can't take their

children to the doctor. I have to hope that they are well enough and only in very extreme circumstances will I take them to the doctor. There are…. and I don't consider myself poor, I know there are people who have children who are sick and they go to the doctor and have them diagnosed as having asthma but they can't afford the inhalers or whatever medicines that they are prescribed. They just can't buy them…

Building on the idea that poverty can be about self-perception and self-labelling the following participant reflects on the idea that it is often about your *self-presentation* as to whether you will draw compassion or judgement from others. An individual will fare better if they adjust their behaviour to dominant expectations of independence and self-sufficiency. Consistent with Rose's (1996) notion of the desirability of the autonomous individual needed in states of "advanced liberalism", a presentation of independence and autonomy is more appealing to others than that of dependence and desperation:

I left an abusive situation in the South Island, and I arrived here with my kids with nothing. And I had to rely on the community for everything. I have noticed that in terms of the general public (as a person that does have to be very careful with money, being on the DPB) if I am cheery about my situation, if I come across as someone who thinks yes I do live on a low income, but it's okay, I am alright, that's where I am at and I am not going to complain about it and I am just making the best of it, I am far more likely to get help from other people when I present it in that way. If I have got to a situation where I have let some situation go on too long and I am really desperate, such as I have really run out of food money and I am really worried that they are not going to help me at WINZ and I have that angst and that anxiety about me, the chances are that I may not get help. So it's become obvious to me that how you present yourself has a very big effect on whether people help you or not.

Because "New Zealand poverty" is not obvious "third world" poverty drawing on a discursive resource that explains poverty as being part of a person's state of mind and self-perception is how a poor person might best be identified in the New Zealand setting:

> **…A person owning a boat in New Zealand is not very uncommon, you know in South Africa if you had a boat you would be considered rich. So you can definitely see (in South Africa), a rich person would have things and poor people wouldn't. However, it all has to do with your state of mind, you know, in terms of how you can use wealth. You might be poor monetarily, but I wonder if it has to do with the way that you perceive yourself as well. I mean do you see yourself as being poor, do you categorize yourself as poor.**

The following quote exemplifies the notion of a poverty of the spirit that involves individuals who do not have a sense of feeling valued by society, finding themselves in a set of circumstances that lead them to acquire a subjective sense of victimisation – of being disconnected and othered:

> *Sheryl* **To sum up can you give me two to three sentences that sum up how we might define poverty in New Zealand? Thinking about everything we have talked about.**
> *Participant* **I think I go back to not feeling included in society, nothing for you there. So needing to feel part of society, to be part of the dream, a place for your family and that you have a future. So for me poverty is feeling that there is nothing there for you and then you just go sideways really. So that would be poverty for me, material things yes, but also not feeling that you have a future that there is a place for you in this country and that you are valued, that you can participate, and your children have a future and that what you try to do is recognised, that you are productive and that you are contributing to society.**

"New Zealand Poverty" as a "Mind-set" and Culture

In this discursive resource a non-material form of poverty was referred to by participants as a "cycle" or a "culture", or a "mind-set" that brings about a general mismanagement of money and of life. Poverty was argued to be the outcome of intergenerational, unhelpful sets of learned behaviour. Construing poverty as a learned culture and a cycle with its own mind-set was readily connected in our interview discussion with a perception of lifestyle as a "choice". An identity for the poor person emerged in this discourse of an individual who could not (or would not) manage their money properly or hope to be able to participate in consumer culture. When drawing on this discourse participants typically considered that the basic items that sustain life in a New Zealand community such as food, rent and power should be dealt with first and that these costs are often not meet by people living in poverty because they do not choose to prioritise them. This quote summed up nicely the individualised sentiment that was usually underlying talk of a mind-set of poverty:

> **I think poverty for me is a mind-set. It starts off as a mind-set, and from there if you don't turn it around it just becomes a way of life, because you can turn your life around, it all comes down to the individual. So it's a mind-set for me.**

Drawing on the discourse of a poverty mind-set a participant could easily question whether there is actual (meaning material) poverty in New Zealand. Life skills are assumed to be an important factor in determining whether people remain beneficiaries and are therefore at risk of living in poverty long-term:

> Sheryl **What might be the long-term social and physical effects of poverty on children in your experience?**
> *Participant* **Well you keep that underclass. If people have got to the point of no return where they just can't handle the whole situation, then the effect on children of course is they grow up accepting that this is a way of life, that there is no way out. So I think there is a poverty mind-set that perhaps those children would have. Then there are the ones that**

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accept poverty, you know long-term beneficiaries, that this is a way of life and very often when you get into those areas there is income supplemented by crime, which of course is never declared. So whether there is actual poverty in there it's hard to know. There are so many factors. But how it affects children, well it depends on the family. If it is temporary poverty then the kids are going to get the life skills, the parents are going to talk about it, they are going to see them working a way out of it and they (the children) are going to learn. I am just such a strong believer in education that I would push that all the time. That people must be able to see a way out, and I think if they can't, then that is it, they are doomed. This is where mental illness comes in as a factor outside their control.

A connection between lifestyle, choice and parenting practices was also perceived as part of a poverty culture mind-set:

I think the problem is with people and their choice of living, their choice of lifestyle. So though the reason why I say it's sad is because parents are the people, the kids rely on their parents, and if the parents don't make the right choice for the family, the kids will suffer. So it doesn't matter if the kids suffer, there is nothing they can do about the parents who are in charge of that family. I think the reason why they are in that situation is because of what they choose to do in life…The poverty comes from this kind of thing, making the right choice and making the wrong choice, from now on.

Thus it was argued that often this "New Zealand type" of poverty mind-set is caused by the adults in the household not managing incoming money and resources correctly and thereby creating a situation of poverty for their children**:**

There are a lot of things, for instance in New Zealand it is the money aspect. People are given a basic benefit. They have a basic income that is sustainable for life. But the money is not used correctly and it goes into other areas. For instance gambling, drugs, alcohol, family commitments

outside of the immediate family so the money is not getting directed into where it is required. For instance kids' clothes, keeping the house clean, kids' food. It is not getting right into where it is needed and so you could say that that is a form of New Zealand poverty in that children are not getting the basic necessities of life. The income and the resources are coming in to the adults in the house but it is not going down to the children where it should be.

The images that were presented in the interviews of a mind-set and lifestyle of a type of New Zealand poverty at times closely mirrored a discussion held in the media surrounding the death of the Kahui twins in June 2006. Following a statement by the then Prime Minister, Helen Clark, which labelled the Kahui family as a throwback to the 1994 movie *Once Were Warriors,* a series of articles in the New Zealand Herald, was written by social issues reporter Simon Collins, entitled *Warriors Still: A Herald series examining New Zealand's violent culture* (Collins, 2006, July 24 – July 29). The week-long series examined Maori culture and poverty in the light of alcohol and drugs, welfare, gangs, domestic violence, neglected children and cultural identity. The media coverage of the death of the Kahui twins seemed to paint an image of poverty in the New Zealand context as being strongly connected with negligent and abusive parenting in this participant's mind:

…But when I think about these images we see on the television of the Kahui situation, that's poverty to me. And that's poverty in its worst sense in that it's poverty on a lot of levels; I don't know that any of it had to do with lack of money because in that particular family there was a lot of money coming into that house through benefits, a lot of money. But the way it was managed and used kept that family in poverty for whatever reason, through ignorance or alcoholism or drug abuse or whatever, but they were in poverty it seemed. So it wasn't a funding issue, and I don't know how widespread that is but when you drive through parts of Glen Innes or parts of South Auckland it is there definitely.

The identity of this "type" of poor person is drawn out in the following quote. This participant spoke about a "benefit-type personality" seeming to refer to a perception of an

inherent character type that identifies some beneficiaries. The argument here was that these character types are creating a stigma for other genuine beneficiaries who are struggling on the benefit out of circumstance:

> **This is what I believe that the government should do for people like me on the benefit. I can see that we are trying. You get that benefit-type personality but they are about one per cent of the beneficiary population, the rest of us we are only there because of circumstance. It is not because we want to be and I am definitely trying to break the cycle with my grandson and my other kids and stuff which I have managed to do. We are getting there but it is slow and I wish it were a bit easier so I could enjoy my kids.**

Participants were keen to discuss the consumption patterns and practices of the poor at some length and referred to having to "keep up with the Joneses" in order to participate in consumer culture with luxury items such as Sky television and mobile phones now owned by most people in today's consumer society, both wealthy and poor. When arguing that poverty is a mind-set a participant would explain that unhelpful habits and irresponsible spending are the direct cause of poverty. Purchasing luxury items, making unhealthy food choices, having unmanageable debt, tithing to churches, giving priority to drinking, smoking, drug use and gambling were routinely seen as the irresponsible consumption practices of poor people:

> **There are people who have been brought up, you have generations now that have been brought up on the Domestic Purposes Benefit so they only know what they have learnt. People only know what they have learnt and experienced. And if they have learnt no other way, no possibilities, then that's all they know and I think that there is probably many people out there who have learnt habits from their family or their friends which in the long term aren't necessarily good. Like putting things on hire purchase for example and there are a lot of businesses out there that will take advantage of people's ignorance and sign them up to deals that they can't necessarily afford…**

A common idea expressed when drawing on the idea of a mind-set of poverty, was that today people can appear as wealthy but this is because the system is allowing them to carry a large amount of debt. Symbols of conspicuous consumption as signifiers of wealth can be misleading in contemporary times because of the increasing ability of people to accrue large levels of debt. Again a notion of "hidden poverty" is alluded to here:

> **I think the gap is still there but I don't think it is as wide as it used to be because people in the upper income brackets, the richer people are paying taxes and a lot of them have got mortgages. They appear to be rich because they have got their own home, but for all we know they could be having toasted sandwiches for dinner every night except when they have got visitors because their mortgages are so crippling.**

Thus describing poverty as a mind-set was usually used as evidence of irresponsible spending habits. This perception of irresponsible spending involved noticing that people often try to cover up and keep up appearances while not providing the basics for their children such as having food in the cupboards:

> **….Some is people put themselves in situations, where to have a beautiful home they will go without the basics of living. I mean they have to be up with the Joneses, everything has to be a certain way and yet they have got no food in their cupboards. And I find that really bad on people with children because they are living up to everybody else's standards not their own. There definitely is poverty here. And it's also true that idea of trying to keep up with the Joneses…**

So it was argued that a mind-set of poverty is evidenced in increasing levels of debt in the community. This uneasy relationship between debt and consumer culture is producing today's young poor people. They are not equipped to manage their money and to be responsible consumers. This mind-set is what is leading to situations of poverty:

> **I actually think it is going to get worse rather than better, because the children today are not taught to manage like their parents were. My Mum managed. Learnt to manage and did. My father was on quite a**

good income so we never knew what it was like to live with poverty. But they managed on the income that they had. But young people today, when they get married or set up flat they want to have everything that their parents have had and they get themselves into debt. Instead of just thinking well we can manage without a television or a stereo or something like that they want it all to start with. And that is where they end up with the money problems.

Thus a participant could argue that there was no type of poverty to be found in New Zealand but find it difficult to avoid making a connection between people living in places of "so-called poverty" and their desire to participate and construct their identities in relation to consumer society:

Sheryl **Okay, I know that you are saying there is no third world poverty and rubbish bin searching here. If you could look at disparity between different groups, if there was anybody who was less well off in this country how would you know?**

Participant **They would look very much like a friend of mine who I was talking to a couple of weeks ago who lives in a so called impoverished area and he was explaining to me that he felt slightly poverty stricken because he couldn't afford the latest thirty-two inch flat screen television. That was his idea of poverty. He couldn't afford one at the time.**

Another key aspect drawn on when framing poverty as a contemporary mind-set, involved noting how well people used to manage in the past:

I guess too I have a strong background thing of the depression. I grew up with my grandparents and both my parents grew up in the depression and from the stories of that it was deeply ingrained in them and I guess reflected in how I grew up. That we didn't really waste anything. And anything seemed pretty good compared to what they had. When my dad grew up his mum had to turn the house into a boarding house, him and his sister used to fight to lick the plates of the boarders as they took them to the kitchen. He said looking back; some of the single guys that were working actually would leave food on their plates a bit. He said he didn't

realise at the time but he thought later on they were just doing that for the children you know. And he slept in the laundry under a quilt made of newspapers. So yeah I tend to think there are a lot of ways that people coped then. Not pleasantly, 'cos his mum had a very hard life but they had lots of ways of managing to get by…

Here the argument that today's poverty mind-set involves wasteful practices comes across strongly. Self-restraint and governing principles such as "waste-not want-not" should be essential practices that the poor of today adopt:

I can't help thinking about my great grandmother who had four children under five and whose husband fell off his horse and was killed. There was no benefit in New Zealand. So she worked and all four kids did very well in their lives. But she worked. Our community where I grew up us kids were given a lot of resources to help us in our lives and I was brought up in a poor household, in a struggling household. But we were taught a lot of things like waste not want not. Whereas a lot of people today wouldn't know what that meant.

Thus the crux of the argument generated was that in the past people used to be able to cope better with fewer things and had better life management skills such as being able to cook healthy meals:

…I know about low-income families, but we survived. My mum had an acre section next door, because we were about six families there, my mum said let's get together and dig up the acre and do planting. Potatoes, whatever could go in the ground they put it in the ground. It was communal food source; we never went without vegetables 'cos of that. We had corn, kumara, and potatoes. We never brought vegetables from the shop 'cos we always had a garden.

Therefore by using comparisons with past times a poverty mind-set positioned today's poor people as lacking in nutritional knowledge as not being willing or able to eat responsibly.   The interview conversations were full of references to how the poor

consumed takeaway food such as McDonalds and Kentucky Fried Chicken and how there is no healthy food in their cupboards. This was especially evident in the context of discussing parents being irresponsible with the food that they provide (or do not provide) for their children:

> **Hungry children, the pictures that you see on television of children in India and Africa, starving with their malnourished tummies and everything else. But I think more than that, I just see the hungry children here in New Zealand - those children that go to school without their lunch. They get up in the morning, they might have a pie for breakfast, they come home, and there will be two-minute noodles for dinner … And one of my pet bug bears is seeing parents in the lotto shop, the TAB and the Pub and then they can't buy a loaf of bread or a jar of vegemite to give to their kids for school lunches, I find that really frustrating.**

However, risking being positioned as an "unhealthy consumer", several participants argued that having treats when you are poor is an important practice to try to keep yourself going when feeling down:

> **And of course I find when I am just in that deep depression I will go out and waste five dollars on a pizza just to keep us kind of normal. You know what I mean. And I think god we are going to pay for this later but at the time it is good psychologically (laughs). Yeah, even a bar of chocolate to share. It is the most awful thing (being poor), you just don't get over it, it is just there all the time, like a big rock, stuffed inside and you just worry twenty-four/seven. Sometimes I can't even sleep.**

Thus an argument emerged that challenged the emphasis given to the non-material aspects of poverty by emphasizing how managing life on a low income can actually be *all about money*. Several participants maintained that it was not possible to budget for a healthy diet on a low income as these two following quotes illustrate. Here it is argued that the time, energy and discipline involved in existing on a low income shape a person's lifestyle, habits and consumption choices:

There are so many poor people in the area and we try and help one another. And we do grow vegetables and we do this and that. I don't care the smarties that say you can feed a family of four on twenty dollars or something. They just don't know what it is like. You have to have all your bills paid off first, and then you are not allowed to get sick. You just have to be absolutely perfect before you can do that. And so there you go.

But if they are on a benefit, they have to live very strictly. They haven't got enough to live on, right. Especially if they have got children they haven't got enough to live on. They have to network with other people. The only way that I get through is 'cos other people help me. Even then I don't have enough money to live on. So they have to sometimes eat unhealthy foods because they haven't got the money to buy fresh foods. And they need to fill their tummies and their children's tummies so they buy things like chips to fill the tummies.

The following quote exemplifies the opinion that managing life on a low income is made especially difficult with today's excessive spending expectations. A "mind-set" of poverty develops from the feeling of not being able to fully participate in consumer society. This leads people down a track of overspending and getting into debt. A poor person is positioned as one who is unable to construct their identity around consumer items. They have to learn self-restraint and how to limit their spending by accepting that they cannot afford to indulge themselves:

So you are managing that to keep yourself operating and surviving and coping as well. So sometimes you do have to in the most difficult times, as far as I am concerned, you have to treat yourself and your children, somehow. Maybe a little thing. Well that can also be seen as being an extravagance in some ports. You will get people who are not able to manage their money tight enough. You have people who are addicted to buying things in this consumer age. You can't live on a low benefit and buy things. You just can't do it. You cannot be part of that consumer age if you are living on a low income. You have to make computers of what you collect on the inorganic. You have to be not attached to gadgets or

whatever. You just can't do it. Because you can't do it, you cannot be a part of that. If you are then you get the debts and the hire purchase things that go on and on and get you into trouble and it gets worse and worse and worse. You get into debt regardless of whether you are doing that, but far faster and far worse.

Conclusion

When reviewing the interview transcripts it was possible to gain some insight into how a person positioned as being in a place of poverty is identified and framed in a consumer focussed society. An underlying rationalisation of poverty as a non-material condition easily contributes to an individualised idea of causation with most participants appearing ready to argue that an individual would often contribute to their situation of poverty by their way of thinking and their lifestyle choices. This individualising of poverty was further evidenced in the way participants discussed their own spending and lifestyle habits and compared them with the consumption habits of those they considered as poor. When drawing on a discursive resource of *spiritual poverty and the poor as disconnected,* a poor person is identified as being embodied in a disempowered and despondent state of being that is seen to be brought about by a combination of poor choices and disempowering social structures that work to keep a person in that situation. A discursive resource of a *mind-set and culture* of poverty articulates an impression of a poor person as being an individual who is making choices based on a lack of "life skills" brought about by a type of entrenched, generational, poverty "mind-set". Importantly however, while overall non-material definitions of poverty and the poor were a strong theme running throughout the interview conversations there was also evidence of a level of resistance to framing poverty in this way. This resistance manifested in an oppositional way and was chiefly expressed by arguing that poverty is primarily *all about a lack of money* and is especially evident in an overwhelming sense of being *excluded* from the ability to fully participate in today's consumer driven society.

Rose (1999) argues today's citizens are governed through their freedom to understand and enact their lives in terms of "choice" as the concept of "freedom" associated with advanced liberalism, works through an individual's subjectivity to shape the way in which they conduct their lives. As cited in chapter two, Rose (1996) analysed "psy

expertise" as a form of governmentality at work to constitute the modern subject, offering an individual a disciplined way to exercise their freedom and construct their identity. "Psy expertise", Rose argues, has become so pervasive in modern societies that to discuss what it is to be "human" is virtually impossible without some recourse to this discursive knowledge. The above articulations of a non-material form of poverty identify the poor as irresponsible consumers who are unable or unwilling to make good "choices" and self-govern their consumption behaviour responsibly. In these articulations, participants draw on frameworks established by "psy expertise" as they individualise the poor and frame them as psychologically lacking in some way. As lacking in mental, emotional and spiritual attributes, the poor are seen to benefit from, and to require, forms of external management in order to develop the "life skills" necessary to make the right "choices" in today's consumer society. Attention to developing these "life skills" was seen as an essential way to avoid being *excluded* from being able to consume due to *self-imposed* situations of poverty. Chapter ten will discuss the relationship between "non-material" poverty, "responsible" consumption and processes of responsibilisation further in the light of the notion of "active citizenship". The following chapter, chapter eight, looks at ways the social welfare system is construed and how this constructs, positions and governs social welfare beneficiaries.

Chapter Eight

"Learn How to Work the System"

Resourcefulness and Regulation

Throughout the interview process participants frequently made reference to "the system" as a term that referred to a systemic order of some sort including legal processes and bureaucratic administration. This term was used in two ways. Firstly, "the system" was referred to in the context of abstract and broader notions about social, economic, political and legal arrangements as participants were articulating their ideas about poverty and wealth. Secondly, and most commonly, it was used with specific reference to the welfare state and the perceived bureaucratic management, or mismanagement, of the operation of the social welfare system. A contrast between the systems that those living on a social welfare benefit interact with and the ones that wealthier members of society interact with was revealed as we discussed the various ways people in the community managed the range of organisational structures that they were enticed to engage with. Overall, opinion about how helpful and effective the social welfare system was in managing situations of poverty was divided.

In this chapter, I will first outline the contrast presented across the interview conversations between the systems that surround those that have wealth and the systems that those living on welfare benefits engage with. I will then present two discursive resources that emerged in the interviews that were used to explain the nature of the social welfare system and that reveal different ways that beneficiaries were perceived to be interacting with that system. By doing this some of the institutional practices that are in place for the "conduct of conduct" of welfare beneficiaries will be highlighted. Additionally how beneficiaries manage to respond to these practices will be presented. Teasing out the use of two discursive resources to explain how the social welfare system operates helps in clarifying why there was a variance of opinion across the interview conversations about how well the social welfare system addresses situations of poverty. *A system that enables* refers to a discursive resource drawn on by participants that frames the social welfare system as a protective and enabling system and that construes a

beneficiary as being able to connect with a sense of agency and self-reliance. *A system of containment* refers to a discursive resource that was drawn on by participants that frames the nature of the welfare system as one involved in containing and managing beneficiaries. This type of framing presented institutional practices as actively discouraging a sense of self-determination in a beneficiary. Both these discursive explanations reflect the practices in a system of governance that frames and institutionalises the way poverty and "the poor" are "known" and provides the justifications for how they are managed.

Contrasting Systems of Welfare and Wealth

The following quote gives an insight to the polarised positioning of "the poor" and "the wealthy" in relation to broader societal arrangements and organisational structures that was imbedded in the interview conversations:

> *Sheryl* **When it comes to income and wealth do you think New Zealand is a fair society?**
>
> *Participant* **Once again it depends on whose system and whose idea of fairness you are working with. If you are working with a system of capital, the system says that if you do a job that is worth a lot of money, and you get paid a lot of money, then it's worth it and it's fair. But it comes back to that capitalist system again, where you have to have them and us. You have got to have the poor to have the wealthy. And if you are looking at economic systems and people who say "Well you know, you chose to have the children, so you have to work out how to bring them up" and that might sound fair on the surface but for a start the parents are severely penalised and unable to compete on a level playing field with those that don't have children. Yet the system needs children. But the person, the individual, is expected to bear all of the economic cost so there are all these kinds of glitches within the systems as they stand…**

Across the interview conversations there was a perception of a misunderstanding between the wealthy and the poor because they interact with different systems, they live in different worlds:

> **I think people who live with poverty don't understand people who are well off. The same as those with wealth don't understand those in poverty. People who live with poverty don't understand that (the wealthy) because it is not something that they know. They can be so far apart they don't understand each other's world.**

The interview conversations presented wealthy people as operating in a system that allows freedom and choice where they can decide to go on overseas trips and eat out at expensive restaurants. Wealthy people were described as the decision makers, self-sufficient, resourceful, and clever. Their lifestyle was described as comfortable. They were seen as enjoying life and as having plenty of freedom and social status. There appears to be little micro management of the wealthy person's activities:

> **A rich person can do what they like. They have more freedom. Money is freedom in many ways; freedom from want and you can do what you like. You don't have to consider whether you can afford it or not.**

> **A rich person is a decision maker, a person that is able to attribute their time as they see fit. They are not as answerable to society as a poor person. Yeah they have choices.**

And they also appear to have freedom from having to make difficult choices:

> **I am not sure that I can talk to you about a rich person. I think probably what a rich person would look like would be a person who is free from having to make huge choices every day. They can, are able to…there is no question that they have to think twice about buying the essentials of life. There is no question that they would have to be concerned about paying for a trip to the doctor. They don't have to think about those things, they**

don't have to think about the essential activities of daily living. They don't have to. All those things are just covered.

Noticeably, throughout the interviews participants seemed eager to discuss the skills that beneficiaries acquired to abuse, rip off, beat, cheat, sponge off, rig, use, or work the *social welfare system*. However there was far less spontaneous mention made of how someone with greater access to wealth might also be "working the system". The following quote gives insight into a notion that accepted social practices are in place to support the wealthy and thus their ability to "work the system" often becomes hidden and sanctioned:

What I have found in the past and this is with the reasonably educated, they love talking about benefit fraud. But if I say "Oh come on, half your solicitors, lawyers and big people are creaming far more off society fraudulently, than you or my little beneficiaries ever do. You stop and think about that, the amount that they fraud, is nothing compared with some of these big guys..." and there is no further conversation (laughs). Not that I am for beneficiary fraud. Of course I am not - but compared with some of these finance companies that ruthlessly cream it off people fraudulently.

Although there was little explicit mention of how the wealthy work the system this quote exemplifies how the system provides a space for the wealthy to avoid paying tax through family trusts. These accepted practices are a key way for the wealthy to "work" the system:

Sheryl **When it comes to income and wealth do you think New Zealand is a fair society?**
Participant **No I don't and I will tell you why. Many reasons, but one thing that really riles me, as I talked to you before about the disparity, which I know it is a global issue - CEOs and workers. But I also look at the aspect of family trusts and how the wealthy protect themselves through family trusts and yet quite often they are the first to point the finger at others who are utilising the system through sickness benefit, through unemployment benefit and through DPB. And yet they are most probably**

costing the country far less than those who are utilising family trusts and who are avoiding a whole lot of tax in all sorts of ways. And who are avoiding paying for their own elderly family members when they utilise not only the public system but also the private system. Rest homes and things like that, you know if you have got a family trust the government's paying, and that is huge money. And I know this because of people I know who are wealthy who have family trusts.

The above perceptions of a system that wealthy people are able to operate in to obtain and maintain their wealth contrasted significantly with the understandings about how life should be managed while drawing a welfare benefit. The expectation that welfare beneficiaries should be made accountable for how they spent their money and time and that they should be encouraged to contribute in some way to the wider community ran throughout the interview conversations:

…. I am a beneficiary - a pensioner, I have worked for my benefit (laughs). I think they should make those people not just expect it of right. They should give it yes, but not long term. So if they have been on it, you know a while, to have a look at it again and see where are they at? Have they improved, do they need it? Can they now give something back, rather than just sit at home, getting the benefit like a retired person, because that's what they are like really, getting their money in but not really doing anything. Even if they became a parent help at school or did something in the community or meals on wheels, or help in the op shops or something. They should not be paid a wage because otherwise it substitutes jobs (working for the dole and that) but doing more in a community way, helping hospices, helping in hospitals it's done by volunteers now and most of the volunteers are old and they are having trouble getting volunteers…

Here a participant refers to the "Beyond Dependency" conference organised by Social Welfare in 1997 previously highlighted in chapter four. The following quote positions beneficiaries as not being capable of managing their money and argues a welfare system only works well when beneficiaries are monitored closely by the allocation of vouchers:

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The New Zealand government paid a huge amount of money to have a Wisconsin Works Conference about fourteen years ago in Auckland, to see how they run their benefit system in Wisconsin in the States. And it appears that nothing very much has been put into practice following that conference. They (Wisconsin) don't pay any money out to the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries have to go in and get a food voucher that they can take to the supermarket. They can go in and get Doctor's chits that they can use to get to the doctors. They get no money at all. Because (here in New Zealand) the money hits the bank account and it's drawn out immediately and spent that day. There is no forward planning for the week. So at the end of the week the kids haven't got food etc. There is no food in the house, literally.

Therefore money should not be given out freely as a beneficiary must learn to manage life without resorting to unnecessary and "unhealthy" consumption. Healthy practices should be a mandatory requirement for those drawing a benefit. Those living unhealthy lives on a benefit are a drain on the countries resources. Alcohol and cigarettes are not necessary items for beneficiaries. They need to learn healthy practices:

But I definitely do think we should look at the welfare state and I think it should be more food vouchers and stuff like that, rather than money. I don't think you should be allowed alcohol either with that money, I don't think that should be included. And sweets, I generally don't believe something that is bad for your body. People see it as a treat but it's actually consumerism and it is plain bad for your body and poor people tend to have worse health. So it sounds like a Nazi type thing to say but I think it is more likely to do harm to people if they are having alcohol. If they have earned it fine they can do what they like but anything from the government, and me as a taxpayer, I don't want to pay tax so that someone who is unhealthy or (not saying that all poor people are unhealthy) but someone in a bad situation will make their situation worse by…you know what I mean. I think they should probably go to food voucher or petrol vouchers. It stops abuse and the people on the benefit

might get more. I just think it is win, win for everyone. I guess there is that stigma attached to "I am on a benefit" but you could get around that. I am not saying that they shouldn't have treats; a bowl of grapes is good for everyone. But alcohol, they have that and beat someone up I mean it is obviously bad for the person and bad for the country. It costs as well. I think it would be really beneficial to have specific vouchers that excluded certain products such as tobacco and stuff like that.

As part of a general knowledge that portrayed beneficiaries as lacking in money management skills, participants routinely stipulated "life skills" as being vital to getting off a benefit and that "education" should sit alongside benefit payments. Commonly, the components cited that should be included in this "education" were parenting, budgeting and cooking advice for beneficiaries:

I don't know there is always going to be people who will fall outside every manner of help possible. And there are other groups who will be assisted by different targeting you know whether it is extra childcare or whether it's being taught life skills. I would like to see in certain cases things compulsory with the benefit, like parenting perhaps, and budgeting. Where the case manager has the discretion when somebody is coming in every month for a food grant to be able to make something compulsory so that there becomes some accountability.

And I honestly think that education should be run along with the handouts - a handout is probably the wrong word. If people are receiving a benefit I think they should also be obliged, as part of receiving it, to get some education to help themselves to see ways of getting out of it or learn cheaper ways of cooking and ... yeah so I think education goes hand in hand with the welfare system.

A Welfare System to Enable

A discursive resource that explains the welfare system as one that is "enabling" was drawn on at various times through the interviews. When drawing on this discourse the poor are construed as being looked after by the welfare system here in New Zealand provided they manage their money carefully:

I mean for the faults we have got, we have free education, free hospital care, pretty cheap medical care if you are on a community services card. And generally I think benefits are adequate to live on but you have to figure out how to live on those benefits and not just automatically do the stuff that television and the rest of society presses you to do.

I think that you do get extremely rich people and you get the average ones. I think that because of the beneficiary system people are getting a certain level of money which if well budgeted would work for each family.

Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) is construed here as an organisation that is available to help and enable a person to move on with their lives. Here the argument is that the emphasis behind WINZ practices is on providing opportunities that prompt and help people to move into the workforce because working will improve their self-esteem and make them feel better:

But there is a lot of opportunities in New Zealand for people to help and improve themselves and if they are on a benefit or a low income there is funding available through WINZ that people can go for and do the courses and learn new skills and some of them even help you with finding a job afterwards.

I know WINZ offer courses that you can go to. They run them down here every Monday and you can go to it and they give you tips for how to do your CV and how to present yourself and how to apply for jobs and things like that and I think if you are going to be getting the dole or a

DPB or any of those main income benefits that you should do something like that. Unless you are on a disability benefit or a sickness. Because a lot of people are long term disabled and can't work. But anyone that can should be doing something to help themselves not just for the money point of it but for their own self-esteem and wanting to feel better about themselves and what they do.

Drawing on a discourse that explained the welfare system as enabling also had the effect of positioning those on welfare benefits as resourceful, self-reliant and resilient as able to make the most of their circumstances. Thus beneficiaries are able to use the system to get out of or avoid poverty, and learning how to "work the system" is actually a necessity:

… I have stood in Welfare lines and had discussions with people and they have said to me "oh you know, come on work the system" and I said, "What's the system?" and they think that you are totally mad because you don't know. They think "Come on girl if you know if you do such and such you will get a benefit for such and such" you know. And it is sort of like; well why are we not told this stuff at the beginning, truth be told, and then they wonder why people lie and cheat. I mean it is great fun. You learn how to work the system and that. My very nature is sort of like, well how do I ask for something if I don't know it's there?

Although "working the system" can often involve some level of dishonesty, it can be argued that this is justified. It is not possible to understand what being on a welfare benefit is like until you have been in that situation. If a person remains on a benefit for any length of time they need to take advantage of all the opportunities available to them to acquire income:

It is only long term people that have learnt how to survive, yeah. You have actually got to change your whole mind-set when you go onto a low income. And you actually can survive if you are really careful but I think it is pretty hard if you haven't got a second income. You need some sort of money coming in. It makes a huge difference when you have got money coming in, especially if it is money that you don't have to worry too much

about paying tax on. I think most people.... I remember years ago a solo mother that we used to know and I was outraged that she was a solo mother and she was working in the hospital and getting the benefit as well. I thought that was terrible until I lived on a benefit and then I understood.

Unfortunately a welfare system construed as "enabling" also allows for positioning some beneficiaries as able to make a "lifestyle" out of "working the system". A person can appear to be better off drawing a benefit than they would be if they were employed:

...The benefits. You know I have seen people, they know all the loopholes of the system. They get assistance, although they have a little tiny sickness but they get all the things that they can get. And then here is the poor family just managing to feed their children. And they are working and struggling. And I see abuse, (of the system) I have to be thing on this because a lot of them are my people; you know Maori, or New Zealand born Kiwis, because they know the system. I am naïve on a lot of things – I am. If you get a good case worker they will tell you what you are allowed...

However, a person could resist positioning themselves as "abusing" the system and talk about using or "working" the system to empower themselves to move through a difficult set of circumstances. A sense of resilience and self-determination comes through strongly in this quote:

I mean I always felt, that in my own experiences when I was struggling, I always knew that I was fortunate enough because I had lots of resources to call on. I had supportive family, supportive friends and I could work the system, you know I could stand up for myself and even though I hated it, hated every minute of it, I could stand up for myself...

So, although there is a significant propensity for a lack of hope amongst beneficiaries it can be argued that the welfare system can be used to foster a sense of resourcefulness and

capability. Therefore a welfare benefit can be construed as a resource that reflects the community support:

> **And I sort of see that intergenerational welfare dependency myself amongst people that I have known when I was living in Otara and well I have been a beneficiary for twenty eight years so I have had a lot to do with other beneficiaries. And it is a trap to be in but I also think that you can look on it as the community supporting me and I want to also take part in the community by doing voluntary work for the People Centre and Youth Line and City Mission.**

Thus an individual on a welfare benefit can draw on a discourse of an enabling welfare system to position themselves as maintaining a resourceful and sustainable lifestyle on a welfare benefit. Here they can frame their life in relation to those who have access to more money in a way that promotes a sense of wellbeing. The self-governing practices needed for life as a long-term beneficiary are well articulated in the following quote:

> *Sheryl* **So imagine a person living on a really low income, what do they have to do to get by?**
>
> *Participant* **Shop wisely. I shop in the car about once every three weeks and get a sack of potatoes, and sack of onions and big stuff. Otherwise I walk to Foodtown and back, which is about a twelve-minute walk, and carry stuff back. I do that about three times a week with the dog so I get exercise. I am probably really fortunate in that I can walk to the supermarket, the library, just about anywhere. Everything I buy is what is on special and we more or less eat what is on special. So what to people need to do? They need to pay their rent or mortgage first, pay their power bills and phone bills next, they need to know about turning off things. Those little things add up to make you manage your money well. Hardly any food in our house gets wasted. So what do people have to do? They have to be like me (laughs). They have to not feel as though they are missing out on something. They have to feel happy that they are living in a community that gives them enough to survive on. You can look on**

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getting a benefit not as a bad thing but as a good thing that your community is supporting you. Get to, and make use of it. That's all.

A Welfare System to Contain and Control

In this discursive resource the nature of the welfare system was explained as a system that is (or should be) formed around institutional practices designed to monitor and shape beneficiaries' consumption behaviour. Thus it is argued here that benefits are administered closely because those who are on a benefit are there for a reason, they are construed as being unable to help themselves, as such they need managing. The following quote demonstrates a common argument contained in this discourse that a lack of competence in money management skills is highly likely in the beneficiary population:

Those sorts of decisions that are thrust upon you, based on your inability to direct your own life. And when I say direct your own life, that is based on your ability to do so and I acknowledge that the benefit is not there to give you a lifestyle. It is there to sustain your life and your life is made up of a roof over your head, food in your stomach, and paying for your utilities. So I sort of consider that conditions should be attached to it. I honestly do. It's like you are on this benefit because you are already declaring to "the world" that you are not coping in some way otherwise why would you be on a benefit? So as a result of that benefit having the structures such that as we mentioned before, having it carded, having the principles set in place for this. Where you go to get your groceries and no cigarettes or alcohol. And then you have say thirty dollars to come and go on for your week to sustain you so that you can choose to have a movie. People learn as a result of having the core things taken care of because then it becomes an evaluative process when they sit down for their review and you can say "Oh well all your fundamentals are being taken care of. How are you getting on?

A key practice highlighted when arguing that a welfare system is involved in containment and control is the way assistance is seen to be implemented by giving individual "case

managers" discretionary powers. Case managers are the people who operate as the guardians of the system. How well a beneficiary is able to "work the system" is therefore filtered by the relationship developed with these guardians:

> *Sheryl* **So the system is making it worse?**
>
> *Participant* **Yes and yet we have what we call a welfare system but that... we have gatekeepers at WINZ who... there are some very good -what do they call them client service representatives? - Case managers. There are some very good case managers who work well with people but on the other hand there are some diabolical case managers who intimidate, who make people feel that big (little). And who don't find out what their needs are and who make them feel like they are bludgers. And I believe that encourages bludging. I don't see that it encourages people to stand up for themselves and feel some sense of worth. And I think that whole system needs to be turned on its head. In my work, over the years, you know we have targeted people who we know will give people a good deal at WINZ …I mean it is wonderful to know that the safety net is there, but it needs to be administered and delivered in a way where people feel empowered and able to get on with their lives and just utilise it in a timely manner if you like.**

When drawing on a discourse that explains the welfare system as one that is involved in containing and controlling it is argued that the administration of the welfare system is not there to encourage a person to ask for what they are entitled to. The impression given here is one of control and the term "working the system" involves having to "grease" a case manager:

> **"Even in terms of DPB. I have got a friend who knows how to work the system and she does it and she has a lot more than what I have. But there are certain things I don't like doing and one of them is going into WINZ especially with the attitude that you get. Sometimes it is like begging for stuff and that I don't like. Staffing attitudes (at WINZ) are absolutely terrible. Like I have got a friend that was able to get something from WINZ and that just happened to be the case manager. And I have been**

told before that they won't tell you what you are eligible for because they don't want you to have it. And it all depends on who you get and if they like you or not. That really upsets me. To feel that you have to grease around somebody to get what you…"

Extra assistance is available to beneficiaries such as emergency food vouchers; however these have to be specifically requested by the beneficiary. This way of administrating the standard forms of assistance available to beneficiaries positions the beneficiary as needy and the procedure is open to being executed in a degrading fashion to discourage a person from asking for help:

There is also available for people - when I was on the DPB I was entitled to three hundred and fifty dollars per year of free food vouchers for emergency situations. But I can understand why people don't do that because once I was in a situation where I needed to go and get one and I am sure that they don't get interrogated like that at Colditz. It was just shocking. You know, "Why do we have to give it to you?" "Why haven't you saved the money?" Why this, why that and why the other thing?" and I was like "Oh I can't believe this".

Thus it is argued that a person is made to feel stigmatised and positioned as a second class citizen as they go about accessing the welfare system:

The humiliation of going through WINZ. Because no matter what they say about their approach it is absolutely humiliating, you have little snotty nosed late teens or early twenty something year olds telling you how to budget. And telling you how to live your life and it's just outrageous. And even though you are someone with three or four children managing all sorts of situations this snotty nose knows it all. And you have people telling you that you should be saving for your children's stationary, on a benefit, you know it's just sometimes the mouth just drops open and you can't even answer them, you can't even answer them.

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Further it is argued that the administrative practices of form filling increase a sense of control and surveillance but they also have a side effect of encouraging dependence and a victim mentality:

But this is another thing about the benefit system. You actually get a five-page statement and there is a clause in there that asks you if you are getting any support from your family. Who in their right mind would say yes? It is just a ridiculous question to ask. Why is it there? What are they going to say "Oh you are getting support from your family so we are not giving it to you" and that is the essence of it. If you are getting support from your family you get disallowed in the benefit system and it is just wrong. It's really wrong. We have got people who have got illness in the family but because they have a supportive helpful family the residual effect is that they get less money or support from government organisations. So you can see where this victim mentally suits a society, suits an environment, suits a person's ability to cope and it's like it is all around the wrong way. I honestly believe it's all around the wrong way.

Therefore, beneficiaries quickly learn the value of being careful and "working the system" is evident here in the practice of avoiding being monitored:

It is getting harder and harder to get support but people are getting more cunning at the same time to get the support that they need. As it gets harder you get smarter, you learn what your rights are and a large percentage of people on benefits know their rights because they can be taken away just like that. One false move, you say the wrong thing or you do the wrong thing. Or you do the right thing and it's taken away so you have to be very careful you know. It's going back to that whole, you only say what you have been told to say, what you know they want. Nothing else. Name, rank and serial number.

Forms are administered to make beneficiaries accountable for their time as they have to regularly prove that they are eligible to be on a benefit and not available or able to work. Job seminars are a practice that works on a beneficiary's subjectivity by attaching a

condition and an expectation of being "work ready" to receiving a benefit. The "unemployed" are then able to be labelled as "job seekers". Thus WINZ operates as an employment agency, WINZ workers are in fact "job brokers" the emphasis is on activating a person into employment regardless of whether they are available to work or not:

> **These days you have to jump through innumerable hoops to get on a benefit. In fact you actually have to go to a job seminar, regardless of what benefit you are applying for. Even a sickness benefit, you have to go for a job seminar and talk to a job broker first. You can't just go in and say I need some money anymore. It's a formality it's written there; you can't just rock in there and say I need some help please. They will actually put you through a job seminar and you will have to speak to a job broker and they will assess you before you are even eligible to go on the benefit. And I think that is for every benefit not just the dole. Even the DPB. It is ridiculous. Because I am already on a benefit I still have to justify that, I have to go in and fill in forms I have to make all sorts of promises to say that yes I do need this. Even if you were really, really, needy there is no guarantee that you will get a benefit or you will get extra assistance.**

The following quote conjures up images of a stage show where the welfare system is seen as simply operating as an administrative event but does not work to help a beneficiary move on; it keeps them feeling trapped and worthless. Form filling and case manager interviews are viewed here as being part of a "circus":

> **I would be tempted to simplify it. I think that they waste an awful lot of money on what seems like unnecessary things. The forms you have got to fill in and the people you have got to see. I mean it is an absolute circus if you ever go to WINZ. And if you are going there because you are unemployed you might as well give up any self-esteem and idea of a job - the minute you walk in the door you feel like you are not worth anything.**

Thus when drawing on a discursive resource that construes the welfare system as containing and controlling a participant would argue that it does very little to empower people. People are contained and controlled as a combination of a lack of access to resources and disempowering WINZ practices forces hasty decisions rather than well considered choices:

The benefit doesn't help you. The benefit holds you back. It is the way the benefit is implemented to me; it doesn't make you feel good about who you are as a person. It locks you down, it puts you in a cell, and it makes you decide "Well I need milk so I won't get the bus. I will have to walk an hour to Manukau to pay that bill, so I won't pay that bill because I will need to catch that bus and I need milk. So I need milk more than I need to catch the bus to pay the bill". So you end up falling behind on your accounts for instance.

Conclusion

As Foucault formulated the concept of "governmentality" he spoke of its "essential technical means apparatuses of security" (such as our social security system) as being one of the key components (Foucault, 1978:102). As evidenced by the attention given to the social welfare system in the interview conversations, a discussion about poverty and the poor of New Zealand is inseparable from debating how well that system is functioning to manage or prevent situations of poverty. Central to discussions was the underlying question of whether WINZ is an overbearing or an empowering form of government, whether it is governing too much or not enough. Foucault's articulation of government reason places the debates about the relationship between state governance and governing of the self in the context of the liberal critique of government. *Liberalism*, as analysed by Foucault, addresses a concern that government is governing too much and it (liberalism) thereby rationalises the *principle* of the self-limitation of governmental reason and the *practice* of limiting forms of government action (Foucault, 2004). Therefore a social welfare system said to be operating in an environment of "advanced liberalism" will place emphasis on the desirability of encouraging self-governing behaviour in the beneficiary population (Dean, 2002).

The interview conversations highlighted an understanding of a contrast between the systems that those who are wealthy interact with and the systems that those on a social welfare benefit find themselves in. Evidence of this contrast was seen as participants described how the wealthy and the poor are living in different worlds and interacting with different systems. In general the wealthy were seen to operate in a system that has little micro management of their activities; they have freedom from having to make a lot of difficult choices with better access to education and health services in particular. Participants remarked on how the wealthy often appear to be over compensated for their contribution to society because as they "work the system" it is sanctioned and hidden in accepted economic and legal practices. In contrast beneficiaries were well understood to be a poor sector of the population and their management of life while living under the umbrella of the welfare system was discussed at some length throughout the interviews. This involved discussing how beneficiaries should learn better self-management skills as well as offering an opinion on how the state should be offering either more or less management of those beneficiaries.

Power, as seen by Foucault, is both a productive and constraining force (Foucault, 1980). As previously highlighted in chapter two, as well as being used to control, power is also productive as it produces knowledge that frames institutional and social practice. From the interview conversations a number of institutional governing practices at WINZ were highlighted; these could be construed as either "helpful and enabling" or "controlling and disempowering". Practices included form filling, job seminars and curriculum vitae presentation as well as the deployment of discretionary powers for the case managers involved in the delivery of services. It was argued that how welfare services were delivered had some bearing on whether a beneficiary who was able to take up and use the welfare system gained a sense of "empowerment" or was to be left feeling trapped in poverty. As a participant discussed the social welfare system as being *enabling and empowering* s/he also identified beneficiaries as being capable and self-reliant. Here beneficiaries were framed as people well able to manage the life they were living - whether they chose to stay on a welfare benefit or move into the paid workforce. Thus, when drawing on this discursive resource the phrase "working the system" often generated a sense of *agency and resilience* as a beneficiary was presented as an individual operating to make the most of their situation. A contrasting way of discussing the social welfare system as being there to *contain and control* often had the effect of identifying

beneficiaries as being incapable, poor money managers, who were not able or willing to help themselves. When drawing on this discursive resource the notion of "working the system" generated a sense of *resistance* to the power relations involved in governing processes by presenting beneficiaries as being anxious and careful to avoid excessive monitoring of their activities by vigilant and condescending case managers. At times this also worked to frame beneficiaries as being exploitative and abusive of the help they were seeking from the state.

Despite diverging opinion in the interviews over how well the welfare system is functioning, there was evidence to suggest that the forms of discipline found in the social welfare system were normalised and were accepted by most participants as necessary forms of governing when it comes to the poor. Whether the welfare system was perceived as helpful and enabling or restrictive and controlling, the basic underlying assumption was that those who are reliant on this system will require some form of institutional guidance. As Dean (2002) argues, in an state of advanced liberalism those who are reliant on welfare are subjected to forms of governance that invite them to "free" themselves from dependence on the welfare system but simultaneously impose *restrictions* that force them to *act on themselves* in a certain way. Thus the "conduct of conduct" for social welfare beneficiaries involves various institutionalised forms of constraint and facilitation. In contrast, evidence from the interview conversations suggests that those who are wealthy are perceived as being able (through their own efforts) to escape many of these institutionalised technologies of management and are therefore assumed as more likely to have the ability to self-manage. Chapter ten will address some of the ramifications of having disciplinary forms of governance for the poor in more detail. The following chapter, chapter nine, presents participants' perceptions on social mobility and the redistribution of wealth and highlights how wider social constraints form social identities and shape conduct.

Chapter Nine

"Work Hard and Get Ahead"

Income Inequality and Social Mobility

In order to draw out formulations from the participant interviews that discussed the possibility of social mobility, I will reflect here on what participants told me about the social effects of having different levels of wealth in our communities and whether they thought there was a problematic gap between perceived wealthy and poor New Zealanders. In the interviews, I questioned participants on ideas about redistribution of wealth, whether they thought that wealth was distributed fairly in New Zealand and how entrenched they thought any gaps in income and wealth might be between the rich and the poor. In general, the interview conversations revealed that participants believed that New Zealand is often considered as having a social and economic system that is "fair", rewarding individual merit and hard work. However, ideas based on a conceptualization of a class system as a structuring force, as well as a keen awareness of social status based on an appearance of wealth accumulation, were also an important focus as participants discussed how wealth is distributed and how much social mobility is possible. I have presented two discursive resources here that emerged in the language patterns that surrounded discussions of income inequality and wealth redistribution. A discursive resource of *merit and egalitarianism* explains a disparity in wealth as the outcome of a willingness to strive to "get ahead" and that a person should not limit themselves by accepting the notion of social structures. A discursive resource of *class* explains wealth disparity in terms of social structures, the habits acquired by the poor and what is seen as becoming an intergenerational lack of access to health and education services. Both of these discursive resources rested on an assumption that a certain level of inequality will always be present and a society will always have its poor. Previously in chapter eight, I focused on specific forms of institutional governance that the New Zealand poor, as welfare beneficiaries, are engaged with as they interact with the welfare system. This current chapter draws attention to social constraints and broader forms of governance which are also in operation to shape conduct.

A Gap between the Rich and the Poor

For the most part participants agreed with the statement "the poor will always be with us" which reflected an underlying assumption that aiming for material equality is an impossible task as some level of inequality is probably the natural state of affairs. This naturalising of inequality easily lends itself to an acceptance of the presence of poor people:

> *Sheryl* **When it comes to income and wealth do you think New Zealand is a fair society?**
>
> *Participant* **Yes as much as it can be anywhere, in the sense that, yes we have great divisions in wealth and lack of it but where isn't it? And that's the way that societies are. There is no way around that I don't think. You can't have a level playing society. People are born with more money or they are born with more skills. The ones that are tend to accumulate more and look after their own and the poor, some of them make it out yeah. So for various reasons you are always going to have the poor. And I don't think that is to do with justice or anything else. That's it. It's the way people are made, the way that societies are run.**

When asked to reflect on whether there was a gap between the rich and the poor over half the participants (twenty-seven) said yes there was a gap and that as a society we should be concerned about it. This quote gives a typical representation of the reply I got to the importance of a gap in wealth:

> *Sheryl* **So I think you would agree that there is a gap between the rich and the poor?**
>
> *Participant* **Oh yes, very much**
>
> *Sheryl* **Do you think this gap is important? Does it matter?**
>
> *Participant* **I think it matters because it is showing that there is a difference in our social understanding and our caring in our community is definitely getting less and less. We are caring less about each other, so the gap between the rich and the poor is getting bigger and poor people**

are suffering. It's the level of suffering that is rising and that is more concerning than I suppose the gap, but the gap is making it worse. So I think it's really important that we have dialogue about that.

However contradicting the view that a growing income gap is a problem, when participants were asked to consider whether income and wealth is distributed fairly in New Zealand over half of the participants argued that yes income and wealth are fairly distributed in New Zealand. These two quotes illustrate that argument:

I think so. I think so. I mean for me New Zealand is still a land of opportunity. It's the most incredibly beautiful country and good climate. If you can't make it here you can't make it anywhere. I think it is fair.

Pretty much, I definitely think that New Zealand is a fair society. I think that things are pretty equitable. You will find that you will get your super rich person here and there but yeah I think New Zealand is pretty fair.

The presence of two main discursive resources for discussing income distribution helps explain why participants can be concerned about a gap in wealth but can also construe that the way income and wealth are distributed in New Zealand is "fair".

A Discourse of Merit and Egalitarianism

This discursive resource holds the idea that New Zealand does not have a clear sense of a system of inherited wealth as they have in other countries (the United Kingdom in particular). When drawing on this discourse a participant would argue that situations of individual success here in New Zealand are gained through merit, which involves striving to work hard and to get educated. A basic faith in an ideal of wealth and status gained through personal achievement was promoted:

Well some of these people who have made it big in New Zealand, who are so called millionaires, there are a few of them that really worked their

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bones off to get to where they are, to get to enjoy that wealth. But no disrespect to the British Royal family; they are born with a silver teaspoon in their mouth. Over there they are paid to be who they are. And they didn't make their money the hard way. It is all given. They pay taxes but still a lot of things they get are cut prices. But here (New Zealand) I think if you have worked hard you should be able to enjoy what you have got. And there are a lot of people with a lot of good ideas but they don't know how to implement what they are talking about. Somebody else takes the idea and runs with it. But that is life. It's a rat race.

The general assumption contained here was that most well-known wealthy people in New Zealand have worked hard for what they have, especially when compared to the well-known wealthy from other countries:

Bob Jones is my idea of a rich person. But I like him 'cos he worked hard for his money. To get rich and work for it, I have got nothing to say. He deserves his privacy, whatever. Now Prince Charles he was given his money. I kick up a stink about that.

Further, this discursive resource was drawn on to argue that we do not observe titles in New Zealand, our social system is open and a person can learn to socialise by conforming to what is required in different social settings. Thus here in New Zealand the conduct of conduct is evidenced by reference to social cues rather than to class structures:

I think there will always be rich and poor, but I think we need to be aware of each other. And that's one of the good things about New Zealand really that money isn't the only thing. We judge people by their behaviour and the way they dress, and the way they act and that. There is nothing to stop anyone mixing together really. I mean we don't observe titles and things like that really. Not like the English system. As long as you can learn how to behave correctly, dress correctly, and mix with people, you can mix with people, you can mix in any… you don't need to feel inferior.

Even though some wealthy people may have inherited their wealth they also must work hard to maintain it. Thus income gaps should not be a barrier to getting to know somebody; the wealthy will be found working alongside everyone else in the workforce:

> **I have friends that come from comfortable families who live in Remuera and you know they are lovely people and they are where they are because they have worked hard to get there. Some have inherited. One friend her family have come from wealth. But these are people who I have met through having worked in the industries that I have worked in. So yeah, I have had snapshots into their lives and stuff and good on them, I just think hard work pays off and yeah I have learnt some good things particularly from one family about "it". How they have maintained "it" and kept "it". But yeah it's hard work.**

So class distinctions, inherited wealth and social divisions seem obvious in countries like South Africa but not here in New Zealand. By drawing on a discourse of merit a participant explains that those who are wealthy in New Zealand must have worked hard and that they are admired for doing that:

> *Sheryl* **So thinking about the people that you socialise with what do you imagine that they have to say about this sort of thing? What might they say about someone who is wealthier or poorer than them?**
> *Participant* **I think in this country they admire them. You know, that they have worked hard for it. Whereas in South Africa they would probably say that person was born with a silver spoon in the mouth or it's because of this particular fact that he is white that he is rich. That is the reason why he is rich. Whereas in this country it's you work very hard and they admire it, I think.**

This discursive resource was also drawn on at times to resist aiming for a greater degree of equality. Because those people regarded as wealthy were seen as having "worked hard for their money" it was argued that they should not be punished by the system for striving to "get ahead":

Sheryl **So while we might be helping people on the lower end with packages such as Working for Families it is not really making things fairer?**

Participant **Well it is and it isn't. Because the Working for Families is definitely helping the lower income people but the higher income people who have probably worked hard and got themselves a good education so they could get a good paying job they are not actually getting anything. It's like well you have got plenty of money so you can just look after yourself, which doesn't really seem fair either. I think in some ways I think they deserve a tax break or something like that. If you have worked hard and earned all your money and you're enjoying living off it, well why shouldn't you? You have worked hard for it.**

Sheryl **Because that is what the Working for Families is essentially, isn't it? A tax break, a tax credit.**

Participant **Yes and I think different cut off levels with the Working for Families are good. I mean if you are under a certain amount you get so much, then you go up and it's quite a high income before you don't get it and I think that is really good because why should the people who have worked hard and got themselves ahead be punished for doing it.**

As participants drew on a discourse of merit they linked the social effects of having a large gap between rich and poor people with a notion of the importance of utilising education to bridge the gap. A theme of the merit and value of education as a panacea to solving social divisions and gaps in income and wealth was pervasive and ran throughout the interview conversations that I had:

Sheryl **Do you think that this makes it harder for someone to motivate himself or herself to get off a benefit, if their wages are so low?**

Participant **Well of course the main vehicle to motivate them, particularly for people on the benefit, is to get educated. I would look at mine and say look if you have to go out to work, and you are going to have to get that in your head, why work for eleven dollars twenty five per hour when with a bit of training you can get sixteen to twenty dollars. You know you have**

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got to work the same amount of time. And they would look at me and say, "I have never thought of that". You know, "Think about it. What do you want to do? What training course? We will pay for extra childcare for your child for you to get training. Training is free. Get educated girl, get some life skills and then you can start planning". And there is a lot of - people talk glibly about self-esteem and I get thoroughly sick of it and I think a lot of it is crap to be honest. But the pleasure that most of them have in getting a job. "I don't have to come in here again". You know that sort of thing. They become people in their own right, rather than just under an umbrella of "beneficiary". And I saw that with my own children, because I was on the benefit for a while and when I got my first job the kids would talk about it. It opened up their horizons.

A discourse of merit that promotes the success of the wealthy person, by default positions the poor in a place of being poor because they lack the drive to work hard and succeed. There was often an understanding expressed that the poor would lack an awareness that the wealthy may have worked hard for their money:

> *Sheryl* **So what effect (if any) is this gap having on how people think about each other?**
>
> *Participant* **I think for people that don't have a lot of money, they don't hold people that have a lot of money in esteem, I think that they don't regard those people as having worked very hard and achieved a lot of success and done very well for themselves, but made a huge effort to get to where they are. What I am trying to say is that I don't think wealthy people are respected for their achievements. Because they are wealthy I think there is a perception that they are just lucky and it's been handed down to them or they don't deserve it or it just magically appeared. And I don't think from a wealthy person's perspective that they have a lot of time for poor people. If they do, it is in terms of a financial handout, maybe a donation but not a lot of energy is put into the poor in terms of their time or efforts.**

Placing a group of people as lacking the drive to improve their social status invites the idea that it is a person's personal responsibility as to whether they are willing to strive to have access to wealth. A person who felt positioned amongst "the poor" in relation to a discourse of merit could respond as follows:

> **I often see people flying over in helicopters, and driving very bright yellow sports cars and that week I probably will not have proper food on the table. And I am at the same time at the university an A plus student. I know I am worthwhile, I know that my children are worthwhile and I know that I am in the situation that I am in through no fault of my own. So why should they be able to do that, while I am in this situation? I get looked down upon. I have to really struggle. And they feel comfortable flying around in helicopters and being in yellow cars. So something about their mentality allows them to feel comfortable driving those things while there are people who are really struggling…. It's just so unfair - the system is terribly unfair. But then I don't agree with the system. The people who agree with the system that gets them the yellow car and the helicopter will feel entirely differently. Even the people in the middle bracket are part of that system of denial and they just believe that it is the poor people's fault that they are in that situation and they sit with that and they don't even look at it anymore. Because they just think it's their fault and if they wanted to get out of it they could. And they leave it at that and the media messages are all on those lines.**

A Discourse of Class and Structured Poverty and Wealth

Contrasting with a discursive resource of merit that argued hard work will result in a person "getting ahead", was a discourse that presented access to wealth as more structured in New Zealand. Although the idea of "class" was not always expressly identified as a dividing factor in the interviews, it was inferred that educational levels and individual ability were both a stratifying and structuring force in New Zealand society. Therefore, even when the word "class" was not used, notions of worth and status attained through educational level (what do you know?), employment (what do you do?),

appearance (what do you wear and consume?) and especially geography (where do you live?) and how these factors serve to divide us, are incorporated in a structural discourse. This quote articulates the status that education is given in New Zealand and how it works to structure:

I do think there is such a thing as cultural or social capital and that people who have it, who have been born into it, have a much easier time to stay in a place of privilege than those who don't. So if you have been born into a situation where you don't have that, where you are outside the privileged, educationally particularly in New Zealand, I don't think we are so much a classed society as an educationally classed society.

Habits and lifestyles are becoming increasingly well-defined and it is becoming more difficult for an individual to move out of the socio-economic "class" that they are born in. Class terminology was drawn on repeatedly in the interviews to refer to the habits of poor people:

The lower class of family seem to live on fish and chips.

The expression "white middle class" was also used often. This was a term that reinforced a racialised notion of poverty and wealth and those using it assumed that I knew what they meant by this term:

….Because of the whole "white middle class" thing, there is huge assumptions made about this end of the Shore and how well off it is.

Participants drew on this discourse to argue that there is a general lack of awareness (or even a denial) of disparity in wealth and of class present as a structuring force in New Zealand communities. The argument constructed here was that although New Zealand is seen as a classless society this is a myth and that this is obvious when viewing where the rich and poor live and the difference in their lifestyles:

Okay well there is a huge gap between the wealthy and the poor in this country. And it is subtle. Most people don't realise it and that's because

of the whole issue of New Zealand as being a great country for thinking that there is no class. We have no class definitions in this country but there is a class system and that is where the wealthy and the poor thing comes in. But because most New Zealanders say there is no class system they don't see it. We suffer from collective blindness in this country. We are able to ignore or act like sheep and ignore major issues that are coming out of the "have and the have not" issue. Like abuse of all kinds, crime, lack of education, abilities and health provision …

The argument that wealth was structured and staying in the hands of a few was not limited to "Pakeha" New Zealanders as the following two quotes illustrate:

I would just love to have access to more of the wealth that I know is in this country. I don't know how to access it and that is both as a Kiwi and a Maori as well. They say Maori have got special this that and the other, no not even (laughs). We are trying to get our family up and running and united and together 'cos it is very fractured at the moment as a Hapu and an Iwi, but there are certain people in our tribes who are getting all the money. We are not getting it. There is definitely no way that we are getting it. And we believe that it is only a few special select ones that are getting it and those families that are benefiting. There are those within Maoridom that are favoured within the tribes. I just wish it could come down to us little people. As far as just New Zealand society in general the wealth needs to be distributed more evenly. And the government is awarding themselves increases. Why not give us poor people down the bottom something too?

But social justice, New Zealand wasn't very good at social justice from the start. The Treaty was an agreement between the white man and the brown man back in the day. It was unjust in a lot of ways. Basically, they brought the land at last year's prices but they want to charge what they think it is going to cost next year. That's wrong. There are good and bad things in the Waitangi situation. I feel we have banged our heads against the wall. I am Tainui, so I can't moan we have already been paid off. But

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guess what? Although I am Tainui I have not had a black cent of that money. Who gets it? The CEO's and all the guys at the top. What about the bums like me? No way. That is unjust.

The wealthy have greater level of access to services such as healthcare and education, this reflects how having large gaps in income levels works as a structuring force in the community:

Sheryl **So is there a gap between the rich and the poor?**
Participant **Materialistically, definitely. I think the biggest way that there is a gap between rich and poor is in education and getting access to good healthcare. The one thing I would like is to have enough money to say, "Well I can have an operation." I can go alternative without having a thought. And if my kid was very clever they could go to university and I could give them some support financially. To me I think that is where you notice it. Yeah, being able to access things. What's the saying? "Life's hard but it is made less miserable by having money". In some ways if you can access things and not have to worry about how am I going to afford that, you can just.... you have more choices….**

The children of the wealthy have better access to participation in social activities such as sport. Those who have a chance to compete are not necessarily the most talented or hard working children:

It does matter because the poor people have less access to things that the rich people have. If they had the same access I wouldn't care that much but having money makes it possible for you to do things. I know kids who are in representative teams not because they are good but because they have the money to be able to pay to be there. And that makes me really angry because my daughter is good at sport but the thing is I can't put her into a programme. I would love to put her into it but I don't have the money. My son is good at basketball he got into … sport academy for basketball. But it makes me angry that I couldn't put him into holiday programmes for basketball and things like that the other children have

access to. And it is not their fault because I can't afford it and that makes me angry. The children are affected by the inability of parents to be able to provide certain things for them….

A structural discourse contains the argument that hard work does not necessarily get everyone ahead. Where a person is positioned in the workforce determines their rewards, it is not related to the amount of effort they exert. People who for some reason are not the "movers and shakers" are penalised by social and economic structures.   These social constraints in the form of limited access to fair and reasonable working conditions highlight the effects of power structures as an individual is often left with little choice but to accept what is offered:

Sheryl **So when it comes to income and wealth do you think New Zealand is a fair society?**

Participant **Laughs...no no no. I think our wages are incredibly low for working people. I think that our wages are just shockingly bad and though there is redistribution with the Working for Families I think it is a too complex system and I don't really like it. Yeah, so we have got incredibly rich people and incredibly poor people, so that is shocking too. I mean most people work a genuine forty-hour week and really what they earn is just a pittance. It is not enough. We need to pay better wages and it should be in their hand not through these incredibly complex systems and I think we also need to look at our benefit systems 'cos really the children from beneficiaries suffer incredibly. Living off a benefit is just so difficult.**

Sheryl **What about the idea that we need to generate wealth, to create a larger pie to share?**

Participant **A lot of people work, you know like our factory workers, our bus drivers. I see the guys here working shift work, our early morning starters that go off at five in the morning, work very hard and really what they are getting is so little, so they do the best that they can. They are not the movers and shakers and the entrepreneurs but they do their best and do an honest day's work and we are actually crying out in New Zealand**

for someone to do that work and they do need to be paid better. It is ridiculous…

An argument that wealth has become structural in New Zealand holds that our society's rewards are not necessarily dealt out to the most deserving. This quote illustrates the awareness of the social value put on different types of employment and how wealth is structured around this value system:

> **But yes there is a thing about more people now having really big money. There are more of them, or a bigger percentage of them now than there used to be and I don't think that is a good thing. I don't have any objection to anyone who has money that they work for but people with a lot of money it's not always like that. They have been perhaps smarter. I can't see how anyone like John Key could possibly be worth ninety six thousand a week like it was reported. Nobody is worth that and the person that cleans the toilet is just as valuable a person as someone who makes a lot of money and gets a knighthood.**

Further it is argued that the practice of wealth inheritance ensures that wealth stays with the wealthy even those who may not deserve it; they may not have "worked" for it:

> …**One of the things I wonder about is in terms of inheritance. I think we in Western countries do it that way because we have done it for so long, not because that is the best way to do it. I mean to focus on the upper echelon of wealth, I guess to be fair you want to give your money to someone in particular, I guess you have that right, but at the same time you get this weird situation where people haven't worked for their money and they get a lot of it and they are not even necessarily the people who will use it the best. You know what I mean? And they probably throughout their lifetime have already benefited from taking their parent's wealth anyway. I mean again you can make assumptions and not everyone does see any of that money. But I think it is a weird system and it perpetuates inequality where the children automatically get so much of their parent's wealth and so on.**

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As they drew on this structural discourse a participant could argue that social mobility is limited because the habits that come with the class they are born into become embedded in their consciousness. By engaging with medical and "psy' expertise, the following quote positions the "poor" as a group who will always struggle and they will not have the necessary social and economic capital to "get ahead":

I think about children that are raised in poverty in terms of physical effects. If their hygiene is poor and their diet is poor, there are all sorts of implications basically from the head down, from the head lice, to the dental issues, to the scabies, to the asthma, the eczema and the poor housing, on and on and on. So there are endless implications if you are raised in poverty. There is a social stigma if you are poor. And the social class that you live in there is a lot to be said for - you can take the boy out of South Auckland, but you can't take South Auckland out of the boy. I believe that. There are long-term psychological implications because of the class that they are brought up in. I think you often see this intergenerational situation where generation after generation there will be unemployment benefit collection, benefit fraud, leading to petty crime, all that kind of thing and they are just on the back foot all the time.

Therefore when employing a structural explanation a participant would argue that people are positioned by socially constructed habits and lifestyle. These social constructs are seen as cemented and they translate into every type of life situation that a person finds themselves in:

So value is placed on what you do in wider society. In different circumstances I put on a different face. If I feel people are looking down on me I do the opposite to them. Not that it makes me feel any better.

We do not need to speak of "class" in a direct fashion in New Zealand. It is more subtle, present in our social practices of form filling:

People in Housing New Zealand houses are seen as I suppose you would call an underclass or lower than other people, even though they don't say

that. I think we do have a class society, even though it is not spoken of. You can't tell me we don't have poor and rich, you know. For example people will say when you are filling in forms "do you own your own home?" You are valued or put up higher if you own your own home. Or they ask you "Do you work? What do you do?" even if you are a mother. So a value system is placed on people just by the questions that people ask.

The social status afforded to the appearance of wealth was well articulated through the interview conversations. What a person is able to wear and consume is seen to define them. Thus striving to increase social status works as a governing force shaping behaviour:

Some of my friends try to keep up with the Joneses and they would definitely like to be wealthy. It's all about status. For a lot of people it is all about status and appearances matter. So the wealthy thing from these friends is about status and appearances.

The branding of consumer items shapes conduct. Children are well aware of the social status that appearing in expensive brand named consumer items can bring. This defines who they get to socialise with:

… Separated by wearing the right or wrong clothes to school, I mean just clothing alone determines whom you can hang out with at school, just my observations with my own children. My husband and I have a five year old, but his (the husbands) little sister lives with us as well, she is twelve. As much as she would love to shop at Urban Angels shops where all her friends shop she doesn't get to shop there. We shop at the Warehouse or bargain shops wherever I can go to get good clothing. But that in itself determines who she gets to hang out with, as sad as that is, so right there I think to myself just clothing alone let alone anything else….

Where a person lives also works to define their social status and identity as geography maps out class and social structures in contemporary times:

> *Sheryl* **When it comes to income and wealth do you think New Zealand is a fair society?**
> *Participant* **No. You have five per cent of New Zealanders that have ninety per cent of the wealth, and the rest of us have to struggle every single day to make ends meet. So I think the whole idea that New Zealand is a classless society and that the wealth is distributed evenly is a complete myth. You just have to look at Ladies Mile and Waiheke Island and any part along the coast to see where the big houses are, and then you look two streets back and you have got shacks (laughs). Or something close to a shack, so you can see it but you have to look, you know. So there is the whole wealth issue and it's a complete fallacy in this country unfortunately. Twenty or thirty years ago there was more fairness in this country when it came to who had money and who didn't. But not anymore. It has become glaringly obvious where the poor people live and where the rich people live.**

Thus it can be argued that a geographical sense of social stratification promotes the social distinctions that have always been present to some degree in New Zealand:

> **Traditionally New Zealand has been stratified not so much consciously but there has been sort of, there have been strata of different wealth levels in New Zealand and that has been minimised to a large extent through taxation policies in the past and through government policies and the like. I think there is a perception that if you come from a certain geographic area that you are considered poor and if you live in another certain geographic area within Auckland you are considered well off automatically. For example, if you live in Remuera you know there is that perception there. There is a distinction out there and some people promote that. Promote the differences. And certainly real estate agents will add snob value to a property and promote it on its exclusivity basically, you know access to Auckland Grammar zone or something is**

an example. Or you know this is an exclusive area to live, such and such blah blah blah.

One of the questions on the interview schedule asked the participant to reflect on their understanding of the word "underclass". I was interested in how this word was construed by participants because of its use in the literature on poverty coming from the USA (Murray, 1984). Although "class" is not often spoken of in a direct fashion, in 2007 John Key, the then leader of the Opposition, did publicly speak of class. This use of the word "class" cut across the understanding expressed in a discourse of merit that all New Zealanders have a fair and equal opportunity and that wealth will come to those who strive hard for it as this quote demonstrates:

Sheryl **He (John Key) named a street and talked of this underclass. What I am interested in is this word "underclass". What do you think he was meaning by this word?**
Participant **The fact that he uses class is quite interesting because New Zealand has always been thought of as a place where there is no class system. You don't have a high class, upper class sort of thing. So it seems strange that he is talking about an underclass as a whole group of people who are in this underclass.**

To introduce the idea of an underclass, I asked the participant if they recalled an incident in January 2007 where John Key in his *State of the Nation* address named a street, McGehan Close, in the Auckland suburb of Mt Albert, as containing a growing underclass (Key, 2007). Following this announcement John Key visited the street, befriended its occupants and subsequently invited a young Maori resident from that street up to the Waitangi Day celebrations with him. Most participants recalled the incident after I prompted them and provided interesting accounts of what the implications might be of a politician acting in this way and insightful reflections on what might have been implied by the word underclass as used by John Key in that context. Significantly, understandings of the words "poverty" and the "underclass" contrasted considerably in the interview. In general participants construed the notion of poverty as a "lack of" something – a lack of choice, money, education, life skills and access to healthcare. The word poverty often implied a condition that has an effect on a person's basic health and

well-being and the poor were assumed as often being unable to meet and/or to maintain their health and educational needs. The following quotation sums up nicely the general meaning contained in the word poverty that came out of the interview discussions:

> **Lacking, not living in a situation that is right for you, not being happy, unhealthy, sad, not being able to enjoy life as much as someone who might be healthy or wealthy or wise or whatever. Yeah, unhealthy mainly, and lacking. Lacking is a good word for poverty.**

The following quote highlights some of the ambiguity of the term underclass drawing attention to how it can refer to people on a low income as well as contain a definite connotation of the embodiment of undesirable behaviours that threaten society:

> *Sheryl* **Now talking about political ideas, John Key recently described a growing underclass in New Zealand can you recall that?**
> *Participant* **I know there was a huge stink about it, I don't actually remember hearing him say it, but I know it was reported and there was huge hue and cry about it. I am not sure whether he was referring by underclass to low income people or whether he was referring to the underclass being what I call the slime balls - the drug addicts the people that sort of commit crimes to feed their drug habits and things like that. Because I would agree that there are a growing number of people in that situation, the drug addicts, becoming addicted to things like P.**

Thus a discursive association between poverty and crime was especially evident when discussing ideas generated by the word underclass. I found that the notion of an underclass as a sector of the population was consistently understood as containing people who displayed values and behaviours that deviated substantively from common aspirations. Accordingly, although many ideas explained by the word "poverty" did overlap and link with ideas contained in the word "underclass", in general, the idea of an underclass had a far stronger connotation for participants with information about crime, especially violent crime, including domestic violence, substance abuse, and participation in youth gangs. This term underclass therefore positions the poor as a "class" of people

who are perceived as not able to self-govern and produce any evidence of responsible behaviour:

> *Sheryl* **What do you think he was meaning by that word underclass?**
> *Participant* **Well he understands that there is an underbelly class. There are people who are not educated, and they just form gangs and they just cause bloody trouble, havoc, they deal in drugs, you know they are to me the underclass, even though some of them might be benefiting out of that trade, no doubt they are. But there is still an underclass and if people choose to drink, over smoke, over gamble and all that, things that I don't do, they are not going to strive, they are not going to keep up with the Jones's, if you like. So there is an underclass, and it is a growing one.**

The overall perception I was left with was that the underclass is a sector of the population that is perceived as very likely to contain perpetrators who do harm both to themselves and to others. When asked to reflect on the meaning of the word underclass therefore, most participants evaluated it as a judgmental word, one that they would not want to have applied to themselves and in general regarded that politicians such as John Key should not be using the word or applying it to any particular location or set of circumstances:

> **That word underclass, you can almost associate with criminal class, so that has got a derogatory connotation to it, which I don't like cause it sees that somehow they are lesser people, because they are under, you know. But the underclass or lower class... lowlife you know...it's a very short jump from underclass to low life and I don't like that connotation…… so sometimes when you say underclass it has other connotations so I think it was a mistake for him to use that word.**

The following quote highlights how easily the term underclass, is readily connected with non-material constructions of a cycle of learned behaviour and a poverty of the spirit. Thus employing the notion of an underclass draws together a structural explanation for situations of poverty with an identity for "the poor" framed in non-material terminology:

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Sheryl **John Key recently described a growing underclass in NZ. Can you recall this?**

Participant **Yes. I think he was talking about crime, drugs, alcohol abuse, benefit fraud, and now we are on to three or four generations of it. I think that is what he was referring to. We know he was talking about a particular street, the cycle of poverty.... I don't know if poverty is the word, because again it is not about money, if that is what you associate poverty with - a lack of money - but it's not really a lack of money because as I have said there are families who have thousands of dollars coming in each week. It's not about lack of money; it is about poverty of spirit, of lack of education, poverty of connectedness within a family and a community. It is not really about money I don't think in this country anyway.**

Conclusion

In general, although the idea of New Zealand poverty was often construed in non-material terms and consistently geographically and socially distanced, the notion that a society would always have its "poor" was not questioned in the interviews. Having a sector of the population defined as "poor" was thus assumed to some extent as being a natural state of affairs. Most participants argued that there was a considerable gap between wealthy and poor New Zealanders and that this was reflected most often in access to services such as healthcare and a disparity in levels of education. However, while being aware of this gap, there was also a general sense running across the interviews that New Zealand is widely considered to have a "fair" distribution of wealth especially when compared with other countries.

To explain a fundamental understanding that there will be a poor sector in any given population participants used two main discursive resources. Participants drew on a discursive resource of *merit and egalitarianism* to argue that here in New Zealand it is possible to "get ahead" as a reward for working hard. In terms of social mobility participants gave examples of people they knew of who have managed to "work hard and get ahead". By default, when drawing on this discourse the poor are identified as those lacking in the ability or the willingness to strive to improve their situation. Running

alongside the notion of "getting ahead" was a discursive resource that saw New Zealand as having more structured systems around access to wealth than is openly spoken about. Participants argued here that although we do not like to talk of *class* as a structuring force it is there, mapped out on our landscape, in our lifestyle habits and reflected in varying levels of social restriction and access to social services. While a structural notion of wealth was not always referred to as *class* most participants alluded to a common understanding of different levels of entrenched social stratification especially when regarding educational levels and standards of living. The poor were identified as those people who lack the necessary education, cultural capital or "habits" to overcome situations of structural inequality. This was particularity evident in the notion of an "underclass" that combined structural and individualised notions of poverty to conjure up a picture of the New Zealand poor that sees them trapped in a self-perpetuating lifestyle of poverty.

In an advanced liberal state the "self-governing" individual is confronted with a range of social and governmental mechanisms that work on their subjectivity to shape their behaviour and manage their social identity (Rose, 1996; Dean, 1999). This aspect of governmentality refers to the prevalent (and often subliminal) acceptance by individuals of the guidance or conduct of their behaviour as they engage with governmental and social organisations. In an environment where government does not wish for its citizens to be passive recipients of benefits and services, but to be active self-sustaining individuals, strategies that both constrain and facilitate action are designed to persuade citizens to want to govern themselves. Examining the "conduct of conduct" includes noticing the influence of indirect forms of governmental apparatus, such as an education system (as a system for distributing income and rewards) on the "self-governing" individual in the construction of identities.

This chapter has highlighted some of the wide ranging social constraints referred to by participants that stem from the effects of growing levels of inequality. In general, participants voiced the importance of having access to education as a way to address inequality and avoid a situation of poverty as they argued that having this asset would most often be the point of difference that would shape an individual's social outcome. Throughout the interview conversations the emphasis on the value of education framed the participants' ideas about the possibility of social mobility. This was often imbedded in

the context of discussing the necessity of employing techniques to enhance an individual's "life skills" in order for them to secure paid employment and to therefore be better at managing their own lives. Furthermore, the emphasis given to individual "effort" and "achievement" running throughout the transcripts was closely connected to how well an individual was seen as able to negotiate the systems of education and employment and use them to their advantage. The perceived importance of having access to education and employment highlights how these are seen as significant avenues that offer direction as to how a person should conduct their lives and as such facilitate the deployment of important techniques involved in "governance at a distance" (Rose, 1996). The interview conversations revealed a perception that those citizens at the bottom of the social ladder, especially those who form part of an "underclass", have fallen outside the scope of the indirect forms of governance on offer through education and employment - they then fall under the more directional forms of governance found in welfare institutional regulations. Further, indirect forms of governance such as education and employment involve relations of power and operate as "dividing practices". Those who fail to negotiate these systems become separated and disconnected from the "norm" and perhaps become known as an "underclass". Thus, as they allow us to identify the normalised attributes or conduct needed for "affluence", indirect forms of governance such as "education" also offer us a means of separating and identifying "the poor".

This chapter is the last of the chapters that presents extracts from the interview conversations. The following chapter, chapter ten, draws the last four chapters together and extends the analysis in a discussion that positions the interview conversations in a broader discursive framework involving practices that generate knowledge of poverty by way of division and distance. Here I will also consider how the language events that emerged from the interview process are reflective of political rationalities that promote a notion of active citizenship.

Chapter Ten

Discussion

In this chapter, I move beyond the thematic description of the interview data that was presented in chapters six through to nine to discuss some of the broader complexities connected with the communication about poverty in conversations held in New Zealand communities. Firstly, I discuss the rhetorical nature of the interview dialogue itself in order to elaborate on the particular style of communication present when holding debates about poverty in the community. I then reintroduce and locate previously presented themes into a discussion of a wider discursive landscape by highlighting some of the common practices referred to by participants that work to divide the poor from the rest of society thereby creating a sense of social distance. A production of statistical knowledge provides an avenue for us to "see" poverty and is part of a *discursive practice* that produces our knowledge of poverty. As discussed in chapter four, over the last twenty years the public debate on poverty in New Zealand has increased alongside a growing visibility of information on poverty framed as a social problem from the 1970s onwards. Additionally, there has been a movement towards a monitoring of social wellbeing in general, with social indicators such as those produced in the annual Social Report (Ministry of Social Development, 2006), becoming a routine governmental exercise that serve to raise the visibility and surveillance of issues related to social well-being. Building on this level of interest in the well-being of the population, and in line with the governmentality literature, a political and economic view of New Zealand society as operating within an umbrella of "advanced liberalism" is taken up in the remainder of the discussion, in which government apparatus is regarded as promoting a particular ideal of citizenship and style of managing citizens as a route to enhanced social well-being. I will finish therefore, by discussing what people in New Zealand communities said about poverty and linking it with the concept of *active citizenship* as conceived in contemporary literature. I will contemplate what this might mean for *social welfare recipients* who are discursively and socially positioned as poor and "other" as well as the implications for those people who are not positioned in this way. As I draw on governmentality theory to look at some of the wider implications

of the discursive environment for the subjects that are embedded in it I will consider the significance of this approach for study on poverty.

The Style of Dialogue on Poverty

I found that there was a particular style of conversation when discussing the topic of poverty. The people in the community that replied to my advertisements had a self-selecting bias and they commonly used their conversation to convince me that they were an authority on the subject of poverty primarily by drawing on their own life experience. Therefore there was an assortment of opinions that often substantially departed from academic or statistical knowledge. However, as previously argued in chapter four, public awareness has grown because systems for measuring poverty have become more sophisticated, are now routinely part of the government's reporting practices and those findings are regularly reproduced in the media. So, while participants often seemed to talk from their subjective life experience, at times they also engaged in a more detached discussion about the wider social and economic system. The information that they used did seem to have filtered down from knowledge generated at policy level but it had become modified through media discussion and intertwined with their life experience as they conversed with me. As a result I found that overall the rhetoric that participants used to argue their point was a reflection of an eclectic combination of knowledge they had acquired about the subject of poverty and their opinions were justified and delivered by a persuasive use of life narratives.

This was a study that set out to look at public perceptions of poverty as well as reviewing academic literature. Although much of the academic literature reviewed in chapter three suggests that the issue of poverty can be discussed either as an individual problem or as a structural problem, I found the interview data to be far more complicated than this. On the surface it presented as a messy, mixed combination of contradictions influenced by political and media discussion and the participants' own life experience. A range of positions and experiences were reflected in the participants' competing arguments. Participants argued at times that situations of poverty were to be blamed on the inherent nature of the person and then at other times argued that external circumstances were the main cause of poverty. Therefore, as they defined poverty in the

interview, participants did not base their arguments entirely from either an individual or a structural perspective and would often move back and forth between these two positions. In this sense, there was often a considerable gap between academic and public understandings of poverty. The notion of "spiritual poverty" as presented in chapter seven, encapsulates some of this blending of personalised and structural explanations for poverty. This was especially evident when participants combined a notion of material deprivation brought about by disempowering social structures with defining poverty as "being in the eye of the beholder" arguing that poverty is a subjective experience and is often about how a person defines and presents themselves.

I was left with a strong impression of the contradictory nature of the interview conversations, a point that was previously alluded to in chapter six. Different participants had varied and conflicting responses to the same "topic" or theme of interest and described the same thing in a different way. Therefore although they had agreement about the topic that needed to be discussed, they could and often did have diverging opinions about that topic, and the overall data set presented a range of inconsistencies. For example the term "working the system" explicated in chapter eight was a common phrase, but how it was used in the interview conversation generated several connotations as to its meaning.   Additionally, there were several instances of self-contradictions internal to an interview, which became repetitive themes with similar kinds of self-contradiction occurring with different participants across the corpus of information that I had collected. For example a quote presented in chapter seven, where a participant states that she is not poor, but who also says she often cannot afford to take the children to the doctor, was a common theme whereby a participant chose to present themselves as "not poor" but define others in similar circumstances as "poor". The challenge for a discussion of the information that participants had provided was to illuminate and tease out the major subjects people mentioned in the interviews as well as to incorporate the divergent views. The Potter and Wetherell (1987, 1995) methodology was very useful here as it provided a way to draw out and present the rhetorical arguments I found in the corpus of the data. As well as isolating the arguments I was able to relate these back to several key themes that these arguments rest on which form the basis of how we perceive poverty, such as understanding poverty as containing a non-material dimension and being about how a person conducts themselves.

The knowledge of poverty forms a basis for a set of ethical precepts and practices upon which the individual may (or must) act in order to avoid or to get out of 'poverty' as it is perceived. Keeping this in mind, another way I made sense of the contradictory information arising from the interview conversations was to draw on governmentality theory and focus on how people said they managed or "governed" themselves around the way they construed poverty. Therefore, as I analysed the interview data I tuned into how participants presented their daily activities, what they said they did to manage their affairs, as well as their comments about how other people managed and how they interpreted this management. For example, as highlighted in chapter seven, most participants brought up the subject of consumption habits of poor people and how this related to poverty but had varying opinions as to how this consumption should be managed. For some their view on consumption patterns represented a shift from past attitudes where everyone including the poor was seen as living within their means. Others focussed more exclusively on the habits of poor people today and whether they had enough self-discipline to restrain their spending habits. A common dimension in these arguments about consumption was that all participants assumed that a level of self-direction was necessary for an individual to manage it responsibly and often considered this self-direction was minimal or absent in those they were defining as poor.

The Discursive Landscape

The transcripts generated from the interviews told me about some of the views people in New Zealand communities have about poverty and their normalisation of it. In chapters six through to nine I used Potter and Wetherell's methodology and teased out the use of several *interpretative repertoires* or "discourses" to present the rhetoric I found in the interview data. Amongst the rhetoric there were some common threads that underlie the participants' arguments about the nature of poverty. Although there was a mosaic of ideas which reflected the complexities of the participants' dialogue I argue they were basing their understanding on a broader *discursive formation* that renders the idea of poverty "knowable" and meaningful (Foucault, 1972). For this part of the discussion, I will build on the conversational themes that were previously identified and presented in chapters six through to nine, by relating them to the idea of a larger discursive landscape. I argue that this landscape highlights the forms of meaning that stretch

beyond the use of conversational language to include the practices that reproduce knowledge and legitimise the exercise of power and forms of governance. Accordingly, I will now turn to viewing the notions I found about poverty in the light of Foucault's philosophy of discourse and of power as a network in operation at all levels. I will be arguing that day-to-day conversation is both shaped by a set of wider *discursive practices* as well as working to support and shape those practices.

Poverty Distanced

Chapter six presents the main categories that participants used to define and locate poverty in the interview. As they drew on these categories an impression of the divisional effects associated with poverty became apparent. I found there was a general distancing and denial of poverty as being a New Zealand problem that was often combined with a description of the nature of inequality in New Zealand described as a form of *relative poverty*. Poverty was often distanced in the first instance in discussions that I had as participants told me that New Zealand citizens are not in "real" poverty and this initial reaction was often used to deny the existence of any measurable form of poverty in New Zealand. Additionally, people routinely reframed their notion of poverty to distance themselves from identifying as poor and thereby discounted their own poverty. So being in poverty was usually presented as being located elsewhere and in other people. While there was a general perception of a level of inequality in New Zealand and a description of poverty as being "relative", the way participants treated poverty as relative often contrasted with an academic understanding of relative poverty previously outlined in chapter three. In particular, absolute and relative definitions of poverty were perceived as two distinct "types" of poverty as people turned a statistical notion into a real world notion. As a participant recognised that a person in New Zealand might be struggling financially but simultaneously regarded that other people in the world are far worse off, a type of relative poverty was regularly being compared with a type of "real" and absolute third world poverty. Several examples of this comparing process are outlined in chapter six, highlighting how pervasive drawing this distinction between New Zealand and third world poverty is and how it is difficult to talk about poverty without also mentioning places such as Africa. The effect of this relativizing and comparing process in the interview conversation was that it became difficult for a person to fully recognize any New Zealand type of poverty as being a

genuine and constant source of difficulty. Therefore, the "relativisation" of poverty could be used in the discussion as a way to minimise, trivialise and even deny poverty as a New Zealand issue and also to locate it elsewhere because New Zealand poverty was not 'real' poverty.

Poverty was distanced *geographically* as participants presented it as being located in overseas third world countries as well as in selected localities such as "South Auckland". This discussion that highlighted poverty as being spatially separate gives a qualitative dimension to the more quantitatively based literature that locates areas of geographical deprivation as reviewed in chapter four (Crampton et al., 2000). The common assumption I found was that poor areas in New Zealand, such as those in South Auckland, not only happen to contain poor individuals but also serve to produce and maintain those people in their poverty by producing a myriad of problems for all the people living there. This supports an argument by Spicker (2007) who points out it is not only individuals with a lower socio-economic status who are affected by the associated problems of "slums" as all individuals, including those who have a higher socio-economic status and inhabit a poor or "undesirable" environment, will be affected by the problems contained in those "slums". In a Foucauldian sense we can see the effects of power working to separate the poor from the wealthy and the wealthy from the poor when conceptualizing the *landscape* of these *areas themselves as poor* in terms of a constellation of inter-related deprivations such as poor housing, a run-down environment, a lack of security and low social status. The detrimental effects of this larger, deprived environment can be seen as working to shuffle people into experiencing different forms of life and having different social expectations from those living in less deprived locations. They can then easily be construed as "other" types of people, different from "us".

Running alongside these perceptions of a visible spatial separation and distance was the sense of a *social distancing* contained in the notion of an *invisible or hidden* poverty that could be discovered in suburbs across the greater Auckland district that contradicted initial denials of *real* New Zealand poverty. This invisibleness includes the hidden homeless who are living in garages and cars or are forced to live with other families in overcrowded conditions, as well as those who may appear affluent but are saddled with large levels of debt. The media is a normal device for visibility with television

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documentaries that often present African poverty and South Auckland deprivation to viewers but do not often highlight the invisible nature of poverty described by participants as being prevalent in places such as Auckland's North Shore. The participants highlighted and made visible the socially detrimental effects of this type of invisible poverty particularly as they discussed the separating and divisional effects on poor children who find themselves unable to meet the social norms of participation while attending a school environment that has students from comparatively wealthier backgrounds.

As outlined in chapter nine, institutionalised processes surrounding education and health work to divide and separate the poor from the wealthy and also contribute to a distancing of poverty. This became especially noticeable as participants drew attention to educational institutions as containing "good" and "bad" schools. This awareness of "good" and "bad" schools is easily decoded into meaning "rich" and "poor" schools based on the decile rating system that is calculated by using, inter alia, household income data (Ministry of Education, 2011). An awareness of the practices that support a divisional education system is nicely captured in a participant's comment about the influence of real estate promotional material that works to support and sustain a sense of geographical distance between wealthy and poor people. Healthcare was also acknowledged as being separating and divisional as participants talked of how access to publically funded services is mediated by lengthy waiting lists for those who cannot afford to have private healthcare insurance. This means in practice that people on low incomes wait to access hospital care, while those who can afford to pay can jump the queue. Further, policy that is designed to mitigate the expense of primary healthcare for those in suburbs classified as poor was seen as having the effect in practice of entrenching notions of where the poor and the wealthy live, and further restricting the affordability of healthcare for those people on low-incomes "hidden" in wealthy suburbs.

Poverty Racialised and Stigmatised

As noted in chapter six, most participants spontaneously racialised the issue of poverty and there were some overtly racist accounts. This racialisation often painted a qualitative picture reflecting an underlying cultural racism with Maori and Pacific

peoples presented as poor people. Statistical analysis and qualitative approaches can give us two different lenses to view poverty. Low income statistics in New Zealand tend to present proportions of each ethnic group below income thresholds rather than present this information as absolute numbers. There are also acknowledged problems around the classification of ethnicity especially at the household level. Therefore the extent of the racialisation of poverty in this study is not an accurate reflection of the statistical information on poverty as an income-based reality as the greater number of people represented in poverty statistics are Pakeha (or European). It seems likely therefore, that the extent of the racialising of poverty and the management in the interview conversation of that racialisation by the participants is partly a reflection of the problems inherent in using ethnicity to categorise individuals at a policy level when presenting statistical data. In social policy documentation, New Zealand "European" (meaning white people) is often considered as the population for other "minority" ethnicities such as Maori and Pacific peoples to be compared with. An example of this ethnic categorising is provided in the annually produced Social Report (Ministry of Social Development, 2006). This report compares levels of achievement of social indicators of well-being such as housing standards, education and health across ethnicity with non-European ethnicities performing comparatively disappointingly. The visibility of these ethnically categorised social well-being indicators and the ensuing media discussion of them can serve to reflect and reinforce a racialised notion of poverty and deprivation. From a Foucauldian perspective the practice of ethnic categorisation can be seen as biopower in operation. Thus, even though available ethnic categories may be remote from self-understandings, they operate as a governmental technology as they are taken up, normalised and used to shape identities by formulating "types" of persons for individuals to be.

In a similar fashion to and linked with a process of racialising deprivation, poverty was regularly presented as a position with a large amount of stigma associated with it. There was a distinction in the interview conversation between discussing a deserving class of poor people such as the elderly or the sick perceived as poor due to no fault of their own that contrasted with talking about a non-deserving class of welfare beneficiaries, such as solo mothers and the long-term unemployed, who were easily linked with crime and notions of an underclass. Discussing the undeserving poor by presenting them as having immoral and deviant behaviour served a useful purpose in the interview conversation to justify distancing and divisional practices in the community because *those people* are

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poor, lazy and criminal and *not like us.* As previously outlined in chapter nine, media-led discussions by politicians, such as John Key, contained and reflected many of these common assumptions about being poor in New Zealand, as he named a growing underclass who were identified as passive and subject to criminal tendencies. This type of discursive position about poverty resonates strongly with a notion of the underclass presented by Charles Murray (1984) as outlined in chapter three. Additionally, what I found also concurred with the analysis presented by Morris (1996) that this contemporary discourse of an underclass has a strongly racialised component.

Poverty Understood in Non Material Terms

As presented in chapter seven, the occurrence of poverty was frequently explained as not necessarily only being about a material condition or experience such as a lack of finances. This understanding of poverty as having a non-material component often attracted a moral gaze. Poverty became personalised when viewed as an outcome of a person's *mind-set* leading to a poor "choice" of life style coupled with misguided consumption practices. In an environment where subjects are governed through their "freedom", "choice" making is liable to come under scrutiny (Rose, 1999). Further, as Rose (1996) maintains, the 'psy' disciplines have become a key technology of government that have transformed the way we "invent ourselves" and reason about how to exercise choice.   The interview conversations provided some evidence of how people are taking up and utilising concepts emerging from popular "self-help" advice generated in the "psy" disciplines and applying these to the idea of poverty. For example, as people took a focus on perceiving poverty as being linked with the psychology of a person, they assembled concepts such as having a "benefit type personality" as a way to anchor sets of common assumptions about the consumption choices, habits and the innate nature of a person drawing a social security benefit. These attitudes towards the consumption practices of the poor were also reflective of a wider concern about the state of the nation as participants referred to warnings that being poor is bad for our health and bad for the economy. This knowledge of best consumption practice therefore asserted an omnipresent influence on how participants constructed themselves and constructed others as psychological and economic beings centred on their concerns about the nature of poverty and wealth. Thus I found the discussion from the participants to be reflective of a wider economic discourse that echoed the sentiments of Bauman (1998) as he argued that today the poor can be

judged by others and themselves on their unwise consumption practices and can be assessed as being "flawed consumers". The poor, Bauman argues, have become the collective "other" of frightened consumers and "the sight of the poor keeps the non-poor at bay and in step" (Bauman, 2001:117). A sense of *exclusion* is easily generated by modern day consumption practices and how these practices are discussed in communities. While the wealthy are afforded status through their conspicuous consumption, the poor are criticised as they consume. The common knowledge presented in the interviews about how to consume properly had a hegemonic quality about it and it exerts a significant influence on the relationship between "us" and "them" or "wealthy" and "poor" in contemporary New Zealand communities.

Categorising the Poor and Governance

A way of exploring ideas about poverty is to take note of perceptions surrounding the subtle social and administrative practices that are used to manage it and manage the poor and see how these processes compare with general systems of population management. As I looked over the themes that had emerged from the interview conversations I had with participants, I found evidence suggesting that participants perceived that there is a contrast in the way the wealthy and the poor are treated socially and managed institutionally. While most participants acknowledged that financial deprivation is difficult, this understanding generally sat alongside an assumption that a person socially positioned as a poor citizen may need some form of external *discipline* to help them to manage better. Consequently, although I found that social processes and institutional practices of governing the poor at times gave the impression of being disciplinary and exclusionary, leading to a systematic othering of the poor, these practices appeared to be accepted as normal and necessary by many of the people I talked with. What I found especially interesting was listening to some of the participants who had been subjected to a range of disciplining and distancing practices themselves, voicing their support of those practices being applied to other people. Expert knowledge was drawn on by the participants in the study to elucidate how to be good citizens, including such advice as how best to manage your health, your education, your self-esteem, your consumption patterns and habits, and how to resist a list of addictions and addictive behaviour including unhealthy food, excess alcohol, smoking and gambling. As I reviewed the interview conversations a notion of an ideal active, self-reliant,

responsible citizen emerged to be compared with the less than ideal dependent, irresponsible, marginalised citizen – those citizens seen as poor in both the financial sense and in an evaluative sense. What I found resonated with accounts in the governmentality literature (Rose, 1999) which observe that how a person experiences themselves as a citizen, consumer or community member, is mediated and framed in relation to marginalised, outcast or deviant citizens. Thus, positive citizenship categories such as a "hard working person" are assembled through their perceived difference to those negative "othered" categories such as "dole bludgers" and "solo mothers".

Participants tended to leap from the idea of poverty to talking about benefits and the welfare administration system. They typified welfare beneficiaries as being poor and this worked to construct an impression of a *subject position* of the beneficiary as "the poor person" who is fashioned in the social welfare system. Overall, while describing poor people and the nature of poverty, there was a lack of appreciation that many people fully employed on low incomes may be not much better off financially than those in receipt of a social security benefit. Because being poor and experiencing poverty was categorised as part of the domain of *social welfare* this left little room to discuss poverty or identify "the poor" in other categories, such as the low paid employed or "working poor". As outlined in chapter eight, when examining the ideas in the interview conversations around the institutional governance of *social welfare beneficiaries as the poor people*, it was noticeable that a person in receipt of a benefit is seen as being subjected to certain rules that the average person is not subjected to. For example, being required to give details of how money is being spent when reporting to "case managers" contrasts with the type of information that low paid employees (or the "working poor") are required to provide to their employer. This was congruent with Dean (2002), who maintains that although in an advanced liberal environment we are understood as being governed through our "freedom", simultaneously forms of disciplinary power are employed when it comes to the institutional governance of the poor. The effects of the power exercised over beneficiaries became apparent as participants living on a benefit discussed eligibility requirements such as attending job seminars designed to assess work readiness. The on-going management of beneficiaries, who are identified as poor, included giving budgeting advice, advice on healthy living, and recommendations about how to improve their employment prospects. This power exercised at an institutional level to shape and mould behaviour can be accepted or resisted by beneficiaries. An

exercise of personal agency in situations of poverty, as highlighted by Lister (2004) and referred to in chapter three of this thesis, can be observed in forms of *everyday resistance* to the power imbued in processes of institutional and socially engineered responsibilisation and social monitoring. This resistance to disciplinary governing processes was clearly evident in the expression "learn how to work the system" that was used repeatedly throughout the interview conversations. As highlighted in chapter eight, the practice of working the system can be construed as a beneficiary expressing a sense of agency and resilience, as well as their resistance to a sense of being monitored and constrained. While the participants also acknowledged that the wealthy "worked the system", what was seen as distinctive, was that this use of the system had less social disapproval than that afforded to social welfare recipients.

I highlighted in chapter nine, how the existence of "the poor" was not disputed by the participants I interviewed. Indeed, for the most part there was a general consensus that "the poor will always be with us" in the sense that it is a natural outcome of how modern societies function. When participants situated poverty and wealth in a wider social context, ideas about the ease of social mobility were often imbedded in a framework of considering the value of paid employment, education and "life skills" and the importance of conveying and displaying to the world that a *personal effort* has been made to accumulate wealth and avoid poverty. Consequently, the importance of being self-motivated and hardworking had a strong correlation throughout the interview conversations with perceptions of an achievement of success and wealth. As the gap between the haves and the have-nots was perceived as growing, having a high educational level and the appearance of being a successful person were seen as the necessary personal effects central to combating poverty. The process of education was itself commonly assumed to be a crucial medium that motivates and facilitates the channelling of people into meaningful well-paid employment. The connection of wealth with merit was central to the idea that we have a fluid system where if a person wants to, or believes they can, they will "get ahead" and that if a person cannot make it here in New Zealand they will not make it anywhere in the world. Therefore, the presence of social divisions was cemented by reference to a subtle awareness of social worth fed by a common knowledge that involves meritocratic ideals of work and effort. However, intertwined with a meritocratic set of principles, participants also reflected on a disparity in access to income, education, healthcare and housing and linked this with social forces

beyond the control of the individual. As they did this a picture emerged of a society with barriers that can only hope to be surmounted by the exceptionally clever and the lucky. Therefore a structural understanding of social life that explained a lack of social mobility in terms of restrictive social forces (such as class barriers) worked to further rationalise the "naturalness" of social divisions and inequality present in New Zealand communities. As highlighted in chapter nine, education and employment were both implicitly and explicitly voiced as the crucial governing mechanisms responsible for channelling people into forms of life that frame their "choice making" in ways that circumvent situations of poverty.

Section Summary

In this section I have explicated some of the discursive resources and governing practices that I found in the interview conversations about poverty and related these to discourse in a broader sense involving social and institutional practice in the community. In the process of doing this I have drawn a picture of a discursive landscape in which poverty was distanced, racialised, stigmatised, institutionalised and defined in non-material terminology. As well as highlighting these dominant ways of "knowing" and talking about poverty, I have outlined an impression of who participants believe the poor person is, and how this perception reflects social practices that maintain a limited level of social mobility and work to locate and manage beneficiaries. Participants gave recognition to a systemisation of poverty and wealth as they contrasted the standards of living of the poor and the wealthy, and a sense of separation between those in poverty and the wealthy was well understood when approaching the idea of poverty from this standpoint. Further, the understanding portrayed was that learning how to compete, cope and "work the system" that you find yourself in is vital. An impression of social status and in-groups and out-groups can be viewed as a consequence of a system of subtle linguistic techniques and social procedures that function to manage or govern the activities of individuals and populations at every level. This knowledge of social status was especially reflected in the language of exclusion as the participants talked about "us and them." As I have presented some of the distancing and dividing practices that serve to separate the poor subject from the wealthy subject, I have also argued that these are reinforced by the way they are discussed in the community. Therefore, I argue that as knowledge of poverty and poor people is produced and repeated in conversation, this

conversational process itself can serve to divide, distance and "other" the poor, especially those who are *social welfare beneficiaries* as well as work to legitimise the forms of governance for those beneficiaries.

The contrasting views about wealth and poverty highlight how both extremes are perceived as comprising of completely separate systems. Wealthy people were presented in the interview conversations as powerful and in charge of their lives, seen as worthy citizens, "successful" and generally assumed to deserve what they have as long as it is not too excessive. Talking about the "exclusiveness" of the wealthy and their conspicuous consumption practices, provided a significant contrast to the sense of "exclusion" presented when discussing those in poverty who were seen as unable to manage their lives or to consume wisely. As I gained a sense of the common understanding and knowledge that surrounds being either in or out of poverty, from considering the conversations of people in the community, I was also able to pay attention to how power is being exercised in the community. Foucault (1982) argued that individuals will have to position themselves in available discursive locations and thereby subject themselves to the forms of power and instruction that accompany those locations. In the next section, I will examine how a notion of *active citizenship* frames how a person might subjectify him or herself and take meaning from the discourse that surrounds notions of poverty and wealth.

"Active" Citizenship and the Formation of the Subject

The interviews told me about how people explain and negotiate both their own lives and explained the lives of others around their particular conception of poverty. As they did this they highlighted practices both at an institutional level and at a social or community level that provided "governance". In general, all participants were keen to convince me that they knew how situations of poverty should best be managed or "governed". Therefore, within the discursive landscape previously discussed, some of the processes of the governing of citizens, both the poor and the non-poor, could be identified. When taking a focus on an individual person or "subject" as a site of "governance", the interviews I conducted with participants told me something about a matrix of ideas in the community around the notion of poverty and how it is managed. Power and its

relationship to the state are looked at in the governmentality thesis by inviting a closer inspection of the practices in institutions and in social actions for governing the conduct of citizens. An omnipresent power is understood as being encompassed in a pastoral approach to the art of governing and is recognised as the presence of a pervasive sense of governance in all directions, or as described by Foucault, as the widespread practice of the "conduct of conduct" (Dean, 1999 see chapter two). In this part of the chapter, I will consider the usefulness of governmentality theory in informing this study and its possibilities for extending an understanding of how poverty is constructed, construed and managed and thereby becomes visible as an "object" of knowledge in New Zealand communities. In keeping with a governmentality framework, I will locate this discussion in the context of the political rationality of "advanced liberalism", which is supporting a governmentality involved in the construction of a citizenship defined as "active".

Citizenship, Social Policy Debates and Governmentality

Citizenship is a prominent idea in social policy debates involving notions of legal and social rights, social obligations, work, community, social inclusion and social exclusion (Dwyer, 2010). At a visceral level citizenship relates to the experience of belonging and feeling included in a society. This primal sense of belonging is played out in modern societies with a democratic tradition by having the opportunity to contribute to that society enshrined legally as the exercise of certain rights that are located alongside a set of responsibilities and obligations. Citizenship has become a key theme in social policy literature because it is a historical product and practice that has to be enforced and managed and it has produced a rationale for the welfare state. Questions about who belongs to the nation and who is entitled to certain sets of rights and how fairly and justly these are being implemented are central to discussions surrounding debates over the rights and duties of citizenship. Discussions in social policy literature often take as their starting point T.H.Marshall's classic 1950 essay "*Citizenship and Social Class*" (Marshall, 1950 - reviewed in chapter three) to identify the foundations of a notion of citizenship that extended citizenship rights beyond the political and civil and added "social" rights and responsibilities. These social rights are understood to be encapsulated in a welfare state framework. Within this welfare framework, principles of universalism are seen as part of society, serve as protection from the negative consequences of the market economy and enhance the lives of all citizens. This

conceptualization of citizenship advances the importance of a formation of a collective perception of social rights relating to social security, health and education.

Lewis (1998) outlined the significance of the notion of citizenship as a means of governance and as the response of the state to the problem of social cohesion. In the light of governmentality theory, citizenship can be viewed as a technology that provides a means of structuring the relationship between the state and the individuals it governs. Both the concept of "citizenship" and the management of citizens can therefore be perceived as part of the techniques of biopower, or population control, as argued by Foucault (1978). Foucault's understanding of power-knowledge can be seen as working to separate, analyse and differentiate groups of people from other groups through the production of a model of the *ideal citizen*. As previously reviewed in chapter two, theorists such as Nikolas Rose (1999) view a situation of "advanced liberalism" as a governmental rationality for a social arrangement that relies upon new kinds of citizen-subjects and new techniques for governing them. A conceptualization of citizenship, as adopted in an environment of advanced liberalism, sees the emphasis on reliance on the self, with self-expertise and self-governing seen as necessary components of a political rationality affecting all aspects of life.

In this understanding of the governance of social life, recognition of the extent to which people are included or excluded from citizenship can be identified by the different strategies employed to govern the marginalised in contrast to the affiliated. Miller and Rose (2008) argue that the included or affiliated citizens need constantly to demonstrate their affiliation through active choice and maintenance of an accredited lifestyle, while marginalised citizens can become the focus for risk management. This draws attention to a subtle control that works to assign different destinies to individuals based on their ability to respond to the requirements of what is considered as *ideal*. For those citizens who are not perceived as being able to self-manage, programmes and technologies are institutionalised under the umbrella of the welfare state to regulate behaviour and the "conduct of conduct" can often rest on a rationality of morality and responsibility. Social provision is seen to be deployed under a range of risk management technologies designed to differentiate between those individuals that are seen as able to be empowered to become "responsible" or "ideal" citizens and those who cannot and who are therefore identified as a concern. Therefore, citizenship as a *governmental technique*

can be seen as a technique that is involved in processes of *governance from a distance* for those individuals who are seen as self-managing. Simultaneously, a closer form of discipline for those who are perceived as being not able to self-manage (or not *yet* able) is sanctioned (Hindess, 2001). This understanding of a differentiated form of citizenship as discussed in the governmentality literature can seem at variance with a notion of citizenship conceived as a liberating concept involved in the advancement of social rights.

The "Ideal Citizen" Construed as Actively Engaged and a Responsible Consumer

Contemporary issues raised in literature on the nature of citizenship have located dynamics of social relations, inclusion and exclusion, in terms of whether citizens are able to consume in the right way and be responsible in the right manner. Recent debate in social policy literature has regarded the effects of neo-liberalism and a perception of a shift in the relationship between citizenship status and welfare provision in the light of contemporary state and institutional discourse that surrounds and supports a notion of *active citizenship* (Dwyer, 2010). Citizens as *active* are addressed and understood as individuals who are responsible for themselves and others in their "community", however that may be defined. Active citizenship becomes associated with individual choice to give freely of goods, money or time as this articulation of citizenship sees that it is part of the obligation of a responsible citizen to contribute to their community through charitable giving, active volunteering, active participation and self-responsibility (Gilbert and Powell, 2008). When applied to "the poor" this discourse of active citizenship is often framed around ideas that promote the desirability of "self-responsible" behaviour and the creation and reinforcement of particular behaviours exhibited by "good citizens". The notion of active citizenship also feeds into an ongoing discussion in the social policy literature about a transformation from a concept of the citizen being a *social rights holder* to the citizen becoming a *responsible consumer* (Belgrave, 2004). Those citizens who rely on welfare provision are now best portrayed as "consumers" of social services. The role of the state has become one of a facilitator of this consumption through private providers with citizens expected to look to themselves and govern themselves by taking responsibility for managing their health and wellbeing (Gilbert and Powell, 2008). However, the active citizen in the context of welfare provision is also seen as being *closely and actively managed* and evidence of this was

reflected in the interview conversations when participants talked about the necessity of managing the money of beneficiaries.

The governmentality literature addresses the notion of *active citizenship*, by regarding it as a strategy of regulating the population in an era of increasingly de-centred forms of government. As reviewed in chapter two, Cruikshank's (1999) interpretation of a citizenship defined in active terms sees it as a strategy of government that amounts to a *technology of citizenship*. Miller and Rose talked of the formation of government through community whereby:

> "new modes of neighbourhood participation, local empowerment and engagement of residents in decisions over their own lives will, it is thought, reactivate self-motivation, self-responsibility and self-reliance in the form of active citizenship within a self-governing community" (Miller and Rose, 2008:92).

The notion of active citizenship involves technologies of responsibilisation which include mechanisms that entail subjects to become self-managing by "shifting the responsibility for social risks such as illness, unemployment, poverty, etc., and for life in society into the domain for which the individual is responsible and transforming it into a problem of 'self-care'" (Lemke, 2001:201). I found that an expectation of self-management was particularly noticeable in the interview conversations when looking at how the participants viewed the relationship between consumption practices and taking responsibility for looking after their own health. Although participants acknowledged that good health practices were not exclusively practised by the wealthy, moral guidance was particularly aimed at those considered poor with the perception being that the consumption of takeaway food, alcohol and cigarettes was high in people living on a low income. There was a substantial amount of reference made to a relationship between being poor and the consumption of what is widely understood to be unhealthy food, such as McDonalds. The discussions I had with participants tended to oscillate between sympathy for people on low incomes for being unable to access comprehensive healthcare services and a suspicion that those positioned as poor are attracting to themselves what are considered nutritionally related health disorders due to their unwise and unhealthy consumption practices and thereby posing a risk to the sustainability of

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the health system. Therefore, in a framework of citizenship that promotes the self-management of what are professed by professionals as healthy consumption practices, people will be open to judgements by others (and themselves) for contributing to their own poor health especially if they are perceived as choosing not to follow commonly recognised and institutionally promoted health guidelines.

There were also responsibilising processes surrounding the purchase of consumer items. Even though most participants recognised that advertising campaigns create artificial wants and needs, I found there was an understanding that most of the population should want to strive to purchase commodities that would meet the aspirations that they may be persuaded to desire. Sitting alongside this pressure to consume, was a belief that people should perform in a manner that allowed them to purchase or achieve their desired level of consumption, with the expectation being that this generally occurs through the activation of personal effort and hard work. In general, those considered as wealthy were seen by participants as capable and deserving of participating in a high level of consumption as there was the assumption running through the interview conversations that the wealthy had worked hard for what they had acquired and that they had made wise financial decisions. For the most part therefore, disapproval of unwise consumption included the opinions about what were perceived as the unwise budgeting practices found in the poor population. This was especially evident in the interview conversations as participants voiced their objection to those considered as poor owning consumable items such as expensive television sets and mobile telephones. For poor people, constructing their identity through consumption choices such as ownership of expensive brand named items was considered as both unattainable and out of bounds.

The "Active Citizen" and Poverty as "Spiritual"

Adjacent to prescriptions about managing health and consumption responsibly, participants constructed a paradox between material and non-material wealth and poverty and the interview conversations often moved towards explaining that money does not equal happiness and that happiness comes from within. Several participants used anecdotal evidence to discuss the "happiness" presented by children in third world countries who appear to have few material possessions. Although I found no evidence in the literature on poverty to suggest that being materially poor does equate to being

happy, the account I was given by several participants was that material well-being had little to do with and could even interfere with subjective well-being or a sense of happiness. Thus, I found that locating the notions of poverty and wealth as *spiritual* conditions could be used concurrently in the interview conversation on one hand to explain an appearance of helplessness as both a cause and effect of material poverty and on the other hand to justify the usefulness of being materially poor as a route to developing a more "spiritually wealthy" existence. The effect of non-materialising or "spiritualising" poverty and wealth in this way was to present wider "socio-economic" factors as psychological "states of being". This conversational pathway distracted from arguing that a person's level of income (and thus their purchasing power) was an important factor to consider when addressing situations of poverty.

A key theme running through the discursive presumptions made about poverty in the interview conversations I had was a form of individualism that considered that fundamentally it is your "choice" whether you want to be a wealthy citizen or a poor citizen. This individualism was especially evident when referring to those who were considered as in spiritual poverty. Participants had various theories about the causes and effects of a situation of spiritual poverty which were at times justified by reference to expert opinion on the nature of human development and psychology. As they drew on a notion of spiritual poverty, participants tended to frame this as a "New Zealand type" of poverty; an accumulation of personalised issues that combine to create a situation where people are seen as not coping or maintaining themselves in a suitable manner and who are often appearing, or presented as being, in a state of helplessness and hopelessness. In general, as poverty became personalised as a "state of being", it was perceived to be a *self-perpetuating* condition as a participant explained that poverty can be "in the eye of the beholder" and it is about how you perceive and present yourself that will ultimately shape your set of circumstances.

Consequently, as I explored this notion of spiritual poverty further and reflected on its meaning, I found that the type of citizen it identified was the inverse of (and thereby challenged) a notion of an *ideal* citizen who could embody the qualities needed to be the self-managing individual in an environment of advanced liberalism (Rose, 1999). Different social roles and social status are confirmed in conversation by notions such as spiritual poverty and these terms work to differentiate between what is considered as

ideal and what is less than ideal. Defining poverty as "spiritual" was similar to distancing it to the "third world"; it became something "other worldly" with those considered as having a poverty of spirit "othered" and distanced to the margins of society. As those people identified as in spiritual poverty were perceived as lost and without the skills to help themselves, they were construed as unlikely to be *activated* into becoming the responsible citizen. So identifying the "New Zealand poor" as a "state of being" in this way invoked an image of a type of citizen who is resistant to governing practices designed to activate, who is socially separate and easily distanced.

Subjectification and the Marginalised Citizen

The "poor person" as a subject position is created in discourse and I have previously highlighted how *social welfare beneficiaries* were typified as being "the poor" during the interview conversations that I had with participants. Accordingly, beneficiaries who are identified as "the poor" become subjected to the meaning, power and regulation of institutional discourses and practices as well as to a social level of community discursive assumptions about their worth as a citizen. The lens afforded by the governmentality approach helped to shed light on how this positioning might be experienced and what might be expected of those people who find they are institutionally and socially positioned as the *poor beneficiary*. The governance of social welfare is a reflection of welfare policy and how this policy was reported by participants as being implemented in welfare agencies provided some evidence of conditionality in welfare entitlements and a sense of a marginalised, restricted citizenship status. However, the interview conversations also revealed some of the self-governing behaviour of welfare beneficiaries, both what they did and what they were expected to do to manage their situation. While most participants distanced themselves during the interview conversation from identifying as poor or as in poverty, a beneficiary could either *position themselves* in the social welfare system in a capable sense as a competent person and as able to "work it" to their advantage, or in a helpless sense as feeling disempowered by it and attribute it to generating feelings of worthlessness.

As reviewed in chapter two, Cruikshank (1999) explored how the technology of active citizenship was deployed through the notion of "empowerment", which, she argued, promotes a certain type of subjectivity by encouraging the active engagement of the

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poor in the provision of social services, with the aim of reducing their reliance on the welfare state and promoting an awareness of self-responsibility. A political rationality that constructs citizenship in "active" terms leaves little room to allow those citizens who are reliant on welfare provision to continue to present as passive, dependent and non-engaged people. Within a discursive framework of *active citizenship*, they will be encouraged in welfare institutions to *see themselves* as having the capacity to make what are promoted as wise consumption choices in a market orientated welfare system. Thus the way beneficiaries were positioned in the welfare system construed them as *active citizens in the making*. This was made evident as participants discussed with me how beneficiaries were encouraged, with the aid of their own personal case manager, to "choose" to connect with a plan that would best manage their situation and empower them to engage actively with the community. Therefore a constellation of ideas was at work to form a notion of "empowerment" that worked on a beneficiary's subjectivity by selling them the idea that they could move beyond their *self-imposed* restraints and their sense of powerlessness if they took more responsibility for themselves and their dependants. They were also made aware of the sanctions if they failed to do so. In the interview conversations I had with participants the reference made to "working for the dole" or volunteering their services was seen as a key way that welfare beneficiaries could be required to show evidence that they were *activated* and moving towards becoming full citizens by contributing to their community.

As I was able to note the social and institutional expectations that are held of the poor citizen as a *social welfare beneficiary* and the perceived failings associated with their consumption, their self-worth, health, parenting and budgeting practices, I was also able to question whether the poor person appeared to subjectify him or herself to the set of disciplinary practices and advice they were confronted with. There was evidence in the interview conversations of a level of resistance towards participating in job seminars and to becoming ready to move away from living on a welfare benefit. In this sense "working the system" involved the attempts to avoid detection of income that was not declared and thus represented a different form of being *active*. When discussing their financial situation with their case workers at Work and Income New Zealand, beneficiaries were routinely subjected to budgeting advice to curb their consumption, especially if they requested extra financial assistance. The expectation was that beneficiaries should be covering the costs of basic household expenditure such as power

and healthy food before factoring in any other outside expenses. This position was reflected in the advice on the governments Ministry of Social Development website with a link to a Kiwi Cookbook that promotes the desirability of affordable, home cooked meals. However, a level of resistance from beneficiaries to recommendations about how to "live within your income" was present in the interview conversations. This was evidenced by reference to the practice of having "treats" such as chocolate and takeaway meals and purchasing "luxury" consumables such as mobile phones and Sky television. In this sense, purchasing consumables appeared to be a way of managing a feeling of powerlessness, as a person engaged the power they did have to purchase something that would provide an instant satisfaction and a feeling of living as "normal" people live. Thus, in this context, consumption offered a way for an individual to become an "insider", rather than settling for being an excluded "outsider".

Conclusion

As I carried out this research I found that some light can be shed on what can be said about poverty and about how power is being exercised in contemporary New Zealand communities by adopting a Foucauldian lens to view and examine people's opinions. I used the elements of Foucault's theorisations that I thought were appropriate and useful as a way to give deeper meaning to the information and to develop a framework to further understand the data that I had collected. In particular, I utilised concepts from the governmentality thesis to extend the discursive information about poverty and demonstrate how those who are construed as poor are managed or "governed" socially and institutionally. I found that the governmentality lens proved a useful tool to examine the responsibilising, disciplining and dividing strategies or techniques (both at the institutional and at the community conversational level) that serve to exclude and include the citizen as well as to assess how those citizen-subjects are responding to these strategies and techniques. As I progressed through the various ways that participants distanced, racialised, stigmatised and construed poverty as a "state of being", a discursive landscape and a form of governance was revealed that worked to separate, restrict and "other" those people considered as poor. Poverty and wealth were seen as part of a system that has to be managed, and social mobility between levels of wealth

was viewed as limited. The limited level of social mobility was attributed both to the individual and to social structures but primarily to the former.

When using a governmentality perspective to look at the management of citizens in a neo-liberal environment, the responsibility for the social wellbeing of the citizen is seen as gradually being shifted away from the state onto the individual, but this process is also seen as sitting alongside more direct forms of intervention by state apparatuses (Lemke, 2001). Government "from a distance" is evidenced therefore in the concern amongst experts and professionals to regulate and control the habits and action of the wider population. Thus while the notion of *citizenship* can be viewed as a liberating concept involved with the advancement of social rights it can also be seen as a technology of government apparatus in a Foucauldian sense. Through a process of exploring how people perceive poverty and its associated social relations, I was able to explore some of the ideas and technologies of citizenship defined as *active* that have become normalised, and the internalised tactics of a governmentality involved in encouraging the development of a self-managing population. Processes of self-management and responsibilisation were evident in the language used by participants as they described how they managed their lives and how they identified the ways "the poor" managed (and were managed by others) to live under the umbrella of the social welfare system. As various processes of responsibilisation were highlighted, a representation of an *ideal citizen* materialised as being an active, self-reliant, enterprising, responsible consumer. From these perceptions emerged what constitutes a sense of an *ideal citizenship status* which contrasted with the notions of what constitutes a sense of *marginalised citizenship status*.

Social welfare beneficiaries were viewed by participants as epitomising the poor of New Zealand and they were seen to be governed by a range of institutionalised practices coming under the umbrella of the welfare system. I found there was some evidence running through the interview conversations to suggest that forms of institutional governance promoting the notion of *active citizenship* are deployed through micro management and a disciplinary approach when they are applied to this marginalised group of "others" (Miller and Rose, 2008). The poor were seen to be watched and regulated and social welfare was generally regarded as a form of surveillance, containment and direction when governance at an institutional level was conducted with an aim of *activating* individuals to be responsible citizens. A key purpose of social

policy is the prevention of perceived risks to society such as poverty, unemployment and illness. The poor as *social welfare beneficiaries* are perceived as a risk if they appear to lack the self-management skills required to self-regulate and do not appear to respond to programmes designed to install what are considered as responsible habits. *Working the system* was a common phrase used in the interview conversations which incorporated both a resistance to disciplinary forms of institutional governance as well as a sense of agency and resilience in the beneficiary population. While the beneficiaries in the study appeared to take up the responsibility for their self-esteem, education, health and work they also revealed a level of resistance to institutional governing processes as they conveyed to me the creative ways they managed their situation.

Chapter Eleven

Conclusion

I chose this project because I wanted to explore the dynamics of conversations about poverty in New Zealand including both spoken and written language. In this research, as I set out to explore community perceptions of poverty, I wondered whether people in New Zealand communities would produce evidence to suggest that the poor were othered in a similar fashion to the mad as described by Foucault in *History of Madness* (2006) and how they might be subject to the modern disciplinary practices of surveillance and confinement as advanced in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1977). In chapter two, I considered how a Foucauldian view of society and change (and in particular a governmentality approach to looking at social concerns) could be a useful way to approach my research question. In chapter three, I overviewed the academic conversations and approaches to studying poverty and noted the changing nature of the way a social issue like poverty can be viewed over time. I observed that social arrangements and the way we discuss them are open to change but that some themes have continuity. In chapter four, I located this understanding of social change around the issue of poverty in the New Zealand context from 1972 to 2008, the date for the commencement of the participant interviews. My methodology was explained in chapter five. I used techniques developed by discursive psychologists Potter and Wetherell (1987, 1995) to analyse the transcriptions and the data I collected was presented in chapters six through to nine in a thematic sequence. In terms of the content of the interview conversations I found a particular style of dialogue around the topic of poverty and I discovered several common themes around the content of what was said in the interview conversations. In chapter ten, I drew on a Foucauldian understanding of *discursive practice* and its relationship with power, knowledge and truth to extend the previous thematic presentation and shed further light on what can be said about poverty and the citizen in New Zealand communities. This analysis of the interview conversations conducted with people living in New Zealand communities revealed a community that is involved in managing themselves (and expecting others to do likewise) in relation to a political rationality that promotes an ideal of citizenship defined in active terms.

Methodology - discourse analysis and governmentality

This type of study with its blend of discursive theory, interview data, and policy review diverts to some extent from typical methodologies that have been used for researching poverty. While existing research on poverty does include the views of those defined as poor describing their experience, there has not been an extensive amount of published research into the general attitudes of New Zealanders towards poverty. I found I could use Potter and Wetherell's (1987) discursive approach to explore and analyse the common dimensions around what people say motivates others and the common things about poverty that they wanted to offer an opinion about. The use of this discursive methodology extends the literature on poverty by acknowledging that the average person on the street is an expert in their own right and proposes that they are someone with authority to speak on the issue of poverty who may or may not agree with the authoritative statements of "poverty experts".

It was possible to develop the discussion of the participant interview conversations further, by utilising a governmentality approach to present how citizens in New Zealand communities are construing poverty and managing their lives around their notion of poverty. I did this by noting their references to the categories, identities and practices that are created in the community and through social policy frameworks that combine to form a social norm of citizenship. The notion of citizenship can aid in conceptualizing the relationship between the contemporary state apparatus and the individuals it governs. I viewed the concept of citizenship in the light of a governmentality approach as a technique of population management involved in encouraging a perception of an ideal citizen moving towards becoming a self-managing, *active* individual. Citizenship debates raise questions of inclusion and exclusion. Throughout this research process, I took note of the discussion that alluded to the occurrence of "in-groups" and "out-groups" and "othering" practices that served as indicators of techniques and procedures that combine to govern the conduct of individual citizens at every level of society. I found that in the contemporary environment the citizen is perceived as having the freedom to make "choices" in a market orientated welfare system. However, I also found evidence of disciplinary strategies of management in place that shaped those "choices" as social

welfare beneficiaries described their interaction with welfare services that often appeared to segregate and scrutinise.

I found that governmentality theory was a useful mode to explore community practices as they surfaced, as well as a helpful conceptual device to draw on to highlight the effect power relations are having on individuals and groups in the community and the perceived outcome of this on social relations. This research offers an extension to the governmentality literature by looking at some of the direct effects of government as it is experienced, taken up or resisted by real people in their everyday lives as it considers some of the abstract concepts contained in that literature in an empirical research design.

Key Findings

This thesis offers information about how people in New Zealand communities are construing poverty. As I reflected on my original research question I found several key ideas that form the basis of our understanding of poverty in New Zealand. Participants had concerns about poverty and there was a *positive unconscious* to this which allowed them to produce their rhetoric with confidence (Foucault, 1994). As argued in chapter ten, there were several discursive understandings about poverty and poor people that emerged. Poverty was *distanced* to third world countries (or South Auckland), *stigmatised* as an immoral situation, *racialised* as being Maori and Pacific, *non-materialised* as being part of a mental or spiritual state, lack of knowledge or bad habits and *institutionalised* as being mainly about the life and experiences of welfare beneficiaries. This discursive landscape worked to explain the presence of a New Zealand type of poverty and forms of disciplinary governance for the poor.

I found that there were conflicting theories, ideas and opinions sitting around common terms and phrases such as "spiritual poverty" and "working the system" and as these terms emerged discursively they worked to hold opposing arguments together in conversation. In the process of exploring how poverty is construed I identified how paid work, education, being resourceful and skilled inspires people. Frequently mentioned were the perceived mismanagement of money, the consumption habits of poor people, a perception of welfare dependency and a lack of self-responsibility. While key themes

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running through the literature on poverty suggested that poverty could be conceptualized in terms of either individual responsibility or collective responsibility, I found that there was a range of explanations and that people were not locked into an either/or structure or agency dichotomy as they conversed with me. Having noted this however, overall there was a general level of individualising of poverty spread throughout the, at times, contradictory information that participants presented, as the onus for poverty was most often attributed to the individual experiencing it.

I found that the *poor as social welfare beneficiaries* were those who were predominately "othered" in the interview conversation. There was a moral economy present in the interview conversations imbedded in the perceptions participants had of "good" and "bad" poor people, and there was a fervent quality to the way participants presented their arguments about social welfare beneficiaries in particular. Thus, to some extent, social welfare beneficiaries were socially positioned as the "undeserving poor". This was revealed throughout the interview conversations in morally infused rhetoric that was delivered through the use of life narratives to persuade. This intense "life of the beneficiary" focus in the interview conversations meant far less attention was given to the idea that a person can be fully employed, hence construed as "deserving", and also be poor.

Notions about "relative poverty" and life style "choices" were closely linked to ideas about consumption practices in today's consumer based society. There were two strong themes running through the interview transcriptions when participants referred to poverty as "relative". One theme involved a comparison of today's living standards with past times and third world countries, while another perspective was involved in comparing how well people on a low income today could keep up with the current standards and expectations of participating in New Zealand communities. In general, participants did think that there is a significant gap in wealth in New Zealand, especially with regard to engaging in a consumer society and they routinely positioned welfare beneficiaries as the poor people who were unable to achieve this consuming properly. There was also evidence to suggest that participants thought that New Zealand is becoming a divided society in terms of income and wealth with social relations between the rich and the poor often described as being distant and strained.

Both contrasting with and complementing this omnipresent awareness of consumption and its relationship to social participation, was an overriding theme of the non-material aspects of poverty. Participants unsettled a materialistic interpretation of poverty in different ways and for different purposes. But the idea that poverty is "relative" combined with words such as "spiritual" was a conversational pathway that worked to distract from income disparity as a participant resisted a materialistic interpretation of poverty. Although not all participants agreed there was any "real" poverty in New Zealand, situations of deprivation were often framed in reference to non-material issues such as an individual's lack of skills, education and knowledge, their mind-set and/or a state of "spiritual" poverty. Therefore, these references to the non-material offered a significant disruption to considering whether material resources are equitably distributed in New Zealand and if this is in fact something New Zealanders should even worry about. The general focus was often on the poor person and their lack of knowledge and inappropriate behaviour.

Consumption, exclusion, containment and control

An analysis of neo-liberalism through the lens of governmentality theory sees that in a neo-liberal environment the state actually intensifies its own responsibilities as pastoral guide and enforcer and institutional processes can therefore be used to process, exclude and "other" poor people. Because the notion of *responsibilisation* concerns the development of a self-managing population, it becomes a helpful tool in explaining both the behaviour of those citizens who manage themselves through predictable means and ends, as well as explaining the justification of forms of discipline and restraint for those who cannot be regulated, as if they were self-regulating. Thus, when taking a governmentality approach to viewing technologies involved in a *responsibilisation of the poor,* it is evident that while some of this process is politically controlled, power is also embodied in the structures that flow through our society in various forms to enforce and reinforce notions of what it is to be a responsible, *active citizen*.

Bauman (1998), argues we have moved from production-based societies to consumer societies and that today's poor citizens can be excluded from consumption practices. The effects of power were evident in the level of social distancing present in the

interview material, and this became particularly apparent to me as I reviewed this material in the light of Bauman's (1998) notion of a *society of consumers*. As Bauman (2003) argued, we have moved from being a society of producers with a Fordist model of production where the emphasis was on containing and controlling people by requiring them to operate in large systems of production, to functioning as a society of consumers. The emphasis in a society of consumers becomes the controlling of a population by their ability to operate as consumers and the threat of no longer being fit, able or required to do this. Thus, if we are operating as a society of consumers, a signifying factor that "others" the poor becomes the level of constraint around their consumption and their failure to be proper citizens by not consuming as they should. I found there emerged a clear set of social expectations around the management of consumption practices with those that were judged for some reason not to be consuming wisely seeming to function as a warning beacon in the way that they were discussed. These expectations around consumption were therefore a key way that the poor were socially "othered". Participants who were social welfare beneficiaries were aware of the judgements made around their consumption practices but also displayed a resistance to suggestions about how to "live within your income" as they talked of purchasing "treats".

Throughout the interviews participants frequently moralised issues of consumption and the relationship with this to welfare provision. In the participants' rhetoric the notion of "poverty" and "the poor" presented as something of a threat as it contrasts with a model of *active* citizenship that embraces self-reliance and responsible consumption and self-care. Therefore, as they discussed welfare beneficiaries and the welfare system, the participants implicitly theorised that the welfare state has the effect of both othering and yet containing the people we call "poor" in order that we can normalise dominant notions of consumer rationality and personal responsibility. This "othering" of the poor in conversation therefore, becomes a key way of managing a concern about maintaining responsible consumption. So just as the prison helps the rest of us to understand ourselves as "free", a welfare system that excludes, contains and controls people and their consumption practices helps the rest of us to understand ourselves as "affluent", good, self-responsible citizens.

I like the imagery of Bauman (2003) as he compares the new and old "big brothers" when he outlines social processes of obligatory inclusion versus processes of rejection and compulsory exclusion. He argues the new "big brother":

> "spots people who do not fit into the place they are in and banishes them from that place and deports them where they belong or better still never allows them to come anywhere near in the first place" (Bauman, 2003:132).

He notes this process is evidenced in the customs procedures at international airports and displayed more dramatically in the exclusion rituals of contemporary reality television programmes. I also saw this process of social exclusion as participants who were beneficiaries told me that they could not participate in this consumer age – they were socially excluded from it perhaps as the "flawed consumers" (Bauman, 1998). However, Bauman (2003) also argues that the old "big brother" of the Panopticon sort is still alive and better equipped than ever in places such as refugee camps and prisons. I got the sense from participants that this old "big brother" is also alive in *social welfare institutions* as a method of containment and control for those who appear to fail in their attempts to become self-managing consumers. Therefore, as people socially positioned as the poor beneficiaries come to accept that they have failed as responsible consumers (and responsible citizens), they also recognise that they are now necessarily controlled somehow around this consumption. The poor as social welfare beneficiaries thereby become a legitimating rationale for a form of disciplinary governance, old "big brother" style.

Implications for policy development

An objection to using a discursive approach to poverty research is that it may not leave us with a practical prescription about what can be done about it. This appears problematic because raising questions about poverty simultaneously raises concerns and moral judgements about how best to respond to it. Further, the emphasis of Foucault's work and the governmentality scholars inspired by him has largely been on the construction of the subject by social power and less attention has been paid to the ways in which those subjects act as agents to create social practice and instigate change. Therefore, by using a

Foucauldian notion of power and the subject in this thesis, I have not been attempting to deliver a prescription about what ought to be done about poverty. However, this thesis does offer an insight into the kinds of practices that have developed and the disciplines and constraints that people have claimed to make use of in order to avoid a situation of poverty for themselves and what expectations they have for others in the community around this. Further, by looking at what is considered as normal and desirable, insight has also been given into how people resist these norms, expectations and disciplines and how this resistance is discussed in the community. A Foucauldian analysis does not prescribe, but also does not preclude, social action. It is up to individuals and groups in society to use knowledge-power to effect change, and research such as this may inform that. As I collated and discussed the research findings, I hoped that a possible benefit of this project would be to inform interested parties of the taken for granted assumptions about poverty in New Zealand and how this might be affecting action, both social and institutional.

Policy documents draw on a constellation of names and phrases that combine to form a social categorisation system for managing populations in which individuals become identified as belonging to a demographically constructed group. These categorisations can serve to both explain and create dividing practices by separating the rich from the poor in our language and in our knowledge. As I considered the information about poverty generated by the participant interviews, I reflected on how this might relate to how poverty has been discursively constructed in policy documents. Because of the contradictory makeup of participants' opinions when trying to articulate their understanding of how New Zealand poverty is identified and located, it is likely that a number of policies implemented to address the redistribution of wealth will find some support in the community. But importantly, the practice of explaining poverty as a non-material, psychological or "spiritual" condition, if utilised in policy discourse, could lead to a dampening of an individual and social conscience about the effects of material poverty articulated as a lack of adequate income. The use of this way of explaining situations of poverty in a policy framework would reduce the impetus to address poverty, measured in terms of income disparity.

An individualisation of poverty was reflected in the recent policy discourse and welfare reforms highlighted in chapter four, with discourses that promote *self-reliance* noted in emerging government policy terminology. In particular, my research has highlighted the

perceived importance in the community of a display of personal effort through paid employment and it would seem reasonable therefore to assume that social policy initiatives that include discourses that promote the importance of *work* will invariably find favour with many people in New Zealand communities. A government initiative to reduce poverty is aptly named the *Working* for Families package. In terms of the significance of *work* perceived as a key way to avoid poverty, it would seem likely that there will be ongoing support in the community for this connection of work with a package of wealth redistribution aimed at circumventing poverty.

However, people living on a social welfare benefit and their dependants (such as those on the domestic purposes benefit) are not eligible to receive assistance from the "In-work" tax credit component of the Working for Families package. Furthermore, I found a level of resistance from those on benefits to responsibilisation processes and the notion of *active* citizenship expressed as being "work ready" by social welfare regulations. Participants told me that those who for whatever reason find themselves reliant on welfare provision will find ways to manage or "work" the social welfare system and this may or may not involve moving into paid employment. As I reflect on recent policy announcements such as those generated by the Welfare Working Group, in *Reducing Long-Term Benefit Dependency* (Rebstock et al., 2011), in the light of what participants told me, it is hard to imagine that the policy direction contained in this discourse of self-reliance and work requirements will do much to inspire or encourage those already struggling with feeling socially othered.

Concluding Comments

As well as contributing to the academic literature on poverty and on governmentality, this thesis exposes and fleshes out the common-sense notions around the understanding of poverty and the governance of the poor in New Zealand. The way the study approached the notion of discourse was to see it as having something of a reality or life of its own outside of the individual actors who were creating or participating in it. Therefore, just as a person can "know" about racist discourse and consequently must engage with the social effects of it (perhaps without ever having personally encountered racism), so too does a

person engage with a very *real* discourse that surrounds poverty and they must contend in some way with the effects of that experience.

At the commencement of this research I reflected on the quote from Lister (2004) that *"poverty has to be understood not just as a disadvantaged and insecure economic condition but also as a shameful and corrosive social relation"*. As I reflect on this statement at the final stages of writing this thesis and contemplate how it now resonates with me, I realise how the process of this research has changed my understanding of statements such as these made by the "experts" who publicly speak out about poverty. As I wrote this thesis and engaged with Foucauldian theory, my own views on how poverty is made knowable in our society were stretched as I struggled to give a voice to the views of all participants. While my discussion has at times involved abstract ideas, the participants in the study were real people, with real lives, who were concerned about how a social issue such as poverty is framed and who took the time to share that with me. I took the position that the voices of these participants, while not given a public platform, were equally informative about the issue of poverty as those of academics such as Lister.

During the writing process, while keeping both the voices of participants and the voices of those such as Lister in mind, I was also actively engaged with Foucault's articulation of "liberalism" as a principle and practice of the self-limitation of government and his understanding of a governmentality involved in shaping the relationship between the state and those who are governed (Foucault, 2004). Understanding the interplay between considering the effects of abstract concepts such as "liberalism" and the voices and statements of the individuals who are construed as operating in such an environment, involves attempting to temporarily put aside the "discourses" of individual actors and see them as speaking in the context of a larger process of the govermentalisation involved in the development of a self-managing population. Thus, taking a Foucauldian perspective to the idea of "poverty" is to see it sitting on a plane of reality formed around *discursive practices* that make it possible to be "known". Now as I reflect on statements such as those of Lister, I see that they are embedded in a context of a self-managing population, are speaking to what have become common-place notions involving practices around a supposed "economic reality" and a morality of "social relationships", and as such are reflective of how we have come to "know" poverty.

Appendices

Appendix One: Human Ethics Application

FOR APPROVAL OF PROPOSED RESEARCH/TEACHING/EVALUATION
INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

*(*All applications are to be typed and presented using language that is free from jargon and comprehensible to lay people)

SECTION A

1. **Project Title**   Perspectives on Poverty

   **Projected   start   date
   for data collection**   **Projected end date**

   In no case will approval be given if recruitment and/or data collection has already begun.

2. **Applicant Details** *(Select the appropriate box and complete details)*

   STUDENT APPLICATION

   Full Name of Student Applicant   Sheryl Rose Bourke

   Employer (if applicable)

   Telephone   *09 624 2153*   **Email Address**   sheryl@splurge.net.nz

   Postal Address   **25 Eaton Road, Hillsborough, Auckland**

   Full Name of Supervisor(s)   Grant Duncan, Mike O'Brien

   School/Department/Institute   School of Social and Cultural Studies

   Campus *(mark one only)*   **Albany**   *   **Palmerston North**   **Wellington**

   Telephone   **Email Address**

3. **Type of Project** *(mark one only)*

Staff Research/Evaluation:		Student Research:		If other, please specify:
Academic Staff		Qualification	PhD	
General Staff		Credits Value of Research		

4. **Summary of Project**

Please outline in no more than 200 words in lay language why you have chosen this project, what you intend to do and the methods you will use.

(Note: all the information provided in the application is potentially available if a request is made under the Official Information Act. In the event that a request is made, the University, in the first instance, would endeavour to satisfy that request by providing this summary. Please ensure that the language used is comprehensible to all)

I have chosen this project because I am interested in the conversations that involve our ideas about poverty in New Zealand. I want to explore the dynamics of these "conversations" in New Zealand communities, which includes both spoken and written language and visual images. My intention is to do this by using a mixture of methods including interviewing individuals and reviewing media coverage and government policy packages. All interviews and discussion will be tape recorded and transcribed by myself. The intention is to draw participants for the study by searching for a variety of lived experience in terms of socio-economic status. This range of people would encompass those with a limited access to financial resources (in terms of income, assets and occupational position) through to people who have a greater access to financial resources (in terms of income, assets and occupational position). The approach I will take will be qualitative, which will involve looking in some depth at the meanings people give to poverty in New Zealand society and the language resources that they use to describe the idea of poverty. The data will be analysed by looking for common themes and interpretations as presented by the participants and by government in policy and by exploring the relationship between these themes.

5. **List the Attachments to your Application**, e.g. Completed "Screening Questionnaire to Determine the Approval Procedure" (compulsory), Information Sheet/s *(indicate how many)*, Translated copies of Information Sheet/s, Consent Form/s *(indicate of how many),* Translated copies of Consent Form/s, Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement, Confidentiality Agreement *(for persons other than the researcher / participants who have access to project data)*, Authority for Release of Tape Transcripts, Advertisement, Health Checklist, Questionnaire, Interview Schedule, Evidence of Consultation, Letter requesting access to an institution, Letter requesting approval for use of database, Other *(please specify)*.

Screening questionnaire

Information sheet

Participant consent form for interviews

Interview guide

Request letter for access to institutions

Authority for the release of tape transcripts

Poster for recruitment of participants via a social service agency

Advertisement in local paper and on posters in public spaces around Auckland

Applications that are incomplete or lacking the appropriate signatures will not be processed. This will mean delays for the project.

Please refer to the Human Ethics website (http://humanethics.massey.ac.nz) for details of where to submit your application and the number of copies required.

SECTION B: PROJECT INFORMATION

General

6   **I/we wish the protocol to be heard in a closed meeting (Part II).**   **Yes** [ ] **No** [ ] [*]

(If yes, state the reason in a covering letter)

7   **Does this project have any links to other MUHEC or HDEC**   **Yes** [ ] **No** [ ] [*]
application/s?

If yes, list the MUHEC or HDEC application number/s (if assigned) and relationship/s.

8   **Is approval from other Ethics Committees being sought for the project?**   **Yes** [ ] **No** [ ] [*]

If yes, list the other Ethics Committees.

[ ] [ ]

9   For staff research, is the applicant the only researcher?

Not applicable

Project Details

10   **State concisely the aims of the project.**

To gain some insight into how people in New Zealand communities construe the concept of poverty. How is this influenced by and linked to government discourse and policy packages and what are some of the impacts of this discourse on social relations?

11   **Give a brief background to the project to place it in perspective and to allow the project's significance to be assessed.** *(No more than 200 words in lay language)*

There is a gap in the existing research and literature in New Zealand in terms of looking at the construction of poverty as a concept. There is little research that includes ideas about poverty as a concept from the perspective of those who may have or have had a lived experience of it and therefore could be considered as "the experts". I suspect that the language and images that surround the notion of poverty in New Zealand are having some impact on social relations and the policy decisions that are made by government. I would like to explore this further by asking people in New Zealand communities what they think, in conjunction with exploring ideas about poverty with those in the helping professions. I am interested in looking at the issue of poverty from the perspective of those who do not consider that they currently experience poverty as well as looking at the perspectives of those who may consider that they have some current experience of poverty. I anticipate that this approach may provide a contrasting set of opinions and offer some insight into the relationship between ideas about poverty and socio-economic status in the New Zealand context.

12   **Outline the research procedures to be used, including approach/procedures for collecting data. Use a flow chart if necessary.**

The research involves two methods for collecting data: **interviews** and the review of discussion and images of poverty in **media and government policy documents.**

The researcher will organise and conduct the interviews. For the interviews a mutually agreed time, date and venue will be arranged. An information sheet and consent form will be given to all participants prior to data collection. The conversations that take place in the interviews will be audio taped and subsequently transcribed by the researcher.

The other strand to the research involves analysis of text including newspapers and government policy documents. This material will be publicly available information and will be sourced by the researcher via accessing information via government websites, libraries, the New Zealand Herald and other media sources.

All collected data will be analysed and presented in the thesis thematically.

13   **Where will the project be conducted?   Include information about the physical location/setting.**

In various locations across the greater Auckland area.

14   **If the study is based overseas, specify which countries are involved. Outline how local requirements (if any) have been complied with.**

Not applicable

15   **Describe the experience of the researcher and/or supervisor to undertake this type of project?**

The researcher has experience in working with different groups in the community as a volunteer and has had training through the Human Development and Training Institute in interpersonal communication and as a group facilitator. In addition to this, some basic research has been undertaken by the researcher as part of the undergraduate degree in research methods papers.

16   **Describe the peer review process used in assessing the ethical issues present in this project.**

Reviewed by supervisors.

Participants

17   **Describe the intended participants.**

Adults over the age of 20 years who have lived in New Zealand for more than five years. There will be a cluster of people who can identify as having had some experience of living with limited access to financial resources who may thus identify as having experienced poverty, through to a cluster of people with access to a mid to high level of income and/or have access to assets which allow them to currently experience a comfortable standard of living. There will also be a section of professional people who work in the community with those who may be experiencing financial hardship. All participants will be reasonably proficient in speaking English.

18   **How many participants will be involved?**

The exact number is not predetermined but it is expected to involve at least 20 people and not to exceed 40 people.

What is the reason for selecting this number?

(Where relevant, attach a copy of the Statistical Justification to the application form)

The number of people involved needs to be at a level that is manageable given the timeframe and resources allocated to this research and of sufficient size to allow for adequate data to be gathered. Participants will be selected on the basis that they will provide enough variance in the sample to give some validity to the research and to provide plenty of information for comparison and analysis. Data collection will cease when the researcher assesses it has reached saturation point and that there would be no benefit (in terms of gaining additional information) in holding any more interviews.

19   Describe how potential participants will be identified and recruited?

In order to gain a broad spectrum of the variety of living experience in terms of socio-economic status, the placement of advertising for participants will be strategically located across the Auckland area.

To access a cluster of people who are likely to have limited access to financial resources the researcher will approach social service agencies in the Auckland area to ask them if they could facilitate the recruitment of participants for the research. The initial contact will be with a representative of the social service agency and this will involve negotiating a working relationship with that person for the duration of the research. The researcher will ask permission to display a recruitment poster on the noticeboard of the agency. Information sheets about the study will be left with the administrator of the agency. Any interested participants will be given the researcher's contact details. When a potential participant contacts the researcher, they will be asked some general screening questions to determine whether they will be suitable for the study. The researcher will explain the purpose and scope of the study to the potential participant. Consent forms will be sent to the participants. A time, date and venue will then be arranged for an interview. Signed consent forms will be collected at the beginning of the interview.

In order to access a cluster of people who may have a mid to high socio-economic status the researcher will advertise in the local newspaper and display recruitment posters in public spaces (such as libraries and supermarkets) in relatively affluent areas of Auckland with details about the study and a contact phone number. When an interested potential participant contacts the researcher, they will be asked some general screening questions to determine whether they will be suitable for the study. The researcher will explain the purpose and scope of the study to the potential participant. If both the potential participant and the researcher agree to proceed, the researcher will then provide an information sheet and a consent form to the participant prior to the interview. A time, date and venue will be arranged for an interview. Signed consent forms will be collected at the beginning of the interview.

In order to access the opinions of social service professional workers the researcher will approach the intended participants personally, either by a phone conversation to a social service agency or by introduction through a common acquaintance, to ask them if they would like to participate in the research. An initial meeting will follow where the researcher will explain the purpose and scope of the study to the potential participant and give them an information sheet and a consent form. If the person agrees to an interview, a time, date and venue will then be arranged.

| 20 | **Does the project involve recruitment through advertising?** | Yes | * | No | |

(If yes, attach a copy of the advertisement to the application form)

21   **Does the project require permission of an organisation (e.g. an**   **Yes** | * | **No** | |
educational institution, an academic unit of Massey University or a
business) to access participants or information?

If yes, list the organisation(s).

Monte Cecilia emergency accommodation – Mangere

Leslie Centre – Mt Roskill (Presbyterian Support)

West Auckland Family Services – Glen Eden (Methodist Mission Northern)

Salvation Army

St Vincent De Paul

(Attach a copy of the request letter(s), e.g. letter to Board of Trustees,PVC,HoD/I/S,CEO etc to the application form. Include this in your list of attachments (Q5). Note that some educational institutions may require the researcher to submit a Police Security Clearance)

22   **Who will make the initial approach to potential participants?**

Participants sourced via a social service advertisement will self-select via responding to the posters and the social service agency worker will be their first point of contact.

For participants sourced via newspaper advertisements and posters displayed in libraries and supermarkets the researcher will be their first point of contact.

For the group of professional workers either the researcher or a contact of the researcher will make the initial approach to the participants.

23   **Describe criteria (if used) to select participants from the pool of potential participants.**

All participants will be New Zealand citizens or permanent residents, will have lived in New Zealand for at least 5 years, be able to converse easily in the English language and be aged 20 years or older.

24   **How much time will participants have to give to the project?**

One hour for the interviews

Data Collection

25   **Does the project include the use of participant questionnaire/s?**   **Yes** | | **No** | * |

(If yes, attach a copy of the Questionnaire/s to the application form and include this in your list of attachments (Q5))

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26   **Does the project involve observation of participants? If yes, please describe.**   **Yes** ☐   **No** ☐ *

27   **Does the project include the use of focus group/s?**   **Yes** ☐   **No** ☐ *

(If yes, attach a copy of the Confidentiality Agreement for the focus group to the application form)

If yes, describe the location of the focus group and time length, including whether it will be in work time. *(If the latter, ensure the researcher asks permission for this from the employer).*

28   **Does the project include the use of participant interview/s?**   **Yes** ☐ *   **No** ☐

(If yes attach a copy of the Interview Questions/Schedule to the application form)

If yes, describe the location of the interview and time length, including whether it will be in work time. *(If the latter, ensure the researcher asks permission for this from the employer).*

The location will vary according to arrangements made between the researcher and the interviewee. The duration of the interview will be 1 hour and the time of the interview will be negotiated with each individual participant; some interviews could be during work time.

29   **Does the project involve audiotaping?**   **Yes** ☐ *   **No** ☐

30   **Does the project involve videotaping?**   **Yes** ☐   **No** ☐ *

(If agreement for taping is optional for participation, ensure there is explicit consent on the Consent Form)

31   **If taping is used, will the tape be transcribed?**   **Yes** ☐ *   **No** ☐

If yes, state who will do the transcribing.

The researcher.

(If not the researcher, a Transcriber's Confidentiality Agreement is required – attach a copy to the application form. Normally, transcripts of interviews should be provided to participants for editing, therefore an Authority For the Release of Tape Transcripts is required – attach a copy to the application form.   However, if the researcher considers that the right of the participant to edit is inappropriate, a justification should be provided below)

32   **Does the project require permission to access databases?**   **Yes** ☐   **No** ☐ *

(If yes, attach a copy of the request letter/s to the application form. Include this in your list of attachments (Q5))

(Note: If you wish to access the Massey University student database, written permission from Director, National Student Relations should be attached).

33   **Who will carry out the data collection?**

The researcher

SECTION C: BENEFITS / RISK OF HARM (Refer Code Section 3, Para 10)

34   **What are the possible benefits (if any) of the project to individual participants, groups, communities and institutions?**

A possible benefit of the project would be to inform interested parties of the taken for granted assumptions about poverty in New Zealand and how this is affecting social action.

35   **What discomfort (physical, psychological, social), incapacity or other risk of harm are individual participants likely to experience as a result of participation?**

The conversation with participants will not be on a personal level that would require them to reveal uncomfortable personal/emotional information. The intention of the study is to look at the language and ideas that are present in normal social settings, not to discuss personal life issues or crises. However, the researcher acknowledges that when discussing a topic such as poverty participants may draw on personal reflections. There is a possibility that some participants (particularly those struggling financially) may be vulnerable and therefore may experience some discomfort when participating in social research on a topic of this nature.

36   **Describe the strategies you will use to deal with any of the situations identified in Q35.**

In general, I would steer the conversation away from areas that might generate hostility or distress. All research questions will be delivered in a sensitive manner and the researcher will assess the situation as to whether a participant will be likely to experience distress as a result of a particular question, prior to asking that question. If any distress arises in the course of the discussion, thereby creating a situation that would be clearly outside the boundaries of the researcher/participant relationship; the researcher will terminate the interview and ensure that the participant is referred to an appropriate social service agency.

37   **What is the risk of harm (if any) of the project to the researcher?**

I do not foresee any great risk to myself as researcher in doing this project, however as pointed out in question 35 above, there is the possibility that the research may attract participants who may feel aggravated when discussing a topic of this nature. To minimise this risk research questions will be delivered in a sensitive manner, and the researcher will assess whether it is safe to engage in a particular topic of conversation on a case-by-case basis. The researcher is prepared to manage the risks associated with making her personal phone number available to participants on research documentation as removing the phone number would make recruitment difficult.

38   Describe the strategies you will use to deal with any of the situations identified in Q37.

The researcher will take the normal safety precautions that she would take if meeting with a stranger. Details of where the researcher is going will be left with family members and the researcher will carry a mobile phone. If the conversation moves to a topic that is distressing for the researcher or the participant, the researcher will terminate the interview. If the researcher has experienced some harm as a result of conducting the interview she will seek the appropriate assistance and will consult with her supervisors as required.

39   What discomfort (physical, psychological, social) incapacity or other risk of harm are groups/communities and institutions likely to experience as a result of this research?

I do not foresee any great risk to any groups involved in the project.

40   Describe the strategies you will use to deal with any of the situations identified in Q39.

Not applicable

41   Is ethnicity data being collected as part of the project?   Yes | * | No | |

If yes: i)   will the data be used as a basis for analysis?   Yes | | No | * |

ii)   justify this use in terms of the number of participants.

(Note that harm can be done through an analysis based on insufficient numbers)

If no: i)   justify this approach, given that in some research an analysis based on ethnicity may yield results of value to Maori and to other groups.

42   If participants are children/students in a pre-school/school/tertiary setting

(Note that no child/student should be disadvantaged through the research)

Not applicable

SECTION D: INFORMED and VOLUNTARY CONSENT (Refer Code Section 3, Para 11)

43   By whom and how, will information about the research be given to potential participants?

For participants sourced via a social services agency there will be an advertisement about the research on the social service agency notice board and an information sheet will be available to give to potential participants via social service agency personal. Once potential participants contact the researcher, the researcher will provide any additional information required. The researcher will check that the potential participant has received the information sheet prior to the interview.

For other participants information about the research will be initially advertised in the local newspaper and on posters in public spaces. When potential participants contact the researcher additional information will be given out over the telephone by the researcher and an information sheet and consent form will be sent to the participant by the researcher using mail or email prior to the interview.

For the group of professional workers the researcher will provide the initial information about the research to the potential participant. If the potential participant expresses an interest in participating in the research they will be given an information sheet and a consent form by the researcher prior to the interview.

44 **Will consent to participate be given in writing?** **Yes** [*] **No** [ ]

(Attach copies of Consent Form/s to the application form)

If no, justify the use of oral consent.

45 **Will participants include persons under the age of 16?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [*]

If yes: i) indicate the age group and competency for giving consent.

ii) indicate if the researcher will be obtaining the consent of **Yes** [ ] **No** [ ]
parent(s)/caregiver(s).

(Note that parental/caregiver consent for school-based research may be required by the school even when children are competent. Ensure Information Sheets and Consent Forms are in a style and language appropriate for the age group)

46 **Will participants include persons whose capacity to give informed consent may be compromised?** **Yes** [ ] **No** [*]

If yes, describe the consent process you will use.

47 **Will the participants be proficient in English?** **Yes** [*] **No** [ ]

If no, all documentation for participants (Information Sheets/Consent Forms/Questionnaire etc) must be translated into the participants' first-language.

(Attach copies of the translated Information Sheet/Consent Form etc to the application form)

SECTION E: PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY ISSUES (Refer Code Section 3, Para 12)

48	**Will any information be obtained from any source other than the participant?**	Yes [ ]	No [ ]	* [ ]

If yes, describe how and from whom.

49	**Will any information that identifies participants be given to any person outside the research team?**	Yes [ ]	No [ ]	* [ ]

If yes, indicate why and how.

50	**Will the participants be anonymous (i.e. their identity unknown to the researcher?)**	Yes [ ]	No [ ]	* [ ]

If no, explain how confidentiality of the participants' identities will be maintained in the treatment and use of the data.

Participant names will not be included in the transcripts or in the thesis. When it is necessary to refer to a particular participant, pseudonyms will be used in the transcripts and the final text of the thesis. The researcher will consult with any participant who is easily identifiable (due to the nature of their position or the information they have supplied), on a case-by-case basis over the level of information they would feel comfortable with being included in the final draft of the thesis.

51	**Will an institution (e.g. school) to which participants belong be named or be able to be identified?**	Yes [ ]	No [ ]	* [ ]

If yes, explain how you have made the institution aware of this?

52 **Outline how and where:**

i) the data will be stored, and

(Pay particular attention to identifiable data, e.g. tapes, videos and images)

In a locked cupboard at the researcher's home address.

ii) Consent Forms will be stored.

At Massey University

(Note that Consent Forms should be stored separately from data)

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53   **i)**   **Who will have access to the data/Consent Forms?**

The researcher, the research supervisors.

ii)   **How will the data/Consent Forms be protected from unauthorised access?**

When not being used for the research the data/consent forms will be in a secure/locked location.

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54   **Describe arrangements you have made for the disposal of the data/Consent Forms when the five-year storage period (ten years for health-related research) is up?**

(For student research the Massey University HOD Institute/School/Section / Supervisor / or nominee should be responsible for the eventual disposal of data)

(Note that although destruction is the most common form of disposal, at times, transfer of data to an official archive may be appropriate).

The School of Social and Cultural studies at Massey University (Albany Campus) will dispose of these.

SECTION F: DECEPTION (Refer Code Section 3, Para 13)

55   **Is deception involved at any stage of the project?**   **Yes** ☐   **No** ☐ *****

If yes, justify its use and describe the debriefing procedures.

SECTION G: CONFLICT OF ROLE/INTEREST (Refer Code Section 3, Para 14)

56   **Is the project to be funded in any way from sources external to Massey University?**   **Yes** ☐   **No** ☐ *****

If yes: **i)**   **state the source.**

ii)   **does the source of the funding present any conflict of interest with regard to the research topic?**

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57   **Does the researcher/s have a financial interest in the outcome of the project?**   **Yes** ☐   **No** ☐ *****

If yes, explain how the conflict of interest situation will be dealt with.

58 **Describe any professional or other relationship between the researcher and the participants? (e.g. employer/employee, lecturer/student, practitioner/patient, researcher/family member). Indicate how any resulting conflict of role will be dealt with.**

The researcher may know some participants, however because there is no existing professional relationship between the researcher and any of the participants there will be no conflict of role.

SECTION H: COMPENSATION TO PARTICIPANTS (Refer Code Section 4, Para 23)

59 **Will any payments or other compensation be given to participants?** **Yes** | * | **No** | |

If yes, describe what, how and why.

(Note that compensation (if provided) should be given to all participants and not constitute an inducement. Details of any compensation provided must be included in the Information Sheet)

All participants will receive compensation for their time and travel expenses in the form of $20 petrol vouchers – which can be used to purchase either petrol or food and other items at petrol stations such as "Mobil Mart".

SECTION I: TREATY OF WAITANGI (Refer Code Section 2)

60 **Are Maori the primary focus of the project?** **Yes** | | **No** | * |

If yes: Answer Q61 – 64

If no, outline:i) what Maori involvement there may be, and

As a possible participant.

ii) how this will be managed.

The researcher will take a sensitive approach to every participant by bearing in mind at all times that their ethnicity may have some effect on their perception of poverty. In particular, if participants identify as Maori the researcher will seek advice from appropriate academic staff about managing Maori involvement to ensure that negative stereotypes regarding Maori and poverty are not reinforced by this study.

61 **Is the researcher competent in te reo Maori and tikanga Maori?** **Yes** | | **No** | * |

If no, outline the processes in place for the provision of cultural advice.

Advice will be sought from appropriate Massey University researchers, including a Maori colleague, on the appropriate cultural sensitivities involved in handling research that involves Maori as participants. Initial advice suggests that this could become necessary when participants are using Maori terminology extensively; - at this point the researcher may need advice as to how to interpret terminology in an appropriate manner so the research will not be misleading in any way.

62   Identify the group/s with whom consultation has taken place or is planned and describe the consultation process.

(Where consultation has already taken place, attach a copy of the supporting documentation to the application form, e.g. a letter from an iwi authority)

Advice received from consultation with Maori staff so far indicates that initial consultation with any Maori authority/group is not necessary and that the most important issue for the researcher will be how to manage any data collected from Maori participants in a culturally appropriate manner. This may require consultation at a later stage of the research process, but this will be dependent on the substance of the data and advice will be sought regarding any further consultation if/when needed.

63   Describe any ongoing involvement of the group/s consulted in the project.

Not initially an issue.

64   Describe how information resulting from the project will be shared with the group/s consulted?

Not initially an issue.

SECTION J: CULTURAL ISSUES (Refer Code Section 3, Para 15)

65   Other than those issues covered in Section I, are there any aspects of the   Yes ☐ No ☒*
       project that might raise specific cultural issues?

       If yes, explain.   Otherwise, proceed to Section K.

66   What ethnic or social group/s (other than Maori) does the project involve?

A range of backgrounds. It is not possible to identify every possible ethnicity that may be represented at this stage of the research process. If issues are raised indicating cultural definitions and interpretations about the nature and causes of poverty, appropriate cultural advice will be sought. It is not possible to seek this advice in advance because the cultural and ethnic identity and views of potential participants is unknown.

67   Does the researcher speak the language of the target population?   Yes ☒* No ☐

       If no, specify how communication with participants will be managed.

All participants will be able to converse easily in the English language

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68   **Describe the cultural competence of the researcher for carrying out the project.**

(Note that where the researcher is not a member of the cultural group being researched, a cultural advisor may be necessary)

The researcher is seeking a wide range of views from a cross section of New Zealanders. The exact makeup of this cultural mix is unknown at this stage, but the researcher will at all times adopt an attitude of general sensitivity when engaging with persons of a different cultural background. Advice will be sought from personnel at Massey University regarding any cultural practices and nuances that the researcher should be aware of when the ethnicity of a participant is established.

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69   **Identify the group/s with whom consultation has taken place or is planned.**

(Where consultation has already taken place, attach a copy of the supporting documentation to the application form)

Not applicable

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70   **Describe any ongoing involvement of the group/s consulted in the project.**

Not applicable

---

71   **Describe how information resulting from the project will be shared with the group/s consulted.**

Not applicable

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72   **If the research is to be conducted overseas, describe the arrangements you will make for local participants to express concerns regarding the research.**

Not applicable

SECTION K: SHARING RESEARCH FINDINGS (Refer Code Section 4, Para 26)

73   **Describe how information resulting from the project will be shared with participants.**

(Note that receipt of a summary is one of the participant rights)

The researcher will offer a research summary to all participants.

SECTION M: DECLARATION

STUDENT RESEARCH

Declaration for Student Applicant

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and discussed the ethical analysis with my Supervisor. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants.

The information contained in this application is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

Student Applicant's Signature   Date:

....

Declaration for Supervisor

I have assisted the student in the ethical analysis of this project.   As supervisor of this research I will ensure that the research is carried out according to the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants.

Supervisor's Signature   Date:

....

Massey University
AUCKLAND

14 September 2007

Sheryl Bourke
c/- Dr Grant Duncan
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Massey University
Albany

Dear Sheryl

HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION – MUHECN 07/038
"Perspectives on Poverty"

Thank you for your application. It has been fully considered, and approved by the Massey University
Human Ethics Committee: Northern.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of
this letter, a reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please
advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Associate-Professor Ann Dupuis
Chair
Human Ethics Committee: Northern

cc: Dr Grant Duncan
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Appendix Two: Introductory Letter to Social Service Agencies

1/10/2007

To…

I am a social science student at Massey University (Albany Campus) in the process of doing a doctorate.   I am interested in how people in New Zealand communities talk and think about the idea of poverty in New Zealand. I have chosen this project because I am interested in the conversations that surround the idea that there can be poverty in a well-resourced country (such as New Zealand). I want to explore the dynamics of these "conversations" in New Zealand communities, which includes both spoken and written language and the visual images portrayed in the newspaper and on television. My intention is to do this by using a mixture of methods including interviewing individuals and reviewing media coverage and government policy packages.   I think this topic is an important topic to study because I suspect that the language and images that surround the notion of poverty in New Zealand will be having some impact on social relations and the policy decisions that are made by government.

I am hoping to gain access to a sample of people to participate in this study via your organisation. As you are the person/group who may be able to facilitate introductions to potential participants I would like the opportunity to meet with you to discuss my research and how you may be able to help. This help, would mainly involve allowing me to display a recruitment poster on the notice board of your agency and for your staff to field enquiries from interested participants by giving them an information sheet about the study and referring them to on to me.

I will follow up this letter with a telephone call to your office next week.

Regards
Sheryl Bourke

What do you think about poverty in New Zealand?

Research participants are wanted for a study that is looking at how poverty is discussed in New Zealand communities. We will discuss questions such as:
Is there poverty in New Zealand?
What are some of the images we have of poverty in New Zealand?

The research is part of a PhD degree through Massey University, Albany Campus and will be held in the Auckland area. Participation will involve a one-hour interview on the topic of poverty in New Zealand. Participants' confidentiality and anonymity will be protected.

Participants will be compensated for their time and travel for participation in the research with $20 vouchers.

For more details please see the administrator at

this social service agency.

What do you think about poverty in New Zealand?

Research participants are wanted for a study that is looking at how poverty is discussed in New Zealand communities. We will discuss questions such as:
Is there poverty in New Zealand?
What are some of the images we have of poverty in New Zealand?

The research is part of a PhD degree through Massey University, Albany Campus and will be held in the Auckland area. Participation will involve a one-hour interview on the topic of poverty in New Zealand. Participants' confidentiality and anonymity will be protected.

Participants will be compensated for their time and travel for participation in the research with $20 vouchers.

For more details please phone Sheryl on 624-1818.

Appendix Five: Advertisement in Suburban Newspapers

Crumbs or caviar – what does poverty mean to you?

Is a weekly trip to McDonald's a big treat, or do you eat at your favourite French restaurant and sip champagne on a regular basis?

A Massey researcher wants to find out what New Zealanders' perceptions of poverty really are in an era when cheap consumer's goods are in abundance and yet social agencies and commentators report a growing gap between the rich and poor.

Auckland-based doctoral student Sheryl Bourke says she is keen to talk to people from a range of backgrounds and income brackets about their notions of poverty.

Ms Bourke says she was inspired to tackle the topic because of the hardship she witnessed through her husband's work with an emergency housing agency.

She intends to ask people such things as what circumstances they think a person would be in to be considered poor in New Zealand, how much poverty (if any) is in their community and what they think causes poverty.

She'll ask them to discuss general ideas about poverty in relation to access to nutritious food, power, phone, clothing, transport, doctor, dentist, holidays and recreation.

"There's been a lot of public debate recently about poverty and I'm interested in the range of public views, opinions and ideas about poverty and how these relate to government policy," she says.

While most people are likely to agree that a family living in a garage is an example of extreme poverty, she's interested to explore common understandings of community standards and expectations and how well people are able to meet those understandings.

Although consumer goods and appliances are getting cheaper and more accessible to low-income families through lenient hire purchase arrangements, the price of basic food items such as bread and milk has increased significantly.

She suspects typical indicators of poverty and wealth are becoming blurred. For example, owning a cell phone might have been considered a sign of being relatively well-off, but these days more and more people are opting to only have a cell phone and forgoing a landline because it's cheaper.

Ms Bourke aims to find out "whether there is a perception that ideas about poverty may be having some effect on relations between different groups in New Zealand society, and if so, what kind of effect. Is New Zealand becoming a divided society in terms of income and wealth?"

If you are interested in participating in this study Sheryl can be contacted on 624-1818.

Appendix Six: Information Sheet

Perspectives on Poverty

INFORMATION SHEET

What is this study about?

My name is Sheryl Bourke and I am conducting a research project as part of a PhD degree at Massey University (Albany Campus) exploring how New Zealanders think about poverty. I have chosen this project because I am interested in how people in New Zealand communities talk and think about the idea of poverty in this country. I want to explore the dynamics of the conversations that involve our ideas about poverty in New Zealand communities, which includes language (both spoken and written) and images displayed in the newspaper and on the television. I intend to interview individuals and review media coverage and government policy packages.

I think this topic is an important topic to study because there has been a lot of public debate recently about poverty and I am interested in the range of public views, opinions and ideas about poverty and how these relate to government policies. I would like to invite you to take part in this research. If you want any additional information about the purpose and scope of the study please contact me on (**09) 624-1818.** My supervisors are Associate Professor Mike O'Brien and Dr Grant Duncan and they can be contacted at Massey University on (09) 414-0800.

Who is participating in this research?

I am recruiting people in a variety of ways including advertisement in local newspapers, recruitment posters in public locations and in social service agencies throughout the greater Auckland area, as well as through personal contacts in the social service, education and health professions. Participants will be a variety of people from different backgrounds.

What will you have to do if you decide to participate?

If you decide to participate in this research this will involve **one interview** with myself (Sheryl Bourke) on the subject of poverty in New Zealand, which will require approximately **one hour** of your time. The interview will be at a time that is convenient for you. I am happy to conduct this interview during work hours or in the evenings at a place that is comfortable for both of us. The interview will be about your thoughts and ideas about poverty. It will not be about any of your own personal experiences, unless these help you to express your opinions. An example of the type of conversation we will have in the interview is talking about the way poverty is presented in media

images. If you agree the interviews will be tape-recorded. You will be given a $20 voucher for your participation to acknowledge your time and travel.

What will happen to the information I collect from you?

Once I have finished the interview I will transcribe the information on the tapes. I will use a pseudonym for you in the research to protect your privacy. When I have finished transcribing you will have an opportunity to check it for accuracy. At that time you will also be able to delete any information you do not want me to use.

The information will be stored in a secure location at my home address and will be accessed only by myself and my supervisors. The information will only be used for the purposes of this research. When this project is completed I will contact you to provide a summary of the findings for your interest.

If you choose to participate in this study you have the right to:

- *decline to answer any particular question;*
- *withdraw from the study at any time until the transcripts have been approved*
- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission;*
- *be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.*
- *ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the interview.*

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application MUHECN 07/038 *(insert application number).* If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor Ann Dupuis, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800 x9054, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix Seven: Participant Consent Form

Perspectives on Poverty

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to the researcher audio taping the interview with me. I understand that I can request the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the interview. I understand that direct quotations from the interview may be used in reports about the study but I will not be able to be identified. The audiotape will be destroyed when the study is concluded.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: **Date:**

....

Full Name - printed

....

Appendix Eight: Interview Guide

<u>Introduce topic</u>

<u>Tape Recorder and consent forms</u>

Visual images and general perceptions of poverty.

What do think about the statements:

"There is no poverty in New Zealand"

"The poor will always be with us"

What images and words come spontaneously to your mind when you hear the word poverty?

If there were poverty in New Zealand what would it look like?

What circumstances would a person be in to be considered as poor in New Zealand?

Describe to me a person you would consider as poor in New Zealand?

How much poverty (if any) is there in your community?

How would you know if there was poverty in your community?

What might be the long-term social and physical effects of poverty on children?

What do you think causes poverty?

General ideas about the redistribution of wealth and social justice. Access to nutritious food, power, phone, clothing, transport, holidays, entertainment/recreation, doctor, dentist.

When it comes to income and wealth do you think New Zealand is a fair society?

In order to be fair what would we be doing?

In your opinion is there a larger or smaller share of people living in need in New Zealand than there was 10 years ago?

Some of the possibilities and options for people who live on a low income in New Zealand. The role of agency. Discuss coping strategies and resourcefulness.

Imagine a person living on a really low income what would they have to do to get by?

Is borrowing one way of coping?

What do you think about the statement: "Poor people don't know how to manage their money?"

Whether there is a perception that ideas about poverty may be having some effect on relations between different groups in New Zealand society, and, if so, what kind of effect. Is New Zealand a divided society in terms of income and wealth?

Can you tell me what is your understanding of the words rich and poor and give me an example of a rich person and a poor person? e.g. friends or movie star characters

Is there a gap between the rich and the poor?

How important is this gap, does it matter do you think?

What effect (if any) is this gap having on how people think about each other?

Thinking about the people you socialise with, what do you imagine that they say about people who are wealthier or poorer than them?

Are some groups of people more disadvantaged than others in New Zealand?

Describe to me what members of these groups look like.

John Key recently described a growing underclass in New Zealand can you recall this?

What do you think he was meaning by that word?

What are your thoughts about children belonging to this underclass?

General ideas about the New Zealand welfare state and whether it is perceived as helpful or destructive in terms of its connection to ideas about poverty.

Have you heard about the **working for family's package?**

What images spring to mind here?

What is the role of the "government" regarding poverty?

If you were the government what would you do?

What do you think about the statements:

"People can always get help if they need it in New Zealand".

"Poor people should get a job. Welfare dependency is the real problem not poverty".

Summation: Can you give me 2-3 sentences that sum up how we might define poverty in New Zealand?

Demographics

Interview number

Pseudonym name

Primary school decile rating

Rate yourself 1-10 on scale of wealthy/poor

Ethnicity – self-identification

Appendix Nine: Aids for Analysis

Category entitlement

People in particular categories official and unofficial are expected to know certain things or to have certain epistemological skills.

Extreme case formulations

Can be used to make a report or version more effective by drawing on the extremes of the relevant dimensions of judgement. "Everybody carries a gun"

Rhetoric of argument

Constructing claims in the form of logical, syllogistic or other well-known argument types provides a way of making them external to the speaker or writer. Versions of events are arranged to provide particular inferences (for example of blame) for they present those inferences as required by the events or actions themselves rather than as desired by the speaker.

Lists and contrasts

The use of lists in conversations is an effective way to construct descriptions, which are often treated as complete or representative.

Systematic vagueness

Vague, global formulations can provide a barrier to easy undermining while at the same time providing just the essentials to found a particular inference.

Vivid description

Rich in contextual detail and incident vivid description can be used to create an impression of perceptual re-experience as well as indicating that the speaker has particular skills of observation.

Narrative

Embedding an event in a particular narrative sequence in which that event is expected or even necessary can increase the plausibility of a report.

Empiricist accounting

In a "scientific discourse", the facts force themselves on the human actors who have an entirely secondary role.

Consensus and corroboration

Factualness is established by depicting it as agreed across witnesses, or as having the assent of independent observers. *Any person* would be in exactly the same position.

Combines what is appropriate action for the person in a certain "category" with what all persons in that category would agree on.

Source: Edwards and Potter (1992) Pages 160-163

Appendix Ten: Demographic Breakdown

There were eleven male and twenty-six female participants in the study. Fifteen participants reported as being married (or living in a de facto relationship) and twenty-two were single at the time of the study. Eighteen participants told me they had dependants. In terms of socio-economic status twenty-six participants reported or presented as being "financially comfortable" which was defined as those people who are in households where the main income earner was in an occupation that secures a mid to high socio-economic status. Eleven participants reported or presented as being "less financially comfortable". For the purposes of recruitment selection the definition of "less financially comfortable" was persons in receipt of a social security benefit, (excluding wealthy superannuitants and those in well paid work who had access to the working for families package etc.) and/or people living on a comparatively low income, from whatever source, who considered themselves to be experiencing some financial hardship and who from time to time relied on support from a social service agency. Seven of these eleven lower income participants voluntarily referred to themselves as being "poor". As a purpose of the study was to elicit participants' definitions of "poor", I did not classify anyone as "poor" unless they did so themselves. Eight of the participants reported working in a professional capacity in the areas of education, health and social services. All participants were New Zealand citizens or permanent residents, had lived in New Zealand for at least five years, were able to converse easily in the English language and were aged twenty years or older.

Table 1 Age breakdown of participants

Aged 20-40	Aged 40-60	Aged 60 plus
8 participants	20 participants	9 participants

Table 2   Ethnicity as reported by participants

Pakeha or "NZ European"	Maori	"Pacific"	"Asian"	South African	English
22	3	5	2	2	3

Appendix Eleven: Government Reviews

Budget '85 Task Force (1985) *Benefits, Taxes and the 1985 Budget* (BT85).

Department of Social Welfare (1986) *Income Support for the Elderly*, Wellington: Department of Social Welfare (ISE).

Ministerial Task Force on Income Maintenance (1986), *Benefit Reform* (BR86).

Report of the Ministerial Review into Benefit Fraud and Abuse (1986) (BFA).

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