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A Difficult Set of Circumstances?

Lone Mothers and Social Exclusion in Woodland View

BARBARA EVA HOLLER

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE QUALIFICATION OF
DPHIL IN ANTHROPOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

MAY 2014

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:.....

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

Barbara Eva Holler

Thesis submitted for the qualification of DPhil in Anthropology

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SUMMARY

This thesis investigates how poor, single mothers on benefits experienced discourses of welfare and social exclusion within the context of New Labour's policy measures. This research is based on thirty-six months ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2007 and 2011 on a housing estate in the South of England among single mothers on benefits.¹ The researcher studied how New Labour social policy initiatives had an impact on their lives. This study argues that while social exclusion and its flexibility constituted a tool to explore multi-dimensional aspects of poverty, the same term had come to entail a much more narrow focus under New Labour. The effects of such a shift in terms of providing services to mothers on benefits provided the framework through which the participants viewed dominant discourses on welfare and social exclusion. In doing so this thesis exposes the contestations and tensions that permeate much of these discourses.

In interviews and discussions carried out during the fieldwork, many women located described the official political discourse as an external phenomenon with which they strategically engage, while also internalising it and accepting it as an accurate representation of social reality. On the other hand, most participants critically engaged with the dominant discourse and almost all traversed a tightrope of moral evaluation. This study argues that the importance of placing the experiences of single mothers on benefits in the context of welfare reform measures cannot be overestimated because it offers an understanding of how different social groups experience new social policies. It also suggests the possibility to evaluate the deeper societal struggles, and it constitutes an opportunity to reform existing economic, political and social structures. This thesis shows that the tendency to morally condemn poor and unemployed citizens has been part of social policy landscape in the United Kingdom for a very long time. These include ongoing changes to the welfare system, focusing on key elements such as penalising the unemployed and privatising public services.

¹ All names of places and persons are pseudonyms, and I have attempted to anonymise the thesis as much as possible.

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Chapter 1

A Difficult Set of Circumstances? Introduction

1.1 Context

‘Poverty is shit. What's worse is that they talk about us like we're shit’ (Michaela, participant).

This thesis is an ethnographic examination of the lives of poor, single mothers on benefits, living on a housing estate called Woodland View, which is located in a City, in the South region of the United Kingdom. It focuses on exploring how single mothers perceive, critique and engage with government policies on welfare, poverty, and social exclusion. In doing so, this thesis will demonstrate that there is a chasm of contradiction and misunderstanding between policy expectations and discourses and the lived realities of these women.

The main focus of this thesis is on the welfare reforms put in place in the UK under Tony Blair’s New Labour Government, with its central emphasis on paid employment and community development as a means to alleviate social exclusion. I concentrated on two New Labour initiatives, the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) and the New Deal for Communities (NDC), and have selected these as they best reflect the realities of social exclusion as a flexible and fairly ambiguous concept, while also representing key elements of the New Labour welfare reform.

Even though social exclusion will be discussed in more detail below, it is necessary to briefly introduce a definition. In the context of this thesis social exclusion is defined by Madanipour, *et.al.* (1998:22), who note that it is:

a multi-dimensional process, in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision-making and political processes, access to employment and material resources, and integration into common cultural processes. Where combined they create acute forms of exclusion that find a spatial manifestation in particular neighbourhoods.

This should be contrasted with a much more narrow definition provided by the Social Exclusion Unit²:

social exclusion is a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown' (Social Exclusion Unit 1997:1).

This thesis criticises the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion as it was implemented within the social policy context of the United Kingdom. Simultaneously, it describes how single mothers on benefits in a specific neighbourhood are affected by social policies.

In the United States, and to a lesser extent in Canada, the welfare reforms in the mid-1990s propelled the ethnographic approach to the study of poverty. My intention is to present ethnographic research of similar calibre but within the context of the United Kingdom. I have selected the UK as there have been no sustained attempts to explore ethnographically long-term impacts of these social policies on the everyday lives of single mothers on benefits.

This research has both social and political functions. It offers an in-depth exploration into contrasting meanings associated with welfare and social exclusion, challenging their dominant discourse. It is not solely a critique of New Labour's policies and it does not take the place of policy evaluation research into the costs and benefits associated with all its social policy initiatives.

1.2 Why New Labour?

With the election of the first New Labour government under Tony Blair, the drive towards welfare reform took centre stage in British social policy. As a consequence, the dominant discourse surrounding welfare and poverty began to incorporate the idea of social exclusion. The politicians were picking up on a growing field of academic debate, which was exploring its potential to overcome some of the perceived problems with discussions of poverty which focused largely on its income

² The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was set up by the Labour government in 1997 and formed part of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The SEU provided the UK government with strategic advice and policy analysis in its drive against social exclusion. In 2006, the SEU merged with the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit to form the Social Exclusion Task Force (SETF) aimed to ensure that Government departments work together to deliver services for the most disadvantaged members of society. The SETF was closed late 2010, and its functions absorbed into the Office for Civil Society.

dimensions. The introduction of the idea of social exclusion into Government social policy, while outwardly offering a more comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to better understand poverty, resulted in specific challenges.

Most of the accounts of social exclusion and attempts to address it by New Labour have centred on the benefits system and its connection to paid employment. New Labour pushed their social policy initiatives by using a combination of three issues: increasing access to paid work, stressing the moral and cultural causes of poverty, and concern with the issue of welfare dependency and the culture of poverty (Berghman 1995; Silver 1995; Levitas 1998, 1999, 2006; Lister 1990, 1997, 2000, 2002; Williams 1998; Cousins 1999; Page 2000; Gray 2001; Byrne 2005). As a result, the UK government focused heavily on programmes designed to combat unemployment through employer subsidies, investing in child care, employment training and support for lone mothers (Barry 1998; Gray 2001).

Because of their lack of attachment to the paid labour market, single mothers have experienced increasing degrees of moral evaluation and this study argues that they have increasingly been cast into the category of the 'undeserving poor'. The discourses and policies designed to combat the social exclusion of single mothers effectively reinforce and intensify their exclusion. The resulting tensions and contestations arose through these programmes highlight the challenges that social exclusion poses as a political tool designed to redress poverty and inequality.

Many of New Labour's policy initiatives were based on a series of similar reform initiatives in the United States. The American welfare reform, as former President Clinton stated, ended 'welfare as we know it' (Clinton 1996). In August 1996, Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The law introduced the Workfare programme, which was designed to move poor individuals into paid employment using private organisations. As will be discussed in chapter five, this welfare reform and its associated debate surrounding welfare and poverty have been subjected to a large amount of criticism.

When I decided to pursue an ethnographic exploration of these themes, it was because there were few ethnographic accounts that connected poor single mothers on benefits with discussions on welfare and poverty in the United Kingdom. Even in the United States, where there are numerous ethnographies on welfare recipients and single parents that examine the socio-economic causes and effects of poverty, unfortunately

none addresses the precarious interface that exists between policy expectations and lived reality. This thesis attempts to de-construct poverty while encourages a new way of conceptualizing it. In doing so, it will contribute to the understanding and subsequent critique of poverty. By adding a localized critical ethnography on poverty, it is my hope that this thesis will contribute to the existing body of literature in the United Kingdom and abroad.

1.3 Key Terms

At the beginning of this study I defined a few indispensable key terms. However, it is very important to note that these terms are often contested by the participants themselves who often believe that they remain open to interpretation, suggesting a challenging divide between their lives and policy expectations.

The first key concept is that of the ‘single mother’, which is often debated. While I acknowledge the need for such debate, for most participants the term held less significance in their daily lives. Most used ‘single mother’ and/or ‘lone mother’, interchangeably. Many of the women questioned the relevance that their relationship status had in the context of the dominant discourse on welfare provision and social exclusion. However, participants were both aware and concerned with how they were regarded within the context of these debates. Michaela notes (*unless otherwise indicated, emphasis added by participant*):

I am a single mother, ‘cos my boyfriend left when he found out I was pregnant. It wouldn’t matter really if they wouldn’t tell us we was scroungers. I am a *mum*, but it don’t matter anymore what *kind* of mum. It don’t matter if you left ‘cos he hit you and the kids. It don’t matter if you left ‘cos you don’t love him anymore, it don’t matter. Now they just say you’re a scroungers, no matter why you are alone. That’s what I think anyway. Maybe it were different if he died...

As Michaela voices, there is a tensions over the term, because dominant discourses on welfare and social exclusion evaluate who is deserving (‘the widow’) among the poor and who is undeserving (the lone mother). According to many participants, the term was not as important as the journey towards and within motherhood. I decided to use ‘single mother’ over lone mother, because within the context of this research, it appears that it more accurately reflects a particular kind of status attached to motherhood. As Tracy told me:

I am not “*lone*”, I am *single*. I am *single* because I have no boyfriend. I have no partner at the moment. I have my family *and* my kids and that means I am not alone.

Most, but not all of the participants would describe themselves as single (even though they might have boyfriends or significant others), rather than lone mothers. Most argued that ‘lone’ denotes being without anybody including family or friends. While this definition seems rather vernacular in nature, I believe it is an important distinction that will prove useful in further discussions on understanding motherhood in contemporary British society. In exposing perceived tensions that exist between academic explorations on motherhood and lived realities, these contributions can prove helpful in re-evaluating analytical concepts. It is also important to recognize its contested nature and the toxicity often associated with its use in welfare reform and poverty discourses. A brief, critical exploration of the use of this term will be provided in chapter three.

This study argues that New Labour’s dominant discourse on welfare, poverty and social exclusion refers specifically to a lack of labour market attachment. This narrows the focus to one dimension of exclusion, while glossing over the ways in which paid work may itself fail to prevent it. For example, jobs that are poorly paid, demand long hours or prohibit other forms of social engagement and do little to encourage social inclusion. Moreover, in focusing solely on paid work, the social role and value of unpaid work is neglected. In addition, the extent to which the dominant discourse on social exclusion concerns itself with cultural causes of poverty makes it even more problematic as a comprehensive approach to alleviating poverty. Therefore, New Labour’s definition became increasingly narrow and overtly concerned with issues related to ‘culture of dependency’, ‘culture of poverty’ and ‘welfare culture’.

By the time fieldwork commenced in January 2007, the term ‘social exclusion’ had become part of everyday vocabulary for most participants. There are important distinctions between how the term is used within the academic literature and within politics and social policy. While the debate around social exclusion, its usefulness as a tool to further our understanding of poverty, took place within the academic community, it simultaneously signalled a modification in New Labour’s discourse on welfare. This shift challenged the conception and meaning of welfare, resulting in New Labour’s increasing emphasis on the merits of paid employment as the most effective measure to tackle social exclusion.

In the City and Woodland View, the term social exclusion found in project documents and used by different categories of service providers (located within the statutory, private and third sector), contained a variety of differing meanings and was underlined by an equally complex web of understandings. For example, even though many participants engaged with these different applications of social exclusion, they felt unable to contest the dominant discourse. As Alan, former director for The Company, the local NDC initiative which will be central to the ethnographic analysis admitted:

I know these words become meaningless. No, *not* meaningless. They are not meaningless when you first read about them *but* once *we* use them, they become meaningless. They are not meaningless, because we use them differently. We *define* them differently. We use them and we change them. Communities of interest, social exclusion, deeply excluded...There are, there always *seem* to be new terms but we know that these are not new ideas. We are not actually doing things different from what we have done twenty years ago. But nothing we can do because you *need* to engage with the debates and they change over time. So, you see, this is what we have to do: Engage and re-invent. Not really addressing problems but *trying* to.

Almost all of these understandings could be located in the discourses on welfare and poverty and their resulting effects on single mothers on benefits.

The last key concept is that of 'deprivation'. New Labour's focus on addressing social exclusion, through policies aimed at low-income neighbourhoods were based largely on increasing the ability of individuals in these neighbourhoods to obtain paid work.

There is no single definition of a poor and/or deprived neighbourhood. Commonalities identified, however, include high levels of poverty, unemployment, crime and poor health of residents. The balance of other problems varies greatly from place to place, including everything from litter and vandalism to the lack of shops and services (The Social Exclusion Unit 1998:12).

Despite being used to secure funding that allows for the establishment and development of projects designed to enhance these neighbourhoods, 'deprivation' for many residents and participants alike, is loaded with negative connotations. The two excerpts below capture the essence of the distance that can be identified between policy expectations and lived realities of participants and residents. For example Alan noted:

Woodland View is a classic deprived area because it has some infra-structure ...but it also has a *massive* concentration of deprived, excluded families also a large concentration of Council Housing and it also captures that self-contained feeling, it doesn't feel part of the city, the city doesn't feel part of it. Also it has the universities directly opposite and it's got the student population but it has no connections. No people here will *ever* go to those universities.

His definition of deprivation stands in contrast to experiences of residents and participants. They might acknowledge the existence of material poverty but not accept deprivation, as many consider this to be a term that focuses too much on negative labels. Jodie, single mother in her late thirties, among many other participants contests these labels and argues:

...it's a stigma that's attached, isn't it? I wouldn't class *myself* as deprived, or my children as deprived or Woodland View as deprived. I think it's a stigma that's been given to Woodland View and it's just *stayed*, isn't it and nothing ever...and there's not enough people to stand up and say: 'Well, actually Woodland View is not a bad place'. They say Woodland View consists of single-parent families and benefit people and...eehm...What a lot of these people who say this about people in Woodland View is once you're in this benefit trap it's so hard to get out of it.

These extracts seemingly present polar opposites of the debate linked to poverty and social exclusion and this thesis will highlight several of the tensions that motivate these debates.

1.4 Rationale and Aims

My interest in this topic arose from my previous critical engagement with social policy research, working as an applied anthropologist. Through this professional experience in social policy and evaluation research in Canada, I became more interested and concerned with the constraints and opportunities that poor, single mothers face. I began to unravel the connections between social policy, the design and implementation of large-scale demonstrations projects, on one hand and policy expectations, on the other.

During the course of conducting qualitative research on various large-scale research projects dealing with aspects linked to poverty alleviation across Canada, I noted that a dichotomy existed between the meanings and definitions attached to key concepts used in several research projects. Of particular interest to me was the difference in understandings of welfare dependency and poverty. In addition, many participants were well aware of this dichotomy between policy expectations and the realities of key concepts like poverty. For example, participants of projects were chosen based on specific recruitment categories. The participants were aware of these categories and the often negative connotations associated with them, but felt unable to contest them in the context of these projects. What I found significant was that these

differences would not factor into the official data collection, but were raised by participants mostly during conversations prior to and after interviews or focus groups.

This research project varies substantially from the approach taken during my work as an applied anthropologist because I seek to actively engage participants in the process of highlighting and exploring contestations in the context of welfare reform especially in relation to the social exclusion discourse. While several chapters of this thesis aim to understanding the causes and effects of poverty, its original contribution is within the context of the discussions concerning underlying assumptions on welfare and poverty. Despite the fact that women talked about their daily struggles in terms of specific causes, like lack of money or access to resources, conversations quickly turned to perceptions and assumptions related to welfare and poverty. Therefore, I argue that for many participants the experience of poverty and social exclusion is dictated to a large extent by the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion. As a result, the effects of the discourse become a vital element of the experience of welfare, poverty and social exclusion. This thesis will expose and hopefully bridge the gap that exists between policy expectations and lived realities of single mothers on benefits.

This then leads into a discussion on the correlation between the socio-cultural and economic environments and the discursive environment that affects these individuals in a similar fashion. I argue that many participants invoked dis-associative techniques, to create and maintain distance between themselves and perceived negative assumptions. For example, requests for interviews during fieldwork were often denied through the statement, 'I'm not like 'em'. This response sent me on the hunt for the 'em'. However, what I found was that 'em' cannot often be located in Woodland View or elsewhere. Rather, these individuals exist only in the imagination of key informants, participants, policy makers and/or the general public.

I do not contest the fact that the social environment often poses challenges and places significant constraints on individuals and the way they are able to support their families, access education and employment. However, I argue that this discursive environment influences in the same way the lives of many participants.

In addition, this research will demonstrate that, while many participants talk about the realities of living in poverty, many women address how they feel the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion affects their lives using the same language.

Therefore, this thesis contends that the discursive environment structures their life as much as the social environment.

As mentioned earlier, the contribution of this research focuses explicitly on placing single mothers on benefits and their lived experiences into the landscape of changing dominant discourses on welfare and social exclusion while illustrating the extent to which these discourses and subsequent social policy initiatives affect the lives of these individuals. In the process of this exploration, the project contributes to the existing discussions to what extent the realities of these individuals are reflected accurately in policy initiatives (Morgen 2010; Goode and Maskovsky 2001; Hays 2003; Edin and Lein 1997; Edin and Kefalas 2005). This research makes a contribution to this body of literature, as women were asked directly about their understanding of discourses on welfare and poverty, as well as particular social policy programmes. In this process, this thesis is able to add to the academic and political understanding of social 'exclusion' a key term in New Labour welfare reform. More importantly, it highlights the contested meanings and tensions that exist in these debates.

In the United Kingdom there are several ethnographies that explore the lives of poor women, most notably the work of Beverly Skeggs (1997, 2004) and Gillian Evans (2006). However, they do not provide links between changing welfare discourses, policy expectation and lived realities of single mothers on benefits. It is for this reason that the majority of this ethnographic engagement is located in literature from the United States, particularly in the works by Sandra Morgen (2002, 2008, 2010) and Jeff Maskovsky (2001) who write extensively and at time collaboratively on effects of welfare reform initiatives (Morgen and Maskovsky:2003).

1.5 Social Exclusion and the Culture of Poverty

New Labour's dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion can be placed in the debate surrounding the 'culture of poverty'. As Oscar Lewis (1966:2) stated:

In my writings it (culture of poverty) is the label for a specific conceptual model that describes in positive terms a subculture of Western society with its own structure and rationale, a way of life handed on from generation to generation along family lines. The culture of poverty is not just a matter of deprivation or disorganization, a term signifying the absence of something. It is a culture in the traditional anthropological sense in that it provides human beings with a design for living, with a ready-made set of solutions for human problems, and so serves a significant adaptive function.

Lewis's theory on the culture of poverty has been criticised within the social sciences but utilised by governments and policy makers. A central element of the

critique is its potential for blaming the poor by locating their culture as a source of the pathology of their lives and so stigmatizing poor individuals or communities (Leacock 1971).

This research shows that its potential as a political tool finds expression in much of New Labour's discourse and policy on welfare and social exclusion. In their re-vamping of the culture of poverty discourse from the 1960s, New Labour's welfare reforms demonstrated its political traction as they increasingly 'blamed the victims', implying that individuals might cease to be poor if only they had different cultural values.

This thesis is inspired by the body of literature of poverty scholarship that emerged over the past thirty years. The aim was to better understand why people respond to poverty the way they do—both how they cope with it and how they escape it (see Edin and Lein 1997; Kempson 1996; Newman 1999; Hayes 2003; Edin and Kefalas 2005). Here it is important to note that individuals differ in which coping strategy they employ, and some of this variation arguably stems from cultural factors. While this body of literature plays an important part in guiding this thesis, this ethnography differs from those explorations because it focuses on the interface between policy expectations and lived realities of single mothers on benefits. As a poverty scholar, the researcher thinks that it is imperative to closely examine the diverse meanings and perceptions concerning welfare, one dimension of which is the centrality of 'the culture of poverty' and the pathology of poor communities within New Labour's social exclusion discourse.

This thesis does not define culture as comprehensively as Lewis did, instead it carefully explores its differences in values, perceptions and attitudes. In fact, much of what has been described as 'culture' is often rejected by participants through dis-associative statements, which arguably are responses to the pathologising of poor individuals. In this sense, this thesis is part of a growing body of literature in the field of New Poverty Studies (Goode and Maskovsky 2001). The New Poverty Studies aim to explore and highlight the different ways in which a 'war' on poor individuals has been waged and examines the struggle and the realities of welfare reform. It is here that my work makes an original contribution to the literature.

As a scholar interested in social policy, my goal is to bridge the gap that exists between policy expectations and lived reality of single mothers on benefits in the United

Kingdom. In the United States, welfare reform and its effects have been extensively researched (Morgen, *et.al.* 2002; Morgen and Maskovsky 2003; Morgen, Acker and Weigt 2010), but even within this literature there are significant differences. As mentioned earlier, this research, while exploring the realities and practicalities of poverty, simultaneously argues that discursive effects of the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion influence the lived realities of the participants in much the same way.

The flexibility of social exclusion as a concept and, most certainly, its contested nature has been explored by several academics (Silver 1995; Levitas 1998; Lister 1990). Silver and Levitas have each developed and traced different paradigms and discourses of the multiple meanings of social exclusion. The paradigms Silver developed include Anglo-American Liberalism, where social exclusion is seen as resulting from individual behaviour and exchanges in society. French Republicanism emphasizes solidarity and the existence of a national identity that connects each individual to the larger society. In the Monopoly paradigm different groups control resources, construct barriers and restrict access to outsiders while promoting solidarity within their own group (Silver 1995).

Levitas, on the other hand, positions her analysis of social exclusion, on its use by New Labour in the UK and in part mirrors Silver's three paradigms. She distinguishes between three discourses: a redistributive discourse (RED) with the primary concern of poverty; a social integrationist discourse (SID) focusing on the merits of paid work; and a moral underclass discourse (MUD) which has a moralistic and behavioural focus, identifying the delinquent behaviour of those regarded as socially excluded or vulnerable to social exclusion. In doing so, the scholar identifies as a cause for social exclusion an inherent lack of resources (Levitas 1998). This thesis aims to enhance the discussion on this analysis.

Lister has explored poverty and social exclusion through an analysis of the debate on rights versus responsibilities of citizens. She has argued that for poor individuals responsibilities have increasingly become associated with obligations to participate fully in the labour market, regardless of the quality of employment. This focus on paid work is regarded as beneficial in the drive towards eliminating reliance on welfare. These obligations must be imposed on poor individuals for their own and society's good, through punitive measures and social stigma (Lister 1990).

Together their work illuminates the underpinnings of social exclusion within different economic, political and social systems and therefore provides a solid base for understanding the use of the term. In addition, Levitas and Silver indicate that the original meaning of social exclusion changed to adapt to a variety of systems and circumstances. It is in these theoretical explorations that much of the debate around social exclusion in policy takes place, and this thesis will highlight how the various conceptualizations of social exclusion shape aspects of moral evaluation of single mothers on benefits. It is also here that the traction of the culture of poverty discourse for many governments can be placed.

The focus of this thesis is on how the social policy agenda, employing a discourse of social exclusion, affected the local community of Woodland View. Specifically, how do single mothers on benefits experience the changes in the benefits system and other recent policy initiatives and the associated policy discourses of social exclusion? In addition, this thesis seeks to understand the experience of these changes on different kinds of service providers, including employees from statutory, third sector and private sector organisations in the City. Through an ethnographic examination of the effects of the New Deal for Lone Parents and the New Deal for Communities, this thesis highlights differing degrees and types of violence that permeate the links between policy expectation and the lives of single mothers on benefits. It argues that a component of the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion contains the potential to impose symbolic violence on the women affected by its policies. This study contributes to these arguments by making specific references to structural and symbolic violence. The research findings support Morgen's (2010) contention that violence runs through many relationships between policy makers, service providers and participants in a similar fashion.

In this research project varying degrees of symbolic violence seemingly permeate the relationships between single mothers on benefits and service providers from a broad range of organisations. This research explores these relationships by arguing that New Labour policies received support from service providers which in turn affected the way they interacted with single mothers on benefits. This thesis adds to the debate by examining how the role of service providers reinforces the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion. This happens through its reliance on the moral and cultural causes of poverty and its emphasis on the importance of paid work.

Also, this thesis highlights the contradictions and inconsistencies experienced by those who applied these discursive components through social policy initiatives. In doing so, this study aims to contribute to ethnographies of power (Goode and Maskovsky 2001) and their drive to incorporate an understanding of the contradictions and tensions between service providers and policy makers, who do not challenge the dominant discourses. Morgen (2010) also focuses on the lack of challenge to the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion, albeit couching the discussion differently by framing in terms of a struggle, experienced much in the same way as by the clients of the services. My ethnography highlights these contradictions by including discussions on both complicity and struggle on the side of service providers and policy makers.

Drawing upon the work of Bourdieu (1984, 1991, 1998), Foucault (1972) and Fairclough, (2000), this study explores how violence is imbued in the discursive construction of the social exclusion discourse. In doing so, I will also highlight the expressions it finds in relationships between participants, service providers and policy makers particularly within the confines of a local neighbourhood regeneration programme. While Morgen (2002, 2003, 2010) in particular focuses on a close examination of these relationships between welfare workers and their clients, never goes so far as to describe these relationships as violent.

Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004: 1) note that ‘violence is a slippery concept-nonlinear, productive, destructive and reproductive’. According to Farmer (2005), structural violence is an important component in understanding the realities and experiences of oppressed individuals and its relationship to other forms of power and violence, including discursive power (Farmer 2005; Sausy 2010). This thesis argues that the discursive power of social exclusion creates symbolic violence that develops and reinforces discrepancies between policy expectations and lived realities of single mothers on benefits. ‘Violence’, according to Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004:1) ‘goes beyond physicality to include assaults on self-respect and personhood. The social and cultural dimensions of violence are what give it its force and meaning’.

Farmer adds to these discussions by providing a model of structural violence that shows that many acts of violence are not unusual. It is argued that in the context of welfare reform initiatives implemented under the first New Labour government in 1998, increases in structural violence became accepted as part of the reform process. At the

same time these connections between violence and power show the contested nature of these concepts.

1.6 Chapter outlines

Chapter two describes how I carried out the long term ethnographic research in Woodland View. Its main focus is on exploring specific methodological challenges, including recruitment, accessing participants and leaving the field. Many methodological challenges are connected in different ways to the key themes of this thesis. For example, in the context of access and recruitment of participants, I was constrained as many women did not see themselves as lone mothers because they rejected the negative associations of the term through its use in discourses on welfare and poverty.

Contestation of key terms presented a dilemma as I asked women to engage critically with discourses on welfare and social exclusion, while utilizing the same terms for purposes of recruitment and analysis. These early and on-going contestations surrounding terms suggest that many, such as ‘lone mother’, ‘welfare’, ‘social exclusion’ are subject to on-going processes of evaluation. The chapter suggests that when conducting research, we need to take into consideration these on-going processes of evaluation and contestations.

Chapter three will examine the key themes that are at the core of this thesis, providing a historical framework in which current discourses on welfare and social exclusion are placed. Its aim is to highlight how changes to welfare provision and discourses on poverty and social exclusion have contributed to an increased disjuncture between policy expectations and lived realities of single mothers on benefits. This chapter provides the historical, political and economic trajectories of the development of welfare and poverty discourses since the establishment of the Welfare State, with particular emphasis on the introduction of the New Labour’s Welfare Reform of 1998. In addition, this chapter will chart the transformation of social exclusion from a key analytical concept towards a policy tool, used to propel much of New Labour’s social policies from 1998 onwards. Descriptions of two of New Labour’s flagship programmes (the New Deal for Lone Parents and the New Deal for Communities) are provided. This representation is of particular significance, as these changes address how single mothers on benefits are positioned within social policy.

While it is imperative to understand the national context, Chapter four explores these issues in the framework of Woodland View. The chapter provides an introduction to the context of its historical, economic and social development. It outlines how the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion is experienced discursively as well as spatially and socially within Woodland View. The main goal of this chapter is to highlight how the dominant discourse on social exclusion and associated policy initiatives, like the New Deal for Communities, affected the local neighbourhood. This chapter also explores how historical narratives become sites of contestations within Woodland View. By placing historical, economic and social aspects of Woodland View into debates about 'worst estates' and 'deprived neighbourhoods,' within the context of the NDLP and the NDC the contested nature of collective identity was revealed. Having firmly established Woodland View in a socio-economical and historical context, Chapter five shows that the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion has reinforced aspects of morality in terms of service provision and delivery. The process of normalising poverty and focusing on perceived pathologised cultural characteristics of participants within service delivery demonstrates the uneasy relationship between the nature of single motherhood and welfare provision.

Historically, single mothers have been a contested group of individuals in terms of welfare provision. The introduction of the New Deal for Lone Parents exemplifies how single mothers on benefits experience specific changes to welfare provision and the associated policy discourses of social exclusion. The aim of this chapter is to examine New Labour's assertion that the best route out of poverty is through paid employment. This will be done through contrasting this claim with the lived realities of work and motherhood in Woodland View. Throughout this chapter, participants argue that unpaid work should be valued and remunerated in the same way paid work is. Therefore, motherhood and paid work become sites of contestations, where ideas about identity, power and morality come into play. Using the body of literature concerning these tensions (Edin and Lein 1997; Duncan and Edwards 1999; Hays 2003; Edin and Kefalas 2005), this chapter will explore the debate over choosing motherhood and benefit receipt over taking up paid work.

The aim of Chapter six is to de-construct further economic aspects of the dominant discourse on social exclusion. It does so by exploring how consumption is affected by the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion. A close

examination of spending habits, indicate how women experience the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion in terms of moral evaluation attached to particular types of consumption habits. At the same time, this discussion highlights the realities of this experience in terms of lack of adequate financial resources. Even so, through many narratives of participants, positive relationships with material culture are unearthed; albeit constrained by lack of adequate financial resources and varying degrees of moral evaluations attached to spending habits.

Chapter seven argues that symbolic and structural violence are inherent in the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion. As a result, differing types and degrees of violence permeate social policy initiatives in Woodland View reinforcing and increasing the gap between policy expectation and lived realities of single mothers on benefits. It is in the context of varying types and degrees of violence that the interface between policy expectations and lived realities of single mothers on benefits is played out. However, it is imperative to consider the time frame of these discussions with the fieldwork placed firmly in the context of the ‘winding-down’ phase of the local NDC initiative. Here, different categories of service providers are at the centre of the discussion emphasizing contradictions, inconsistencies and problems associated with social policy initiatives and the discourses that frame them. These categories are broadly divided into statutory, private and third sector organisations, as well as between managerial and front-line employees. This interface highlights the limited opportunities that the dominant discourse on social exclusion affords, in many instances, marginalising further both service providers and participants.

Finally, Chapter eight provides a synthesis and look towards the future with a discussion on the findings. Specifically, the chapter will outline key welfare reforms taken by the Coalition government elected in 2010. The chapter attempts to place these reforms within an historical context of similarities and differences between New Labour and previous governments. More importantly, it will provide a brief discussion about how discourses on welfare and poverty and social exclusion have changed since then while also providing some indication on how participants have responded to these changes and their expectations for the future.

Chapter 2

Measuring the Distance From Down the Road To Home: Challenges of Conducting Fieldwork at Home

OK,... you're a German-sounding, academic woman....and you're planning to go live in Woodland View and talk to single moms on welfare...there's no chance in hell that this is gonna work. No one's gonna want to talk to her and she'll probably get beaten up (Helmut, colleague).

Introduction

This message was relayed to me by a colleague after presenting my planned research project on Woodland View at a research seminar in the autumn of 2006. At that time I did not realise yet how many of these issues raised by Helmut would factor into my fieldwork. This chapter aims at highlighting several methodological aspects of conducting long term ethnographic research in Woodland View. Its main concern is to explore challenges pertaining to accessing and recruiting participants, conducting fieldwork at 'home' and to issues around 'leaving the field.' Furthermore, this chapter connects these methodological issues to the broader theoretical themes that are the basis of this thesis.

The first section briefly sketches the approach I employed when conducting ethnographic research in Woodland View, while the second section outlines the research questions and strategies. The third section is an exploration of some of the methodological challenges faced during the course of my fieldwork. The last section will provide an overview of the process of leaving the field. This thesis is an ethnographic examination of the lives of poor, single mothers on benefits. It explores how they perceive, criticise and engage with government initiatives around welfare and poverty and the discourse of social exclusion. In the context of specific social policy initiatives implemented in Woodland View, the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) and the new Deal for Communities (NDC), contestations and tensions arose for many participants and these were reflected in many methodological challenges encountered during my fieldwork. I argue that these tensions can be situated in pathologised and normalised assumptions about poverty and social exclusion, including moral evaluations of single mothers on benefits.

2.1 Participant Observation

The fieldwork was extensive and took place between the beginning of January 2007 and the end of January 2011. I examined the processes and lived realities of single mothers on benefits in the context of the social exclusion discourse, and the change of benefits and service provision in Woodland View.

When I decided that I would find a house in Woodland View I had initially envisioned to live in a small one-bedroom apartment, but I ended up having to share a house with several students from a local University. One of the first entries in my field diary describes the process of finding housing for myself and provides a figurative glimpse of the property and its place within the context of Woodland View history and policy initiative. Here of particular note is the fact that the property was bought by its former owners during the 1980s when the 'Right to buy' initiative under the Thatcher regime had first been introduced:

Today is my first official day of fieldwork. I spent my day moving into my room in a house I share with three students from the local University. After spending most of December looking for an apartment to rent by myself in Woodland View, I had to concede defeat and accept the fact that there are no apartments available to rent unless you are eligible for social housing or willing to share a house with other students. So, here I am moving from down the road, literally fifteen minute walk from my old house to a large house located in South Woodland View.

I am planning on spending at least one full year in the area and hopefully will be able to move flats within the various neighbourhoods to get a flavour of the different locations while I conduct my fieldwork. The house itself is lovely. It has spacious rooms, lets in a lot of light and has a massive backyard with many old fruit trees and bushes.

When I spoke to the letting agent he told me that the owner is the son of a couple who lived in the house since the 1950s and bought the house during the Thatcher buy to own era, when social housing was made more affordable to buy and this meant that more people were able to buy social housing across Woodland View. I suppose this could be somewhat regarded as an equalizing opportunity, getting individuals on the property ladder but one needs to be mindful of the long-term effects of such schemes. Considering, the son, according to the letting agent moved away from South Woodland View and has never returned to live in the neighbourhood. After his parents died he decided to rent out his childhood home to students because a lot of money is to be made in that business. We pay \$1000 for the house not including any bills. I had initially thought that rents would be cheaper here but after looking for a place to stay, I quickly realized that the geography of the location make it a desirable area for university students. (Fieldnotes, January 1st 2007)

As previously discussed, Woodland View was chosen as the location for this research because it has been described as a 'deprived estate'. Since most of its housing is owned by the City Council and classed as social housing, there was potentially a large, concentrated group of participants located in this neighbourhood. Furthermore, Woodland View was chosen because in the wake of the election of New Labour in 1997, the implementation of the New Deal for Lone Parents and the New Deal for Communities, it became the centre of attention for a large number of different service providers and agencies.

Because of the focus on exploring the realities of single mothers on benefits along with social policy expectations, there are two broad categories of participants that this research project focused on: single mothers receiving welfare benefits on one hand, and a group of participants that I have termed service providers. It is important to note that these broad groups of respondents are equally important in terms of their insight of policy expectations and experiences of living on benefits. As a composite group I prefer to label the service providers knowledge workers since at a very basic level, this kind of employment deals primarily with developing and translating social policy into reality. Here the contestations embedded within the policy discourse on welfare and social exclusion were positioned prominently. Within the groups of service providers I made a distinction between those at the managerial level and frontline workers because these individuals experience and engage with policy expectations in a variety of different ways. The last distinction was made between the various organisational sectors: statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations. Again this distinction seemed of importance because service providers within these different types of affiliation are affected differently by changes within political ideology and discourse related to welfare and poverty. In the context of this research project there is another group of participants that I encountered: community volunteers. In fact many residents from Woodland View and several of the single mothers who became participants are community volunteers. Their role of participants within the project is interesting because some of these women can be considered as crossing boundaries both socially and spatially, a topic that will be explored more in chapter six.

I had the opportunity to conduct long-term participant observation of the local NDC programme, hereafter named The Company. As a result I have conducted interviews with over fifty service providers at all levels and within the most important

Company organisations. Of these organisations they included the City Housing Office, the City Council, The Company Management Team, Community Safety Team, Health Team Programme, Local Action Team, Neighbourhood Renewal Team, Woodland View Trust. At the same time I was actively sought out by a variety of community volunteers whose position within The Company management structure had become a site of conflict for both service providers, particularly but not exclusively at the managerial level.

Engaging thus with The Company meant I had the opportunity to conduct participant-observation and interviews at the central Job Centre Plus and the local mobile Job Centre Plus in Woodland View. Expanding my work further meant conducting long-term ethnographic research of a local Work Programme and its involvement in the employment-related activities within and beyond Woodland View. In this case I was able to conduct in-depth interviews with service providers and able to observe first-hand job search interviews and interactions between frontline service providers and single mothers on benefits.

My fieldwork sites were in four distinctly different neighbourhoods within Woodland View: North, East, South and West Woodland View. I also conducted fieldwork with service providers located within Woodland View, Hillview and throughout the City. Because of the large number of service providers involved in The Company who were all connected through a network of funding and shared history in service provision, I spent much of my time when not in Woodland View, at least five hours per day twice a week in Hillview, in other locations across the City, developing and maintaining these connections. With the variety of service providers based within the local neighbourhoods, regular, often daily e-mail exchanges or text messages became an important means in establishing trusted relationships. But the regular visits with and to specific community initiatives helped foster these relationships even more, as my fieldnotes testify:

I have sent out another batch of e-mails to introduce myself to some individuals who according to some information I located online are supposed to be involved in working on community projects in North Woodland View. I was hoping to meet the contact person for a prominent community organisation funded by The Company to work on issues around sustainability of NDCs across England, but he has stood me up. Now I am waiting outside one local Community Hall feeling rather foolish because even though the building is locked there is some sort of meeting going on inside as I can hear voices.

After about an hour walking through the lower end of Woodland View keeping the doors of the Hall in sight, there are some people leaving. When I casually rush to the parking lot I do not know who I should talk to, who is in charge or even who these people are. Here I am, standing on the sidewalk announcing to nobody in particular: 'Hi, my name is Barbara. I am conducting research in Woodland View. Could I ask you some questions, please?' The collective response of a group of about six individuals was: 'Who are you? What university are you from? What are you researching?' I felt relieved. Finally I had made some sort of contact of service providers I thought, by myself... (Fieldnotes, May 2007)

The above is a good example of how I was able to first establish relationships with members of the community involved in running the local NDC project in Woodland View. These community members were not exclusively resident volunteers but also included Police Community Support Officers, Community development staff, staff from the local Sure Start Centre, Housing Office, a priest of the Parish and two Woodland View City councillors. The second step was to develop routines to maintain and foster these connections. This first quite accidental meeting resulted in a process that helped open doors to me that I did not expect would never be accessible at the start of my fieldwork. The individuals I 'cornered' that afternoon were members of a Local Action Team, involved in collating and addressing issues raised by residents in Woodland View. The Local Action Team was set up by The Company to tackle issues around community safety, including a reduction of anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in the local area while also trying to strengthen and promote community's pride. The board is made up of Local Councillors Police officers and Community Support staff from the local HDC Board, Social Housing tenants, and the Housing Office. I always made the effort to visit the employees of the Job Centre Plus, the local Work Programme and the local Council, as well as smaller NGOs located either within or outside Woodland View. Exploring the interface between policy expectations and lived realities of single mothers on benefits cast services providers into a significant role. As Okely (1984:5) notes:

Apart from the theoretical and historical necessity of including the wider context, the effects of those same policy makers are lived with daily in the anthropologist's country both before and after fieldwork.

This aspect of conducting fieldwork became important since my increasing involvement with the structure of The Company highlighted similar experiences when comparing them to many participants. It is important to remember, though, that the recruitment

strategy illustrated above was only one of a variety of channels I utilized. For example, in the late autumn of 2007, I decided to visit the Contact and Visitations Centre of the Woodland Field office of the Children's and Young People's Trust. I literally walked into their front doors and sat in the waiting area for about two hours talking to individuals waiting to see children who had been taken into care. I chatted to a social worker who was happy to share some of her experiences with me and, after informing her about the nature of my research, we discussed her work in Woodland View. This visit came to a rather abrupt end once I asked to schedule another interview with her. She left to get the consent of her manager who promptly asked me to leave the premises and not to return.

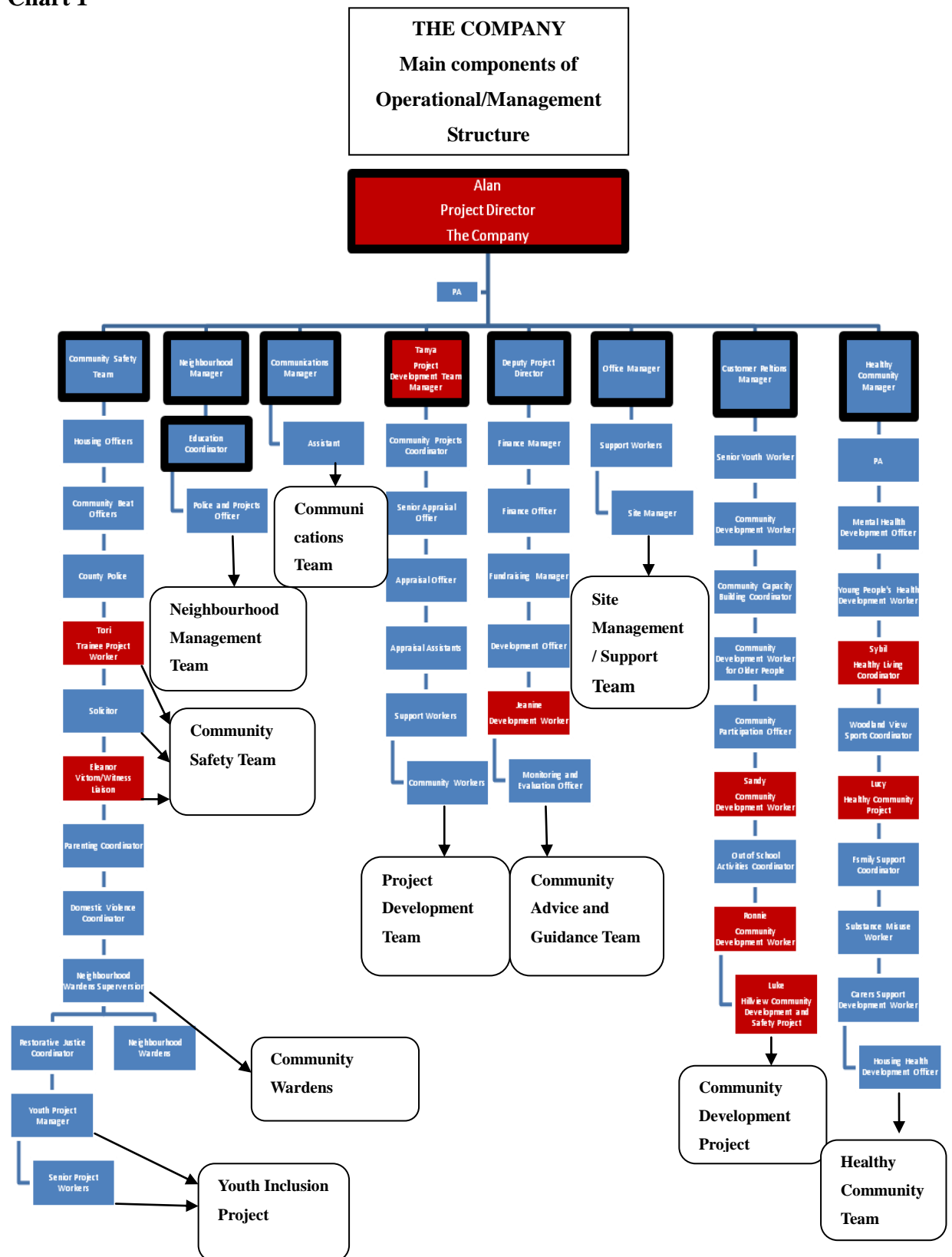
Similar experiences took place in the summer of 2008, at the local Sure Start Centre just located below from the Children's and Young People's Trust in East Woodland View. I had come to conduct an interview with an informant housed in the same building and afterwards waited in the reception area to conduct another interview with the Project Director of The Company. Upon his arrival, we retired to a quiet spot in the main lobby and started our interview. Within five minutes the receptionist had alerted one of the case managers for the Sure Start Centre. She approached to enquiry about our presence and then she asked us to leave. At that time I had not realised that that employees of the various community organisations, who, even though New Labour emphasised the importance of community engagement and sector collaboration, often failed to do so in practice. These are two examples that highlight the difficulty I faced when I first entered the field and then extended over the rest of my fieldwork period.

Multiple sites, of which several were frequented on a more regular basis, included: Community Centres in Hillview; the City Council Building; a Community Centre in Woodland View; a Community Hall in Woodland View; Woodland View Primary School; a local Highschool ; a Women's Shelter in the City, the City Housing Office. As there were so many actors involved in the process of delivering local NDC projects across the identified neighbourhoods, the practices of delivering projects targeted at addressing social exclusion varied across the different organisations. The variance provided its own challenges, several of which will be discussed in upcoming chapters. The large number of service providers is indicative of government pressures to reduce funding and maximizing benefits to potential recipients of services. The service providers who consented to become part of this research project were just elements of a

large structure set up to deliver local NDC projects to Woodland View and other poor neighbourhoods in the City. Even though they were employees of various organisations and companies, all were employed in the funding framework of The Company. To highlight the complex structure of The Company please refer to Chart 1, the operational and management structure I obtained in autumn of 2007 from the project director. All the service providers interviewed for this research project were linked in a variety of ways to the operational structure of The Company.

Even though they are all termed service providers, within the context of my study, and by looking at the chart provided below, it becomes obvious that there are significant differences. These differences exist in terms of the position these individuals inhabit within the overall hierarchy of The Company. This in turn affects in a number of ways the control these service providers experience both real but also symbolic, in their relationship to the participants and their own relationship within the matrix of The Company. These distinctions are important also in the context of access and recruitment for this project. It had been much easier for me to approach those front line workers located at a fairly low level of the structure of The Company, who in some instances sought out their participation in the project actively, rather than individuals inhabiting positions of managerial and operational power. These participants were at once more difficult to recruit in the initial stages of my project, but their engagement with my research project was maintained easier and more consistently over the long field work. There are three broad types of service providers I have identified for this project: Project workers (statutory sector), project workers (private and third sector) and Managers/Directors. Please see below a chart detailing the main components of the organisational structure of The Company at a glance. While there was staff turnover within the existing structure of The Company this chart developed in April 2003 has remained in place for the duration of this project. The red boxes indicate individuals whose discussions appear in this thesis. The boxes surrounded with a dark black border highlight the members of the management team for The Company.

Chart 1



2.2 Research questions and strategies

This research posed three main questions focused on accessing the experiences and realities of single mothers on benefits. It also attempted to make links to broader issues around welfare initiatives and the discourse of social exclusion.

1. How do lone mothers on income benefits experience the policy discourse of social exclusion and recent policy initiatives?
2. Focusing on economic, social and spatial dimensions, how do policy initiatives affect the lives of lone mothers on benefits?
3. Are the realities of those individuals accurately reflected in policy initiatives?

The research questions are set out to understand the diverse opinions of those most closely involved in the realities of the social exclusion debate in the context of welfare receipt, including service providers, participants and residents of a poor neighbourhood. In addition, this research explores how individuals located differently within the framework of this debate, both accept and contest the underlying assumptions of the dominant discourse of social exclusion.

The data for this thesis is qualitative, based on participant-observation and in depth life-history interviews. It is also extensive – it includes the narratives of eighty-nine single mothers plus fifty service providers and five single fathers. The majority of the participants were recruited during the course of more than three years of fieldwork. The neighbourhood distribution of the eighty-nine single mothers shows that forty-three were located in East Woodland View compared to twenty-four women from North Woodland View, twelve from South Woodland View and seven from West Woodland View. Three participants were from other estates across the city. These women were included because they had strong family ties to Woodland View. Fifty-three of the participants were raised in Woodland View and had lived there most or all of their lives. While five single fathers were interviewed, the focus of this particular research was on single motherhood. There may be an impression that men are absent from this thesis. However, I wanted to provide an in-depth insight into single mothers' experiences with welfare initiatives and social exclusion discourse, and therefore decided to limit my sample. The strengths of doing this are the nuanced insights into the understandings, misunderstandings and contradictions that exist between policy expectations and the lived realities of the women I interviewed.

Like the general population of Woodland View, all of the single mothers in this study would identify themselves as white. While there are several families of non-British origin located in Woodland View, none of these individuals that I talked to fulfilled the main recruitment criteria of single motherhood. All participants were identified as ethnically white. 13 of the participants were between 16-24 years old; 29 women were between 25-40 years of age; 37 were between the ages of 41-49 and 10 participants were between the ages of 50 and over. Over the course of three years, I followed the experiences of these women. I collected data using a number of sources, including initial interviews that covered a wide variety of general topics, face-to-face unstructured in-depth interviews, interviews structured by topic (decided on by myself or the participant), informal chats, collection of life histories and participant observation.

During the course of the fieldwork I also conducted in-depth interviews with fifty service providers who I labelled key informants. These individuals worked in the various organisations and agencies in and around Woodland View. The key informants included administrative staff, project managers, outreach workers, research staff, case managers, health visitors, and programme directors. Their experiences play an integral part in exploring the interface that exists between policy expectations and the lived realities of single mothers on benefits, while highlighting the contradictions and tensions present in many of these relationships.

Because both poverty and single motherhood should be regarded and researched as a process rather than a fixed state, the collection of life histories and other kinds of in-depth interviews had an important role in this project. As Fetterman argues, 'ethnographers use interviews to help classify and organize an individual's perception of reality' (1989: 50). Interviews were also useful in helping me to explore perceived differences and similarities within Woodland View. The narratives collected from participants were diverse and focused on a number of themes including paid work, motherhood, consumption and morality, class and culture and the welfare system. Furthermore, I have gathered the life histories of twenty-five residents of Woodland View. Several of these personal accounts have provided historical, social and political context especially for chapter three. These narratives have become increasingly important for this thesis because they highlight the contested nature of the history of an estate.

Ethnographic interviews are less formal and less interviewer driven than traditional interview formats (Stokes Brown 1988). They are guided instead by the talk itself, by what gets said, and what is left unsaid. As Agar writes,

‘in an informal interview “everything is negotiable. The informants can criticise a question, correct it, point out that it is sensitive, or answer in any way they want to” (1980:90)’.

In fact, the best ethnographic interview is more like a conversation than a traditional interview. The ethnographer probes, reacts, questions, responds, expresses surprise, and discloses, and in these exchanges the most pertinent information is exchanged.

The ethnographic researcher, then, regards the interview as a lengthy conversation. The researcher can probe for detail, clarity or explanation and can even express surprise or disbelief, which shape an interview along these lines (Schatzman & Strauss 1973: 72). However, no matter how ‘informal’ this process may seem, it still requires a great deal of involvement in developing interview protocols that ensure that topics of interest are covered, even though these do not necessarily follow a pre-set format or linear line of questioning (Ellen 1984; Berg 1989).

I followed the experiences of the participants over the course of three years, drawing on several sources of data: initial interview (trying to) cover all general topics broadly divided into three topics including economic, social and spatial aspects of their lives through face-to-face unstructured in-depth interviews. After this initial interview participants usually decided on specific topics they were most interested in exploring in subsequent discussion. Other sources of data included: informal chats, collection of life histories and participant observation.

This data was supplemented through a variety of other sources such as correspondence with service providers and other agencies, and personal documentation such as poetry, photographs, letters, drawings and notes on scraps of paper. While initially, I had planned to conduct a series of at least three interviews to cover economic, social and spatial aspects of social exclusion, once the fieldwork was under way a more flexible approach was deemed much more appropriate. The main reason for this decision was based on the fact that most participants, as noted above, usually decided after the first more formal interview which topics were of importance to them. In the end the number of interviews per participant ranged from one to five altogether.

While interviews were important in this research, participant observation took on an equally, if not more significant role. Over the course of over three years, participant observation allowed me to very slowly chip at some of the class and cultural boundaries that separated me from many of my participants. In doing so, I was able to informally chat with many of the residents and individuals working in the neighbourhood. My initial plan was to conduct three interviews with each single mother, covering economic, social and spatial aspects of social exclusion. However, once the fieldwork was under way, a more flexible approach was deemed more appropriate. It was here that I allowed participants to decide on the topics they wanted to explore during the interviews. Not surprisingly, many participants choose to explore themes that are at the heart of this thesis: namely the contested meanings attached to welfare and social exclusion and the practical implications of living on benefits.

Researching social exclusion ethnographically provides a snapshot of history over a brief period of time and thus this ethnography should be regarded as a time-bound artefact. Long-term ethnographic involvement in Woodland View has taught me that ethnographies, like cultures and social exclusion itself, are processes and not fixed states. According to Clifford, there is no one moment of absolute representation (Clifford 1986(a): 10-15). Any ethnography can be nothing more than an historical inscription of relationships over time.

2.3 Exploring Social Exclusion Ethnographically

This research draws on an area of literature from the US dealing with welfare reform in that country. Much of this literature is based on long-term ethnographic research and this provided much of the inspiration for the approach in this thesis. These long-term ethnographic studies are important because they offer a descriptive account of what is lived and understood within a culture. Changes to the welfare system and its services need to be considered an on-going contextual process which is constantly modified. Ethnography describes both interaction and setting, and should be concerned with social behaviour outside as well as that occurring inside the site (Wolcott 1990: 24-25). Ethnography is not identified by the methods it employs, but rather by its aims, "to discover and disclose socially acquired and shared understandings necessary to be a member of a specified social unit" (Van Maanen 1982:103). It is a cultural description, emerging from a long and often intimate knowledge of and relationship with a particular

social group. For single mothers on benefits, the on-going changes to the welfare system have pertinent consequences affecting their lives and families and shaping their understanding of the world. It is not enough to collect statistical information about this, since this type of data hardly reflects what it *means* to be poor. In addition, it is only during the process of long-term ethnographic research that a real understanding is established of how single mothers on benefits engage critically with the dominant discourse of social exclusion.

Willis (1977), Skeggs (2001) and Evans (2006), have used ethnography to research the lives of working-class young men, women and their children in the UK. None of this research specifically focuses on exploring the interface between the lived realities of single mothers on benefits and policy expectations. Nonetheless, all have provided ethnographies that include context as a way to understand the lives of their studied groups. These three ethnographies guided some of the discussions that arose from my research. From Skeggs, I borrow an understanding of how participants understand discursive constructions of themselves as a form of positioning. Evans and her vivid account of working-class women in Bermondsey, presents additional understandings around the degree to which women embrace perceived characteristics of working-class culture. Willis supports my understanding of the historical context in exploring changes to the welfare system, while also raising questions around if and how positioning within social groups can be challenged.

The importance of ethnographic research cannot be overestimated because it is an ideal tool to explore the multi-dimensional aspects of social exclusion. Through long-term ethnographic research exploring the lives of single mothers, examining causes, effects and different dimensions of poverty and inequality, this research captured a more complete picture of the lives of single mothers on income benefits than has yet been produced. Since the election of the Coalition government in 2011, the introduction of a yet another welfare reform highlights the need for ethnographic research on the experiences of those who might be directly affected by its implementation. If the effects of the previous welfare reform are not researched properly, many of its effects will remain unknown and policy decisions will continue to rely overly on statistical measures.

2.4 Methodological challenges

The following section will describe several methodological challenges that I encountered during my time in the field. Many of the challenges reflected themes and highlighted broader concerns located in the upcoming chapters, including issues of poverty, violence and morality. I contend that many of these particular challenges can be linked to the timing of my fieldwork, political circumstances that were mirrored in my research topic, and the length of my ethnographic engagement. When I started my fieldwork in January 2007, I knew that the local NDC programme was winding down and decided that this time period would provide me with important information regarding changes in service provision and delivery. At the same time, I realized that with the benefit of hindsight, I would be able to access additional information on how service providers, residents and participants had experienced the realities of programmes aimed at alleviating social exclusion. I was sorely tempted to continue to collect data full-time after the election of the New Coalition government in 2010, but largely refrained from doing so because I needed to get on with data analysis. So I confined data collection to a core group of 15 residents and participants.

My long-term engagement in Woodland View came at a cost. While changes to welfare delivery and the benefits system provided the chance to explore the effects of the dominant discourse of social exclusion over an extended period of time, the winding down phase of NDC meant that much of the contestations and tensions felt around policy created insecurity and fear among service providers, residents and participants. In addition, the implementation of NDLP created challenges for service providers, participants and myself. Both topics will be explored in more detail in the upcoming chapters. Some of this fear and insecurity have translated into various kinds of violence, both physical but more importantly symbolic. These issues became more pertinent for myself in the context of leaving the field and will be explored further below.

This research is not about violence. For me, the purpose of this research was to record how poor single mothers on benefits traverse the disjuncture between policy expectations and lived realities, as well as exploring the basic structural positions occupied by service providers. However, elements of different forms of violence can be located throughout the research and my own journey as a researcher. The methodological challenges examined below include access and recruitment, conducting multi-sited research, paying for services and leaving the field.

2.4.1 Can I get a Fag? Challenges in access, recruitment and defining a sample

I got shot down again. This is getting to be a chore. I am not sure how I will be able to get anybody to talk to me. It is already February and I only have two official participants. At this rate I might have twelve per year... (Fieldnotes, February 2007)

These were some of the thoughts that occupied me during the first few months in Woodland View. Before entering the field, I needed to identify a target population, which included determining the criteria for inclusion in my project. In the preliminary research, I had prepared literature reviews on single mothers, exploring the various definitions that would factor into finalizing the parameters of my target population. In many of these early explorations, I questioned the validity of utilising analytical categories particularly related to sensitive topics like welfare receipt. I argue that the very concept of single mother needs to be questioned as a legitimate analytical category, since these women are a very diverse group in terms of economic, social and spatial aspects. This sentiment of questioning the value of putting these different types of women into a single analytical category is echoed in the literature on motherhood especially in policy contexts (Hobson 1994; Millar *et.al.* 2001; Rowlingson *et.al.* 2005). Rather than assuming social exclusion or single motherhood to be fixed states, it is central to accept that they are processes which change over time. It is important that research provides these insights, or single mothers on income benefits will remain the focus of policy initiatives aimed at homogeneous groups which do not acknowledge their diversity.

Many authors suggest that any ethnographer must be sensitive in entering and establishing a role and deciding how they will become involved in the community (Wilson 2003; Okely 1996; Smith and Kornblum 1996; Skeggs 2001). There are two broad concerns located with entering the field and establishment of the researcher role in fieldwork. Firstly, entry is often obtained through approval from a third party. This presents an immediate dilemma for the researcher: disassociating themselves from the interests and controls of that third party. For example, initially I volunteered for a community organisation which delivered services to residents of Woodland View. Members of staff tried to dissuade me from approaching prospective participants, citing concerns linked to supposed lack of confidentiality and anonymity of my research and the perceived high degrees of participants' potential vulnerability. This situation proved

frustrating and it was not until I limited my engagement with this organisation that I felt able to recruit participants freely.

Before starting fieldwork I had contacted this organisation to apply for a volunteering position as a community outreach worker, discussing in my interview and subsequent meetings very openly my hopes to be able to approach potential participants while promoting educational advancement in Woodland View. However, once I had begun my placement, the director told me in no uncertain terms that this kind of recruitment would be considered inappropriate and unethical. Other staff then began to voice their concerns as well and Maggie, a group facilitator told me:

I just don't *think* it is a good idea for you just to talk to anybody about your research. We are working with *very* vulnerable women here. Most of them have not done well at school and I think they would be *very* intimidated if you would just ask them to be part of your *research*.

Gaby who organized many of the activities at the organisation overheard this remark and chimed in adding:

Barbara, this is also an ethical problem. It's *not* done this way. You can't just talk to people like that. They have no real understanding what is involved in a research project. They might get hurt because they don't really know much about how the world works.

Initially, I felt blindsided in this change in my ability to conduct recruitment, since I expressed interest to volunteer for the expressed purpose of recruiting from a potential pool of around fifty women. All of the clients of this community organisation seemingly fit my recruitment criteria. While I could have ended this particular volunteer activity I decided to continue working at this organisation until the summer of 2008. Even though some staff was worried about potential harm that might be created through participant involvement in my research, the majority of women I talked to during my work never voiced concerns regarding my presence. In fact some women decided to approach me asking to be included into my research project.

Secondly, researchers cannot buy their way in by offering anything of value to participants, so there are no compelling reasons for subjects to participate or cooperate (Van Maanen 1982; Berg 1989). However, once in the field the provision of services or things became paramount in maintaining many relationships. On top of facing these two very real challenges, the subject matter of my research topic made it particularly difficult to gain entry. Because of this, potential participants questioned the potential

intrusiveness and moral evaluation implied in the research. These concerns turned initial access and entry into a very difficult endeavour. Once I started my fieldwork, the realities of this concern emerged almost immediately.

Nearly directly after I started recruitment I was confronted with the contestations related to analytical categories embedded in my own research. After conducting my first round of literature reviews I initially thought using the term ‘lone mother’ versus ‘single mother’ would imply less moral judgement and stereotypes. According to the debate surrounding the usage of terms describing potential participants, the term ‘lone mother’ included any woman not currently residing with a partner in one home and raising the children on her own while receiving benefits. Even though I had attempted to remain value-free in developing this category, once I started fieldwork it became apparent that while outwardly many women fulfilled the eligibility criteria, many potential participants attached negative meanings to both ‘lone mother’ and ‘welfare’. Categories are never neutral. They embody values and biases that need to be uncovered and deconstructed in the process of fieldwork and as such are crucial (Hastrup and Hervik 1994).

There were several women who initially excluded themselves from these supposed value-free and neutral categories because of the negative assumptions that are widely held regarding single motherhood, which position single mothers as work shy, feckless and residing in deprived areas. While such analytical categories and descriptors are still the norm in exploring social life and processes, the realities of applying them to my research opened this project to the same kinds of criticism applied to the discourse of social exclusion. Ironically, what this meant was that the way in which I determined the criteria of ‘single mothers’ was done much in the same way as governments, policy makers and service providers have identified them in the past. Misty was adamant in telling me:

I know what they say about me. It’s enough I know it when they come knocking for any reason. Why’d I want to let anybody know I’m like the ones they talk about. I tell you, they ruined it for all of us. With all that shit they’re saying. I don’t wanna talk to you....

While categorisation is not necessarily a negative, in the case of researching individuals whose position in life is morally evaluated by others more powerful in society it can be fraught with tension. This was an important element in conducting fieldwork in Woodland View. As a result, the moral evaluations attached to analytical categories such

as single mother, social exclusion and poverty were de-constructed and questions related to their meaning and perceptions were addressed.

As Okely notes so succinctly:

Distance between people need not be measured by geographical mileage...Afterwards an anthropologist asked me how I had come to meet this individual. This genuine puzzlement in the question indicated that some of the inhabitants of one's own village may remain as elusive as cannibals. They are neither known nor inevitable accessible to the average middle-class academic on home territory (Okely 1996: 4).

Nowhere was this statement more representative of my early futile attempts to recruit participants living in Woodland View. I was not at first aware that complex representations of poor individuals in the United Kingdom, found in policy and media, would in fact seriously hamper my preliminary forays into recruitment. At the same time, I was largely unaware that my own position as an outsider: educated, foreign, middle-class woman, might create further barriers to processes of enrolment. I was therefore faced with two dilemmas: how to recruit those who were regarded as a homogeneous group, fairly negatively in the context of policy perception and, simultaneously negotiating my own position as a double-outsider (not English, middle-class and fairly educated.)

In early summer 2007 I was 'hanging out' outside a local Primary School in order to attempt some recruitment. While sitting on the bench a woman approached, sat next to me, leant over and asked "Can I get a fag?" With this simple act of sharing a cigarette, we began to chat and it was during this encounter that Patty, who a few days after this conversation became a participant, summarised why terms like single mother can create and maintain tensions in accessing and recruiting participants. She stated:

No, I know you've been around. I told Jodie I wasn't gonna talk to you 'cos you know I'm not like 'em, you know. I know what you all think of us. We're single mums on benefits. We're scroungers, we're lazy, sitting on our arse all day. I know but I tell you: I'm single 'cos he left when I got pregnant. Not by choice. And now I'm raising her myself but I'm not alone.

I got a boyfriend and he helps loads and my nan does too. It's what they do though about us lot. They tell the whole world we're lazy and don't wanna work and have babies to get all that money, doing nothing all day. And then they say we're all the same. I tell you we all have a different story, we do. We're not all the same...you'll see soon enough.

A problematic aspect of my research was to simultaneously expect participants to critically engage with particular concepts and categories, while employing other

contested concepts in the process of conducting the research. Therefore, it was very important to question the significance of these categories. There were many women who thought of themselves as poor and as struggling mothers. They believed that they were trying their best to get by, but received benefits because this is their right as a citizen of this country. As a result they resented categories like ‘benefits recipient’, ‘welfare scrounger’, ‘hard to reach’, ‘deeply excluded’ and ‘working class’.

What made applying analytical categories around benefit receipt especially difficult, was the fact that most participants I interviewed were embedded in gendered and classed webs of relationships (Skeggs 2001; Evans 2006). That meant they often experienced key terms through a number of evaluative relationships, for instance with service providers, ex-partners, neighbours and community agencies. Therefore, it is important to explore the intersections between expectations, realities of policy and analytical categories. Key terms used in this project, like lone mother, welfare and social exclusion, have been subject to on-going processes of evaluation. When conducting research we need to take into consideration these on-going processes of evaluation and contestations.

2.4.2 Can you pay? I haven't got enough money'

Concerns about reciprocity were an integral part of this research. For poor women and their families on benefits, notions of reciprocity are firmly established in daily life. As one of my participants Kat pointed out, in order to survive financially, ‘I have to barter, beg and steal’. Most participants faced this challenge on a daily basis to meet their basic subsistence needs.

As a self-financed Ph.D. student my situation was financially precarious. I lived from pay cheque to pay cheque, meeting rent payments and bills, but hardly having enough money to indulge in things myself. However, the majority of participants displayed utter disbelief that I did not have money and often expected me to pay for things. This raised an ethical concern and caused me to not bring a lot of cash with me when visiting the neighbourhood. Reciprocity is the ability to pay for services through gifts: however, I was not able to afford to do this which made things very uncomfortable for me. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes about a shopping trip with a participant Nicky describes the meaning of reciprocity for her and displays how the process of gift-giving was often negotiated with discomfort on both sides. She said:

I went over to see Nicky at her flat in West Woodland View around 11am. We sit around drinking our cups of tea and listening to dogs bark outside the building. Nicky told me that she thinks she is ready to have a formal, taped interview with me soon... I have become more comfortable with spending time with some women and I have to admit that the idea of getting their story, their information and then leaving makes me feel that I am taking advantage of them. Even though I brought doughnuts this morning, I feel it is not *enough*. There is no reciprocity in this process. There is no exchange that indicates a levelling of the playing field (Fieldnotes 2008).

We're settling for a chat and Nicky says:

It is strange you coming back and us just *talking*... I wonder you know.... what's it gonna be *good* for....I don't mind people knowing about it I suppose but I wonder what *I* gets from it.... I mean you bring doughnuts today and you brought fruit the other week and you got A. the lipsticks and she *loves* those... but I wonder what *I* get? But what about what I get? I mean I give you a story every time I see you and you get the research, but what do I get? I will still be here, where I am now, when you're gone then.... you know it's like I said before I like talking to you but I know you won't be coming back then..... you don't live here *anymore*. You moved away already.... (long pause) I need to get some food for next week. You wanna come along?

I have been shopping with Nicky before and I know her needs overall, but today there are some changes in her shopping. She seems to buy more of items. ..We move to the cashier and start loading the goods on the belt. Nicky moves to the front of the trolley.

I am watching the other customers, while the items are tallied but then I get woken from my reverie from Nicky who very loudly states that 'I haven't got enough money, can you pay?' I am shocked and embarrassed. My first instinct is to vanish and my second one is anger at Nicky for talking loudly in a shop, where I feel now everybody is looking at us. I say: 'Sure', move to the till and pay.

When we leave, I notice that Nicky has turned beet-red. I remain silent and she keeps looking at me out of the corner of her eye and then finally when we are at the bus stop, she tries to catch my eye. She is struggling, then blurts out:

I am sorry but I wanted something else. You know what I talked about earlier. I give you my story and I think it's like a gift and you don't just give a gift and not give something back.' (Fieldnotes 2008)

It seems imperative that reimbursements and financial expectations are explored openly by researcher and participants. Particularly in the context of poverty, research participants may have the need to get paid for their information. There are questions which need to be addressed here relating to ideas of fair economic exchange.

Some of these challenges are covered by the Ethical Guidelines of the ASA (2011), which set out the guiding principles of our engagement with participants. According to guideline 6, fair return for assistance states that 'there should be no economic exploitation of individual informants.... fair return should be made for their help and

services' (ASA 2011: 6). However, the realities of this fair return for assistance and the difficulty of achieving it are not covered by these guidelines, as indicated in the interaction with Nicky. While I did not exploit participants, in several instances I was told that I took more than I provided in exchange.

In my attempt to provide a fair return for exchange as outlined by the ASA, I experienced a backlash because fair return was interpreted differently by different individuals. In many instances it was my financial inability to provide what had been decided to be 'fair' by participants that resulted in repercussions. These included harassing phone calls and text messages and personal confrontations. These responses to my perceived unwillingness and inability to sustain a fair exchange became even more common once I had left the field. Issues around fair return were therefore closely linked to the challenges I experienced after my fieldwork.

Concerns around fair exchange often became critical once the women began to get to know me better. Issues often became serious because participants assumed that I had money, when I did not. They felt that if I had enough money to go to university I could spare money for alcohol, groceries, cigarettes and gifts for their children. The following is an extract from a conversation I had with Rachel, about six months after we started chatting:

Tony told me I shouldn't talk to you 'cos you don't pay. He says, if you want to get me to talk about private, personal things like, then you should pay. He says it's only fair. We haven't got much and he says that I should get something from you...He says I should tell you, like, so you know that this is what he thinks.

The relationships I had to maintain took place in an environment where financial resources are scarce and people were constantly trying to obtain things they needed by exchanging them for things they might not need in the moment. Many of the women managed relationships with their wider social network in much the same manner. The examples above illustrate the indignities of poverty, where one has to ask for money either standing at the check-out counter or because your partner asks you to. The economic aspects of my fieldwork were located within the web of economic activities participants engaged in.

Women like Nicky and Rachel felt that that they gave me a gift every time I visited by answering my questions and letting me pry into their personal lives, and therefore expected something in return, something more than snacks or small presents.

This illustrated 'the reciprocity of fieldwork' Wilson (2003: 93) identifies, arguing that researchers,

cannot be social members of the community without an economic engagement. A researcher who decides to share nothing, give nothing, help nobody and demand nothing will not be considered as a member of that society.

As my shopping trip with Nicky demonstrated, 'the economics of relationships' Wilson (2003: 93) were often difficult to maintain. However, it was imperative that relationships between participant and researcher were kept as equal as possible for ethical reasons. Nonetheless, the realities of these economic exchanges were always fraught with preconceived notions of the worth of material on offer. While Nicky considered her stories and time to be worthy of specific financial reimbursement, my personal ideas of small gifts clashed with these convictions.

These conflicting facts complicate the on-going debate related to reciprocity. When conducting research among poor people, offering 'practical services' as Wilson (2003:181) suggests or small gifts as I offered, is simply not sufficient. Often, instances of poverty call for more significant financial support. However, this relies on the researcher being able to afford to give this, and this kind of reimbursement could also be regarded as ethically flawed, since it could alter the relationship between researcher and participant in a variety of ways. For example, relationships could become complicated by gratitude, guilt or dependency, and the expectation of specific types of support could make the process of leaving the field more difficult, as it will be explored in the upcoming section.

2.5 Leaving the field: A story in three parts

Once the lease of my house was up for renewal after nine months living full-time in Woodland View, a number of issues made me no longer wish to remain in the neighbourhood. Our house was renovated and the letting agent proposed an increase in rent, I had become the target of several vicious attacks (verbal and physical) that made living in the neighbourhood a concern for my safety and the more I got to know participants and residents, the more I became to realize the distance that existed between myself and many individuals I had met. Okely stated that this sort of distance does not necessarily find expression in miles but in the fact that those we research are members of a different culture and vice versa (Okely 1984). For many participants I had

increasingly come to represent not only a strange individual peeking into their lives, but at times accentuated the differences they saw between themselves and mainstream City society. I received threatening visits to my house in Woodland View resulting in numerous police visits and attempted arrests of those involved. I was attacked on several occasions both within homes and across the various neighbourhoods in Woodland View. Most of these assaults seemed to be a direct result of my presence in a particular situation. For example leaving one of the participants' home I was assaulted by her ex-partner because he felt I undermined his authority. I was attacked after defending participants from assaults or verbal abuse.

What finally made me decide to leave Woodland View was a violent exchange I became embroiled in by chance. Ruth, a participant, had been married to a violently abusive man for over twenty years. She decided to leave him, take her kids, and built a new life for herself. She was able to secure a house in North Woodland View which she decorated with immense love and care. Her life seemed on the upswing when I first met her but her ex-partner was always just lingering in the background, showing up unannounced, calling the house, threatening her and even beating her on a number of occasions. As the degree of violence increased so did Ruths' safety measures. She installed a CCTV camera in her house to monitor her street and backyard, she installed two door bolts in her bedroom, so she could lock herself and her children into her own bedroom if he flew into a violent rage, but none of this mattered when her ex-partner realized she was spending much of her time with me. He decided to contact her and told her that I thought she was 'a slag, a lesbian whore and cunt.' As a result I received the following text message: 'I guess with u it's all just research! Hope u got all u needed from me, there will be no more 2 follow'.

Once Ruth and I talked on the phone she quickly came to understand that her ex-partner lied to her and reported him to the police on assault charges. After this event, her ex-partner started to harass me at my house in Woodland View. It was in this moment that my friends decided that it was time for me to put some geographic distance between myself and Woodland View.

When I began my fieldwork in January 2007, my personal goal was to conduct ethnographic research for twenty-four months. I believed that this time frame would afford me ample opportunity to collect sufficient data to present a detailed study of single mothers on benefits. However, my time in the field by this thesis was written

added up to more than three years. I returned to Woodland View on a daily basis even after I moved back into my apartment just a mile down the road. I remained firmly embedded in Woodland View until December 2010 but did not return regularly from January 2011 onwards. As Okely and others argue, fieldwork includes a commitment to a process of immersion (Okely 1996; Amit 2000): but it also involves challenges related to disengagement. While an intellectual rationale for continuing with my fieldwork beyond my original time frame is presented below, I also experienced personal difficulties attempting to leave the field, which extended my time there.

The timing of the last phase of my fieldwork coincided with the last phase of the NDC project in Woodland View. With the ethnographic study under way, I was able to collect important information on the last months of funding of the local NDC initiative. Simultaneously, the local authority started the processes of applying for funding to maintain several projects that were slated for closure in the wake of the end of The Company. Other local groups began to retreat from the neighbourhood renewal funding arena and started to rely more on neighbourhood volunteer efforts in order to keep their projects running. This shift from being part of a large-scale neighbourhood regeneration initiative implemented across the United Kingdom to preparing for the loss of much needed financial support hit many organisations and residents hard. Without the opportunity to collect the data over an extended period of time, this thesis would have lost much of its driving force.

Furthermore, with the slow demise of the New Labour government, social exclusion discourse started taking on a more moralistic stance. This shift is noted in the later phases of the fieldwork, especially towards the end of 2008 and most certainly through 2009. With competitive bidding for funding and a more target-driven mantra, many service providers started to become more disillusioned in their dealings with the government, but also showed frustration with their potential clients. It is in this situation that discussions about ‘the underclass’ and ‘welfare scroungers’, became most prominent.

When the Coalition government was elected in the summer of 2010, the position of many participants within social exclusion discourse was reinforced, and the scene was set for additional changes in the welfare system. This gave another very good reason to remain as closely tied to the field as possible for another twelve months. My data was therefore eventually the product of three years’ worth of ethnographic

fieldwork and provides an extensive and holistic view of life for poor women and their families and friends, service providers and residents. Therefore, this thesis is part of a tradition of long-term ethnographic fieldwork that goes beyond the mere collection of data (Letkemann 1980; Skeggs 2001; Morgen 2010).

With such long-term fieldwork come ethical challenges. In Section I.2 of the ASA guidelines, under ‘Anticipating harms’, it states:

Anthropologists should be sensitive to the possible consequences of their work and should endeavour to guard against predictably harmful effects. Consent from subjects does not absolve anthropologists from their obligation to protect research participants as far as possible against any potential harmful effects of research. (ASA 2011:2)

In relation to this, I believe that the process of leaving the field, particularly if the field is located just down the road from the place of residence, can be harmful to participants in a number of ways. As Van Maanen (1982:116) suggests:

fieldwork inevitably entails attachment, and it therefore creates all the existential dilemmas upon which any human relationship is based.

In my case, leaving the field did not suddenly create space and distance because the participants whose lives I shared still relied on me for support, advice and gifts. When these were no longer on offer, resentment and hostility clouded perceptions and began to damage relationships. For example, I had successfully supported Maria and her daughter in their negotiations to move out of Woodland View. As a result Maria expected my support in a number of on-going disputes she was embroiled in with the Housing office and Job Centre Plus. During the slow process of leaving the field, I told her that I would no longer be available to provide extensive help as I had been in the past. This resulted in an outpouring of verbal abuse and several visits to my home to complain about my ‘lack of *sympathy* and *empathy*’ (her words). I remained adamant about needing to continue with my writing up away from Woodland View. At that point, Maria decided to break ‘all ties’ with me, telling me that I ‘should do something for people.’

These concerns were magnified by the fact that based on the proximity of the research site and my living arrangements, the ‘field’ was located metaphorically ‘just down the road’. This was also perhaps at the root of the fact that despite my relief at leaving the field, and even though I was looking forward to immersing myself in the analysis and writing of my research, at the back of my mind there lingered a strong

desire to return. Whilst my primary research had officially finished by 2011, the women I had worked with remained, evolved and changed. I was developing new interests and entering new, interesting and potentially enlightening relationships.

Having now had the time to reflect, I realise that my desire to retain close links to the groups also served other purposes. I had a persistent concern that there remained data waiting to be collected. I believed that perhaps another chat, or attending another event, could provide yet another seam of material to further enrich my analysis. These notions are well documented in the literature, as Buchanan, et.al. (1998: 64) argue:

It can therefore be difficult for the researcher to decide finally to leave the organisation, to gather no more information, and to begin the process of analysing and documenting what data have been collected. This can be an awkward psychological leap, as there is always the possibility, usually a strong probability, that vital information has been overlooked.

In these instances, leaving the field can become a very difficult task (Shaffir, *et.al.* 1980). I had initially hoped that by placing myself at the edge of Woodland View (South) I would not be considered an outsider, which of course would help recruitment and accessing potential participants. I did not immediately realize that South Woodland View was considered to be the posh neighbourhood of the area which of course affected the way some residents came to regard me. Therefore my place of residence still emphasized the difference that existed between myself and participants. As discussed above the location of my house was in one practical sense very advantageous: police arrival was speedy. It can take up to over one hour for police to respond to calls within Woodland View neighbourhoods based on anecdotal evidence collected throughout fieldwork.

2.5.1 Leaving the field Part I: 'Will you still like us when you're done?'

The process of leaving the field began two years prior to my actual departure in January 2011:

It is now after 7pm. Ruth has finished a ten hour shift at the nursing home caring for old people with dementia and Alzheimer. We are sitting in the living room nursing cups of hot, sweet, milky tea. Ruth is quietly lounging in her chair, eyes half closed, not talking. Three of her daughters are working over their supper in the kitchen: pasta, potatoes and a stew of beef in gravy. Nelly and Fee are coming into the living room on a number of occasions mainly to complain about their older sister Lilly who they feel 'bosses' them around in the kitchen, telling them what to do. There are shouts of: 'Mooooom, she's doing it again.....', 'Mooooom, tell her to

stop....', Ruth responds by telling them: 'Be nice to each other,' repeating this phrase over and over again.

I have asked her before if she ever loses her temper but she told me then and still tells me that she was brought up with being hit and treated badly as a child and she 'couldn't bear putting them through this crap...'. Fee walks into the kitchen declaring she is done with her part of the cooking and climbs onto her mother's lap and snuggling close to her. Fee strokes her hair and asks if she is 'awfully tired?' Ruth hugs her daughter and tells her that she is. Then Nelly saunters into the living room and joins her sister on her mother's lap. This results in another squabble between the sisters, each vying for a spot physically closest to their mother. Ruth finally says: 'Stop it' and both girls do settle down finally.

Fee then looks at me and asks: 'Will you still like us when you're done?' This comment jolts me from my daze, comfortably sitting, not thinking for the first time all day and not needing to speak and I am back in researcher mode. I have forgotten for a moment that I am here to collect data and instead envisioned myself just sitting down with a friend after a long day's work but this comment brings back the fact that all the relationships I have formed are only temporary and artificially created ones, the majority or maybe even all will not endure longer than my stay in Woodland View.

All this comes in a flash and I turn looking at Ruth and two of her daughter all looking at me expectantly. Ruth seems wide awake now focusing her attention on my possible response and I not for the first time struggle for words. I repeat: 'Will I still like you when I'm done?' and give the response most natural and most likely untrue: 'Of course I will.' Lilly has by now arrived in the living room as well wanting to know what we are talking about and adds: 'Will you still visit us?', and 'Can we still visit with you?' All the while Ruth watches me closely trying to detect sincerity or insincerity in my voice or demeanour and I don't know what to say really.

I have not yet thought about how I will deal with relationships I forge now in the middle of my fieldwork when the 'after fieldwork' stage seems so far off and my instinct is to say I will remain as close to them then as we are now. Ruth then interjects the children and tells them 'not to bother' me. At least a question has been asked that I had not anticipated: 'Will you still like us when you're done?'

(Fieldnotes, October 2008)

This excerpt from my fieldnotes vividly recalls processes of leaving the field that were started before the end of my time in Woodland View. The question 'will you still like us when you're done?' was repeated more often as time went on and the official end date drew closer, but I never felt the same sense of panic as when it was first spoken aloud. However, I continued to encounter the inherent problems associated with long-term ethnographic fieldwork. While my sentiment was to remain in touch and remain friends with participants, the realities of research more often than not made such relationships impossible. Oakley (1981) and Stacey (1988) remind anthropologists that there is a fine

line between friend and informant, intimacy and betrayal. Nowhere could this be observed more closely than in the processes of leaving Woodland View. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:212-13), propose a task of estrangement to distance oneself from the participants and argue that:

Before embarking on any major writing up, therefore, one has to undertake a further task of estrangement. If one does not distance oneself from them, then there is a danger of being unable to dismantle the data, select from them and re-order the material...The ethnographer who fails to achieve distance will easily fall into the trap of recounting 'what happened' without imposing a coherent thematic or analytic framework.

I have wondered if this distance is really necessary in order to create something out of my data. However, I remain firm that to conduct long-term ethnographic research is necessary in order to gain insight into the lives of single mothers on benefits. It should involve a commitment to:

systematically focus on the everyday, and otherwise unheard, or muted, voices. Because anthropologists pay attention to the lives of ordinary people, they see society from below. From there, power and privilege stand out in sharp relief. This creates the potential to analyse social formations of inequality, and a disciplinary disposition to dissent (Lindisfarne 2002:404).

At the same time it is imperative to observe these processes over a longer time-period. However, even longer-term fieldwork comes to an end and it is important to prepare participants and informants for this process. In the literature there are two approaches that are prominent: the quick exit and the gradual phasing out (Berg 1989: 172). Both approaches present their own challenges (Festinger *et.al.* 1956; Rains 1971; MacLeod 1995; Hays 2004; Skeggs 1997). The next two parts will first address first the gradual drifting off and lastly the quick exit.

2.5.2 Leaving the field Part II: 'What are you still doing here?'

I have returned to the Community Centre for a quick visit on my way to university. Every Thursday there is a lunch club organized by some of the residents and open to everybody in the neighbourhood and beyond. For the price of £3 one can get a home-cooked three-course meal and play BINGO to boot.

Up until now I have volunteered every Thursday for the lunch club usually arriving at 11:30am to help in the kitchen, setting up the tables, serving and cleaning up afterwards. However, since my teaching timetable has changed slightly I am no longer able to come along early and it also means I have to leave just after 1pm.

Today is the first time I arrive just when lunch is being served. As I walk into the door I am greeted by Tracy with, 'What are you still doing here? I thought you was

done.' This is what I had expected to hear from her but it still stings. Even though I had told Frankie who is kind of in charge of the lunch club about my commitments for teaching at university I felt slighted by Tracy who was a participant.

She is a long-term resident of Woodland View and knows everything about everybody in the neighbourhood. Frankie responded to Tracy very loudly across the Hall, 'Let her be. I told you she was working now and couldn't come right now.' Everybody fell silent. You could hear a pin drop and I felt ashamed and embarrassed at the same time. Embarrassed because I do not like scenes and ashamed because I could no longer devote this time to helping out at the Hall.

The other Tracy then poked her head over the kitchen counter and said VERY loudly: 'Barb, you wanna have peas and carrots with the roast?' As soon as the cook talked to me conversations started up again and Tracy turned away from me with a, "You know I'm only kiddin', right?"

I walked over to Frankie's table greeting some of my older acquaintances along the way, getting my behind pinched by Harry and then sitting down to my meal. Arthur who served me smiled and told that it was nice I 'come back for a visit...' Frankie told me not to mind Tracy 'cos she got a big mouth and everybody knows it.'

Again I felt the need to justify my absence at the Hall and pay my £3 for the first time as a fully-fledged customer rather than a volunteer. I eat and leave in a hurry and for the first time feel as though I turned a leaf in the research. I am no longer a researcher, I am not an observer, I am not comfortable with several of the people in the Hall, I am not and can never be friends with the people there but then the question remains: 'What on earth am I doing coming back over and over again?'

(Fieldnotes, October 2010)

This question deserves some analysis in that it illustrates a serious dilemma of conducting fieldwork 'down the road,' located in the City. When the research is completed and the data is collected one leaves the field or theoretically should leave the field. However, what are our obligations in terms of remaining in touch, remaining alert and aware of changes in the lives of former participants? What are our obligations in terms of continuing to provide services or give gifts? All these questions have been an integral part of the process of leaving or better yet attempting to leave the field of this particular ethnographic study. Berg notes (2011:171):

exiting any field setting involves at least two separate operations: first, the physical removal of the researchers from the research setting, and second, emotional disengagement from the relationships developed during the field experience.

Concerns linked to these phases of leaving Woodland View resonate through some of the ethnographic literature (Wax 1971; Whyte 1970; MacLeod 1995). Many of the concerns expressed by participants and residents are also mirrored in some of the events that have unfolded since I have not returned to Woodland View in January 2011.

2.5.3 Leaving the field Part III: 'The C-Word'

Most of the concerns described in this section can be located in the literature on issues linked to leaving the field. Shaffir *et.al.* (1980: 259) state that:

Personal commitments to those we study often accompany our research activities. Subjects often expect us to continue to live up to such commitments permanently.....When our subjects become aware of our diminished interest in their lives and situations, they may come to feel cheated-manipulated and duped.

I have wondered how much of what happened since I left Woodland View in January 2011, should be included in this last section. As far as I am concerned I have not left the field. My home is located in the City, and the relative vicinity to Woodland View means I see many participants when I shop in the City, visit pubs or just take walks in the area. For several participants there was a high degree of resentment because of me leaving Woodland View and their lives, while many remained pragmatic. There are those who felt betrayed by my absence, left behind. This is not an uncommon experience (Shaffir *et.al.* 1980:1990). To them it seemed, while I moved forward with my work and life, they were left behind. This made some of these individuals angry and this anger was directed at me. Between the end of official fieldwork and writing this chapter, I have been exposed to what I consider to be the fallout of the dominant discourse of social exclusion and closely connected to very public negative discussions surrounding class.

I firmly believe that many of my experiences were directly shaped by an overwhelming moralistic social policy that places responsibility for life solely into the hands of individuals, neglecting social divisions and factors that contributed to the maintenance and reinforcement of these. What became worse over the course of my fieldwork was the increasing normalisation of poverty, even among those people I talked to. Even though processes of pathologising and normalising have been part of society for many years, with the New Labour welfare reform they became accessible to all of society. I remain concerned about several participants and even though I am not 'in the field,' I remain deeply invested in many of their lives. This follows a long tradition of maintaining connections after fieldwork (Skeggs 2001; Stack 2001; Newman 1999; MacLeod, 1995). The following are excerpts of a few text messages I received once I began to reduce the time I spent in Woodland View. Even though I did not simply pack up my things and left the neighbourhood I gradually did not visit on a

daily basis. I did no longer respond to text messages as promptly as I had while still fully immersed in fieldwork activities. I was longer as readily available to provide support of multiple means as during the data collection process. I still tried to maintain a semblance of connection with many participants but the more pressing task for myself, became one of sifting and sorting through data. The resulting, at times overwhelming negative responses from participants, who I had the chance to work with for several years still affects me very deeply. Most women labelled me a ‘cunt’ in these final exchanges and I firmly believe that these exchanges can be linked directly to notions of class that started off this section.

You fucking cunt. we gave you everything and then ur just like the rest of them.

Never called back, always wanting shit, you don’t give a shit about us...

Ur like shit to me now. Ur a cunt like the other cunts! Ur worse den blare and Cameron!

U just took and took and we got nothin from u.

U said u were gona be there. And i called and u never called back. They said they are gona move me to Hillview and u said u were gonna help me.

(Selection of text messages received, January 2011 to April 2012)

In what I consider to be the third phase of leaving the field, I encountered the symbolic and actual violence which caused me a great deal of upset and impeded the writing of this chapter. However, I have come to the conclusion that this violence was less directed at me and more at the political system which exercises ever-increasing degrees of punishment for not taking up paid work.

While I contend that this thesis is not about violence, I need to remain true to my research topic: arguing that the dominant discourse of social exclusion affects participants often negatively, and more importantly that both discourse and subsequent social policies are contested. While many of the women opened their doors to me while I was in the field I always had grave concerns about how this might affect my work once I left Woodland View. As has been noted by Murphy and Dingwall (2001), using the work of Josselson (1996), ethnographers face a number of issues writing about the lives of participants:

The experience of being written about may be a matter of concern in its own right: 'I worry intensely about how people will feel about what I write about them. I worry about the experience of being "writ down", fixed in print, formulated, summed up, encapsulated in language, reduced in some way to what the words contain. Language can never contain a whole person, so every act of writing a person's life is inevitably a violation.' (Josselson 1996: 62, cited in Murphy and Dingwall 2001: 341)

The concern for me had always been the fact that many of the participants had been morally evaluated both within and outside Woodland View. Many of these women never had been given the chance to engage critically on how social policy affected their lives. As such this research provided them with a critical opportunity to talk about their lives and their experiences and know that these stories would contribute to our understanding of the interface between policy expectations and lived realities. However, there was always a risk that I might not represent them accurately, or that I would end up engaging in the kinds of moral evaluations I intended to criticise. Therefore, adding another text message to a list already received seemed like a small price to pay in order to gain an insight and to be able to record their stories. The epilogue or prologue to this research will be presented in Chapter eight.

Conclusion

This chapter has briefly outlined some aspects of the process involved in conducting long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Woodland View. Of particular interest are considerations around choosing specific analytical and/or interpretative categories when designing research projects, since the formulation and application of these categories and research topics influences access to and recruitment of participants. In the case of this project, the high degree of critical engagement with the dominant discourse of social exclusion included such an engagement with categories I developed to frame my research topic and questions.

Also of interest is how the experience of leaving the field was underpinned by some of the themes at the base of this thesis, since violence was part of my interactions with some participants. The violence of policy will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven, while chapter eight will outline additional concerns related to the C-Word, particularly in the context of the Coalition welfare reform. The C-word this chapter references relates to notions of class many women have explored extensively and the specific swear word 'cunt' that seemingly became an integral component of many text messages sent to me by former participants.

Chapter 3

From the Deserving Poor to Welfare Scroungers: Realities of a Discourse



*Laurie's Story:*³

We grew up poor but we was proud. My dad worked most days and we had food most days and we got money from the Social when they started the *Welfare State*. My parents knew what they deserved and we was never ashamed to get our monies then.

Laurie picks up her story and continues:

When Billy and me got married we first lived down Bristol Road, you know, where they built the big shop and then we put our name down for a house in Woodland

3 Laurie was born in the City towards the end of World War II and spent much of her childhood in and around a low-income neighbourhood located in a low-income City neighbourhood. Returning from the war her father continued working as a day labourer, while her mother raised her and her four siblings in a three room apartment in the neighbourhood.

View. We never, *never* thought about it, really. They told us we could get a house easy enough because we never had much money back then. I stopped working when my eldest was born. You wouldn't *dream* of working when your children were young....And then we moved to our house. 1968 it was, or maybe a bit earlier? A big house we got. It were big enough for all of us and we had a big garden. We grew our own veg and we had an apple tree. We all got money from the Social. We all did but it were our *right*. We worked. We all *worked*. Never had much money but we worked and raised our children *proper*.

As she explained:

We were entitled to the money. We wasn't scroungers. We *worked* all our lives. Billy worked *hard* and I *raised* our children. When they was old enough I gone back to work. I worked in the chicken factory 'til my health gave out and I got sick. But we knew what we was owed from the government. There was no shame 'cos you were getting money from the Social. I remember some health worker coming to our house once just after my youngest was born and trying to tell me what to do and I clean chased her down the street and told her to mind her own business and not to come back.

Maybe it was 'cos we all lived here and we all got the money but I think looking at things the way they are now....It was different for us 'cos we felt we was not talked down from the government, we was not treated so badly as them mums who want to stay home and raise their children now. Back then you would've *never dreamt* of going back to work when they was little, never! Now they are looked down on andBack then we were proud to be mums, to raise our children well. We didn't have much money but we made do with what we had. But I remember there wasn't much talk about all mums having to go to work and that if you didn't that made you a bad mum almost 'cos your kids wouldn't want to go to work then either. Nonsense, that is all nonsense! *MY* children done very well for themselves, *very* well!!"

When Laurie talked about motherhood, paid work and single mothers some of the issues that were raised by her directly addressed the language on benefit recipients used by Blair:

I don't know what happened but it *did* happen when Blair was talking about poor people...I remember we was down the Hall and were talking about that and I remember telling Debbie and Vicky that there will be trouble 'cos it's the way they started talking about us lot back then....As if we was something dirty, as if we needed help, special help like 'em people that get hit by starvation but then they also started talking how mums should all be working and that it would set good examples for children, that all children should go to university, that we're a *deprived* neighbourhood, all that nonsense.

But most it was how they made us look like we was lazy scroungers, not willing to work, not wanting to work.....(sniffing loudly) And that was something we all *saw* and then once all these people came here with their *projects*, and then the Work Programme and all that lot we heard them talk like that. We knew our rights back then, you know, we knew we was owed what we got. Now everybody's just saying 'They's worse than me', 'I deserve it, they don't', 'I'm not like 'em...' (Pause) Sad all that.....Weren't like that back then, was it, Billy?"

In her capacity as resident, mother, benefit recipient and community volunteer, Laurie has been intimately connected to a number of key themes that are at the core of this thesis. Laurie's excerpt touches on some of the key historical, political, and economic trajectories that are entailed in changes to welfare provision and embedded in many of the discourses on welfare and poverty since the establishment of the welfare state. The previous chapter argued that tensions and contestations around pathologised and normalised assumptions about poverty and social exclusion, including moral evaluations of single mothers on benefits, found their expression in methodological challenges. This chapter will place some of these challenges into a broader national perspective, exploring the emergence of the Welfare State and the place women in it. At the same it will offer a time a description of social exclusion in the framework of New Labour's Welfare Reform, with special emphasis on the New Deal for Communities and the New Deal for Lone Parents.

Changes to our understanding of the world do not take place in a historical vacuum, but are in fact shaped by political, economic, or social factors. Like Laurie, many other participants identified several key events that guide recent debates and have affected the development of discourses on welfare and poverty. Laurie still lives in North Woodland View and she continues to be active as a community volunteer in the neighbourhood. Her account gives us a prism through which to explore the following concerns.

This chapter begins by outlining how women have been embedded in a more recent historical context of welfare provision of women more generally and single mothers more specifically. Here, approaches to welfare provision will be summarised with particular focus on the time period between World War II until the election of New Labour in 1997. Within this exploration this study will provide an analysis how social policies particularly the conception and distribution of welfare benefits have been rooted in understanding women and their role in social reproduction.

The second section of this chapter focuses on exploring the evolution of the idea of social exclusion within social policy. What began as a multi-dimensional approach within the academic literature on poverty and inequality became a political tool that was central to the approach of the Labour Government elected in 1997. Despite rhetoric of multi-dimensionality, New Labour social policy became heavily focused on addressing poverty and inequality through employment-related policies and initiatives. In addition,

the chapter summarises how specifically single mothers on benefits are positioned in the structure of social policy and in current discourses on poverty and social exclusion.

The last section of this chapter will review welfare reforms implemented under the New Labour governments from 1997 onwards, and outline the changing representations of single mothers on benefits.

3.1 From the Poor Law to New Labour

3.1.1 From the Poor Law to the 1930s

According to Golding and Middleton, public perceptions of welfare recipients have been at the centre of state policies for centuries and for just as long the poor laws seemingly provided the foundation on which other social policies were constructed (Golding and Middleton 1982:6). With the growth of industrial and urban society that led to the rise of urban centres and subsequent mass migration to these cities across the country had many social consequences, including housing shortages and slums, problems associated with poor sanitation, public health problems and outbreaks of disease. In addition, on-going exploitation of workers and widespread poverty became an increasing problem for British society. Furthermore, Capitalism seemed to exacerbate differences between men and women, private and public life, home and work life. It was during this particular period of time that many women across all classes started to play the role of carers and were left in charge of the household, while men were increasingly cast in the role of breadwinner, creating a separation of gender roles.

While paid work outside the home was generally remunerated, albeit poorly, work inside in the home was unpaid. This in turn created a disparity in terms of responsibilities connected to paid and unpaid work which later facilitated inequality of access to and value of specific types of labour. Boserup, among others, has explored the negative effects of Capitalism on subsistence farming during colonial expansion in Africa and noted that rather than proving to be a liberalising, emancipating factor for women, it forced them out of large-scale agricultural production into small-scale food production (Boserup 1970; Beneria and Sen 1981). With this push into a sector that is often not accounted for or under reported in official statistics, women's work began to be underestimated (Beneria and Sen 1981:281). To what extent, then, does unpaid work maintain the authority of men over women? A possible answer is that it is the encounter of Capitalism with patriarchy that in the United Kingdom gives rise to women's

oppression. Capitalism can arguably be considered a system which survives and thrives through processes of exploitation making profit from the labour of man and women; patriarchy is a form of oppression, a system whereby men maintain and expand their control over the lives of women (Williams 1992:62).

In the United Kingdom, the Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832 began a slow process of democratisation of Parliament by extending voting rights to small property owners. This, along with other incremental changes to the political system, created a political landscape that began to challenge traditional authority and the position of the upper classes. However, for much of the 19th century the government remained conservative, non-interventionist and not particularly active in reforming society or providing social welfare (Fraser 2000, Walsh 2000). The social changes described above created the ideal social conditions for the development of social welfare. In 1834, the Poor Law was reformed through the Poor Law Amendment Act (Hill 2003:15). This resulted in the establishment of a National Poor Law Commission to oversee the local parishes, which until then were responsible for looking after their own poor (Fraser 2000, Walsh 2000). This reform is significant because it reinforced the parameters in which the 'deserving' versus the 'undeserving' poor were placed. There was a greater degree of intervention by the state because by that time the state had moved further into the lives of individuals and reinforced the responsibility of the state to make some provision to supplement philanthropy. The system was intended to ensure that those who received support were worse off than the poorest individuals who were working. For example, according to Walsh (2000) the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 embodied the new economic principles of the era. Its basic premise was the assumption that the provision of social services to individuals should be limited to bare necessity and that the 'undeserving' poor were responsible for their position in life and that self-help was an important component of service provision (Walsh 2000:43). It was according to E.P. Thompson the 'most sustained attempt to impose an ideological dogma', standing in stark contrast to human need of poor individuals (Thompson 1991:295). These ideological factors were ripe with moral and administrative justifications, arguing at its core that poverty was morally grounded and self-inflicted (Higginbotham 2013). The various interconnected factors that drove many of these initiatives can be broadly related to "interaction of capitalist, patriarchal and imperialist social relations," as defined by Williams (1992: 154.) As far as the position of women were concerned, the

Poor Law shifted between accepting the rights of women with no male breadwinner (widows, deserted and separated wives and unmarried mothers) to poor relief, forcing women to become dependent on a man to support them financially, insisting they take up paid work and also discouraging perceived levels of immorality with punitive initiatives (Williams 1992: 153). From the mid-nineteenth-century onwards, England saw the further development of poor law policies, most notably the removal of specific classes of claimants from the central institution of the workhouse. Instead more specialised forms of welfare provision were established. These included the infirmaries for the sick, and the separate provision for the elderly, children and mentally disabled (Golding and Middleton 1982: 20). As for single mothers the government successfully created the boundaries between the public and the private sphere while establishing women in the household (Williams 1992, Kiernan *et al* 1998, Hill 2003). As a result, women were faced with maintaining a balance between reinforcing ideologies of family life, subsequent female dependence and facing the realities of economic survival (Williams 1992).

This stands in stark contrast to the fact that there are many routes into lone motherhood: economic considerations, relationship breakdowns, divorce and separation, death, contraception failures, escaping abusive relationships or the result of affairs with married men. The experiences are diverse and have been throughout history (Kiernan *et al.* 1998; Rowlingson and McKay 2002). It is important to note that the family structures many people believe to be new since the 1960s—living together, many births outside marriage, short-lived and extended family relationships—have a much longer history in the UK. For example, cohabitation had long been popular among working class men and women (Walsh 2000; Rowlingson and McKay 2002). In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, women mainly became unmarried mothers as the result of failed courtships, usually with men of their own class. During this period of time, death, cohabitation and separation were some of the likely causes of lone motherhood (Kiernan *et al.* 1998). For example, in 1800, at least half of all first births were conceived out of wedlock (Williams 1989).

The end of the nineteenth-century saw the emergence of a change in attitudes towards the poor especially in the context of urban poverty. The start of poverty research notably conducted by Rowntree in York, heralded a tentative shift in classifying the poor as morally deficient and started to explore structural causes of

poverty (Golding and Middleton 1982:27). It was also during this time that the inadequacy of the workhouse and the shortcomings of individual philanthropy started to lay the groundwork of the introduction of the Unemployed Workman Act of 1905. Along with the establishment of school meals this saw a move towards a more universal provision of social services.

The introductions of the 1908 Old Age Pensions Act and National Insurance in 1911, and of reforms aimed at improving the health of infants, children and their mothers through the 1918 Maternity and Child Welfare Act (Williams 1992: 157), were more general policies aimed at supporting mothers and their children. However, with the introduction of these policies, workers paid a flat rate every week into a scheme, entitling them to sick pay in the event of illness or benefits, in times of unemployment (Powell and Hewitt 2002: 26). In this way, benefits were directed at those who contributed, that is, workers rather than all members of society. It is here that in many instances the idea of the British male breadwinner can be located. These policies were keen on affirming the ideology of the male-breadwinner model of a woman's responsibility to work in the home and care for her family and reinforced women's financial dependence on a husband. Furthermore, unemployment policies of this period discriminated against women because they received seventy-five per cent of male entitlement and they were further penalized for not being able to claim time off for childbirth (Williams 1992:158). National insurance was conceived as temporary financial assistance only meant to supplement other sources of income and those who did not qualify for the scheme had to resort to those authorities responsible for Poor Law provision (Ellis and Dean 2000; Sainsbury 1994). What is important to note is the fact that these policies reconstructed and retained moral assumptions about poor individuals that first came to fore with the introduction of the Poor Law. These policies were regarded as a temporary safety net rather than a universal right of every member of society.

Some of the above developments, along with the aims of the various insurance schemes during the period leading up to the creation of the welfare state, can be considered as means to protect individuals from the stigma of poor relief (Fraser 2000: 55.) However, in order to offer benefits to citizens the introduction of the family means test created the foundation for remaining on benefits after people had exhausted their right for financial support. In 1934 the Unemployment Act developed two types of

financial support: unemployment insurance for those people eligible because of contributions made, whilst unemployment assistance was paid to those who had either depleted their rights or had never qualified for them in the first place (Fraser 2000:57). Here a key issue for policy-makers in the inter wars period were unemployment of males. Because of high levels of unemployment during this time the provision of welfare concerned itself centrally with male unemployment, and women's needs were not specifically addressed. It was assumed that if men were able to access welfare women, and by extension children, would be taken care of (Pascall 1997:200).

World War II saw a shift towards incorporating women into the paid labour market out of necessity. More women entered the work force to take over positions formerly occupied by men. At the end of the war the United Kingdom had a chance to create a new system of welfare provision that had the potential to challenge the conception of welfare in two major ways. It would no longer reinforce ongoing women's dependency or the sexual division of labour, where unpaid house and care work is undervalued and no longer favours the male breadwinner model.

3.1.2 The Beveridge Report



It is, first and foremost, a plan of insurance – of giving in return for contributions benefits up to subsistence level, as of right and without means test, so that individuals may build freely upon it (Beveridge Report 1942:7)

Many of the underlying principles of the Beveridge Report promote equality of citizens and seek to eliminate the five giant evils of British society (Beveridge 1942). These five giant evils were identified as 'Want' (lack basics for life); 'Disease' (avoidable illness); 'Idleness' (unemployment); 'Ignorance' (lack of education for all) and 'Squalor'

(poverty) (Beveridge 1942:6). Beveridge argued that in order to create a better society for all, these issues needed to be addressed through the provision of a comprehensive welfare system (Hill 1993; Jones and Lowe 2002; Alcock 2003:6).

In the years following the war, specific steps were taken to address the issues outlined by Beveridge, and to provide this comprehensive package of social services. For example, to address 'ignorance', free education was provided up to age 15 (later 16). To combat 'squalor', public housing was made available to individuals in need through the passing of the Housing Acts in 1946 and 1948. The Housing Acts resulted in the construction of 800,000 new council homes and 150,000 prefabs across the United Kingdom (Walsh 2000; Jones and Lowe 2002). In order to tackle 'disease', the NHS was set up in 1948 to provide medical service free of charge at point of provision to all British citizens. In addition, National Insurance, family allowances and benefits implemented between 1946 and 1948 were paid to everybody to ensure that 'want' was addressed (Walsh 2000:45; Jones and Lowe 2002).

Fraser (1984, 2000) identified some broad developments that supported this new system. The first was full employment with a focus on social justice and a drive towards addressing inequality. These achievements helped to cement the value of the Welfare State in the minds of the British population. Secondly, the universality of the benefits meant that all classes were interested in the preservation and expansion of services provided (Fraser 2000). The main purpose of the welfare state was to establish social welfare provision through a variety of specific services on the same basis as it did its public services like roads and libraries. As such it is an institutional model of welfare. It provides these welfare services to all its citizens with some serious short-comings in the ways men and women and their relationship to paid work is organised.

No satisfactory way has yet been found in our industrial society for a mother without a breadwinner or a helpful family to combine the two tasks of earning a living and making a home for her child.

(Sinners, Scroungers, Saints: Lone mothers, past and present, Exhibition, The Women's Library London, 2007 display quote taken from: *Studies in the Social Services*, 1954)

The establishment of the Welfare State represented a new era in welfare discourse. There was a focus on universality of welfare service provision. The responsibility of government was stressed both in terms of service provision, as well as in terms of setting up organisations and agencies through which these services were delivered

(Walsh 2000; Fraser 1984; Hill 2003). It is these changes, both in terms of discourse on welfare and poverty, but also of the establishment of government responsibility to provide adequate services, that form the basis of current critiques of the welfare state. In this particular discourse on welfare and poverty, stressing the importance of the universal aspect of welfare provision, the position of women became identified with one of the deserving poor, particularly in the context of war widows.

The introduction of the Welfare State had serious implications for women following the end of World War II. During World War II many women had to take over the men's jobs, including many that involved heavy work and mechanical skills (Oakely 1985:143). The focus on the universality of welfare benefits meant that, many women who had been in paid employment throughout the war years had to face difficulties in balancing their career choices with the expectations of the society. Coupled with the return of soldiers to the United Kingdom meant that most women who were employed in the war industry during World War II returned to the private sphere. There was little doubt according to Wilson that full employment for men and better social services for women and children were the priorities of the welfare state (Wilson 1980). With its outward support of the male breadwinner and the support for his dependents a specific form of family was reinforced. The retreat of women into the home and the sustained effort to promote the male breadwinner model is significant as it continued to mark the sharp division that existed between men and women, even in the context of welfare provision. However, the welfare state was created on the premise that men and women would get married and that they would stay married. Further, it was assumed that when couples produced children it would be mothers who would defer, indefinitely, paid work outside the home to care for those children. Within the family structure women would provide all necessary care. The idea that women's work was unpaid work was implicit. Unpaid work meant no contributions. This led, in turn, to no social insurance. Therefore the financial needs of married women were to be provided for through their husband's contributions. Their security would come through marriage and dependants' benefits paid to their husbands (Pascall 1997:198). Women, although adult, able-bodied and deemed capable of rearing a new generation, were at the same time perceived as incapable of independently receiving and managing an allowance (Pascall 1997:7).

The male breadwinner model meant that National Insurance benefits were targeted at supporting men in full-time employment, while family allowance was paid to

mothers. As the Report's basic ideas were developed around the insurance of the adult male worker and welfare policies were targeted at males, women's needs were essentially grafted on (Pascall 1997:201). Where benefits were paid, he was clear these 'need not be on the same scale as the solitary woman because, among other things, [the married woman's] home is provided for her,' (Beveridge 1942 cited in Pascall 1997:13). Even though according to Land (cited in Powell and Hewitt 2002:68) care in the home was valued by Beveridge it was not financially rewarded and payment for unpaid work was not considered.

Although the patriarchal attitudes that Beveridge evidences were very much ingrained in the culture of the time, it is important to recognise that he was criticised by scholars who analysed family life. For example, Eleanor Rathbone in the *The Disinherited Family* published in 1924, wrote that the very idea of women as dependants suggested something parasitic and non-essential, and exposed the underlying bias of power in relationships between men and women. She argued fundamentally that a system that attaches little or no economic value to women's primary role as carer needed to be regarded as a disaster for women (Rathbone 1924 cited in Pascall 1997: 6). In societies that perceive financial reward gained in economic undertakings primarily undertaken in the labour market, as a primary indicator of status and value, the unpaid labour women's went unnoticed and unrecognised.

Similarly, the Women's Freedom League described Beveridge plans for benefits as 'denying to the married woman, an independent personal status. From this error, springs a crop of injustices, complications and difficulties (Price 1979 cited in Pascall 1997:7). These patriarchal attitudes that are apparent in many industrialised nations across the Western world do not reflect the realities of unpaid work and do not acknowledge that there is much diversity across cultures. There are many societies which afford higher value to child care than other economic activities. This fact exposes a fundamental flaw that the employment of women is a relatively new phenomenon, possible only if the state takes over care and educational duties reserved usually for women (Oakely 1985:139). While the welfare state did indeed provide access to social services on a universal basis, its emphasis on homemaking as an honourable position in the context of a specific family unit failed to create the validity and value of unpaid labour (Wilson 1980:40). The subsequent governments continued to place importance on the male breadwinner model until the 1960s when demographic composition of the

United Kingdom started to show a change in households. Groups engaged in this type of labour remain powerless, invisible and at the margins.

3.1.3 The Conservative era



(Sinners, Scroungers, Saints: Lone mothers, past and present, Exhibition, The Women's Library London, 2007)

While the period following World War II until the end of 1960s is associated with virtually full employment and little inflation from the late 1960s onwards, the Labour government under Wilson and later the Conservative government under Heath proposed a programme which contained many of the elements of what is now called 'Thatcherism', including a refusal to support outdated manufacturing industries (Hill 1993, 2003; Walsh 2000; Ferguson *et.al.* 2002). As a result, even without the oil crisis, there would still have been the largest balance of payments deficit to that date. The mid-1970s were consequently marked by retrenchment and social cuts, though many of these were cuts in expected growth rather than in actual expenditure.

Social changes in the years following the Beveridge were coming to the fore especially during the Thatcher regime, put pressure on the welfare system. A growing divorce rate, an ageing population requiring increased expenditure on pensions, a rising population of lone parents with increasing numbers of families headed by women; all mean that women are now the majority of recipients of many welfare benefits (Pateman

2000: 239). Families headed by women after divorce was something Beveridge had not planned for. Pateman states that women are more likely than men to be poor after divorce, a woman's standard of living can fall by nearly 75%, whereas a man's can rise by nearly half (Pateman 2000:244). This effect can be seen as a direct consequence of social policies that assume, erroneously, that woman's needs are fulfilled by men. Feminist writers during the 1970s, for example, felt State and institutional structures that actively discriminated against women had their roots in the Beveridge Report. The gendered division of labour, typified by the male breadwinner model, had been encoded in social legislation (Sainsbury 1996: 49). They argue that this turn has provided power to British social policy to perpetuate the lack of women's independence and choice through an inherent assumption that when women and children were poor the remedy was an increased income for men. With the increase in numbers of lone mothers from the 1960s onward, policy-makers have been more or less inclined to treat these families like two-parent families, more or less inclined to single out never-married mothers for moral evaluation and has remained more or less punitive in their approach to providing welfare benefits (Kiernan, Land and Lewis 1998: 276). It is important to note that while there have been shifts in attitudes towards this group of the population equally important is the fact that from the late 1980s onward the Conservative's opinion had become progressively hostile, particularly towards unmarried single mothers.

Despite changes in social policy over the years, this ideology continued throughout the Conservative governments. Changes to the welfare system had been based more on limiting costs to the state than on reforms that could be regarded as beneficial to women. For example, in 1986, the Social Security Act, seen as the most fundamental reform since Beveridge, made no reference to women's vulnerable position as dependants and low paid workers (Pascall 1997:203). In fact, changes made at the time were seen as detrimental to women. The provision of welfare services reflected and maintained traditional roles, with many women incorporated into the system as wives (Sainsbury 1996:49). Feminist analysis, has pointed out the implications for women, in the broader societal framework, when entitlements are based on marital status. In enshrining the idea of the citizen primarily as a male who is engaged in paid employment, feminists could see where 'woman as dependent' ideology became actual legislation. Importantly it was not just about maintaining the status quo in terms of lack of financial benefits to those women who raised their children and took care of their

families but it was the fact that unpaid work, domestic work continued to be undervalued (Oakely 1985:137).

Considering the period of Conservative governments between 1979 and 1997 as a whole, four themes have been identified by several authors in some of the literature in relation to the welfare state (Walsh 2000; Hill 1993, 2003; Fraser 2000). These include: attempts to control public spending; processes of privatising public service provision; targeting specific social groups and rising levels of inequality (Hill 2003). This time period is of particular interest since it provides the starting point of re-emerging critiques on the provision of welfare services. Golding and Middleton have pointed out that during this time period when the economic crisis of the 1970s intensified the public became increasingly hostile towards individuals classified as welfare scroungers (Golding and Middleton 1982:3). At the same time, the Conservative government tried to reassert motherhood, both as an ideal to aim for and as a full-time occupation. Right-wing politicians stated that previous state interference in the family had resulted in a variety of so-called family problems ranging from teenage promiscuity, increase in separation and divorce rates, to growing numbers of single mothers. Their reasoning was that by re-establishing women's primary caring role within a male-headed family unit that these problems would eventually disappear (McDowell 1989).

For many authors (Andrews and Jones 1990; Jones and McGregor 1998; O'Brian and Penna 1998; Hill 1993; Jones and Lowe 2002; Hill 2003; Fraser 2000) the main feature of the Thatcher government was its determination to "roll back the state". Many of its policies in the 1980s revolved around "cuts" and restrictions in public spending designed to allow tax cuts, particularly reductions in the rates of income tax. It might therefore come as a surprise that the share of the national income set aside for the provision of welfare services remained almost identical to the share devoted to welfare by the previous Labour government (Hill 1993, 2003). Simultaneously it was generally acknowledged that it is women in British society who carry the burden of unpaid work within the household and during the Thatcher-years this was described as a 'labour of love' and likened to the 'moral responsibility' of women'. The government argued that once individuals are offered the care through state initiatives, 'human beings will be deprived of one of the essential ingredients of humanity: human responsibility' (McDowell 1989).

It was during this time period that notions of single motherhood had become particularly visible and began to receive an extraordinary amount of negative public attention. Much of this can be directly linked to their position within the welfare state and society (Kiernan *et. al.* 1998, Rowlingson and McKay 2002). This position has been increasingly connected to discussions on shifts in their dependency. While in the past this dependency has been more closely associated with their reliance on a male breadwinner, from the late 1960s onward there has been a shift towards their dependence on the state. Since the late twentieth century, serial partnerships and complex families have re-emerged, though exposed within a different moral and policy climate (Rowlingson and McKay 2002; Jones and Lowe 2002).

Under the Conservative government, welfare spending shifted, with health and social security provision favoured over housing and education (Andrews and Jacobs 1990; Glennerster 2003; Ferguson *et.al.* 2002; Hill 1993, 2003). Despite these measures the government did not succeed in reducing welfare spending, partly because of the economic problems described above resulting in rising levels of unemployment and increasing demand for income support and welfare services. In addition, the role of the private sector in welfare service provision was encouraged and increased. Furthermore, the Conservative government's move towards means-testing and targeting certain social groups reinforced the divide between the deserving and undeserving poor.

An underlying assumption of the positive effects of households headed by the bread winning male pervaded many discussions during the 1980's and 1990's. Alcock describes how Murray's work on the British underclass argues that marriage is more advantageous than cohabitation or lone parenthood as a family form and therefore it is justifiable to discourage the latter through policy limiting access to benefits (Alcock 2003). It was during the Conservative governments that policy development continued to focus on the morality connected to notions of lone motherhood (Alcock 1996). Similar discussions emerged from the Labour Party during the same period of time. Frank Field, a prominent Labour politician during this time, explored issues related to the negative effects of family breakdown emphasising moral aspects of single motherhood in a similar fashion (Field 1989). It was this legacy, embracing many of the features that defined the era of Conservative governments, that the first New Labour inherited government in 1997.

3.1.4 Welfare Reform under New Labour

“In future, welfare will be a hand-up not a hand-out.” (Tony Blair, 1999)

To better understand some of the ideological sentiments that arguably define New Labour's approach to the Welfare State, it is worth recalling Frank Field, former Labour MP, who as early as 1989 argued that ‘one of welfare's roles is to reward and to punish. The distribution of welfare is one of the great teaching forces open to advanced societies.’ Field concludes that ‘welfare...should openly reward good behaviour and it should be used to enhance those roles which the country values’ (Field 1989). This punitive approach to welfare provision, stressing the importance of rights and responsibilities of individuals, was to loom large in New Labour's policies after 1997. The election of New Labour in 1997 showed the influence of Thatcherism, which became apparent in the debates that developed around subsistence level welfare provisions administered through the Department of Social Services in the 1990s. These had many of the same preoccupations with levels and conditions of welfare payments that had been part of an extended welfare history in the United Kingdom (Andrews and Jones 1990, Jones and McGregor 1998, O'Brian and Penna 1998, Jones and Lowe 2002, Fraser 2000).

Most of these debates continued to focus on the importance of paid work, supported by education, as the primary mechanism for all fit adults to achieve independence and to avoid dependency on welfare benefits. Within these debates many of the contestations and tensions related to interpretations of the welfare state and subsequent discourses on poverty and social exclusion were located. It is this contestation that provides a frame through which the interface between policy expectation and lived realities of single mothers on benefits are viewed. In March 1998, the introduction of the Government Green Paper on Welfare Reform provided eight principles, which were set out to frame the reform. The first stated:

the new Welfare State should help and encourage people of working age to work where they are capable of doing so. (Government Green Paper 1998:2)

It goes on to note that:

the Government's aim is to rebuild the Welfare State around work. (Government Green Paper 1998:3)

Lister identified, as one of the key elements of New Labour's social policy interests, the targeting of all fit adults and states this as a shift from the male breadwinner towards a 'universal breadwinner' model (Lister 2000; Lewis 1997, 2000). Assumptions about the place of women inherent within the Beveridge Report were detrimental to their advancement. Unpaid work of caring for elderly, dependants and children saved the State financially, whilst ensuring the social reproduction of coming generations (Williams 1989:128). At the same time this approach to welfare reform also reflected an emphasis on individual responsibility. Furthermore, there is also a high degree of moral judgement, as officials speak the language of 'welfare dependency' and 'handouts', which can have negative implications on how those reliant on benefits are regarded by the wider public (Lister 2000).

3.1.5 The Politics of New Labour's Welfare Reforms

Much of the dominant discourse on welfare and poverty in the United Kingdom borrowed heavily from the US 'welfare to work' agenda. In the process, it began to change how the word 'welfare' was used, referring to cash benefits for the poorest as in the United States, rather than the much wider concept generally used in British debates on the welfare state. New Labour's concern both with the growing cost of benefits and the increasing rates of lone motherhood led the Blair government to address this discrepancy directly, through a variety of employment-focused policies. However, these strategies have led to two major debates within the discourse of welfare provision: contradictions in the way the role of mothers was understood, as well as implementing social policies, which had mostly negative effects on many lone mothers. While at the same time, women were still expected to fulfil their duties as primary carers as well as to become full-time workers.

The introduction of the welfare state in 1948 changed and challenged the payment and provision of welfare. However, with the abolition of the Poor Law, remnants of poor law mentality still permeated the modern benefits system. For example the policies addressing social exclusion in poor neighbourhoods were concerned with lack of responsibility of residents, family breakdown, the lack of community cohesion, violent and anti-social behaviour; stemming from a loss of moral standards caused by welfare dependency over a number of decades. Such thinking can be found in New Labour Governments' concerns with fecklessness and irresponsibility

and welfare dependency which manifested in policies to address ‘social exclusion’ (Levitas 1998) and before then, debates about the ‘underclass’ in the 1980s and 1990s (Lister 1997).

It is imperative to locate two of the main critiques of the Welfare State in the United Kingdom within the context preceding the first New Labour government. On one hand, the welfare state is criticised for its failure to address growing poverty and social problems. On the other hand, social expenditures are accused of depressing economic growth (Evans 1998). The second criticism indicates a socio-cultural trend towards individualistic self-interest that influences UK policy. Under the Conservative governments of Thatcher and Major, a key aim was to diminish the role of the state in the provision of welfare and to increase individual responsibility; the response of New Labour has been described by some authors as ‘an exercise in post-Thatcherite politics’ (McDowell 1989; Lister 1997). It is this particular set of political realities that provided the setting for the introduction of social exclusion as a political tool designed to address issues connected to poverty and inequality in the United Kingdom.

Social exclusion played almost no role, during New Labour’s election campaign in 1997, rather focused on issues around equality of opportunity and the importance of market economics (Blair 1997). In his speech to the 1997 Labour Party conference Blair noted that,

‘a decent society is not based on rights. It is based on duty. Our duty to each other. To all should be given opportunity; from all responsibility demanded’ (Blair 1997).

However, within a few months from the election, the Social Exclusion Unit was set up and the term had become a key instrument through which New Labour addressed social policy related to poverty and inequality. The debates on social exclusion opened up again discussions on the importance of employment and the relation between paid and unpaid work. New Labour’s idea of social exclusion, its development and its role as a political and social policy tool will be explored in detail in the second section of this chapter.

The cultural nature of the predicament of the poor is often cast as a failure to modernise because of limitations reproduced and reinforced by themselves, or because of their disadvantaged position within global economic processes (Field 1989, Murray 1990, Dean and Taylor-Gooby 1992). In Britain poverty related to the new international division of labour emerging in the 1970s and processes of de-industrialization

accelerated and reinforced during the 1980s. Poverty had determinedly cast in cultural terms in the 1990s through the political discourse of welfare dependency (Conservative Party 1996, Labour Party 1997). This is perhaps most evident in the notion of the “underclass”, which has readily become a political and media shorthand for ‘problem people’.

While the Beveridge Report emphasised the social commitment to the provision of universal welfare benefits, New Labour as its Conservative predecessors returned to more punitive and deterrent conceptions of welfare provision to promote ‘self-help’ and self-reliance of individuals. These interpretations of welfare provision can be found in its earlier forms under the Poor Law. With the publication of New Labour’s Green Paper *A New Contract for Welfare: The Gateway to Work* (1998) explicitly states that...

... rather than encouraging work for those who can, it promotes wasteful long-term benefit dependency which, in turn, can lead to social exclusion, poor health, low self-esteem and low personal motivation. (DFEE 1998: 5).

With this Green Paper New Labour began to focus its attention on making the receipt of welfare benefits dependent on participating in intake interviews. New Labour stated that there are no distinctions between various groups of welfare recipients but that specific social policies, mostly implemented through a variety of New Deal programmes would focus on assessing their ability to work on an individual basis. In the discourse of underclass and of the culture of welfare dependency is positioned as the staple wrong of a modern welfare society, which is defined by its focus on individuals, local level practices and processes of exclusion. I argue that this focus on individual responsibilities has permeated much of New Labour’s government discourses on welfare provision and receipt, framing many of its subsequent policies aimed at single mothers on benefits and resulting in tensions between policy expectations and lived realities of these individuals. Furthermore, the loss of entitlement inherent in changes to welfare provision returns us to elements of social policy and welfare philosophy that were in place in the first half of the twentieth century, and which *to some extent* harked back to the ideas and categories of the old poor law, such as the difference between outdoor relief and the very punitive workhouse conditions, the extreme forms of test of entitlement required for both indoor and outdoor relief and their moral judgements, leading to the idea of some poor individuals as deserving and some as undeserving.

As many authors have pointed out, the family model based on a male breadwinner, in which men took primary responsibility for earning and women for the unpaid work of care has been substantially eroded and is replaced by an adult or universal breadwinner model (Fraser 1997; Lister 1997; Lewis 1992, 1997, 2000, 2005; Lewis *et. al.* 2005). In this approach, paid work continues to be at the centre of the relationship between individuals and the state, and unpaid care work is still largely ignored (Daly 1994; Sainsbury 1994; Duncan 1995; Alcock 1997; Millar *et. al.* 2001). Subsequently, this focus on paid work has in many cases negatively affected lone mothers who are engaged in unpaid work, carrying many of the same and additional responsibilities, yet not compensated for their contribution to the economy (Lewis 2001; Millar 2001). Therefore, unpaid care and housework have become economically devalued (Jordan 1996; Levitas 1996; May 1997; Barry 1998; Racke 2001; Gallie 2002; Pascal *et. al.* 2004; Bowring 2005). Equally important this position ignores the fact that, as Levitas has pointed out, paid employment for many poor women is located in the area of low paid, low status, insecure work and taking on these jobs does not guarantee that poverty is avoided (Levitas 1996, 1998).

However, for New Labour paid employment became the cornerstone of their engagement with the discourse on welfare and social exclusion. The debate around deserving and undeserving poor, their rights and responsibilities as active citizens were now firmly connected to their attachment to paid work. While increasingly, discussions surrounding individual responsibility and morality permeated the discourse on welfare and social exclusion. The dominant discourse on welfare, stressing the importance of paid work as a route out of poverty, effectively ignored contradictions between paid and unpaid work. Instead, re-introducing issues connected to morality, meant that the interface between policy expectations and lived realities of poor, single mothers became a minefield of contestations and symbolic violence. Furthermore, as I have contended earlier in this chapter, the direction the dominant discourse on welfare had taken under New Labour effectively undermined the usefulness of social exclusion to describe poverty as a multi-dimensional process and de-legitimised single motherhood as an entitlement to receive benefits.

3.2 Transformation of Social Exclusion

3.2.1 The evolution of social exclusion

According to Okongwu and Mencher (2000: 110) it is important to note that ideology and social policy go hand in hand. These links are made up of multi-dimensional, complex social processes where often implicit ideologies seemingly mediate between policy and government interests. It is important to recognize that the emergence and utilisation of social exclusion in the United Kingdom can only be understood if placed into the context of New Labour's welfare reforms.

As an analytical concept, 'social exclusion' was originally coined in France in 1974 (Rodgers *et.al.* 1995). It referred to the various categories of marginal individuals who were considered to be a social problem and were unprotected by social insurance. Social exclusion, in this context, referred to a process of social disintegration in the sense of an on-going break of the various relationships that exist between individuals and society. Since the late 1980s, the use and power of 'social exclusion' as an idea became well established in Western Europe. The term has, for example, been extensively used by the European Commission, increasingly concerned with the problems of long-term unemployment and of unskilled workers and immigrants (Rodgers *et.al.* 1995.) It was also developed in a different way, and to a lesser extent, in the US in the depiction of the poor as an 'underclass' (Jordan 1996). In the 1980s, discussions by US right-wing politicians and theorists generated theories of a 'culture of dependency' along with the 'underclass' debate. These can be considered offshoots from the earlier 'culture of poverty' debate from the 1960s (Lewis 1966; Moynihan 1969). In its most notorious form, Charles Murray referred to a veritable cultural 'disease' amongst the poor 'whose values are contaminating the life of entire neighbourhoods through their rejection of the work and family ethics' (Murray 1996:26). Murray's account was severely criticised, particularly for its failure to examine the existing inequalities in society. Despite this, many commentators have pointed out that an underlying 'cultural' understanding of social exclusion persists in many circumstances and at the same time as structural contributions to poverty have become marginal in dominant discourses on welfare and social exclusion (Alcock 1996; Lister 1996; Deacon 2002; Papke 2010).

In the UK, social exclusion was first used in a publication by Golding (1986) called *Excluding the Poor*. Golding drew attention to a range of new and broader aspects of deprivation which, he argued were growing in importance in contemporary society. These arenas, such as the inability to partake in leisure activities, had not traditionally been included in earlier discussions of poverty (Alcock 1997). Alcock also argues, positively, that by exploring social exclusion, European researchers were attempting to broaden the debate and research on poverty and deprivation by including the reaction to poverty by agencies and society as a whole. In that sense social exclusion was regarded less as a state of being, but rather as a process affecting all members of society (Alcock 1997; Walker *et.al.* 1997). Social exclusion was seen as a multi-dimensional, dynamic process referring to the breakdown of major systems in society that should guarantee the social integration of individuals or social groups. One main focus in these approaches is on the processes that cause exclusion (Golding 1986; Berghman 1995; Jordan 1996; Alcock 1997; Walker *et. al.* 1997; Levitas 1998; Byrne 2005). When viewed as a process, social exclusion has the potential to become an important instrument to highlight inequality at a structural level and could theoretically play a major role in challenging it.

Some of these ideas are an updated version of Peter Townsend's much earlier account of poverty as relative deprivation. This is described most fully in his book *Poverty in the United Kingdom* published in 1979:

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, customs and activities. (Townsend 1979:59)

Townsend's account of relative poverty stresses how the lack of resources that characterised the poor meant they were unable to participate in activities that other people would regard as 'normal', implying marginalisation and their effective exclusion from everyday activities taken for granted by the non-poor. Most academic debates on social exclusion take these ideas of relative poverty as their starting point. As such they represent a potential turning point in poverty research, because they open the door to nuanced examination of inequality, highlighting structural and individual causes of poverty.

Walker *et. al.* (1997) for example take up Townsend's 1979 argument that poverty is too narrowly viewed as an outcome and insist that poverty is an inability to share in the everyday lifestyles of the majority of the population because of a lack of means, which in many instances is equated with lack of income or material resources. Revisiting the definition of social exclusion provided in chapter one serves as a reminder that:

...[s]ocial exclusion is a multi-dimensional process, in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision-making and political processes, access to employment and material resources, and integration into common cultural processes. Where combined, they create acute forms of exclusion that find a spatial manifestation in particular neighbourhoods' (Madanipour *et. al.*, 1998: 22).

Throughout many academic debates, social exclusion has most often been linked to a specific geographic locale: estates, council housing and deprived neighbourhoods (Madanipour 1998; Page 2000; Byrne 2005; Henderson 2005). In their aim to reduce social exclusion, the New Labour government identified poor geographic locations as directly related to high rates of poverty, low educational attainment and employment opportunities from 1998 onwards (SEU 1998). This argument is supported in much of the literature especially through connections between low incomes of lone mothers on benefits and marginal housing and how this in turn can lead to what is defined as 'estate culture' (Hardey *et.al.* 1991; Andersen *et.al.* 1992; Alcock 1997; Lee *et.al.* 1997; Page 2000; Bradshaw 2003; Byrne 2005). As a result, lone mothers on income benefits were located precariously within the context of the policy debate on spatial aspects of social exclusion. The argument I make here is that social exclusion focuses on marginalized individuals, but also on the idea that large numbers of such marginalised individuals are to be found together in marginalised communities. According to New Labour's social policy it was in such locations where a culture of poverty 'breeds,' with culture essentially used as a social concept. This trend had been well explored in reports produced by the Social Exclusion Unit, their focus on deprived neighbourhoods and the introduction of the NDC designed to alleviate social exclusion.

The process of social exclusion is a dynamic one, changing over time and space, affecting different groups of people in different ways. Its boundaries move, so that individuals may be included or excluded over time depending on education, demographics, social and economic conditions and public policies (Silver 1995; Levitas 1998). As Bhalla and Lapeyre (1999) contend, social exclusion goes beyond the

economic and social aspects of poverty to include individual and political rights. These rights determine the relationship between the individual and the state as well as the relationship between the society and the individual. Economic developments in globalised capitalism exclude individuals and individual communities from its economic benefits. These more radical accounts however also point to the potential within the discursive range of the term to increase divisions between social groups within society (Bowring 2000: 310; Haylett 2001; Lyon-Callos and Hyatt 2003; Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008). They point out that dominant groups are able to harness social exclusion as a key concept to make distinctions between the deserving and the undeserving poor based on their relationship to paid employment and other resources (Bowring 2000: 310; Haylett 2001).

3.2.2 Social Exclusion as a political tool

The shift since the late 1990's from a focus on poverty to a focus on social exclusion in UK social policy debates about inequality had been accompanied by a key political appropriation. Fairclough (2000) describes the discourse around social exclusion as a political tool in the United Kingdom that combines a moral and contractual discourse and an individualist discourse. He suggests it interprets the distribution of rights and responsibilities metaphorically as a contract between the individual and society (the community) or the individual and the government. This moral discourse resulted in a move towards implementing increasingly punitive and restrictive interpretations of the social exclusion discourse (Fairclough 2000). From the 1990s, Chris Haylett (2001) documents a renewed focus on a culture of poverty discourse in which the idea of an 'underclass' has yet again become part of the personal, public and political imaginations of the United Kingdom. Skeggs (2004) adds that in this sense social exclusion is used to focus on individual responsibility (Skeggs 2004:79). In doing so, structural problems of inequality are changed into 'an individualised form of cultural inadequacy' (Skeggs 2004:79).

As described earlier, Tony Blair's New Labour government used this approach to make connections between mutual respect, acceptable conduct, duties and morality with a focus on individual responsibilities, especially in terms of taking up paid employment. As soon as notions of morality started to creep into the political

interpretation of social exclusion through New Labour, it became apparent that its language and key precepts had much in common with 1960s ‘culture of poverty’ discourse. Rather than the structures that make inequalities possible, cultural aspects of poverty are stressed. Several authors have highlighted the cultural characteristics of poverty and their connection to issues of morality. Bartholomew among them contends that the welfare state causes poverty and exclusion because levels of benefits are set too high, which results in generations of badly educated, welfare-dependent, less civil and decent individuals (Bartholomew 2004:361.)

Speeches by key New Labour Ministers in the early days of Blair’s government also used this ‘culture of poverty’ language. For example Blunkett:

it’s about saying to anyone who seeks helps through the benefits system, that instead of simply being given benefits you will be given help...guidance...rehabilitation and support. (Blunkett 1999)

This welfare culture is seemingly inhabited by opportunistic individuals seeking to live an easy life, taking advantage of a welfare state that is too generous with its benefits. Blunkett goes on to identify bad welfare as welfare that does not change the people who receive it...

...and within 5 to 10 years it is back to where it started from, without having changed the nature, the tradition or the culture of the people who are there. (Blunkett 1999)

Other examples include an article published in *The Guardian* (February 11th, 1999:2), where Labour MP and Cabinet member Alistair Darling stated: ‘it is the poverty of ambition and poverty of expectation that is debilitating’. Benefits are seen to be bad for the recipients, trapping them in a culture of dependency. This growing tendency to describe and explain poverty in the cultural terms of the dominant social exclusion discourse, represents individuals who are socially excluded as culturally different from mainstream society. There is, as Levitas (1998) notes, a focus on the behaviour of the poor rather than the structural challenges of society.

3.2.3 The Social Exclusion Unit

While the idea of social exclusion did not play a role during the election campaign, tackling social exclusion became an immediate priority of the newly elected

Labour Government. They felt the need for consolidating individuals from various government departments as well as outside organisations (such as third sector organisations) explicitly involved in providing advice on issues connected to social exclusion. Within months it became a central concept and by December 1997, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) was established. Initially planned for two years it remained in place, in various forms, until November 2010. Based in the Cabinet Office and reporting to the Prime Minister, the SEU was charged at its inception with studying exclusion and with developing:

...integrated and sustainable approaches to the problems of the worst housing estates, including crime, drugs, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, community breakdown, and bad schools. (Social Exclusion Unit 1997:2)

However, its efforts to deliver on this brief were frequently undermined by the perceived political imperatives of the new government, whose policies often ran ahead of work produced by the SEU. Its thirteen year history was also marked by government inspired constant shifts in the remit of its work. In effect, the SEU faced a major challenge throughout its life time in its attempts to make operational a more nuanced examination of poverty and inequality. For the new Labour Government, social exclusion very quickly became associated and defined by the quantification of the unemployed and with programmes to get them out of the benefits system.

One of the political imperatives of this emphasis was the huge rise in government social expenditure that had taken place during the late 1960's and 1970's. Although these included the rapidly rising cost of the NHS, it was politically much easier to target the benefits bill. By mobilising the idea of social exclusion to do this the government could also be seen to be tackling the perceived growing social problems in Britain's cities. In so doing, social exclusion was no longer regarded as a process, but considered a state to be addressed through employment-related measures and the opportunity for more critical engagement with the multi-dimensional aspect of social exclusion was lost.

The government focused its attention on dealing with the five million individuals of working age who lived in households where no one was in paid work, as well as the three million individuals who lived on thirteen hundred housing estates (SEU 1998). The Social Exclusion Unit sought to identify commonalities among those regarded as socially excluded or vulnerable within deprived neighbourhoods. They cited

a sense of oppression that seemed to characterise many disadvantaged communities, joined with neglect by government agencies, geographical isolation and an experience of persistent economic decline and other features such as poverty and high rates of unemployment.

Despite the focus of their work on changing the understanding of social exclusion within the government, the main targets in SEU reports were deprived neighbourhoods, teenage parents, rough sleepers and young people at risk of social exclusion. This focus on the detachment of a minority group or individuals from mainstream society within UK policy indicated a shift from ensuring the rights of these groups or individuals towards protecting the rights of the majority of the population (SEU 2004). This corresponded with SEU's description that it looked for solutions to 'prevent social exclusion, delivering mainstream services for all and re-integrating people who have fallen through the net' (SEU 2004:3).

By June 2006 the functions of the Social Exclusion Unit were transferred to the smaller Social Exclusion Task Force, with its focus to coordinate

...the government's drive against social exclusion, ensuring that the cross-departmental approach delivers for those most in need. It champions the needs of the most disadvantaged members of society within government and the public service reform agenda (SEU 2004:3).

The aim of the Task Force shifted from developing coordinated policies to addressing social exclusion, described as 'joined-up policies for joined-up problems' (SEU 1998, 2006). There was also an increased focus on collaborative efforts designed to bring both communities and different types of service providers (from the public, private and third sector) together in an effort to address social exclusion and poverty. After publishing over fifty reports the Social Exclusion Task Force was abolished in November 2010 when the New Deal for Communities came to an end. During its lifetime it had come to focus more and more on identifying and targeting particular groups of individuals, who were vulnerable to social exclusion. It had also experienced at first-hand how the twists and turns of the political imperatives of the government produced constant shifts in the priorities of community based intervention.

3.2.4 New Labour's Social Exclusion Policies rolled out

Despite the fact that the first forays of exploring social exclusion under New Labour focused on examining structural causes of inequality, most efforts to address social exclusion under Blair centred on the benefits system and its relation to paid work (Daly 1994; Sainsbury 1994; Duncan 1995; Alcock 1997; Barry 1998; Levitas 1999; Millar *et. al.* 2001; Gray 2001). The importance of paid employment as a primary means to combat social exclusion was stressed, and the focus was placed on individual responsibility and morality of people living in poverty (Berghman 1995; Williams 1998; Cousins 1999; Page 2000; Gray 2001; Byrne 2005). As a result, the UK government targeted programmes designed to combat unemployment through employer subsidies, as well as investing in child care and employment training and support for lone mothers in order to include them into the workforce (Barry 1998; Gray 2001).

The expectation that single mothers on benefits enter paid employment and become workers while also continuing their caring duties was closely related to the increasing emphasis placed on principles of conditionality that had moved into benefits policies. The assertion was that there are no rights without obligations, and that inherent rights to benefits that existed in the past, were no longer central in New Labour social policy. The idea of benefits as grounded in the principles of universal social rights has eroded rapidly since 1997, and conversely a sharper focus on individual responsibility and obligation has developed. In chapter five, I expand on this discussion by arguing that benefits have become conditional rights, attached only if conditions are fulfilled. In the process it is argued that social exclusion policies are less likely to challenge dominant systems (Henderson 1997; Percy-Smith 2004).

This new approach to social policy represented an attachment to the 'disincentive effect,' where rights to benefits were seen to discourage individuals from paid employment. Under New Labour it was considered to be part of active social policy to bring those identified as socially excluded back into the paid labour market, thus eliminating social exclusion. According to Saraga (1998:5) this means that 'the government does something about these people.'

The rest this section will now go on to describe three key elements of the New Labour social policy that are particularly important for their impact on single mothers in Woodland View. These were the New Deal for Communities (NDC), a New Labour

flagship programme initiated in 1998, the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP), another national programme begun in 1998 and the increasing privatisation of employment services for the unemployed, for example the Work Programme.

New Deal for Communities

New Deal for Communities (NDC) was a key programme in New Labour's strategy to tackle social exclusion in the poorest neighbourhoods in the country, offering these communities resources to address their problems in an intensive and co-ordinated way. The programme was set up in 1998 and its aim was to bridge the gap between these neighbourhoods and the rest of the United Kingdom. The New Deal for Communities was a regeneration programme established by Blair's New Labour Government and was overseen by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit within the Department for Communities and Local Government. The funding received was allocated to multi-agency Local Strategic Partnerships in the Local Authority areas determined to be the most deprived across the United Kingdom based on the 2000 Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

The funding of approximately £2bn was intended to be spent on the social regeneration of the areas to which it has been awarded, and on interventions designed to reduce the relative deprivations in those areas (such as health inequalities, educational underachievement and high crime rates). There were three key characteristics of the NDC: A long-term commitment to deliver real change amongst the deprived neighbourhoods, with a focus of placing communities at the heart of social regeneration working in partnership with key agencies. The second key element of the NDC followed from the first and included community involvement and ownership. The last integral component of the NDC was a focus on 'joined-up thinking and solution. 'Furthermore, emphasis was placed on action based on evidence about 'what works' and what doesn't.

Initially seventeen local area-based NDC partnerships were announced in 1998. In 1999, twenty-two partnerships were added, increasing the total to thirty-nine. Over the course of ten years, five billion pounds were allocated to these neighbourhoods. The aim was to address issues of social exclusion, by focusing on five key areas: health, education, housing and the environment, crime and safety and employment. Its distinctive feature was to put local people 'in the driving seat' (SEU 2001:5) and it was acknowledged that 'communities need to be involved' (SEU 1999:34).

While the problems of each NDC neighbourhood are unique there are five common themes that had been identified amongst all the NDC partnerships: poor job prospects; high levels of crime; educational under-achievement; poor health; and problems with housing and the physical environment. The NDC was hoping that through collaboration and community engagement to see results that will bring benefit to residents living in these neighbourhoods. The New Deal for Communities (NDC) was designed to address specific issues related to deprivation and social exclusion overseen by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit located within the Department for Communities and Local Government.

New Deal for Lone Parents

New Deal for Lone Parents highlighted the extent to which welfare reform was at the centre of the Labour government's programme and welfare-to-work at the centre of welfare reform. This section sets the context in which the New Deal for Lone Parents was implemented, particularly with reference to the development of policy towards lone parents and, more broadly, 'active labour market' policy.

The New Deal package for lone parents, young unemployed people, disabled people and the partners of unemployed people overall aimed to reduce barriers to work for these groups by providing them with information and advice to enable them to take up job opportunities. Participation was voluntary and training opportunities may be available. The New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) was funded with £190 million over four years (Millar 2000:4). It was introduced in eight case study areas across the United Kingdom in the summer of 1997. It was then rolled out at the national level by the spring of 1998 to include all lone parents making new or repeat Income Support claims (Millar 2000:4). From October 1998 onwards, existing lone parents were also included in the programme, with those on Income Support for six months or more and with a youngest child aged five years and three months or over being sent an invitation letter (this group consists of the 'target group'). The programme consists of an initial interview, case loading, job search and in-work support. While on the NDLP, registered child-care costs can be paid. Lone parents within the target group receive a letter from the Job Centre Plus inviting them to attend an interview when their youngest child is aged five (the target group is to be extended to all lone parents with children aged three and above from summer 2000). The Personal Adviser explains the structure of the New Deal and records information about the lone parent's circumstances and any barriers to

employment. In-work benefit calculations are made to see whether the lone parent would be better off in work. An action plan is drawn up if the lone parent agrees to participate in the scheme. Regular contact is maintained with the participant through follow-up interviews when the lone parent is helped to search for work or to increase their skills through training and other support. Participants who gain employment are eligible to receive in-work support for which there is no time limit (Summary observation notes, 2007-2010). On the whole, the NDLP and similar social policies emphasise financial incentives for working and addressed barriers inherent in the benefit system.

The aim of the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) was:

to encourage lone parents to improve their prospects and living standards by taking up and increasing paid work, and to improve their job readiness to increase their employment opportunities (Evans *et. al.*, 2004).

Initially, the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) was just aimed at lone parents with school-age children. However, by 2008 it included all unemployed lone parents. The launch of the NDLP consisted of a childcare strategy, comprising both childcare provision, and family-friendly employment policies, supposedly utilizing the adult or universal breadwinner model.

The NDLP represented a form of social intervention that is not necessarily about the provision of extra jobs, benefits or amenities, as it was about facilitating people to make changes within their own lives. In this scheme, welfare provision was considered as something positive and pro-active. Its mantra of 'work for those who can, security for those who can't,' expressed a contractual notion of fairness, in which an individual's welfare rights were matched with responsibility. The programme was envisaged as a way to stimulate those responsibilities and to generate activity in place of passive welfare receipt. In this interpretation, welfare spending becomes problematic on two fronts: a problem of anachronistic cultures at the micro-level, capitalism and the global economy at the macro-level (Bowring 2000; Haylett 2001).

In contemporary theoretical debates within critical social science, there is a focus on the relative weight that should be given to the relation of either culture or economic factors (Lister 2000; Levitas 1995; 1998, Jordan 1995). This critical engagement was absent from social policy initiatives like the NDLP. The programme did reflect a broad consensus among policy-makers that paid work represents the best

route out of poverty and was considered a key factor in reducing social exclusion for those able to take it. Part of the process to increase individuals taking up paid work had been a push to privatize employment services and programmes.

Work Programmes

From November 1999, we plan to invite external providers to be involved with the management of part of the case load, paying them on the basis of agreed outputs and making them accountable for the impact of their actions on programme expenditure. In this way, we will be able to compare external innovation against the approaches used for the other variants. Such an approach sits comfortably with the more flexible arrangements we are introducing in Employment Zones. (DfEE 1998:11)

With the election of the first New Labour government, the private welfare-to-work industry began to play an increasingly important part in providing services formerly delivered through Job Centres. This focus on privatising employment-related services was a trend continued from the Conservative governments of the 1970s and 1980s. New Labour considered these organisations effective tools to deliver social exclusion policies because they were supposedly more effective in administering employment programs and policies, which would arguably save taxpayers' money and reduce welfare bills through the competition for contracts (Brown and Joyce 2007, Dawson *et.al.* 2000). In the United Kingdom, processes of privatisation of welfare services became commonplace during the two terms of New Labour government. The City's local Work Programme is just one of many private companies with both public and voluntary links, to cash in on the government's drive to outsource employment-related activities. With an increasing focus on tackling social exclusion through addressing issues concerned with a welfare culture of dependency and highlighting the individual failings of poor people, the privatisation of employment-related services was part of the shift from combating social exclusion to combating welfare dependency (Sunley *et.al.* 2006).

Single mothers faced an onslaught of new services, among others, lone parent support advisers, child care provision, bi-annual job-focused interviews and subsequent referrals to companies such as the local Work Programme. These changes to the welfare system signalled a major change in the principles of the British social security safety net. In addition, then Social Security Secretary Harriet Harman, defended the controversial cuts to cash benefits for lone parents on the grounds that the assistance for finding work under the New Deal for Lone Parents, represented similar resources that

would be more productive for them in the long run (Harman 2002). To address these issues, new resources were introduced to improve formal childcare provision and to help with its costs through the Working Families Tax Credit.

However, even though the New Labour government appeared to accept the fact that to be paid to look after other people's children is paid work, staying at home to raise one's own children is not considered as such. While cuts to benefits are important concerns for most participants, the focus of this thesis is located primarily on exploring the links between paid and unpaid work, specifically as they relate to specific employment-related services, the NDLP and the Work Programme, both of which will be discussed in Chapter five.

For New Labour paid work is the route to moral and cultural citizenship. In this moral and cultural frame, work is invested with a specific set of symbolic values and the receipt of benefits becomes the negation of those values, more than just a lack it is a drain, working to diminish society's social and moral fabric. Paid work is about duty and deservedness; it is good in a moral sense and it is considered inclusive in a social and cultural sense. In this vision, it is the basis of both the good society and the good, responsible citizen. For poor, single mothers, however, it is a condition of subsistence and has been legislated for.

The language of social exclusion then is not so much an economic language but a language imbued with symbolic value of a moral and cultural kind. As a result, many single mothers have been increasingly labelled, if not wholly undeserving, then most certainly divided and more narrowly defined. The significance of this thesis lies in the fact, that it deals to a large extent with the contestations and tensions that are embedded in this language of welfare. In doing so, it emphasizes the challenges, constraints and opportunities that poor single mothers on benefits face, while traversing the realities of policy.

3.2.5 Social Exclusion: Summary of policy initiatives

This section of the chapter has dealt specifically with the evolution of social exclusion as a key concept to frame many social policy initiatives implemented by the first New Labour government under Tony Blair. It focused on the shift in the social exclusion discourse as it was utilized through particular social policies of the New Labour governments. This change included a re-positioning of individual responsibilities in the

debate on poverty, including a re-emergence of the discourse on the underclass and, in doing so, placing emphasis on changing perceived pathological characteristics of these individuals. Placing social exclusion within the relatively narrow confines of the political imperatives and interpretation of New Labour resulted in social policy efforts that were as narrow, but couched in the language of inclusion and collaboration. Some of the underlying academic deliberations were still present in many of these engagements, (for example, the focus on multi-dimensionality), but the realities of social policy dealing with social exclusion have led to a change in the discourse about poverty, specifically the causes and effects of poverty. (Howe 1998; Walker and Howard 2000).

This brief account of the transformation through political application of social exclusion is particularly important for this thesis as it describes how politics appropriates and re-invents key terms developed through social and political thought. The transformation of social exclusion, from contributing to a more nuanced understanding of poverty and inequality to its use as an instrument to frame mainly employment-related policies and processes of privatisation highlights the contested meanings attached to such terms.

Social policy initiatives like the NDC and the NDLP reflected a new broad consensus amongst policy makers that paid employment represented the best route of out poverty for those able to take it. One general criticism levelled at these initiatives is that to be successful, jobs and relatively good jobs, need to be available (Barry 1998; Cousins 1999); another is that the policy gives priority to *employability* rather than employment. These top-down changes are, as seen later, actively contested by those on whom they bear most heavily, as the long extract from Laurie's interview, which began this chapter suggests. Woodland View residents are familiar with the many discursive shifts that New Labour's social policy entails:

They always try to make us out like we is *deprived*. Not sure they know what that means. I know there's many of us who don't *have* much money but we always had each other to depend on. We're *not deprived*. I told them so many times. Told them lot from The Company many times they shouldn't use those words. (Laurie)

Numerous discussions with research participants in Woodland View take up a wide range of language and labels within the dominant social exclusion discourse presented by the government and, taking a similar form as the above quotation, seek to assert alternative meanings. Single mothers in particular are caught up in these changing

discourses on poverty, with their entitlements to benefits reduced under the guise of combating social exclusion through getting them into employment. The following chapter will explore how these national programmes designed primarily to battle social exclusion have been translated into reality in Woodland View whilst providing an analysis of the effects these programmes had on the lives of residents and participants alike.

Chapter 4 'It's Just Down the Road': Snapshot of a Neighbourhood

Introduction

Too many people in deprived neighbourhoods lead lives blighted by joblessness, high crime levels, run down housing and poor health and education. We need to narrow the gap which separates their communities from the rest of society (Tony Blair, 2001: 5).

For me this is not a deprived neighbourhood. They make us sound like we are dirty and smelly and lazy. They don't think about how it was back when the estate was first build and even how it is today. Deprived to me would be a really run-down area, like some parts of London, where they all living in these flats, you know, no gardens for their children, like ghetto places. Here, the places have nice gardens, nice park over the road, just because you're out of work or on benefits doesn't mean you're deprived.

It also shouldn't mean you have to live with this stigma of being poor, the way it's talked about. As if you don't have history to be proud of. There's that thing about how people look at you when you tell them that you come from *here*...

But I know the rest of the City's always thought that this is a scummy area and it's not. You know it's not, you work out here. You know it's not, but the rest of the City don't know that. They believe what they read in the papers and the Paper always wrote bad about Woodland View and they gave the area a bad name.

And then when The Company came in with their programmes and we read what we were described as and we were not happy, *not* happy at all.....When it (Woodland View) was first built it was considered nice, but when the years have gone on it hasn't been, that's it.

What probably happened is that as the years have gone on there's been one or two problem families that brought a bad reputation to the area and it stopped the nice community and that happened all over Woodland View not just 'ere. But I will tell you something else there's things that aren't good for the community and that is when they say things like that about us... If you'd had young families in them houses like you had years ago you would have them people mixing in, but because you don't have any young families, like there was then, it gets not nice anymore.

There's just no community spirit these days. There's no community spirit, like there was. I think it's times, it's times that made it go away. Everyone leads their own lives and that's it...And then when The Company came in, they should've done more to promote Woodland View as a good place to live for young families, but they didn't do that. They done us a lot of harm, because they came in with the money and then labelled us deprived and told the world that we are poor...and now they leave because the money is all gone, all spent on things.

They don't tell the *real* story about Woodland View....like it was and like it is now with good people and some bad people but I suppose because we are poor these stories don't really matter.... (Nancy, participant)

Woodland View, a peripheral housing estate located in the City, has ranked as one of the 5% most deprived estates in England. Its history is comparable to many other semi-rural estates, which sprang up in the wake of the end of World War I. Most of these urban developments were the combined result of a wave of urban planning that included slum clearances and the creation of new housing developments for individuals returning from World War I. Prime examples of such an estate includes Woodland View. There are several unifying characteristics of estates built during this time period across Great Britain. The introduction will offer a brief outline these specific elements and then move on to provide a unique description of Woodland View. In exploring the interface between the experience of single mothers who live in Woodland View and the policy expectations situated in New Labour's welfare reforms, it is necessary to begin with an economic, social and spatial description of the estate and its history. This historical account takes up Nancy's analysis that recent discourses associated with combating social exclusion have in fact further contributed to the marginalization of the neighbourhood. Subsequent narratives will show how the dominant discourse on social exclusion provides a frame through which residents in Woodland View perceive and contest the policy world. At the same time these narratives provide an effective means to de-construct and criticise it.

The first section of the chapter will provide an overview of the development of the various neighbourhoods within Woodland View. In the process it will highlight the contested historical narratives that exist in the memory of many residents, related to perception of each neighbourhood. The data in this section has been collected through life history research and has been compiled from several interviews with a number of participants, residents and key informants in the neighbourhoods.

The second section of the chapter will outline the economic development of Woodland View, while the third section will provide a social description. This information is important because it provides background to the key elements in New Labour's drive towards introducing Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies aimed at tackling social exclusion from 1997 onwards.

The third section of this chapter will address the implementation of the local NDC in the City. Here I argue that contested historical and social narratives about Woodland View demonstrate that New Labour's attempt to implement the NDC in Woodland View failed to recognize these differences and in fact contributed to

increasing the tensions that exist among the various neighbourhoods. Simultaneously, the NDC had the inadvertent effect of unifying residents against the common enemy of the outsiders writing their history, again, and labelling them negatively in the process. History is usually written by those in power. The history of many deprived estates does not always take into consideration the fact that there is much contestation related to the development of neighbourhoods, and in the experiences of living there. Even if lip-service is paid to diversity within neighbourhoods, policy initiatives often fail to address these issues practically.

The last section of the this chapter then explores how policy initiatives such as the NDC and the New Deal for Lone Parents, fail to recognize that simply living on a deprived estate, and, being a single mother on benefits might not be enough to create common attitudes or denote a social group, even if individuals share key demographic characteristics.

4.1 Development of Woodland View

Woodland View is the largest estate in the City with around eight thousand five hundred residents. The area of Woodland View is situated in the North East of the City and the overall estate was developed in different stages in the inter-war period from 1924 onward. Therefore, Woodland View itself cannot be regarded as a homogeneous environment, but is very much shaped by the histories of its population.

In 1922, the land on which Woodland View sits was acquired by the borough council in a 'land grab'⁴. Land in the south of the parish was transferred to the City Borough⁵, and the estate of Woodland View was developed at the beginning of 1924. The initial development at South Woodland View started in the early 1920s. Prior to this, the area was open land with the valley bottom sheltering a string of nurseries and market gardens. Woodland View also included a woodland area, which was purchased by the Council as part of the Woodland View estate in the mid-1920s.

4 This information is based on oral history provided by several residents.

5 At this time, the City was a County Borough of the area and was not merged with an adjacent Borough as a Unitary Authority until the 1990s.

Over two hundred acres are now leased as farmland, but the ninety-acres of the woodland area, have mostly been left as open land and are used by locals and visitor alike as a rambling site. Many residents of Woodland View associate the area with murders that have occurred several decades ago. Until this day the events following the crimes have been ingrained in the public consciousness of many residents of Woodland View and play a role in how the history of their estate is regarded by themselves and also by outsiders.

The development of Woodland View was necessary for two main reasons. First there was a housing shortage following World War I and later World War II. Secondly, it was considered as a social experiment. The slum clearances of the City coincided with the development of much of the estate because houses were needed for those who formerly lived in close-knit neighbourhoods in the core of the City. One consequence of the processes of slum clearance that took place between the 1920s and 1950s was the expansion of the outlying estates of Woodland View and Hillview. One resident, Vicky, who was moved to Woodland View in the 1930s, said her family was left devastated by the move:

We came from the city centre and used to playing at the beach, waiting for me dad to come home from the boat, helping with the fish and cockles, helping mum and running errands to earn some money... to being in the countryside, in the middle of nowhere. Friends were gone, moved elsewhere. They moved gran to Hillview and me auntie and uncle too and we was sent here. There we had everybody, we knew everybody. Here we knew nobody. We were so unhappy. Me mum cried and cried. And me dad had to walk all the way to the beach every day. There were no shops, I couldn't earn a little money running errands, I couldn't see my friends. It were hard. It took a while but it were hard to be here and not have a choice...

The three main neighbourhoods in Woodland View, South, North and East Woodland View were built as a response to these particular issues. The original estate was erected on ninety-four acres of land to the east of the City acquired in 1920.

The City is to have a model garden suburb - but not, of course, until after the war. Definite progress, however, is being made with the scheme to build 1,000 houses near the City, and it is possible that something more may be heard of the project at the next meeting of the Town Council.

The proposal, as far as can be gathered at present, is to build about ten houses to the acre. It is the intention of the Corporation to engage the highest expert advice they can get in order to ensure that the estate on which the houses are to be built shall be laid out on the most attractive lines. There is to be no dead uniformity of what might be called "modern prettiness" about the modern garden suburb.

All the houses are to be of an individual character. All are to be fitted with electric light and baths and are to have a reasonable amount of garden. What is most important of all, they are to be let at a rent which makes them self-supporting. But at the prices to which building materials are soaring - and no one anticipates that house prices will fall for many years to come - it does not seem clear how the rent can be a moderate one.

(The City Paper, 29 June 1918⁶)

4.1.1 South Woodland View

Dad thought it was worth investigating and Mum liked what she saw. The semi-detached houses were set in a valley, looking more like country cottages. Mum was a countrywoman at heart, having spent her childhood in a village. Dad thought the rent was very high, but there were three nice bedrooms, and a big garden, and lighting and cooking was by electricity, which was the very latest fashion. So Mum tried a little persuasion, offering to help with expenses by earning money at home, if he would agree to take them away from the terrible family upstairs. Their name was added to the waiting list, and they moved in the summer of 1922⁷.

South Woodland View consists of two areas and was originally developed in the form of a garden city with winding roads, large grass verges and big gardens. Its initial use was intended to provide 'homes fit for heroes', providing more affordable housing to soldiers returning from World War I. The four-hundred and seventy-eight houses were also meant to provide new homes for people affected by the proposed slum clearance areas in the City. However, the rents charged by the council were prohibitive for most of the intended residents, and tenants were brought in from other towns, especially London, following an advertising campaign. Little was therefore done to relieve the appalling conditions in the centre of the City. It was considered a model estate, with its large open spaces and two-storey, semi-detached houses with large gardens and even tennis-courts. The earliest buildings were effectively an adjunct to the existing housing opposite the some City buildings but later the extensions of North and then East Woodland View took the estate out into relatively remote countryside.

In the early 1930s, the estate was extended up the Woodland View valley with additional houses built further up The Woodland View Avenue. As this was on land previously belonging to a local farm, these new houses were known as the Lower Woodland View estate. The limit of the original estate of Woodland View ended at the

⁶ Reference withheld for reasons of anonymity

⁷ Reference withheld for reasons of anonymity

western end of this farm. There was also some private development at this time across Woodland View but this area is now generally regarded as part of South Woodland View.

4.1.2 North Woodland View

While the main purpose of South Woodland View was to house war veterans and their families and to provide homes for individuals affected by the slum clearances in the centre of the City because of the high rents many houses proved beyond the means of many for whom they were initially intended. North Woodland View was developed to rectify this problem and many war veterans of the First World War moved into the area⁸. Especially after the Second World War, a great deal of additional low-cost housing was developed in order to locally house an expanding workforce employed mainly in the manufacturing industry.

The development of North Woodland View included three-hundred and ninety houses built on forty-six acres bought in 1925 by the City Council. It followed the earlier design of South Woodland View and was built between 1926-30. This neighbourhood was developed to a higher density than South Woodland View and was initially designed to re-house families from some of the slums that existed in the city centre. It was meant as a social experiment, providing social housing for poorer individuals. As such, it was only partially successful. The families that moved there worked four miles away in the centre of the City. This caused problems as buses were infrequent and expensive, while only few families had the necessary means to fully furnish their new and large homes. Compared to the houses built on the South Woodland View estate, the higher density and smaller-sized residence meant that not only were rents more affordable, but also resulted in high levels of over-crowding, which partly persist to this day. The area was annexed by the City in the late 1920s.

4.1.3 East Woodland View

Well, I've always liked living 'ere in Woodland View (East) myself, I don't wanna move out. My husband would like to move back to his home town because that's where he comes from, but I just like living here. We was born here. I'm now sixty-five years old. We lived in a different road until 1970 then I moved up here. I got a

⁸ Reference withheld for reasons of anonymity

house and my mum, me dad and me three brothers all lived there by the shops. My dad died in fifty-two, he was just turned forty. So me mum was left with us. I can say we all worked at the (local manufacturing plant) that is where the Hall is now and then we all got married and had families. (Sue, participant).

The East Woodland View housing estate was built on part of a three-hundred-acre estate purchased in the winter of 1935 by the City Council. East Woodland View was completed by the 1950s with the flats of West Woodland View. East Woodland View was the site of most of the economic development of the area. Here a local, large manufacturing plant and major employer prior, during and after World War II was located.

4.1.4 West Woodland View

West Woodland View is comprised of three story flats covering most of what was a former tree and plant nursery. It is located across from the other Woodland View neighbourhoods and is still referred to, both by local residents and outsiders, by the name of the nursery. Most of the locals consider themselves a cut above Woodland View residents. As Nicky told me:

I wouldn't want to live anywhere in **Woodland View**. I just couldn't *imagine* living across the road. (laughs) We're just different here. Everybody is just a different *class*, I think that's it. It's newer houses. We have grounds keepers. We have the flowerbeds and the library is just 'round the corner. And a university is here too. It just makes living *here* more like living in the City. There's no...I don't know, I think it's because there is no riff-raff like they have in North Woodland View, or up on some streets in East Woodland View. (Nicky, resident)

From its earliest developments and especially starting from the 1960s policy makers came to regard these different neighbourhoods as possessing a collective identity – Woodland View. It was as such that the City Council applied to become part of New Labour's the New Deal for Communities as well as expanding services through the New Deal for Lone Parents in the area. However, as the extracts from individuals quoted above show, many current residents reject such a collective identity, particularly one centred on deprivation. Even though much of the data presented in this chapter echoes similar research, Evans among them notes that:

The city is historically divided into manors, which were, and sometimes continue to be, closely defined territories about which people are often fiercely proud and protective (Evans 2006: 20).

One of the reasons why individuals contest an artificial collective identity created by outsiders, can be located in the historical development of the estate bound to various key events and tied to key social groups. As described, while South Woodland View is tied to an earlier government scheme of building 'homes for heroes', located historically at the other end of the spectrum is North Woodland View and its close connection to the slum clearances. Both East and West Woodland View were the result of mainly post-World War II building boom in the wake of the establishment of the Welfare State. However, the rejection of a collective Woodland View identity can also be located in discussions around current perceptions of inequality and other social divisions amongst a predominantly working class population.

4.2 Economic Description

Descriptions of economic aspects of Woodland View are significant in the context of this thesis because they highlight the connections between poverty and social exclusion and particular types of economic activity, namely the manufacturing industry. Much of Woodland View belongs to the City's old working class, while the estate itself provided significant manual waged work for a time. One of the most important local manufacturing plants, provided employment for many Woodland View residents from the 1930s until the closure of the main, local manufacturing plant in the mid-1980s:

When I worked at the (local plant), I was an apprentice from 1961 to 1965 and the main factory was half way up Woodland View. The firm employed about 3000 workers and there was another plant in The City. They made teleprinters, or was it cash machines? Our plant was the biggest employer in the City, I think. And now they are no more, though I'm sure there is a rump company carrying on with some of the old name. I suppose their trouble was an inability to move quickly with the times. OK, our crane controls were really ground breaking technology at the time, but they needed back up and investment and, when the rest of the company is struggling a bit, and overstretched on its building programme then something has to give. They were a great firm to work for. (Tony, resident).

Many of the earliest residents of Woodland View included fishermen, tailors, bricklayers and manual labourers and their employment was physically far removed from their place of residence; many had to travel from the various neighbourhoods of the estate to the town centre to reach their place of employment. Beginning in the

1930s, the development of small industrial estates along the main road leading to Woodland View, changed the nature of labour opportunities. An electrical engineering firm, was the leading industrial business in the area. It was founded in April 1910 and the factory was located on one of the main streets and quickly expanded into Woodland View, where two factories were built in the late 1930s. During World War II the firm contributed to the war effort, building thousands of radar sets and sections for the Mulberry harbour, a temporary harbour designed to offload cargo during the Allied invasion of Normandy.

In the post-World War II era, the outlying part of the City grew rapidly, with the further development of two large local manufacturers located in The City. After the war, almost 3,000 people were employed by these companies, with the local plant opening further factories in Woodland View from the mid-1950s onwards. The late 1960's and the early 1970's saw serious retrenchment in Woodland View's manufacturing industry. The economic restructuring of major industries both in the UK and worldwide during the 1970s, resulted in the downsizing and eventual closure of the largest employer in Woodland View. This time had brought a number of redundancies to the local manufacturing plant and all production and offices were transferred to one branch in the area. The almost new building was finally sold in the 1970s⁹ and the original factory demolished during the same time period.

In the early 1970s, the plant was acquired jointly by large American corporations. The large manufacturer fell victim to changing technology and contracting markets, which led to the eventual closure of the factories in Woodland View and the loss of around seven thousand jobs. By the mid-1980s, the manufacturing plant, had been acquired by its own management for £27.5 million. Today, most of the Woodland View Way sites have been sold, with just one factory left operated by the plant, one small factory located in a nearby port town and the former site of the company has been turned into a retail park.

It has been suggested in the literature that the poverty that currently affects the neighbourhoods of located in the City cannot be understood without considering the underlying structural economic decline, which the story of the local manufacturing plant

9 In the 1970s the building was renamed and has since then been used by a local University as one of their buildings.

exemplifies¹⁰. The City's 'deprived' neighbourhoods are directly related to the legacy of manufacturing decline and the on-going failure to revive and diversify the local economy. The loss of the local manufacturing industry, coupled with a lack of attracting significant employment in the area, along with relative geographic isolation has resulted in increases in economic deprivation compared to the City and national levels. For example, around 35% of all individuals in Woodland View are economically inactive compared to the City average of nearly 26%. The differences become more significant when one explores the statistics based on gender distribution. Nearly 20% of men of working age are economically inactive compared to just over 14% in the City. The distribution of economically inactive females of working age in Woodland View stands at 26% contrasted to the City which stands at around 19% (Nomis 2001:2). The percentages used in the chart below are based on the population aged between 16-64 years of age. Please see Chart 2 for further details.

Chart 2 Economic Inactivity 2001, Woodland View and The City (Nomis 2001:2)

	Woodland View (numbers)	Woodland View (%)	The City (%)	Great Britain (%)
All people				
Economically inactive	3,476	34.8	25.8	26.0
Retired	265	2.7	3.5	4.5
Student	1,256	12.6	7.9	5.3
Other	1,955	19.6	14.4	16.2
Males				
Economically inactive	1,237	25.9	19.5	18.6
Retired	65	1.4	2.4	3.0
Student	579	12.1	7.2	5.3
Other	593	12.4	9.9	10.4
Females				
Economically inactive	2,239	42.8	32.1	33.2
Retired	200	3.8	4.5	6.1
Student	677	13.0	8.6	5.2
Other	1,362	26.1	18.9	21.9

People living in these neighbourhoods have not benefited from the successes of the city's economy that began in the late 1990s. In particular, they have not been able to

¹⁰ Reference withheld for reasons of anonymity

adapt to the growth of financial services and the development of knowledge-based services, notably in creative industries, such as art, design, film and IT. Instead, they have been largely dependent upon the low paid jobs in sectors, categorised as elementary in Census data. For example, in 2001 Census data shows that over 1,000 (17%) jobs performed by residents of the Woodland View were classed as elementary positions, compared to around 900 (15%) positions filled in skilled trades, followed by over 800 within the sales and customer service sector (14%). Comparing these numbers to the City, the numbers show some differences. For example, the city approximately 9% of its working population is employed in skilled trades, an additional 9% work in the sales and customer service sector and an additional 9% work in elementary occupations (Nomis 2001:3).

4.3 Social Description of Woodland View

Woodland View, is one of the two most deprived wards of the City in regards to income, employment, health, housing, education, skills and child poverty. In particular, North Woodland View continues to mainly consist of social housing, where there are many long-term residents, who have experienced insecure long-term unemployment. Furthermore, across England there has been a trend of falling sales in the social housing market from 15,110 sales in 2007-2008 to 3,860 sales in England in 2008-09 (Communities and Local Government, August 2009). This trend has found realizations in less desirable neighbourhoods like North Woodland View. While there are less potential local buyers of houses in the area, many participants indicated the influx of students renting privately owned properties has affected the make-up of the neighbourhood in a variety of ways, not all of them positive. For example, well-established residents have complained about the fact that students were less willing to participate and engage in local activities and community groups.

In August 2005 the number of housing benefits and Council tax benefits claims stood at 1995 of which 1215 were women. There were 1170 women in receipt of Income Support, including 715 single parents, by February 2007 (Fieldwork data, 2007). At the same time 155 single mothers received Job Seekers Allowance

(Fieldwork data, 2007). 415 individuals were in receipt on Carers Allowance in February 2007 (Fieldwork data 2007).

Using a basic overview of statistical data is in part inspired by similar research conducted particularly in the United States (Edin and Lein 1997, Hays 2003), which had a more narrow geographic focus compared to other more large-scale research projects also conducted in the United States that explored the topic across different states (Edin and Kefalas 2005.) Most importantly though my research has been undertaken with the explicit aim of considering from an ethnographic point of view how policy can contribute in creating new geographic pockets of poverty (Goode and Maskovsky 2001:16). Data related to the composition of social housing in the City indicates a slow decline of social housing available within the city. The number of properties has fallen from over 14,000 units in 1994 to about 12,000 units in 2012 (Inside Government 2012). This compares to a total of nearly 14,000 households which were on the housing register of the City Housing Offices between April 2007 and March 2008¹¹.

Several statutory services are located in the neighbourhoods. Located along one of the main roads next to West Woodland View is the City Housing office. This serves the local population in the context of their needs connected to council houses including repairs, payment of rent and other associated bills and providing support through and for local tenant groups. These local tenant groups are set up by a member of the Housing office and then run by the tenants themselves.

Driving towards North Woodland View, the Primary school is located directly across from West Woodland. The Primary School opened in 1927 initially aimed at children aged between 5 and 11 years. In 1929 a separate Infants' School was opened. The school merged in 1999 from Woodland View Nursery and Infant School and Woodland View Junior School. The Primary School has a student enrolment of approximately four hundred pupils between the ages of 3-11. The local High School has been granted full service school status and linked more closely to the local community, providing a potential stimulus for improved educational attainment. The High School was turned into an Academy in 2010. The Academy hopes to continue its engagement within the community through a variety of community events and on-going consultation with residents and parents.

¹¹ Reference withheld for reasons of anonymity

East Woodland view also houses the Children's and Young People's Trust on its lower end, the Leisure Centre and the local Children's Centre, which accommodates a number of local NDC services. At the upper end of this area a contact centre for the Children's and Young People Trust is located. This area of Woodland View has the largest concentration of services offered to residents in and beyond the immediate neighbourhood.

This brief summary provides the picture of a classic council estate located peripherally to a medium-sized city. Overall, Woodland View lacks a number of adequate facilities, including appropriate grocery stores, cafés and shopping amenities of any sort. Besides, a large Bingo hall and arcade, local community halls and some churches offer some space for community engagement. However, these community spaces are located in different neighbourhoods across Woodland View and might only be attended by residents of that particular neighbourhood.

Woodland View has experienced problems identified by New Labour as akin to those in other fringe estates across the country: high unemployment, dependence on seasonal labour, usually low-paying, and insecure employment, run-down facilities and associated issues, such as increased levels of crime. In reality number of crimes committed across Woodland View neighbourhoods has always been at the average end of the spectrum compared to the rest of the City. The reality, however, has shown a decrease in crimes committed across Woodland View since the start of fieldwork. It is important to note that the individuals referred to in these quotes, are commonly associated with geographic locales within East and North Woodland View that have been associated with higher levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. These perceptions do not reflect the reality of the overall number of crimes committed in Woodland View, with an average of fifty-four crimes committed in December 2010, dropping to forty-eight by December 2012.¹²

Regarding the perceptions versus realities of crime, it is important to note that Woodland View can be divided into spaces of preference indicated by residents and various groups of participants. For many women there was a real fear connected to having to move to Woodland View once they were allotted social housing. This fear can partly be located in the 'reputation' an estate has gained over decades in descriptions in the local media for example. Most of these portrayals refer to a very small, sub-section

¹² Reference withheld for reasons of anonymity

of the local population. In the case of Woodland View, there were five families in particular and one specific crime that had affirmed the negative reputation of the area since the late 1970s. The major crime that occurred during this time in the Woodland View area has been seared into the collective memory of the residents and many outsiders. Three of the notorious families were also residents of this area, while the other two families had left an indelible mark in terms of public perceptions of the residents in East Woodland View. The perceived feeling was that this was the result of the 'dumping' of problematic tenants from the Hillview estate back in the 1970s.

According to a resident, Dave:

They (Housing office) moved the XXX's here (North Woodland View) and it went downhill from there. They never worked, drank all day, sat on their arses and were fightin' with all the neighbours. Worse were the drugs. They sold them right from their front door.

Interestingly, the family David refers to had moved from Woodland View to a rather affluent neighbourhood in the City in 1990. Other residents of North Woodland View told me that this particular family was nothing compared to some of their own locally grown trouble-makers, who as they argued over decades of severe drug abuse and violence have become senile. I have seen two of these most feared local crime lords throughout my fieldwork and stayed out of their way. Neither gave me any problems and some of their sisters were participants of my research project. When I discussed specific 'problem families' with my key informant from the police, we explored their criminal history and besides charges for burglary, trespassing and marijuana possession, there was not much of spectacular nature to be found. However, the effects that 'problem families' can have on the collective memory of residents and outsiders to the area, perceived and real can be felt deeply by many individuals. Terry, an electrician, born, raised and married in North Woodland View states:

I know they were bad (Referring to the family XXX above), they was always fighting and arguing and drinking but they's gone for years and people still talk about them as if they just left yesterday. I think it's got to do with the Woodlanders not with the XXX's. We're not really welcoming to people other than us and you know that. It's like you like to keep things private and deal with them here. It's okay to talk about ourselves but we sure don't like other to talk about it. Take the murders that happen in the woods. Same thing. We would've like to deal with it ourselves and I remember I was out there looking for them little ones and then we found them dead. It stays with you but it shouldn't what people remember when they think about Woodland View. Those are just stories. There's

less crime here than in the City. People don't steal. And there was the old lady who lost her money and some young lad returned it to her. But we never hear those stories.

Terry explores how sometimes the nature of communities can lead supposedly to the development of some sort of sub-culture. Rather than accepting and abiding the norms of mainstream society, the neighbourhood instead develops its own sets of standard of acceptable behaviour (Barke and Turnbull 1992). Some of these issues can be linked to the culture of poverty hypothesis but expanding to include the critical element of geographic locale and associated concerns of over-population, over-crowding in Woodland View. Others, like Andrea, a participant with two daughters and one granddaughter, considered rejecting a social housing offer of a lovely three-bedroom house located in East Woodland View, recalls her fears vividly:

I never thought I would end up here. I always rented privately, always lived in the City centre but when I was pregnant with Zara, I needed a bigger place and the house was lovely. It has lovely views and we can keep the dog. I keep more to myself because I know there are some problem families just down the road but I never had problems since I moved here.

Armed with a set of perceptions of specific or more general Woodland View neighbourhoods faced the implementation and operationalisation of their local NDC programme. The local NDC programme for the City, called The Company, aimed through processes of community engagement and empowerment to develop long-term sustainable projects across to alleviate social exclusion in Woodland View and other estates located in the City. The next section will describe the establishment of The Company and contends that the programme has had implications in the way narratives about Woodland View contribute to the contested history of the estate. Furthermore, a descriptive autopsy of The Company placed in the context of Woodland View will provide necessary background information for upcoming discussions in chapters five, six and seven.

4.4 Woodland View and The Company

In its first consultation paper, the government's new Social Exclusion Unit outlined how:

Over the last generation...the poorest neighbourhoods have tended to become more run down, more prone to crime and more cut off from the labour market. The national picture conceals pockets of intense deprivation where the problems of unemployment and crime are acute and hopelessly tangled up with poor health, housing and education. They have become no go areas for some and no exit zones for others (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998: 9).

As we have seen, New Labour most often linked social exclusion to a specific geographic locale: estates, council housing and neighbourhoods (Madanipour 1998; Page 2000; Byrne 2005; Henderson 2005). In its aim to reduce social exclusion, New Labour identified poor geographic location as directly related to high rates of poverty, low educational attainment and diminished employment opportunities. With this focus on deprivation connected to the physical environment coupled with messages from researchers and politicians, that these poor neighbourhoods directly affect degrees of social exclusion experienced by its residents, Woodland View had to contend with some practical consequences. For example, some participants have argued that their postal code might negatively affect their chances of eligibility of better employment opportunities, which has been examined in similar instances in research conducted in the US and the UK (Hays 2004; Kearns and Parkes 2005.)

Reviewing how historically Woodland View has been identified as a poor neighbourhood, the dominant discourse on social exclusion added further constraints to living in the area.¹³ While the low income of single mothers on benefits has been closely correlated to marginal housing and 'estate culture' (Hardey *et.al.* 1991; Andersen *et.al.* 1992; Alcock 1997; Lee *et.al.* 1997; Page, 2000; Bradshaw 2003; Byrne 2005) the focus on deprivation as an issue experienced socially as well as physically has affected Woodland View in the context of the implementation of the New Deal for Communities. Many of the 'worst estates' within the UK and elsewhere are located in neighbourhoods peripheral to and isolated from main cities (Power, 1997). Estates are for the most part residential in nature and rarely possess many facilities and services. Even though the UK government has focused much of its attention on providing services through community-based local programmes, such as funded through the NDC, questions remain as to how these initiatives and their association with the dominant discourse on social exclusion affect perceptions of the neighbourhoods.

¹³ Reference withheld for reasons of anonymity

Set up in 2000, in the neighbourhood of Woodland View and several other estates across the City, local partnerships were established for each regeneration area to ensure that any initiative and project were community-led. The initial proposal prepared through the City Council and a variety of local voluntary community organisations to receive NDC funding from the UK government covered six estates across the City. The Company catchment area became one of the first to be selected for participation in the national NDC strategy. The programme received a total of £47.2 million of government funding over an eight-year period, from 2000 to 2008. As I have shown, like many other NDCs, these neighbourhoods are quite distinct with their own local identities and a high proportion of social housing. These neighbourhoods are also characterized by a predominantly white population. Although the ethnic make-up has changed in recent years, Woodland View has a population that is ninety-one Percent white compared to eighty-eight percent white in the City as a whole.

The Company was made up of residents and specialists, to oversee and guide the spending of these funds. One of the key components of The Company was its focus on resident-led community development, with the aim of helping residents setting up projects to tackle issues related to social exclusion, such as the lack of health facilities, child care providers, youth centres and inadequate housing. By 2005, the local NDC had been turned into two separate organisations and a company with limited liability. During this time, The Company had already split into eight different teams organised around a variety of target areas including Health, Community Development, Community Safety, Neighbourhood Management, Community Advice and Guidance, Project Development and Appraisal, Youth Inclusion, Neighbourhood Wardens and the associated Communications and Site Management and Support Teams. The basic premise of the establishment of The Company and other local NDC programmes was its focus on targeting marginalised individuals who were to be found living in large numbers on deprived estates. For the purpose of this research, the interactions between various types of service providers and residents (many of whom are participants) are an important platform to explore issues linked to the challenges faced by poor mothers during the implementation of these policies. As a central theme, the form and shape these organisations took have implications how the interface between policy expectations and lived realities are experienced.

The Company was overseen by the Council's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit. However, local partnerships were established in each regeneration area to ensure that change was 'community-led'. The Company was governed by a partnership board, made up of central and local government representatives, local estate residents and other members of the City community such as the Police and Statutory and Third sector service providers. Even though the majority of its administrative and technical staff were employed by the City Council, they were responsible to The Company Board. The programme covered a wide range of activities, from the provision of social and economic infrastructure to a variety of education and training initiatives. With the implementation of The Company, from 2000 onwards more than three hundred projects have been funded over a ten-year period. The projects were approved through a Partnership Board and Steering Groups, which were organized around four key themes: Education and Employment seeking to promote a 'Better Educated City and 'Enterprising City'; the Environment whose focus was on 'City: a Better Place to Live' and 'Safer City'; Health aiming to achieve a 'Fit and Healthy City' and Taking Control 'City Taking Control'.¹⁴

With the end of the NDC national funding stream in December 2008, The Company was transformed into a smaller project. Streamlined versions of projects were supported, only if they were able to display self-sufficiency and the ability to work in collaboration with other projects across the area. With the establishment of the new project came a focus on 'communities of interest', 'minority groups' and 'worklessness', as well as tightening of the financial budget. For example, instead of receiving funding to participate in the Family Pathfinder Programme, a nation-wide initiative, which amounted to £1.5 million over a three-year period, the project was left to consider applying for funding tackling inequalities, which was topped at £150,000 for one year (Fieldnotes, January 2009). Compared to earlier initiatives much seemed to have changed, but in essence it is the lack of funding, a narrower focus on targeting social groups identified as vulnerable to social exclusion (deeply excluded) and on paid employment that have emerged as the key differences. By mid-summer of 2010 The Company ceased to exist; it was succeeded by The Company Trust.

The inclusion of Woodland View estate as one of New Labour's New Deal for Communities established the area as one of the most deprived wards in the whole city

¹⁴ Reference withheld for reasons of anonymity

and among the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the country. Even though many residents do not deny the fact that their neighbourhoods are affected by crime, high levels of unemployment and lack of appropriate housing, for many it came as a shock to be officially be labelled as deprived. There are several authors who argue that the negative portrayal of poor people and places in public discourses could be regarded as an act of domination, through which social inequalities – such as class – are multiplied and replicated (Bourdieu 1992; Schubert 2008: 183; Mooney 2009: 437).

During the fieldwork the researcher witnessed community meetings where many residents openly resented this negative label of deprivation because they argued that to be poor does not mean to be deprived. At the same time there was the realization that the only way to receive this amount of large-scale funding was through the existence of deep-rooted indicators of poverty and social exclusion. It was through identifying as poor that social exclusion was to be addressed and subsequently reduced. As Derek noted,

We didn't have a choice. It was us telling them that we needed the money and we did that by telling them we was in need of help because our neighbourhood was too run down, the people had no jobs, the kids barely went to school and so on. It was a blessing and a curse you could say.

For example, in 2005, the City Regeneration Strategy recorded that there were well over nineteen thousand people affected by employment deprivation, making it the thirty-fifth worst district in England.¹⁵ More than twenty-two percent of the population in these neighbourhoods were on some form of income support compared to just under nineteen percent in England as a whole. Furthermore, thirty-four percent of children were living in poverty, compared to twenty-eight percent nationally.¹⁶ Even though these statistics mirror the sentiment that poverty and social exclusion can be geographically located and subsequently be tackled through a number of social programmes.

4.4.1 Winding Down and Moving On

Since 2005, the local NDC has been considering succession, although the intention to establish an asset-owning successor body was set out in the original

¹⁵ Reference withheld for reasons of anonymity

¹⁶ Reference withheld for reasons of anonymity

Delivery Plan. The partnership is clear that there needs to be a successor body for a number of reasons: the realization that the regeneration of the area is going to take longer than ten years because many of the interventions funded by the local NDC have a much longer 'lag time' and because the benefits of what has already been delivered need to be sustained. While The Company was fully funded through the national NDC funding schemes, self-sufficiency was of low concern. However, by 2007 attention turned towards phasing out of the national initiative and the local partnership board agreed that sustainability was to be achieved through a number of inter-related strands of activities.

The first was main streaming. During the life of The Company, there were a number of projects and methods that were adopted by partner agencies following successful piloting by the local NDC, including interventions addressing domestic violence, children and young people's needs, worklessness and crime and community safety. The local NDC was clear that mainstreaming was not necessarily about projects being funded to carry on delivering services in exactly the same way or in the same place. As a result, in some cases the partnership piloted approaches that have been adopted for delivery across the City and in others projects have been adapted by partner agencies for wider delivery. For example, a successful smoking cessation project was picked up by the NHS Primary Care Trust, although it was unable to resource the full range of support that The Company had delivered (Fieldnotes, December 2008). In this way the benefits of sixty percent of the Company funded projects have been sustained. The Company argued that it built on its strong links and collaborations with the council and other community partners to influence the way in which services were maintained and sustained in the long-term (Fieldnotes, March 2009).

The second part of the succession strategy focused on Neighbourhood Management. For some time, the Company had a Neighbourhood Manager working in the area, coordinating services and ensuring that they were more responsive to local needs. Building on its experience, the partnership sought to influence the roll-out of locality-based working across the City. The precise form that this was going to take remained in flux for much of the last years of the operation of The Company, but the council had overseen a number of different approaches, including the local NDC, and was determining the most appropriate way to take these forward (Fieldnotes, February 2009).

A final key element of the local NDC's sustainability strategy was to set up an independent community development organisation, the City Trust. Led by a board of residents and partners, the Trust aimed to provide a local voice, focus and profile for the area and to continue the regeneration started by the local NDC. The City Trust used profits generated from its assets to support local groups through a community chest programme and had a vision of building relationships with partners outside the NDC boundary relating to physical developments and enterprising activity. These assets included some local businesses and apartments, a Retail Park and Industrial Estate, which contains a wide range of light industrial and service activities. Other local businesses include a small parade of retail shops and a leisure centre (Summary of fieldnotes and discussions with project staff, March 2009).

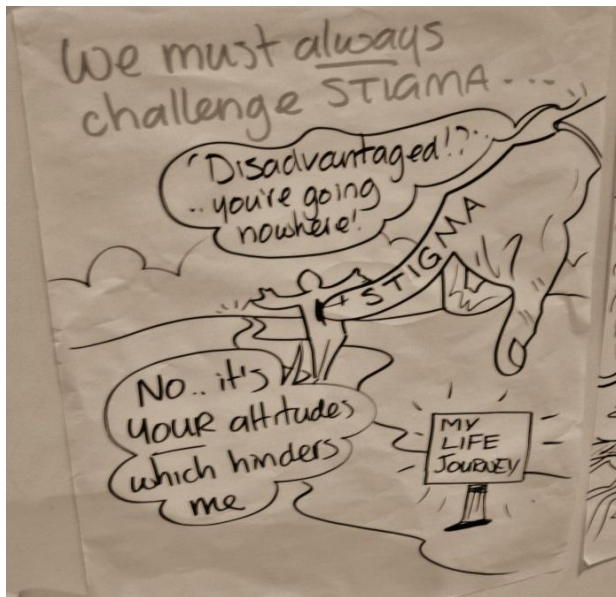
As the result of the influx of funding through the New Deal for Communities there has been some private sector investment in and around the neighbourhoods. Within Woodland View, a pharmaceutical company has relocated to the Industrial Estate, providing 50 new jobs. A car body repairer has invested £1million in the area to develop a site. The developments at the Retail Park should theoretically provide opportunities for further private sector inward-investment. However, a contribution to the continued medium-term demand for construction workers in the future has not taken shape and some City-owned buildings are to this day undeveloped. Other important private sector employers in the area include a depot for City Buses and a regional bakery (Fieldnotes 2008, 2009).

By 2008, The Company still had around twenty projects that it was directly managing. Throughout the remainder of the programme, the partnership was overseeing their delivery, and supporting them towards mainstreaming, or other routes to succession. As the programme was winding down, The Company staff had already begun moving on. In many cases, staff went on to take jobs within the council and associated programmes and projects, while a core programme team was left to manage the projects and sustain the links with partner agencies. From the beginning of April 2008, the City Trust, having been directly supported by The Company for its first year, was required to stand on its own two feet. However, it continued to have an on-going relationship with The Company until 2010, which marked the end of the national NDC programme. As well as challenges associated with moving from a government-funded

programme to a more entrepreneurial approach to regeneration, the Trust needs to ensure that it maintains its connections with the local community.

The next section returns to a theme illustrated in the extracts from various residents of Woodland View, namely a discrepancy that seems to exist between the perceptions of Woodland View by local social planners and the perception of residents themselves.

4.5 Perceptions of Woodland View



(Employment Conference, November 2007)

You had back then the opportunity to create a community and be part of something. But then, the whole of Woodland View was like that, because Woodland View was built for the soldiers. But they also did the slum clearances in the City and that's where they ripped whole families apart and moved them to different estates and that is when it went downhill you see. And then later on in the '60s and '70s they moved the rough lot from Hillview into (North) Woodland View and they never took them back again. We've always been posh, this end of road you see (laughs.) It has been very nice living here, but it is also very different from the rest of the estate. We've always prided ourselves on being clean and tidy and having a nice area and working. *working* (Tony, resident, East Woodland View).

As I have described, South Woodland View, had always been regarded as a highly desirable neighbourhood, compared to North Woodland View which is least popular as a place to live, with East Woodland View, depending on specific streets, located somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. It is North Woodland View that is used by many residents as a sort of benchmark to measure their own relative position

within the complex web of social relations that exists within and outside Woodland View, based on their geographic locale. These perceptions resonate through many of the life histories. Some of these perceptions are partly mirrored in literature on class (Strathern 1981; Edwards 2000). In Woodland View, tensions from those days are still felt today and find their expressions through both negative and positive associations with the area. I contend that these narratives describe how the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion has on the one hand reinforced particular perceptions associated characterising the various neighbourhoods and emphasized the contestations that exist in the context of reinforcing and rejecting a collective identity. While a collective identity might be resisted from inside Woodland View, the implementation of The Company in the area reinforced resistance towards this identity based on indicators of deprivation.

The government's Social Exclusion Unit, charged with studying social exclusion and with developing

...integrated and sustainable approaches to the problems of the worst housing estates, including crime, drugs, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, community breakdown, and bad schools etc. (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998)

It did little to alleviate reservations that residents felt when confronted with the realities of living with the label of deprived neighbourhood. In fact, most publications by the Social Exclusion Unit sought to identify commonalities among those regarded as socially excluded or vulnerable to social exclusion within deprived neighbourhoods. It cited a sense of oppression that seems to characterize many disadvantaged communities joined with neglect by government agencies, geographical isolation, experience of persistent economic decline and other features such as poverty and high rates of unemployment.

For Woodland View and the other successful applicants of the New Deal for Communities funding, the application process and subsequent implementation of community-led participatory programmes meant on the one hand they were, as a neighbourhood represented as 'deprived' and on the other hand included a struggle for meaningful programme design and operation. These issues will be explored in greater detail in chapter seven.

For many residents, this process of labelling resulted in re-claiming different local identities firmly rooted in the historical development of Woodland View. This

highlights the contested nature of the local history and emphasizes the importance to incorporate these various narratives into the debates on social exclusion. Here I build on Evans and her assertions that:

white working-class people are divided against each other, lamenting the death of their community and struggling to defend themselves against the increasing influence of immigrants...(Evans 2006: xiv)

I argue that these narratives are used as effective tools to define themselves against others through processes of differentiation (Skeggs 2001: 4, 2005). As such they need to be incorporated into policy considerations because these narratives are then also used to resist the dominant discourse on social exclusion and its focus on addressing concerns common to deprived neighbourhoods. However, many residents rejected the label of 'deprived', as it included highlighting negative aspects of the neighbourhoods and stressed the need for outside intervention. In several instances, this has had negative effects on how individuals perceive their communities and can in fact increase levels of resistance towards further programmes. Sibley (1995: 141) contends that:

stereotypes play an important part in the configuration of social space because of the importance of distancing in the behaviour of social groups, that is, distancing from others who are represented negatively and because of the way in which group images and place images combine to create landscapes of exclusion.

However, as Howe (1998: 18) has noted:

cultural distancing always involves a dual aspect: individuals attempt to create distance and difference between themselves and others deemed low in the moral hierarchy with whom they fear being confused, at the same time they seek to nullify a presumed moral gap between themselves and a different set of others considered morally superior and with whom they want to be associated.

For Woodland View residents, its history then becomes a site of contestation. It then becomes important to understand that the focus of both social exclusion discourse and associated policies meant that there was increasing emphasis placed on issues of morality and individual responsibility rather than concentrating on the structural aspects of inequality, for example the disappearance of local industries and businesses. Many residents felt that in the process of implementing the New Deal for Communities, their local history had been re-written and often appeared to present Woodland View in a negative light. Therefore, while there is a rejection of a collective identity based on the label deprived neighbourhood many participants and residents alike feel a sense of

collective dislike to the overall labelling of Woodland View as a deprived neighbourhood. As Rosie recalls:

I want to hear nothing about them calling us *deprived*. **Deprived**. (Loud snort) We're not deprived. We don't have much money, never had. We were poor but we are hard working and proud. We're not *deprived*. They make us sound like we are **worse** than poor. Like we are sitting in the dirt, begging for crumbs,...It makes me angry because you can be poor and be like all the rest of people in *society*. Just because you haven't got much money doesn't mean you are **lacking**. It doesn't mean you are *different* from other people in society. That is the problem, I think, anyway. It is because they make us sound like we are not just poor but we are missing something else...And then they come here and tell us we are *deprived*, you know and then people start believing it, too.

In the wake of the implementation of The Company in Woodland View many participants added their own narrative strand of understanding the neighbourhood. I remember Andrea telling me how scared she was when she got her house in East Woodland View. She told me it was because of what she read about Woodland View in the local newspaper. As she noted:

And that's another problem. They tell everybody that this is what Woodland View's like and then nobody remembers the good stories, you know. I am not saying those were the good old days, everything nice, not at all but I say: there were good and bad stories, not just **one** story: the story they tell about us....

The New Deal for Communities' primary goal was to be a means of narrowing the gap that appeared to separate some communities from the rest of society by injecting large amounts of money to Britain's poorest areas. Through a process of long-term community engagement, provisional funding of £47 million was designated to regenerate the poorer areas of the City. What this meant for Woodland View was that rather than alleviating social exclusion and poverty, The Company created chasms in the process of neighbourhood regeneration and community development. These chasms include a rethinking and rewriting of local history. Specifically this entailed discrepancies in how history of Woodland View is experienced and how this kind of newly created history located within the dominant discourse on social exclusion permeates the various neighbourhoods within Woodland View.

Conclusion

This chapter has described some of the historical, economic and social aspects of Woodland View and briefly placed these into the on-going debate of 'worst estates' and

‘deprived neighbourhoods’ within the context of the NDLP and the NDC. By juxtaposing these with extracts from conversations with Woodland View residents and single mothers, the chapter highlights the contested nature of collective identity particularly in the context of the dominant discourse on social exclusion. The theme of contesting local identity is an important issue since the aim of the thesis is to explore the contested nature of key concepts and discourses and therefore it is vital to incorporate narratives about Woodland View into this debate.

Exploring the spatial, social and economic aspects of the development of the neighbourhoods of Woodland View, has been a useful prism through which to bring to light discrepancies that exist between policy expectations and the lived realities of single mothers on benefits and residents of Woodland View. By charting more detailed narratives of Woodland View’s residents and their responses to The Company a more nuanced description of the impact of the policies on lone parents and NDC emerges. I argue that The Company served as a tool to frame elements of the dominant discourse on social exclusion, in particular its focus on deprivation and associated problems, such as worklessness and implemented these in specific geographic locales. Even though I do not assume that poverty and social exclusion go hand in hand, single mothers on benefits are directly affected by the dominant discourse on social exclusion and its accompanying policy initiatives. These impacts and responses to them will be explored in detailed in the upcoming chapters five, six and seven.

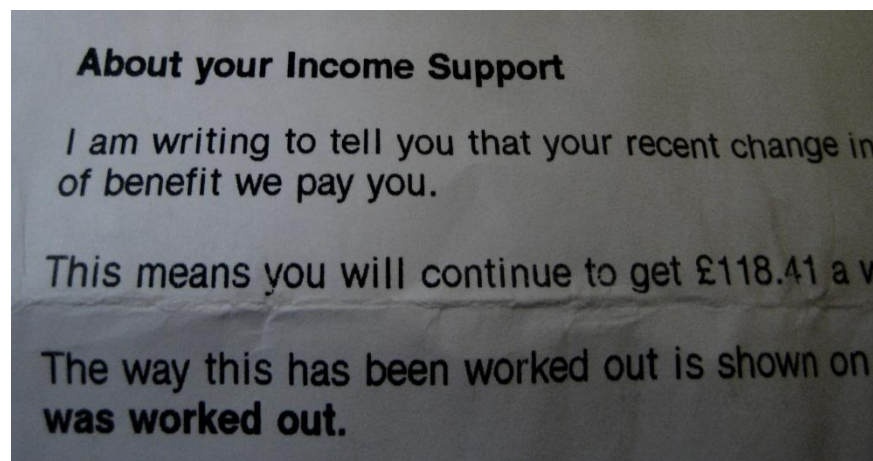
With the winding up of The Company, it remains to be seen what place the project will eventually occupy in the narratives of residents and participants. However, it is likely that the effects of the ten or more years of The Company will be apparent for many years to come. The dominant discourse on social exclusion directly affects single mothers on benefits because its policy initiatives become embedded in the cultural landscape of participants. The dominant discourse on poverty and social exclusion is contested especially in the context of local history. In the context of this chapter, residents and participants add their own narrative strand of contested history to the story of Woodland View. This is immensely important because social policy programmes that are created and embedded in these dominant discourses represent additional important features in the cultural landscape for single mothers in poor neighbourhoods. These features can both present opportunities and constraints to these individuals. In much of

this chapter they represent the disjuncture that seems to exist between the lived reality of single mothers on benefits and policy expectations.

The following chapter will continue to examine some of the contestations that have been brought up in terms of local identity specifically related to the contradictions that exist in the context of paid and unpaid work in the various neighbourhoods of Woodland View. Even though many participants agree that they should get paid for raising their children, conflicts arising out of who is more deserving of benefit payments often play out in the arena of local identity.

Chapter 5

“I Should Get Paid”: The Impasse of Welfare-To-Work Programmes and Single Mothers



(Franny, weekly benefits October 2008)

Introduction

They want equality of both opportunity and responsibility. They want to know the same rules that apply to them, apply to all. Out goes the Big State. In comes the Enabling State. Out goes a culture of benefits and entitlements. In comes a partnership of rights and responsibilities. That's why we need reform (Tony Blair 2002)

In discussing with participants and service providers New Labour's assertion that the best route out of poverty is paid employment, contrasting claims about the value attached to paid and unpaid work emerged. The premise of this chapter is that the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion has re-introduced and reinforced existing aspects of morality as outlined in chapter two in terms of service provision and

delivery. This embedding of moral aspects within service delivery demonstrates the uneasy relationship that exists between the nature of single motherhood and welfare provision.

Most of the accounts of social exclusion and attempts to address it by New Labour have centred on the benefits system and its connection to paid employment. Nowhere can this process be observed more clearly than in the introduction of the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP), the subsequent establishment of the Job Centre Plus, and through processes of privatising employment-related services like the Work Programme. Using these tools, New Labour reformed social policy initiatives along three lines: emphasising the value of paid work, stressing moral and cultural causes of poverty, and raising concerns about the issue of welfare dependency and the culture of poverty. These themes are linked, and will be investigated throughout this chapter.

This chapter is broadly divided into two parts in order to illustrate the apparent discrepancy that exists between various service providers and participants in terms of engagement with the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion. I will provide a description of the category ‘service provider’, since their position within the structure of Public, Third and Private Sector does inform their experiences with participants. In this project I have sorted service providers into three categories: project workers employed in the statutory sector including the City Council, the City Housing office, Job Centre Plus and situated more broadly within the Managerial and/or Operational structure of The Company. The second category covers project workers employed in private and Third Sector organisations locally and/or nationally, with particular focus on the Work Programme. The last group of service providers are Project managers and Project directors, individuals who have moved across and within various sectors. For example, delivering services through the public sector meant that informants in many instances felt relatively secure regarding their employment status, whereas individuals working within the private sector like the Work Programme felt at times rather insecure about their jobs if they were unable to achieve and maintain specific goals attracting and retaining clients. Furthermore, through this separation the emphasis is placed on the interface of policy expectations and lived realities of single mothers on benefits. It is at this interface that competing ideas about paid and unpaid work unfold.

The first part consists of two main sections. Through an examination of statutory and private sector provision of employment-related services to the unemployed, key

policy expectations are explored. First, I present ethnographic data detailing service provision at the Job Centre Plus in the City. Secondly, I present a brief overview of the process of privatising employment-related services and then go on to describe the Work Programme, a private sector company which started offering employment-related services in Woodland View (exclusively geared towards lone parents) in 2007. In both sections, the realities of service provision will shed light on the contested nature of paid and unpaid work in the context of the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion.

The second part of this chapter will present the lived realities of single mothers on benefits in relation to employment-related services. In doing so, the links and disconnections between policy expectations and the experiences of single mothers become apparent, particularly as they connect to class and culture. I will also present an assessment of opportunities within the labour market.

Many of my participants argued that unpaid work, such as care work related to raising children should be as valued and remunerated as paid work. Therefore, paid and unpaid work became contested sites where ideas about identity, power and morality come into play. Using the body of literature concerning these tensions (Edin and Lein 1997; Duncan and Edwards 1999; Hays 2004; Duncan and Strell 2004; Edin and Kefalas 2005), the last section of this chapter explores the debate around choosing motherhood and benefit receipt over taking up paid work.

The tensions and contestations discussed in this chapter have led to two major debates within the literature on welfare provision: there are contradictions around how the role of mothers is understood, and confusion around implementing social policies, which in many instances had negative effects on my participants. While the participants are still expected to fulfil their duties as primary carers, they are now also expected to become full-time workers. This set of expectations creates tensions, which are explored in the second part of this chapter and relates to the central topic of this thesis: the interface between policy expectations and the lived realities of single mothers on benefits.

My research will demonstrate that policy initiatives do not necessarily alleviate social exclusion. In fact, it will show in various ways how the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion does not address issues of structural inequality, but rather focuses on stressing individual responsibilities.

5.1 A New Contract for Welfare: New Labour's Welfare Reform and social exclusion



I have, however, learnt a few home truths over the last few decades. The first is that changes to the benefit system affect the lives of people in ways which many of us can only half imagine. The second is that the need for change is overwhelming. The system as it stands promotes fraud and deception, not honesty and hard work. It has led to growing poverty and dependence, not independence. It has fuelled social division and exclusion, not helped in the creation of a decent society (Baroness Hollis of Heigham, March 1998).

In March 1998, the introduction of the Government Green Paper on Welfare Reform identified three main concerns with the previous welfare system. It is these three problems that frame this chapter and much of this thesis. According to the Government Green Paper (1998:1)...

...inequality and social exclusion are worsening, especially among children and pensioners, despite rising spending on social security; people face a series of barriers to paid work, including financial disincentives; and fraud is taking money out of the system and away from genuine claimants.

The report provided eight principles for guiding welfare reform to address these three issues. The first, and most relevant to this thesis, was that “the new Welfare State should help and encourage people of working age to work where they are capable of doing so” (DFEE 1998:2). The Green Paper went on to note that, “the Government’s aim is to rebuild the Welfare State around work” (DFEE 1998: 3). This particular focus on paid employment is a key linking theme for much of New Labour’s discourse on welfare and social exclusion. Along with a further emphasis on delivering services through

partnerships between the public and private sectors (DFEE 1998:2), this is at the centre of many of the contestations and tensions related to interpretations of the welfare state and related ideas about poverty and social exclusion.

Upon New Labour's election, concerns were raised regarding the need to reform the welfare system, emphasising the high costs attached to it and contending that the existing social security programme was doing little to tackle the causes of poverty. However, if one looks at welfare spending as a part of total national income, there has been remarkable stability in the share going to welfare. Lavalette and Mooney argued that in 1998 the "government's own 1998 Social Trends report showed that spending per head on welfare benefits was very low, with Britain ninth out of eleven in the European table. The report also showed that forty-four percent of the population thought that more money should be spent on welfare benefits and public services even if this would lead to higher taxes (Lavalette and Mooney 1999). However, New Labour (like the Conservative government before it) pressed forward with a programme of welfare reform focused on the importance of paid employment as a route out of 'welfare dependency.' A strong moralistic undertone was a key component of the dominant discourse on social exclusion that formed the basis for New Labour's social policy initiatives.

5.1.1 New Deal: Summary

In April 1998, after an initial six-month test period in carefully selected evaluation areas across the UK, the New Labour government launched the New Deal programme as a way of reducing unemployment through a combination of the following: training, subsidised employment and voluntary work for unemployed individuals. Funded through a £5bn windfall tax, it was initially piloted for unemployed youth. New Deal programmes were subsequently expanded to include lone parents, people with disabilities and individuals over the age of fifty. Employment initiatives were implemented in partnership with both statutory organisations and private sector companies (Finch, O'Connor, Millar, Hales, Shaw and Roth 1999).

An examination of the New Deal for Lone Parents exemplifies how single mothers on benefits experience specific changes to welfare provision and the associated policy discourse of social exclusion. To illustrate the tensions between policy expectations and the lived realities of single mothers on benefits, this chapter will

explore the effects of the New Deal as they played out in Job Centre Plus and the Work Programme initiatives in both the City and Woodland View.

5.1.2 New Deal for Lone Parents

The NDLP has been running as a national programme since October 1998. The NDLP represents a form of social intervention that is not so much about the provision of extra jobs, benefits or amenities, as it is about enabling people to make changes within their own lives. In this scheme, welfare is something positive and pro-active. The weight it places on "work for those who can; security for those who can't" (DFEE 1998: 23) expresses a contractual notion of fairness, in which an individual's welfare rights are matched with responsibilities. Programmes such as NDLP were envisaged as a way to highlight those responsibilities and generate active in place of passive welfare receipt. In this formulation, everybody should be in paid employment. However, no attention is paid to creating alternative employment opportunities for single mothers on benefits, who are often trapped in low-paying, insecure work (Finlayson and Marsh 1998, Dawson *et.al.* 2000, Marsh 2001).

Critical engagement is absent from social policy initiatives like the NDLP. The programme reflects a broad consensus among policy makers that paid work represents the best route out of poverty, and is a key factor in reducing social exclusion for those able to take it. Furthermore, part of the process of increasing the number of individuals taking up paid work has been a push to privatise employment services and programmes. These privatisation processes play an important role in this research since the establishment of the Work Programme in Woodland View has changed the delivery of employment-related services of many participants. These individuals now have to deal with two independent organisations (Job Centre Plus and the Work Programme), whose pressures they seem to experience in tandem exerting pressures on participants to enter paid employment.

5.2 Job Centre Plus: Overview

That is the key to Job Centre Plus. It embodies on the one hand the enabling welfare state, spreading opportunity - and on the other our reform of public services, as a new responsive service focused on the jobless. (Tony Blair, 2002)

It is in this statement that I contend links between citizenship, class and employment are forged. Job Centre Plus has become a key site where policy expectations and lived realities are played out. Participants face an important aspect of living on benefits: their

bi-yearly job search interview. While the NDLP was promoted as a voluntary initiative in order to remain eligible for benefits, most participants were actively ‘encouraged’ to attend these interviews. Therefore the Job Centre Plus became an important site where participants and service providers interacted: thus, another key concern for this thesis was to see how and to what extent service providers experienced and reproduced the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion.

This section of the chapter provides the framework in which contestations and tensions between policy expectations and the lived realities of both service providers and single mothers are placed. In doing so, I place emphasis on how the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion shapes the relationship between participants and service providers. This discourse repositions individual responsibilities as central to the debate on poverty, which involves a re-emergence of the idea of the ‘underclass’ and an emphasis on changing perceived pathological characteristics of these individuals. Single mothers are caught up in this changing discourse, and their experiences of this will be explored in the last section of this chapter.

5.2.1 *How to get a job?*

In June 2001, Job Centre Plus was created, bringing together the Employment Service and parts of the former Benefits Agency. It was an integral part of New Labour governance of the welfare system, with the aim of ‘help[ing] the large numbers of people on benefits to find meaningful employment’ (DFEE 1998:8). During this period of time, the Work Programme and a number of other private for-profit and public organisations officially became part of delivering employment-related services in the UK. This was a broad move undertaken by the New Labour government in getting unemployed individuals into work through outsourcing a range of companies embodying characteristics of public, private and third sector organisations. While the Job Centre Plus was the main contact point for many participants, the Work Programme was introduced to work in partnership focusing especially on moving the long-term unemployed like single mothers on benefits into paid employment. With this move, New Labour heralded the beginning of a new welfare system which was based to a large extent on the welfare-to-work model implemented in the United States from the mid-1990s onwards (Kilty and Seagal 2008; Chappell 2010; Collins and Mayer 2010; Morgen, Acker and Weight 2010) .

The Job Centre Plus is located in a down town area of the City adjacent to a number of municipal buildings. When the Jobcentre Plus was first set up it was meant to provide a focal point for the community in tackling needs around unemployment of its clientele. The Jobcentre Plus was organised so as to accurately reflect these needs through engaging with a variety of partners in the public and private sector to better support the population and its local economy (Fieldnotes, 2007).

I visited the Job Centre Plus for the first time in early 2007 after accompanying one of my participants to one of her interviews. After the worker dealing with Sam's case found out that I was not a resident of Woodland View but a friend of Sam's and that I was conducting research on single mothers on benefits and their life experiences, I was asked me to leave the premises. However, the interest raised during this first visit sparked the interest of a few Job Centre Plus employees, one of whom followed me outside the building and asked to hear more about my work. Ernie told me that he felt sorry for me and consented to be interviewed in another location in Woodland View rather than at the main office. He provided much of the information I was able to collect on the Job Centre Plus and its role in moving individuals off benefits into paid employment.

Five years after the introduction of Job Centre Plus, I first interviewed Ernie, who was then working as a Job Centre Plus outreach worker at various locations across Woodland View. He was located in a number of city-wide run programmes like the Children's Centre and a YMCA-funded programme. His job description required him to actively encourage individuals to sign up for Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). While this seems a very straightforward job there are some issues that need to be considered. During our first discussion Ernie told me that there are significant differences between JSA and Income Support (IS) even though they are virtually the same benefits. According to him they have two separate claims forms (although many participants usually claim over the phone or online nowadays), but the information goes to two different sections of the Department of Works and Pensions and the forms are different. It is the same amount of money and most of the rules are the very same.

The difference is that if clients claim JSA they indicate they are 'capable of, available for and actively seeking employment', while if they claim Income Support it means they cannot honour the above because they might be carers, a single parent, sick or disabled. Individuals who are only able to claim Income Support must be in one of

these groups. The advantage of Income Support is that clients do not have to 'sign on' at the local Job Centre Plus every two weeks. With JSA on the other hand they must 'actively seek' employment. This means approaching companies and seeking out work (not just looking at vacancies which would be passively seeking). Some Job Centres are very tough regarding these rules, according to Ernie. He told me that the government was going to bring in mandatory public and community service for repeat claimants and those claiming JSA over two years. Ernie also told me that after clients spent six months on JSA they are usually referred to the Work Programme who then actively refer them to any job opportunity that opens up in the City and beyond, depending on the qualifications of participants. Income Support does not have these labour market criteria attached (this according to Ernie, is the only real difference between JSA/IS), and Ernie told me that clients still have to attend periodic meetings (every six months) with a personal adviser, but clients are not obliged to do anything else but looking for work when receiving IS and continuing to use the Job Centre for vacancies, etc. (Fieldnotes, 2007).

Ernie had a 'floating desk' as he called it, usually an empty office reserved for other flexible knowledge workers like him. In the context of this chapter, Ernie provides a point of view that outwardly contests the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion. However, even though he had always been more sympathetic towards his clients, in our conversations he repeatedly returned to insist on the existence of individual characteristics that set some unemployed people apart from those who do not rely exclusively on benefits. He, however, made it clear before starting our conversations that 'I have to point out that anything I say is *my* personal view, not necessarily that of the DWP.'

You know, I decided to come here because I think it is important that the Job Centre is in Woodland View, you know to let people know that we are here and that we are available, if they are looking for work. And I think I'm making real headway here. People are getting to know me and coming to see me, to find out about work and benefits. That's how things should be done: through the Job Centre, not through some private company who are there to make profits instead of providing support and real jobs.

But as I said I see it now with my colleagues, the way they talk about the clients is very negative. I remember just a while ago, when I talked to Amanda and she was laying into some woman, who told her she only wanted to get back to work when her youngest was in school. You'd think that Amanda being a single mum would be understanding, wouldn't you? But she started talking about welfare culture and dependency culture and cycle of poverty and I had to walk away from the table.

Mind, I do think there is personal, like individual characteristics, like different personality, but I think it's also probably because of the area I'm dealing in, the geographical area, my aim is to move people closer to work, rather than put them in work. Whereas, other advisers, at the Job Centre have targets to specifically get people into work, but I don't have a target and that helps me...

When I've seen lone parents, I'm kind of with them on bringing up their children. I believe bringing up children is the most important thing, but the lone parents, who I see who want to work will find work. Those who don't want to find work won't do anything about it. I.....it's difficult.

In this discussion Ernie highlighted several issues that are at the heart of this chapter: the contestation that exists between the value of paid and unpaid work and the underlying moral aspects that have crept into service provision for welfare recipients. I argue that both are evidence of the influence that the dominant discourse on social exclusion has on service providers and participants.

The discussions I had with Ernie highlight the critical position service providers assume in working with their clients. It was here that I assumed service providers would display a certain degree of critical engagement with the dominant discourse on social exclusion and its focus on paid employment as the route out of poverty. However, Ernie proved to be the lone example among service providers working in the employment sector. His views serve as a reminder that their critical engagement is vital in emphasizing the lived realities of those affected by New Labour's social policies.

5.2.2 Job Centre Plus staff and 'work'

How inspiring, to be able to contrast that old picture with our new Job Centre Plus offices. Job Centre Plus exemplifies both an active welfare state and our vision for public services.

An active welfare state which brings together benefit offices and job centres so that instead of simply dishing out cash, personal advisers provide everybody coming through the door with advice and support to help them into work or at least get them closer to the labour market.

This is a welfare state which reflects all our responsibilities: the responsibility we have to engage actively with the jobless to provide them with opportunities; their responsibility to engage actively with us and take those opportunities. (Tony Blair 2002)

Blair's statement exemplifies the shift from rights to responsibilities, and echoes the sentiments of many employment sector staff I interviewed. These individuals highlighted the importance of paid work to social inclusion are explored below. By linking notions of class and culture, service providers showed that the 'culture of

poverty' narrative has once again emerged. As discussed by Chappell (2010), within this narrative class-based culture rather than structural factors are positioned as the main reasons to refuse taking up paid work (Marsh and McKay 1993; Chappell 2010; Collins and Mayer 2010; Morgen *et.al.* 2010). This emphasis on poverty as culture rather than focusing on disadvantaged structural position shows how deeply the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion has permeated the understanding of the service providers interviewed for this thesis. For example, Morgen (2010) describes how case managers in the United States seemingly embrace a culture of work enforcement in their dealings with clients. In the context of Woodland View this process became increasingly apparent during the course of my fieldwork.

For example David, Job Centre Plus Lone Parent Advisor stated:

They need jobs, they need to learn to work. Who doesn't work in this day and age? You can still have your children if you want to but you need to work. They have grown up in this culture of not working at all for generations now and it is time for them to wake up and stop...

Celia one of his colleagues agreed and added:

We all have children. Just because you have children doesn't mean you don't have to work. It is a bit ridiculous. Just because that is the way they have always lived doesn't mean they don't have to change...

It seemed that service providers failed to recognise the value of unpaid work, in particular unpaid work linked to motherhood. Amanda, a lone parent advisor, stated:

I was a lone parent, I had my children, one when I was sixteen and one when I was seventeen...But see, so many of my clients they don't want to work at all. I understand about struggling with child-care and all the rest of it, because I was always interested in school and my parents always made sure I studied, but many of my clients don't like work or education. It must be because they were raised working class. And I think that many of my clients would rather not work and just take the benefits than take a job even if it is working in a hotel or restaurant or shop and then set a good example for their children...

Amanda argued that paid employment was important as it sets a good example for children. Amanda noted that for her:

Work is so important because it sets an *example*, a good example for your children. They might look at you and be really proud of you because you work. And it might encourage *them* to do more in their lives.

Phil echoes this sentiment, combining ideas about the culture of poverty with notions of the undeserving poor as well as the value of paid work:

I have said it so many times before, I tell it to my clients all the time: You need to *stop* taking money from the government. You need to become a responsible parent and show your kids that work is how you make something of yourself. It is *not* enough, simply not enough to just take money from the taxpayers and then not work...Just because you have grown up in these circumstances and don't know better does not make it right...I am not popular with my clients...

These narratives show the influence of the social exclusion discourse and also serve as a reminder that there has been a shift towards de-legitimising welfare receipt and the benefits system through the dominant discourse on welfare. While notions of the deserving versus undeserving poor have been long established, welfare reform initiatives under New Labour increasingly reinforced these divisions through the establishment of an ever more punitive system. Furthermore, the belief that paid employment is not only the best way out of poverty, but also the appropriate behaviour of the moral citizen resulted in tensions between paid and unpaid work.

One day over lunch, Amanda expanded on the links between paid work, class and culture.

Because many of my clients have been raised in this *culture* where their parents have not worked and sometimes not even their grandparents and that is very bad for children. And I think that has to do with how you were raised really and once you start working that this cycle of dependency stops and my clients can get on with a proper life and being role models to their children, having more self-esteem...I think work is the most important thing for my clients. Even if it is service work, like working in restaurants or hotels or shops. It is good and important for women to work....then all other things don't matter....

Amanda's assertion is that work, any paid employment work *per se*, would enable women to redress issues related to class and social inequality. Her insistence that a culture of welfare dependency would prove to be a major barrier in taking up paid work reproduced the social exclusion discourse of the government. Within this discourse there is a mantra that places importance on paid employment over any other types of work, including unpaid care work.

5.3 From Welfare to Workfare

5.3.1 The Work Programme

Option 2 - Summary of Comparison

Current circumstances		New circumstances (working 35 hours per week, earning £162.47 net)	
Total Weekly Income	£330.25	Total Weekly Income	£405.26
Total Weekly Outgoings	£74.73	Total Weekly Outgoings	£74.73
Income minus Outgoings	£255.52	Income minus Outgoings	£330.53

The difference between your current income and your new income is		£75.01
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(Work Programme, Budget calculator)

The Work Programme is just one of many private companies with both public and voluntary links that became involved in the New Labour government's drive to outsource employment-related activities. In this particular context, the effects of privatising sections of the benefits system play an important role in determining the conflicting experiences of service providers and participants. This section will first outline privatisation processes within employment-related service provision, and will then move on to place these in the debate around the importance of paid work to alleviate social exclusion.

5.3.2 Changing Lives Creating Futures

The best Employment Zones - run by various work programmes, a PPP, or by the private sector-are achieving impressive job outcomes and are popular with claimants. And we're picking up some valuable lessons:

- begin with a can-do mentality which sees claimants as potential employees;
- ask them why they think it is that they are not working - staggeringly, this is often the first time someone long-term unemployed has been asked that;
- give your front-line staff greater autonomy - and with it responsibility and flexibility;
- and combine strong incentive payments for jobs with real leadership, performance pay and team working. (Tony Blair 2002)

In the spring of 2007, the Work Programme, a public, private and voluntary company, opened its doors in a Community Centre in Woodland View.

Sophie, an Engagement Consultant told me about the Work Programmes' participation in the employment sector and the following passage is a summary of this discussion:

The Work Programme was set up in 2000 to assist in the delivery of government targets in enabling individuals to gain access to employment in some of Britain's most disadvantaged communities. By 2007 according to staff located at the Work Programme office in Woodland View, they have now assisted in placing fifty thousand individuals in work across the UK. Their target groups include any social groups not currently in paid work, including single mothers, the long term unemployed and ex-offenders. Their support package is tailored to the needs of each individual and provides on-going support for up to 13 weeks after they enter paid work (Fieldnotes, July 2007).

She also provided the following information during another discussion about the Work Programmes' contractual involvement in the employment sector:

By 2008-2009, the New Deal spending figures indicated that the Work Programme had received a total of nearly M£60 for three contracts. These benefits made the Work Programme one of the biggest beneficiaries of the private sector organisations within the New Deal framework, (Fieldnotes, December 2009).

Participants' engagement with the Work Programme started through a referral process initiated by the Job Centre Plus and from there unfolds as follows: usually after receiving Job Seekers Allowance for a time between twelve and eighteen months, many participants received a letter from the Work Programme indicating that they had been referred from the Job Centre Plus. While the NDLP is a voluntary programme, refusing an invitation to attend an interview with the Work Programme could result in an automatic loss of benefits. Kelly summed up it up as follows:

You attend or you lose your benefits. Then they get you in there and you gotta do those interviews every four weeks....

Zoe, a single mother in her early twenties told me:

I always thought it was they were gonna help you but they just tell you what to do. They just tell you to get jobs like in Primark and then they tell if you don't come and talk to them, they just take your money away from you....

Kelly and Zoe were two of several participants who recounted their experiences as negative, standing in stark contrast to their interests in finding employment once their children are older. Kelly told me that she spent most of the first year taking on three jobs, all at large retail chains in the City. She got fired from all three because of frequent absences because of her daughter's illnesses. However, the Work Programme continued referring her to these jobs. These concerns regarding how effective these organisations are in determining eligibility of people for particular services, performing to the

satisfaction of programme participants in terms of job referrals have also been noted in other literature (Schleiter and Stathan 2002; Morgen 2002, 2010).

After a series of discussions with Work Programme staff, it emerged that there were two main reasons for this. The staff had to meet targets set by their local management team, and the Work Programme receives bonuses for every individual placed in paid work. These bonuses serve as a financial incentive to Work Programme staff to move clients into paid employment. In February 2007 I was able to obtain through conversations a list of specific financial motivations paid to the Work Programme by the government. These bonuses are similar across Work Programmes operating within the welfare-to-work industry across the United Kingdom. The following chart outlines these financial incentives in more detail.

Chart 3: The Work Programme Financial Incentives

For each claimant referred to 'Step One' (Initial interview):	£300
For each claimant progressing to 'Step Two' (Training sessions and workshops) the equivalent of six months Jobseekers Allowance	£1400 (approx.)
For each claimant who finds a job, regardless of what help they may have got from staff	£435 (or £547 if unemployed for more than three years) And staff retains whatever is left of the six months Jobseekers Allowance.
If the claimant retains the job for three months	Bonus of £2,468 (or £3,098 if unemployed for more than three years)

(Fieldnotes, February 2007)

Several participants have gone through a number of cycles of employment and unemployment during the course of fieldwork.

After their initial nine months with the Work Programme and attending usually monthly Job readiness sessions, Step 1 is completed. Then participants are asked in to sign an 'Action Plan', similar to the 'Jobseeker's Agreement' with the Job Centre, in which they outline a number of steps to end their unemployment, and the Work Programme agrees to 'help them'. After signing this document the Work Programme then takes over the payment of their benefits. That is called 'Step 2' and

is usually where the real pressure on the participants begins (Summary based on fieldwork notes recorded between 2007 and 2009).

There are both positive and negative effects related to the ‘privatisation’ of employment services and programmes in areas like Woodland View. On the one hand, privatisation could enhance local control over service delivery by decreasing the role of government bureaucracy, while provision of services was devolved to community level where theoretically, delivery organisations would be more in touch with and responsive to local needs (Bryson 2003; Davies 2008; Walker and Wiseman 2003; Land 2004; Grover 2007, 2009). However, some critics have responded that large for-profit entities are the antithesis of local control, having huge corporate structures that are unresponsive to local needs (Kay and Thompson 1986, Kelly, Kelly and Gamble 1997, Haughton et.al. 2000, Goode and Maskovsky 2001, Morgen 2001, 2002, Land 2004, Grover 2007, 2009, Wacquant 2009). Even when dealing with local agencies or non-profit organisations that provide benefits and services, their ability to ensure community input, acceptable performance and protection of clients’ rights is questionable. There are also concerns regarding how effective these organisations are in delivering particular services and performing to the satisfaction of programme participants. Specifically, support for people who take part in such programmes is often not appropriate, and available jobs do not offer much in terms of long-term, meaningful types of employment (Barry 1998; Cousins 1999; Saunders 2008; Grover 2009).

Welfare to work has sometimes been referred to as the ‘work first’ model in the literature (Morgen 2010; Edin and Lein 1997; Edin and Kefalas 2005). Within the framework of New Labour, the best way to improve an individual’s position in the labour market, was for them to move quickly into work, any work. Employment programmes therefore focused primarily on compulsory job searches and short-term initiatives to facilitate a quick entry or return to the labour market. Staff at the Work Programme admitted in conversations that, “forcing lone parents into work could result in surge of ‘work unready’ candidates.” However, they did not consider that many participants, and other women in similar circumstances, had work experience but had decided to raise their children and in fact considered unpaid work to be of equal value to paid employment. This argument will be discussed in greater detail in the last section of this chapter.

In some instances the ‘work first’ model uses subtle modes of operation, for example career ‘planning’, job search ‘advice’ and ‘training’, but for my participants

this approach was often associated with more forceful methods such as pressuring them into paid employment to avoid ‘all the hassle and consequences’ (Grover 2007, 2009, Morgen 2010). As a result for many participants, employment-focused interviews became almost synonymous with intimidation and harassment by staff; training with ‘employability’, or increasing a person’s chances to find any job (Abrams 2002; Morgen 2010).

In the summer of 2008 Cindy had contacted me in tears after one of her interviews at the Work Programme and upon meeting with her she said:

They told me, and it wasn’t just Adam this time but it was one of the other ones as well. She just walked over and sat down and they just...(sobbing) they were just mean, so mean...I fucking hate it. They make me feel like I’m dirt...they said..if I don’t get my act together they will not give me any more money. They can’t do that, can they? They can’t do that...I don’t want to go back there...And I know how to work. I always worked before I had Sydney. They don’t make it easy to find a job...

Partly as a result of this, the prospects of a career had lessened for many, and they enjoyed much less security and benefits in the labour market. What made this process more difficult was the fact that the profit-driven structure of the Work Programme makes benefit receipt a privilege rather than a right. With threats of withholding benefits several participants had been unwillingly moved into low-paying jobs with little chance of career advancement.

It is also important to talk about tensions around what were considered appropriate choices in terms of work, particularly related to the importance placed on paid work as noted by Hays (2004), Morgen (2010), Edin and Lein (1997) and Lein and Kefalas (2005). What is of particular significance when summarising the experiences of single mothers on benefits with employment-related services is the underlying cultural message of welfare reform. As discussed by Edin and Lein (1997), Goode and Maskovsky (2001), Hays (2004), Wacquant (2009) and Morgen (2010), welfare reform is a means to both legislate family values and the prevailing work ethic. Adam an engagement consultant, stated:

This new system work very well. We have now the chance to talk to our clients about their needs and we have the power to instil some work ethic. They have to attend a series of workshops to learn about the positives of working for a living. And they also learn that if you have a family you can, you *should still* go out and work for a living, to *contribute* to society...This is very, very important.

At the same time, Wacquant adds that Workfare programmes have failed to reduce poverty. In fact, he argues these programmes are a means to normalise poverty rather than reduce it (Wacquant 2009:101). I argue that the process of normalising poverty is not necessarily a result of welfare reform or workfare programmes but of discourses linked to social exclusion. Sophie a Work Programme employee noted:

Work is so important but it is difficult sometimes even for somebody like me. Sometimes I feel a bit jealous because they (clients) do what I would like to do as well. I would like to raise children and not have to worry about work all the time. But to be honest this kind of work...it is just not feasible to pay people for it. It is not possible...We all know that. They have all these reports that clearly say that.

This can be seen in discussions with service providers, who by and large present their unwillingness to engage with structural inequalities that many participants face. Instead, many service providers seem to tolerate the cultural messages embedded in the dominant discourse on welfare. While participants were eager to criticise and contest the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion, service providers hardly ever moved beyond the rhetoric provided through government channels.

Adam has been very outspoken on his views regarding these issues and summarised his point of view as follows:

We all have equal chances now. I grant you, not all of us will go to university but we *could* all go. It is possible for us to do things, achieve things we wouldn't have dreamt of years ago. So, I firmly believe that it is up to people to do something with their lives. And I also believe, I am **convinced** that the government should do more to get people into work. *Teach* them to work. Make them *work* for their benefits. I think that will change a generation of people who have never worked.

For the service providers, their own position as workers often became the yardstick to measure everyone. It is here that the tension between lived realities and policy expectations became most apparent. While Hays (2004:10) stresses the significance of cultural norms, beliefs and values located in welfare reform, Wacquant (2009:101) adds, that there are in fact three interlinking components to welfare reform.

According to Wacquant, welfare reform has been successful in reinforcing moral aspects of welfare provision, particularly through its focus on the importance of paid employment and in doing, encourages individuals to take up low-paying, low-skilled work. While his analysis is of immense significance for this project, I argue that there is a need for a more nuanced understanding of the focus on paid work. In this sense, this

thesis offers additional details related to the value attached to paid work in the context of both service providers and participants.

Paid work affected both participants and service providers of this research project and both groups had different experiences and understandings of what constituted work. I stress the importance of dominant discourses especially when talking to service providers.

It is important for us to work together as an industry to formalise our role and change the way we engage with marginalised groups like the unemployed working class and by extension lone parents because most of our clients come from that particular group. They are also the ones who have been on welfare for the longest time. We need to change the way we engage with these marginalised groups and help shape the way government programmes work in the future. (Summary of Working Programme marketing material, 2008)

Many participants who took part in the Work Programme had to contend with de-constructing notions of a welfare culture, while at the same time believing that motherhood is an important basis of moral citizenship.

Reilly, a participant argues that:

Not sure what their problem is...The way I see it, they have classed us as an underclass if they are particularly nasty or classless if they are trying to be neutral....The way I see it is simple: I am not the underclass. I am I think doing the most important job in the world: I am raising the future generation.

However, because of the focus on paid work, for many of their service providers, the dominant discourse on social exclusion and poverty provided the framework through which they viewed the participants. In doing so, categories different from the ones many participants would use to describe themselves were assigned.

Alan, formerly part of The Company, provided an example of how he classified social groups.

I have this theory where you have three layers of people, those of us who always work and those are the ones that would feel morally and culturally very ashamed if they didn't work, another layer who are in and out of work or spend periods of unemployment but are prepared to ask for help and are prepared to be educated.

And then you have that other layer of people who very often are saying: 'Why should I work? I can't see the point.' There is no shame attached in not working. 'In fact if they give me a job in the city centre that pays me £19000 a year, my mates are going to laugh at me. They go: you mug, you now have to pay your rent, you need to travel to the city centre, you can't hang out with us during the day, you don't have any more money than us, in fact you have less money because we do a little bit on the side.'

It's these kinds of people that you need to break into I think, that don't receive an excess in services because we need to understand them because we don't understand them. In order to do that, to deliver services and projects that do that, that help to change that culture and bring these people into education and work and do preventative work with young mothers and their children to stop them just rolling off the production line decade after decade, that is an expensive thing to do.

For Alan, and many service providers, the moral elements of the social exclusion discourse meant that they regarded many single mothers on benefits to be part of the category of the less deserving poor. In addition, their identities as non-working, welfare receiving working class individuals marked them out as culturally deficient in the context of work-related and life skills and seemed to give justification to many service providers to treat the participants as less worthy than others who might not work (Sunley *et.al.* 2006). The dominant discourse on social exclusion and its related perpetuation of the culture of dependency seemed to imply, to many service providers, that most single mothers on benefits in Woodland View could and should take up paid employment but were either unwilling or unable because of lack of ability both in terms of individual and educational predisposition. As a result these women who did not know how to work needed to be taught appropriate behaviour and to accept the authority of service providers. Conversely, while the upcoming section outlines that many participants stressed the fact that they embodied a number of class and/or culture based characteristics, many participants felt they were reduced to the role of 'working-class poor' when they came into contact with employment-related programmes such as the Work Programme or the NDLP staff. Many staff considered the majority of their clients to be part of a working-class culture that had receded since the 1970s but had somehow managed to re-establish itself.

Key informants such as Sophie, a Work Programme employee argued that they were part of a '*class of third generation welfare recipients.*' For Sophie and her colleagues stereotyping had become part of the interaction with many of their clients and even though they made attempts to differentiate between different types of single mothers, issues related to identity often seemed to linger just below the surface and merged with ideas about welfare dependency, a culture of poverty and the underclass. This idea that the working class of Great Britain has collectively been replaced *en masse* by welfare recipients evokes ideas about the culture of dependency. It implies, based on a supposed collective attachment to low-skilled, manual labour, that individuals are somehow less able to become part of a pool of individuals vying for higher-paying work

and are somehow culturally deficient. This is problematised by Nicky, a Work Programme engagement consultant, who asserted:

These women have really low self-esteem because they have never done well in school and their parents never saw it fit, to tell them that education is important for getting a good job, for having a career because of course they were working in factories most of them.

And now it is difficult for us to teach them otherwise because of this culture not just that it's important to work and to be proud to work and not to want to rely on handouts for the rest of their lives but I think it's more important because we have to re-train, basically re-train generations of negative ideas about education because of course they can't get factory work anymore or if it's there it's not as well-paid as it was back then. They don't have many choices really. They will just have to take any old job that pops up.

With the Work Programme now responsible for the delivery of employment-related services, additional possibilities to explore the contested nature of welfare and social exclusion are presented. Staff at the Work Programme and other companies like it, are caught up in the dominant discourse of social exclusion. Statements like Nicky's above highlight the lack of critical engagement with this. This is problematic because, with a focus on paid work, the realities of the low-paying, insecure jobs usually available to participants are largely ignored. While some staff raised concerns related to these types of jobs, most were eager to stress the redeeming qualities of paid employment.

Amy, a Work Programme training facilitator visited the Woodland View office on a number of occasions. She usually worked at the London headquarters as a facilitator of employment and training sessions for staff, and she had ventured to their City office to give staff working in Woodland View a 'pep talk,' as she called it. She considered the local staff to be unable to get 'people to sign up' and felt 'unhappy' employees did not quite understand the importance paid employment played in the lives of poor people. She told me:

I know those people, they need to get more training and then they can do different types of jobs. But it is a problem to get them both in the door and to get them ready for the workplace. This is why it's so important that we run these workshops because we teach our staff how to engage with people who have those cultural inclinations not wanting to work. But work, work is so important. Any job, any work is better than no work at all.

What many of these staff failed to appreciate was the fact that poor working mothers were often not better off working in low-paying, insecure jobs, which rarely promised much career advancement. In fact, poor working women frequently report

higher levels of economic and social hardship than women on welfare (Edin and Lein, 1997) because of increased stress associated with long working hours, low pay and problems in securing and maintaining child care.

However, as a result of the moralistic undertones reinforced through the dominant discourse of social exclusion, more single mothers on benefits are likely to choose low-paying jobs, even if it means sacrificing the well-being of their children (Hays 2004, Morgen 2010), particularly if there is a lack of adequate child care and less financial gain than living on benefits. Therefore, the dominant discourse and some of its associated policy initiatives in fact perpetuate exclusion rather than alleviating it. Almost all Work Programme staff interviewed believed they were helping single mothers to achieve a better life by getting them off welfare and into paid employment because most believed that paid work is the best route out of poverty. This echoes Morgen's (2010: 90) research on poor families and welfare reform in Oregon. However, in the case of Work Programme staff as elsewhere, in the contestation between paid work and unpaid work the value attached to paid work meant that its benefits almost always outweighed its costs for them. Staff member Harvey explained how additional considerations linked to social exclusion added credence to his belief that poor single mothers were better off once they had taken up paid employment.

Well, I think in terms of what we know about single parents and their opportunities for either employment or work or having the kind of material standards that would allow them to participate in most things. They are obviously, clearly on the *whole* going to be disadvantaged given that their situation is what it is. But I think they will be better off if they work.

This sentiment was echoed when Sophie, one of Harvey's colleagues, added that for many of her clients and potential clients it is the exposure to education and work-related activities that would lead to a change in the inherited pathological features of class and culture. Here, the connection between the perceived benefits of employment and alleviating perceived class-based and/or cultural deficiencies emerged more clearly. Sophie argued that:

Our clients don't like school and they don't like work. It happened so quickly over just thirty years. Working class people liked their manual labour but didn't like school because they had no need for it or had bad experiences with it. Now it is worse because they don't like work either. How do you change that? We get them into the door. We give them life-skills. They learn how to become self-confident, how to dress for an interview, how to write a CV, they talk about their experiences in life and how they can use them to get a job. We are a greenhouse and provide an environment where people can be nourished and flourish.

Here, embedded assumptions about class and culture are clearly revealed, while services are positioned as a way to tackle these shortcomings. Sophie concludes:

We give them choices, good choices and if they take these chances with us, they will eventually learn and be able to better themselves and set a good example. Work for them is the answer, really.

This statement shows how values attached to paid work in the context of New Labour's welfare reform have been a significant factor in mainstreaming existing notions of the culture of poverty. The mantra of 'any work is better than no work,' has resulted in increasingly moralistic assumptions about life choices of participants. In addition, as noted by Hancock (2004: 56) assigned characteristics of single parents discussed by Sophie and many of her colleagues, serve to construct and maintain class and/or culture based social divisions, which often justify specific types of policy initiatives. The purpose of employment-related services then becomes one that returns single mothers on benefits to the paid labour market and lift these individuals into middle-class respectability.

The following section moves this discussion towards an exploration of participants' experiences in the context of living on benefits. The experiences of many participants differed greatly from the way they were portrayed and described by service providers. I do not argue that service providers were uncaring, but I contend that there was a lack of nuanced engagement with many issues of concern for the participants.

5.4 Talking to the hard-to-reach

5.4.1 Introduction

It's demoralising," one woman said, describing her experience. "Degrading and humiliating treatment," added another. "A complete waste of time," and so on, and so forth. I have been sitting in the waiting area at the Work Programme for the better part of a day and chatted to women attending a variety of employment-related sessions ranging from preparing a resume, dressing for interviews, job searches and career advice. In fact the most common experience seems to be disillusionment and the feeling of 'not being good enough.' But I often hear statements of: 'I should get paid.' When I asked to expand the women tell me within hearing of Work Programme staff 'cos I raise my kids and that is work,' while another notes: 'If I don't raise them I pay somebody else to look after them. (Fieldnotes, February 2007)

My exposure to the realities of employment-related services and their links to the lives of single mothers on benefits began in February 2007. As discussed in previous sections, underlying concerns connected to class and/or cultural characteristics of single

mothers on welfare, rather than understanding the disadvantages of structural inequality especially related to employment and educational opportunities, permeated many of the relationships that participants of this ethnography had experienced.

The aim of the following section is to explore how single mothers on benefits in Woodland View experienced the dominant discourse of social exclusion, while placing these experiences in the context of receiving the specific employment-related services outlined in the previous sections. This last section serves as a platform to let these women describe to what extent, if any, their realities are accurately reflected in these policy initiatives.

There are both practical and moral concerns discussed by participants and more often than not these overlap in a variety of ways. The practical concerns have to do with paid employment and access to a variety of jobs. The moral concerns are mainly couched in terms of values, beliefs, class and culture. Of particular interest for many participants were two issues: the fact that they should get paid for the task of raising their children and the understanding that they were morally evaluated by service providers for not taking up paid work. Exploring these concerns, many participants engaged in processes of moral evaluation as well. These could include aspects of class and/or culture and often found expression through tensions located within spatial dimensions of Woodland View. These issues, already explored in chapter three of this thesis, become relevant here in terms of the degree to which some participants labelled others as more or less deserving of benefits.

5.4.2 Realities of low-paid jobs

Debts

Credit Union	£ 3533	+ Int.
Sky	£ 86.64	
Capital One	£ 117.35	
Housing	£ 308.81	(23/7/07 - 25/1/08)
J.V.L.A.	£ 80.00	
	<u>4125.81</u>	

Income

Working Tax Cr.	211.09
Child Benefit	169.20
Salary	600.00
	<u>980.29</u>

Outgoings

Rent	325.67	Ins	12.00
Council tax	83.03	Bike Ins	17.60
Gas	60.00	Retro	20.00
Electric	40.00	Food	<u>360.00</u>
Water	40.00		996.30
T.V / Phone	18.00		
License	20.00		

(Budget, Ruth 2008)

It is 8pm on Thursday and Ruth has just returned from a twelve-hour shift at the nursing home, where she is employed as a care taker. She has been working there on a part-time basis for the past three years. But to me, it seems she is always working. If anybody working less than thirty-five hours a week is considered part-time, her thirty-five hours or less are the longest I have ever noticed. She earns minimum wage which stands at £5.50 per hour and told me she clears around £600 per month after taxes (Fieldnotes, October 2007)

This brief excerpt sets the tone for the following discussion on the realities of paid work for many participants. This excerpt also echoes much of the research conducted on lone mothers in the United States, where the discrepancies between available jobs and income are noted as major barriers to the alleviation of poverty and inequality (Edin and Lein 1997; Newman 1999; Edin and Kefalas 2005; Collins and Mayer; 2010, Morgen *et.al.* 2010). In the US researchers stress the significance lone mothers place on the value of paid employment, even if it results in increased degrees of social exclusion (Edin and Lein 1997; Edin and Kefalas 2005). This happens primarily through high costs or lack of child care and transportation, availability to mostly low-wage jobs and subsequent loss of time to be spent with children, family and friends, many have incorporated into these discussions the negative effects this kind of work can have on individuals (Edin and Lein 1997; Edin and Kefalas 2005).

Ruth had almost no flexibility in terms of her working hours, no time off provided if she was needed elsewhere and little in terms of career advancement. For example, on many occasions Ruth was unable to attend school plays or sporting events

because she had been called into work. Furthermore, because of her hectic work schedule she found no time to pursue her studies in terms of career advancement. In the lives of poor individuals these considerations are important factors that determine their ability to take on paid work.

However, even considering these factors, the focus on employment and welfare-to-work strategies not only neglects to acknowledge their inability to take up paid work at the particular point in time. Equally important, this position ignores the fact that, as several authors have pointed out, paid employment for many poor women is located in the area of in low paid, low status, insecure work and this does not necessarily guarantee that poverty is avoided (Levitas 1996; 1998, Barry 1998; Jordan 1996; Abrams 2002).

When I conducted my research, Ruth had been working on her NVQ3 (National Vocational Qualifications) healthcare assistant for two years and was yet to complete the required coursework. NVQs are work-based qualifications, where individuals prove they are competent to fulfil their job to a required standard. For Ruth, having a care job at a nursing care facility for individuals suffering from Alzheimer and Dementia, it would mean she would receive more pay for the same responsibilities she already performs. More importantly though Ruth would be able to enter into nursing training. There are five levels for the NVQs and level three indicates a broad range of work-related activities. As she told me:

Why should I bother? I know I'll never get a better job anyway and besides I'm always busy, busy with work, busy with the kids. When I get home, I usually just sit in front of the telly and hope the kids be quiet...

Julie is a single mother in her early forties, she is the mother to a five-year old boy and fifteen year-old daughter. She grew up on another estate in the City with her single mothers and her older brother. She was so severely abused by her mother as a child that Social Services removed her from her home on several occasions. Her earliest childhood memories consist on being beaten with planks of wood wrapped in tea towels and getting thrown down flights of stairs. Her brother did not suffer any abuse and this has caused friction and resentment in her relationship with him.

Julie told me that she was an alcoholic by the age of eleven, 'popping pills' and abusing other drugs by thirteen. After a turbulent adolescence interspersed with physically abusive relationships, Julie met her father whom she followed to Cornwall in search of stability. She lived in Cornwall for eighteen years and stopped abusing drugs.

In her late twenties she married and became pregnant with her oldest daughter. While she claimed her first husband never beat her, Julie admitted that he abused their daughter so severely that Social Services threatened to take her daughter into care, unless Julie was willing to leave her husband and press criminal charges against him. Facing complete loss of financial security after five years of economic dependence on him, resulted in two suicide attempts the scars of which are visible, constant reminders of her struggle to retain a sense of autonomy and agency. She referred to them as battle-scars that according to her showed that she in fact had the power to change the course of her life. At the same time she acknowledged that 'he (her ex-husband) held all the money, he controlled everything and I had *no* money, no family.' She got re-housed and even though she had paid partly for their house in Cornwall was left with nothing and left with only their clothes on their backs into a flat in rural Cornwall. Her daughter had just turned five. Julie picked up the pieces of her life and started working full-time as a sales assistant in a local clothes shop.

However, because of the ongoing threat her ex-partner posed she decided to move back to the City. It was here she met her second husband got married and after five years became pregnant with her youngest son. While this marriage was not riddled with violence, her partner left her shortly after she announced her pregnancy. At this time Julie was still working to support her family financially but it became more difficult for her to retain employment because of the increasing demands her children's health problems placed on her.

With the birth of her son following the end of her second marriage, the burden to support her growing family became overwhelming and she decided to take up residence in East Woodland View and focus on raising her children.

Even with the benefits she receives to support her family she states:

To get the money I get now like the rent that I don't pay but the council does, my council tax, prescriptions when we need to go to the doctors and that is around 300 pound just for them alone. I would have to earn at least 500 pound a week just to break *even* and I am still living on the poverty line...I would get sacked within three weeks. I don't wanna work in a cafe 'cos I've done it you know. I only ever had those shit jobs, Roberto asked me to work for him but he wouldn't be able to pay me enough. And then, who is going to look after the kids?

According to Duncan and Edwards (1999), the various components of this system are negotiated within a given set of circumstances, which can vary between different social groups or even within one particular neighbourhood. For example, the decision to take up paid work is juxtaposed with the importance of caring for their children

especially if the job opportunities on offer are mainly those at the low-paying end of the spectrum. In June 2007 Ernie, the Job Centre Plus Outreach worker in Woodland View, had pulled up a spreadsheet of available jobs in the City area. There were 129 in the greater area altogether. There were forty-eight positions located within the city boundaries, fifteen were calls for labourers, six for door-to-door canvassers, six for tele-sales, five for cleaners, five for shop assistants (including a Cosmetics supervisor), three for receptionists, three for health care professionals and a number of positions for Heads of Schools, Engineers and Finance analysts (Fieldnotes, 2007).

Julie and many participants like her were dealing with a complex, interconnected system incorporating both practical and moral concerns considering decisions about returning to paid work (Himmelweit and Sigala 2002, 2004). As noted by Duncan and Edwards (1999), these processes of negotiation incorporate policy initiatives as a secondary context but are not necessarily exclusively determined by them. Even though New Labour's New Deal for Lone Parents stressed the importance of paid work the realities of low-paid work has been experienced by all participants at many points throughout their lives. As noted by Julie among others, she knows what paid work entails because she has worked for most of her life until caring for her children became the focus.

In the context of this research, I argue that while specific policy projects might be considered as a secondary context, they assume great prominence when discussing policy expectations because participants know how much significance has been placed on taking up paid work since the introduction of the New Deal for Lone Parents. I believe it is of the utmost importance that careful attention is paid to the extent to which the dominant discourse of social exclusion affects single mothers, especially as it relates to the contested nature of paid and unpaid work.

Another participant, Sam has worked as a community volunteer for The Company for several years and believed that this kind of community engagement might open doors to take up paid employment with the City Council. However, as she now realised, even employment she once highly coveted was rather insecure in the current climate of competitive funding amongst Third and Statutory sector organisations. She contended that her work is raising her family and providing community support on a voluntary basis to those less fortunate in Woodland View. She works at a local Assisted

Living facility, as a cook in a local Community Centre and the Primary School and sits on several Community boards. As Sam told me:

Well, when I was working for The Company that's when I thought I wanted to work...I don't any more, mind you. Well, I thought...because I was there since the beginning of The Company in 1998 and I thought if I started doing this, it's a way in the back door of the Council...(pause) Because if you work in the Council you would be more of less....safe. I want to do Community Development work....

Yeah, that's what I want to do because I've done some Community Development training. But now I know that jobs in the Council....I mean you get funding for a year, two years and that's it. I know it's not even worth thinking about any more... We are planning on opening a greengrocer but that still wouldn't be a full-time job for me...I mean I have always worked, always. But I am not sure if it is worth it now. Not sure if all this bother is worth it.

I do so much volunteering, I have no time for anything else. And as Trish (daughter) tells me, I should get paid for being a mum anyway. But I have done it all: hairdressing, shop work, Bingo hall, bar, hotel, cleaning work, restaurant, care taker, office worker.... got fired when I couldn't make shifts 'cos when one of the kids were ill, left others. All the same, not enough to live on and no nothing else...

Sam's experiences are representative of many of the participants I got to know over the course of my fieldwork in Woodland View. The expectations placed on these women are very steep but in line with expectations that can be located in the literature around social reproduction and employment dating back to the 1970s.

After the end of World War II women were expected to disappear from the public sphere to return back into their homes. Only from the 1970s onwards a new era of self-determination for many working-class women was heralded. These women often had no choice but to continue to work in the labour market and this provided a sense of freedom that other women in more financially privileged positions gained only slowly. As described by Okley in *Own or Other Culture* notes, education and by extension work was seen as a means to find a husband who would provide financial stability, rather than the opportunity for these women to become self-sufficient through paid work (Okely, 1996: 147). However, for many working-class women, paid work was never an option but an integral component to financial survival. As the following quotes highlight women state that society expects them to take up paid work and there is little significant differences in these expectations.

For example Amy, a single mother of nine-year old twin boys, told me:

I've done it all, I worked as a hairdresser, then worked in the shops just down the road (Woodland View Way), then I done work at the Big Shop, then I worked at

Primark. Oh, when I was younger I worked at the local Pub. What else? I done cleaning, I done delivery work, I done...I worked concession stands, I done more cleaning work at a big hotel. Not much money, no time off and when I worked at the hotels we got time limits, twenty minutes to clean a room....Got fired there.

I worked all my life. I am not lazy. I am not a scrounger. Just because I don't work does not mean I don't work, you know what I'm saying, right? I work every day, all day long. I should get paid simple as that.

Other participants like Annette, a mother in her thirties with one daughter, carried this contestation further and affirmed:

I have had so many shit jobs. Shit jobs are for shit people. Shit people have no choice. I tell everybody, I tell those people at the Job Centre: You get me a good job, you get me a good job with good hours, with good benefits and child care and I take it. But they won't do it because I am a shit person, I am one of those people who is wrong for those jobs. So, I am not doing shit jobs right now. I do it again when Marianne is older. Then I go back doing the shit jobs. I am busy looking after her, raising her well...

Many of these women talked about their exposure to low-paying, insecure employment mostly in the service sector. There were also a number who, while considering paid work, would want to be employed in meaningful positions. Referring to 'meaningful employment,' Regina summarised its definition:

A *good* job, something that is *worthwhile*, like important. Like those jobs that give you good money and you get to do something that maybe changes things.

As highlighted above, many participants throughout their lives have part of a group engaged in low-paying work. For most this type of employment has not been translated into many of the benefits of paid work heralded by New Labour. In fact much of this paid work overburdens women who already struggle with additional factors such as looking after their children. Even though the women understand the negative ramifications associated with their non-compliance in taking up paid work, simultaneously, they reject paid work because they do not see the benefits associated with just *any* paid work. Placing much priority on the importance of paid work as a solution to social exclusion does not take into consideration the lack of adequate employment opportunities for many single mothers (Edwards and Duncan 1996; Crompton and Harris 1998; Duncan and Edwards 1999; Lewis *et.al.* 2001). To be able to care for your family and hold down a full-time job paying minimum wage can lead to greater degrees of social exclusion. As indicated in some of the research from the United States, Hays among others found that women engaged in low-paying, insecure

employment stated that their employment paid poorly, took them away from their children for long periods of time, and often made them experience levels of isolation based on demanding shift-work schedules (Hays 2004; Edin and Lein 1997). What many participants of my own research indicate, there are a number of mixed messages encoded in responses.

For example, Denise, a young single mother in her early twenties, who has worked a variety of jobs in the City, ranging from office work and cleaning jobs, to bar staff in a local pub. At the moment she is employed as a shop assistant and trying to make a living through a variety of financial support measures, including housing benefits and carer allowance for her son's disability. She states that:

When I was younger, anybody could get benefits. And I think that's changed now with them putting you on JSA and making you take jobs. Some people have to get a kick in their bums and they pressure you to find work. I think it's not bad. But there's gonna be problems 'cos there's people like me, that wanna go out, but who's gonna watch Kris? And I still need that little extra help to pay bills. That's not what you get now. I mean I am poor, and I really need the help. I make £6 an hour and I work crazy shifts. I don't get to see my friends at all. I'm always tired, I yelled at Kris, I don't get to meet people at the shop, they are all too busy, 'cos most have more than a job and I get to spend no more real time with Kris...

Within this quote Denise hit upon several concerns of hard working individuals who struggle to survive financially, working hard while raising their children. At the same time she touched on moral concerns linked to poor mothers on benefits, resorting to well-worn stereotypes already explored in this chapter and others. The third issue that arises out of Denise's discussion is her concern about not being able to spend *real* time with her son. The trouble with managing and adhering to such social standards becomes difficult to achieve.

Social exclusion, then, arguably becomes integral to an inability to achieve the gold standard of societal expectation, not only in getting paid work but also managing issues associated with employment: child care, proper housing, a good job. For many participants then the decision to take up any paid work was therefore part of a carefully considered process of negotiation, in part but not always determined by practical concerns. As for Denise, she got fired from her position as shop assistant after two months and resorted to take up more informal work in Woodland View, providing beauty treatments and hair-styling services. She is now able to set her own hours of work again, scheduled around Kris' needs. She is spending more time with her friends,

offering some of her time to the elderly women in Woodland View in need of a bit of beauty therapy. While her income has been reduced by around £50 a month, Denise has lost the haggard look in her face and stopped chain-smoking. In Britain, even among those in full-time employment there is a high incidence of low pay, reflective of growing wage inequality (Cousins, 1999).

5.4.3 'I should get paid for it...'

This focus on paid work has in many cases negatively affected lone mothers who are engaged in socially essential unpaid work, yet who are not compensated for their contribution to the economy (Lewis 1995, 2001; Millar and Rowlingson 2001). As a result, unpaid care and housework are devalued (Jordan 1996; Levitas 1996; May 1997, 2006; Barry 1998; Racke 2001; Gallie 2002; Pascal *et.al.* 2004; Bowring 2005). Julie was among many women who stressed the importance of acknowledging the importance of unpaid work rather than being treated as undeserving. Her statement summarises how many participants felt about their lives on benefits specifically linked to employment-related services. She notes,

I wish they did it like, that you get the money as a wage, you know. I wish they did something like that, but it is never gonna come to that because they need somebody to blame for that what is wrong in the country and single mums are good for that because we are made to feel like we are scum. But I know I am a good mother.

As a result, as noted by Julie and many other participants, the receipt of benefits has reinforced notions of deservedness. According to these, deservedness is closely linked to notions of class and/or culture. It is ideas related to welfare dependency, the underclass and the culture of poverty that have to a greater extent influenced the relationship between service providers and the participants of this research project. Most participants critically engaged with the dominant discourse and almost all traversed a tightrope of duty and moral evaluation.

Many participants like Julie have commented on their right to a living wage. They demanded the right to be paid for their job raising children and looking after their families. Here they are in line with many authors who have critically engaged with the value of paid and unpaid work (Atkinson 1996; Kelly *et.al.*, 1997). For women like Julie, the care of children is a part of the work she must do and for her this work is not a secondary and private matter. Her experience clashes with the policy expectations and those of service providers in the Work Programme and Job Centre Plus because they

bear little relation to the explicit goals of New Labour's welfare reform and its mantra of no rights without responsibilities. These issues all contribute to increase the tensions between paid and unpaid work that arose from discussion with many women. This shows the differences between policy expectations and lived realities of single mothers on benefits. I argue that participants lean towards acknowledging the tenets of universal benefits for all.

Natalie, a single mother in her early twenties, lived in a small, neat, one-bedroom apartment at the border of North and East Woodland View. She separated from Bobby's father because of domestic violence and was raising her four-year old son alone. A few months prior to my interview with her, Natalie started a cleaning job to supplement her benefit income. This work gave her an extra twenty pounds a week, on top of her £74 Income Support payments, which according to her was enough money to allow for small luxuries for Bobby. Natalie grew up with a father and mother who spent much of their time abroad, selling real estate in Spain, along the Costa Brava. She experienced her parents to be largely absent and uninvolved in her upbringing, engaging a series of au-pair workers to help with child care. She left her home when she was sixteen, never completed high school and worked as a street performer in Europe for a number of years. When she met her son's father, they moved to the City to settle close to his family in North Woodland View. Before the birth of her son, Natalie reconciled with her mother, who still travels for her work but spends more time East Woodland View with her daughter and grandson. For Natalie:

My life is my son, so, I don't, I don't actually *want* to work when he is little. Maybe when he is older, I don't know. I think they shouldn't make mums go back to work at *all* if they don't want to. We all *work* so hard. I want to be there to drop him off [nursery school], I want to be the first thing he sees every day. I want to teach him his colours. I *want* to do that. Now I do cleaning while he is at nursery, from that....you see, I think I should get paid for my...it is my job to raise him. I *should* get paid for it. If I would work, I would pay somebody to look after him...

Natalie went back to talk about the fact she was not in full-time paid employment and argued that:

And I *do* believe, touch wood, *my* son, I mean possibly coddle him too much but I can honestly can't see him walk around the streets carrying a knife when he is older. I do believe that's because if you....You got to have a bond with them. If you are *made* to go back to work at *all* or even too *early* that bond's gonna be broken. You know, I believe that they should pay us. They *should* pay us and stop *nagging* us about going back to work...They know we are working....

Her views were echoed by many participants of this research project who argued that especially when children are still young, mothers should have the right to stay at home to look after them and also expect remuneration while doing so. According to service providers and implied in policy expectations are notions that the presence of children intensifies the need for single mothers to take on paid work, while many participants have argued that taking on paid work in fact de-values and undermines their responsibilities as mothers.

Milly raised her two children as a single mother, after divorcing her husband. It was not until her youngest daughter turned twelve that she returned to work. She first took courses in computer science and accounting through a local Community Centre and finally got a full-time position as an accountant at a Community centre. She recalled the days of living on benefits and her choice of not returning to work until her younger daughter turned twelve.

I don't agree with that idea that you have to work. I don't agree with it. I personally don't agree with that. But if you do that, they wonder why so many mums....I mean statistics show that so many mums have gone back to work, yet look at the children, look at society. Look what is happening to it. Look at the anger in the kids. There is a social demise.

Milly continued to explore the importance of raising your children:

doing the crèche-child minding...no one can love your child like you can. So, how can you expect the child to feel that love if you're not there to give it? And then when they grow up? They might have the £110 trainers on but haven't had that 'How's your day been, darlin'?' and 'Come and tell me all about it.' And 'What's wrong?' You know, because that's what you do and if I had worked when they were little I might not have had that bond with them. I tell you again, I think we should get paid for that. It's *important* work.

Since returning to paid work, Milly stated:

Cos it's hard work, when you're at work. I feel it now and I *don't* have the same time for 'em and I'm just glad they're old enough.

I'm coming home, I'm doing the housework, I'm doing your dinner, I'm trying to find out how your day's been.....you know, you're suddenly doing a lot more....Either you lose yourself or you lose your kids. One of the two. No one's super that way, I believe. No one's super. You're either gonna lose yourself in this or you're gonna lose them. because you're gonna concentrate on work and a little bit on them. Now I do that and I believe I lost them....

Milly and other women consistently connected ideas of good motherhood to availability.

She told me that when her children were at school, she once received a phone call:

I can remember my boy twelve years old got knifepoint mugged at school and that's traumatic for a twelve-year old. I would've never, never forgiven myself if I would've missed picking him up from school. And I can remember many a night

being up 2 o'clock in the morning because that's when he felt like talking about it. You know, and you do because that's what you do *but* I wouldn't be able to do that if I had to work the next day... You *need* to be there for them. I *want* to be there for them... This is what the government needs to understand.

Duncan (2005) argues that while class seemingly appears to be important it does not very often seem to appear as part of a social identity in the UK. For Duncan, it is in activities such as mothering that class can be located and differences between the middle-class and working class can be observed. According to Duncan, ideas around the necessity to be a good mother are a factor behind why some single mothers choose to remain on benefits rather than enter paid employment (Duncan 2005). It is also motherhood that remains a social identity, highly regarded by many participants, at least until their children reach school-age. Duncan states that preferences of paid versus unpaid work are in fact socially and culturally created through a variety of factors, including the "development of career as identity", personal experiences with school and past employment and network relations (Duncan 2005). This echoes similar findings from research conducted in the United States (Hays 2004; Edin and Lein 1997; Edin and Kefalas 2005). For participants, combinations of any of these factors came into play when they talk about experiences and expectations of paid and unpaid work. For most women in this research project class plays a very important factor when discussing their engagement with different types of work. Class remains a shadow that lingers in existing social structures in Woodland View and beyond and plays a role in how participants engage with and experience both paid and unpaid work.

5.4.4 'They treat you like you're complete dirt'

The majority of participants engaged critically with the dominant discourse of social exclusion. They were aware of the emphasis placed on paid work and the lack of value associated with unpaid work. The day after one of her job search interviews I spoke to Sam who called me in a flood of tears:

Working people. It's the way you are treated...the way they treat like you're *absolute* dirt, you're the complete underclass, they treat you like you're a *piece of dirt*. And I, I really *hate* going in there. You have to go twice a year. I know it doesn't sound a lot but twice a year you have to go, you have an interview and they make you feel like that (indicated a small measure with thumb and forefinger) and I tell them the voluntary work that I do and they say 'If you do voluntary work why don't you go out and get a job?'

While the first two parts of this chapter described how service providers at the Job Centre Plus and the Work Programme regarded many of their clients, many of whom were also participants in this research project, this section has dealt with the realities of surviving on low-paying jobs alongside discussion on the value of unpaid work. Most participants have deliberated on moral evaluations when talking about welfare receipt. Here, as indicated in other research (Hancock 2004) processes of pathologising specific class and/or cultural characteristics of welfare recipients did little more than reinforce and emphasise the structural and individual divide that existed between service providers and participants.

The effects of pathologising certain characteristics of class and/or culture were understood by many participants. Julie argued that the government should acknowledge the fact that she was raising two disabled children. By the time her daughter turned eleven she had developed debilitating health problems, partly attributed to childhood abuse and Julie's son was diagnosed with several medical conditions before he was even born. Her first husband had choked their daughter on numerous occasions resulting in internal injuries to her brain and neck area. She suffers from seizures and epileptic attacks. In addition, she had belatedly been diagnosed as mildly autistic. Furthermore, she experiences anxiety attacks which manifest themselves through OCD-type behaviour, like self-harming and hair-pulling. Her youngest son is also epileptic, suffering from haemophilia and ADHD and he has to take more than seventy pills per week.

While both attend their local school, Julie is called to their schools daily because she has to administer her son's medication personally and frequently her children experience medical emergencies. Throughout the fieldwork I have conducted our interviews at least twice a week in Primary and High schools because Julie wanted me to observe first-hand the demands placed on her because of her children's medical and emotional needs. The tensions that are created and retained in the context of paid work and unpaid work place immense stress on women like Julie. She noted:

I want the government to acknowledge single parents that look after disabled children and not keep hounding them to go back to work, not like threaten them that they will stop my benefits if I don't go to these interviews. I took the kids in with me and I told them that if they find somebody to look after all the hours I am at work and if they find me a job where I can take off if they get sick and if they find somebody who is qualified to administer his drugs and you find somebody who puts up with their moods and their fighting and self-harming and then you tell me what is cheaper: me staying at home looking after them or finding somebody to look after them while I am at work and then leave me too knackered at night to

look after them and that woman just looked at me and said that I should get a job to set a good example for my kids. I told her that I am setting the *best* example by raising them. She just looked right through me....

Here both practical and moral implications of taking up paid employment were illustrated. Julie and her need to stay at home to look after her children was contrasted with the expectations placed on her through the NDLP around taking up paid work to set an example for her children. Her role as a caregiver to her children stands in stark contrast to policy expectations. As noted by Holloway (1997), “if we are to improve the odds that these women will rise out of poverty, . . . we must devise more effective ways to guide them along preferred paths” (Holloway *et.al.* 1997: 204). As noted by Evans (2006: 32) in her work on white working-class women and their children in London, ‘middle-class people behave as if they do working-class people a favour, educating them, teaching them how to live a ‘proper’ life and then wondering why it doesn’t work’. Contrary to her findings that there is, ‘working-class people’s resistance to this process, a resistance which is born of a defiant pride about the value of common life and values’ (Evans 2006: 32), my own research painted a rather different picture. While there was defiance as can be noted in many of the excerpts in this chapter there was also a high degree of compliance, of understanding that, as summarised by Ruth so eloquently: ‘it is what it is. No matter how hard I try I will always be low.’

These considerations are very important, particularly in light of contextualising policy expectations and lived realities of participants. Women expressed their understanding of processes of othering with their dealings of most categories of service providers. Here it is also important to know that these women acknowledged their complicity in reinforcing pathologised characteristics of class and/or culture. As Mandy told me:

When we met back in, when was it? Yeah, back in June [2007], remember when I was so angry ‘bout Stacy getting something extra? I don’t remember even what it was. Think ‘twas about £20 extra or so. You remember that? And I was thinking, when I was so riled up that it ain’t right, it ain’t right I should be mad at *her*. That’s the worst, ‘cos you *know*, you **know** it’s not *us* that is wrong about us ourselves but it’s the system doing us wrong. All that they tell us and then I go on and talk likes them....

In this statement by Mandy the lines are blurred. Mandy views the dominant discourse as an external phenomenon with which she strategically engages and internalising it, accepting it as an accurate representation of social reality. The following passage further demonstrates these intricate links as they exist side by side in the experiences of

participants. I met up with Julie after she had a discussion with her friend Alex, who received additional financial support for some of her children. Julie was clearly angry when we sat down to have our bi-weekly coffee chat. Seated with her cup of latte she launched into the following monologue:

No one is gonna admit they're the ones that bring it down, no one it gonna admit that they are the ones that are wrong and there's always someone else you can blame so you don't have to blame yourself and you don't want to be classed like one of them people but fact is we're all classed like that 'cos we're on benefits, innit?

And I think society thinks it's not their *problem* if you need to care for your children, they think you should have a job because that's what proper people do and then you think the same way about people who are *not* like you and don't do things the way you do 'em and as I said before there's always somebody else who's worse off than you and then you can beat down on them.

Julie's view resonated with many participants. Here we can locate the realisation that the dominant discourse of social exclusion in part shaped her beliefs about herself and others. Julie elaborated on her opinion by introducing the example of her friend Alex to illustrate the difference between herself and other women. She considers Alex to be less deserving of state financial support, based on specific parameters based on relationship and employment status. Even though she has not engaged in the formal labour market for a number of years and her past marriages had both broken down, Julie uses both to stress differences. She further expanded:

But society thinks that if we can't pay for our children then we shouldn't have had them children. (Pause) I was in a relationship, I owned my own house, I never thought I would be divorced but there are women over there that never were with someone, they never bought their own house, they never worked and they got kids by all different fathers.

As long as she has money for her dope and her fags her children don't matter, they didn't even get a birthday present. And she's got six kids, three at home and three moved out. And I got another one of my mates she got two kids and she's on benefits. Her kids have mild disabilities and there's not way she would ever work 'cos she's lazy. She's on full benefits, full DLA, full carer's allowance and she's met this bloke off the Internet and he's living with her and he's working and she's nine weeks pregnant and they've only been together three months. Social'll pay for that baby. They are just so needy, they are too lazy, they stay at home all day. They should get off their arse. I'm not like *that* and I don't wanna be like that. I don't wanna be around people like that. I don't want them dragging me down.

Julie describes in the quote above the relationships she has with two of her closest friends in Woodland View: Suzy and Alex. This excerpt shows that for most women the effects of pathologising aspects of class and/or culture were multiple and can include a process of dis-association from class as discussed by Skeggs (2001:77). At the same

time, while there are seemingly differences between individual participants, there are more commonalities than some like Julie are willing to acknowledge. This becomes more apparent where for example Julie erects barriers between herself and others in similar positions. In turn her friends and acquaintances engage in similar processes to a greater or lesser extent. There are differences in their attitudes with Julie using moral evaluations of other single mothers and both Suzy and Alex understanding that these evaluations are applied to them.

For example, Suzy is one of Julie's closest friends in Woodland View and she lives just up the road from her house. Both families spent a fair amount of time with each other, with their younger boys being particularly close playmates. Suzy has recently given birth to a baby girl whose father has since left her for another woman. Her marriages broke down because of the violent abuse the family experienced at the hands of both former husbands. While she looked after six children altogether, only four of them were biologically her own from two marriages. The other two children were in fact step-children (a son and a daughter) from her first husband. Both have since left the household but are still regular visitors and very fond of Suzy. They both credit her for keeping out of trouble in the neighbourhood and staying in school. Her oldest step-daughter, Mandy has become a hairdresser and works in a well-known beauty shop in the City while her step-son Tonio is training to become a car mechanic.

Suzy, a divorced mother of four states:

They shouldn't have them kids if they look after them. I know I had mine only because I was married. Not my fault they left us. But some of those women....You should see them. Smoking fags all day and drinking their lager...

Alex is another one of Julie's friends and neighbours in East Woodland View. They have been friends for a number of years but this has not stopped both from bad-mouthing each other whenever I speak to either of them. Lara neglected to mention that Alex in fact has two biological children and raises her stepdaughter Britney because the father has been incarcerated for aggravated assault and battery. At the time I conducted the interview with Julie, from which the above quote was taken, her friend Alex had been pregnant for just over two months. The quote below was taken from one of Alex's interviews after her youngest daughter Sydney was born nearly seven months later. Sydney has Down Syndrome, while her son Logan has been diagnosed with Asperger's

Syndrome and her daughter Britney has ADHD. In most of our conversations Alex stresses the importance of moral evaluations by arguing:

You know how it goes. They tell us we're scroungers, we tell each other we're not but behind our backs we're at each other's throats...and all about some extra pennies, all about hoping you don't get classed like of them.

Trish is another participant who continues this theme of acknowledging moral evaluations yet applying them to other women:

When I saw how she was going on about like she's not like one of us I was mad, I tell you that. There's no way she's better than me. She's getting her giro like the rest of us, like all her family. They all do it but they just think they are better than us...But she's just loafing about with her mum all day, doing nothing....

The following section highlights the distinctions that were made between Julie as more deserving of benefits than others who are considered scroungers. She provides an example of a strategic use of the dominant discourse:

You know I am not some single woman sitting on her arse all day doing nothing and watching soaps. But I tell you I find a lot of the parents in Woodland View are *lazy*, very lazy. I mean that's one reason I don't hang out with many 'cos they don't do nothing to help themselves. They just expect everybody to do everything *for* them but I think if you want something from life you got to bloody *earn* it, you got to *work* for it. I am a single mum on benefits and that doesn't make me a bad person. I was forced being a single mum because both my kids are disabled and the men who fathered them couldn't be bothered with looking after two disabled children. It's not my fault they are disabled you know.

However, she also notes that,

Every day I'm being punished, I'm being punished for the way society *is* and the way people think about me. Society thinks I am scum and I am a scrounger, that I am lazy and good for nothing and that I'm sitting on my arse all day. But I tell you something, you look at my Nicky, she don' hang around street corners and intimidate people, she don't drink and do drugs, she doesn't go around stealing from shops, she doesn't smoke. She won't be on the dole when she leaves school. Straight from leaving school she is going into an apprenticeship because that's what she wants to do and I help her to get there.

This highlights how the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion is at once contested and embraced. These tensions were deeply embedded in many narratives, indicating that there might be a need for more critical engagement with discourses on welfare provision within the context of applied social policy. Julie's monologue is one example of how participants attempted to de-construct the contradictions of the dominant discourse.

To revisit Sam, a single mother in her forties represents an example of individuals who can be described as crossing certain social boundaries within Woodland View. She has been quite engaged providing time and support to a variety of groups in East Woodland View, mostly looking running arts projects for the elderly. With the arrival of The Company Sam was recruited as a resident volunteer and continued her work albeit increasing the number of projects on offer. It was during the summer of 2009 that during our discussions Sam started to focus increasingly on perceived differences between residents in the various Woodland View neighbourhoods. Even though Sam had the experience of association with The Company in a more formal way than other participants in this chapter, she was by all outward appearance a real ‘Woodlander,’ even if she was born on another estate in the city. Her knowledge of the area afforded her an ‘outside view’ as she called it and her participation in a few research projects gave her the academic clout to expostulate on perceived differences based on geographic location. I noted earlier that among many residents North Woodland View is considered a “bad neighbourhood”. I argue that in fact specific policy initiatives have resulted in stressing these perceived negative associations rather than eliminating them. Sam stated:

And you never will, you will never crack them [North Woodland View] because they are serial....they’ve been on the dole, never worked and it just goes on from generation to generation. The girls have babies at sixteen, the mum’s a grandma at thirty-two and a great-grandma at fifty-four, it’s just constant...generation after generation. I was thirty-two when I had my first one. I’d say on the estate there are about *twenty* hard-core families and they are all related in some way, second cousins or whatever, they’re *all* related and they all do the same thing, generation after generation. And then there’s people like me, I’ve been volunteering here for fifteen years but you’re treated like you’ve stepped on something....*I* think it should be recognised. I have a certificate for my work that I’ve done for The Company...but when I go for job search interviews they do not recognise my work, they treat me like they do people who’ve not done nothing with their lives. And they know I’m not part of that culture like those across the road (North Woodland View). They are a different class than us over here. You know they are just by looking at them. I know that ‘cos I’m over there most days (Sam volunteers at a local community centre in North Woodland View).

Sam and involvement in The Company did not affect in positive ways her relationships with project workers from Job Centre Plus and the Work Programme. Within the above quote are embedded webs of information related to family values and work ethic, with Sam noting perceived differences between herself and individuals from North Woodland View. Sam argues that culture and surrounding notions of class set her

apart from North Woodlanders. In turn, she is frustrated that project managers are seemingly unable to make distinctions between their clients. As Sayer notes, 'the moral significance of class ...cannot be disconnected from attributions of worth and value and therefore forming unequal possibilities and constraints for individuals' (Sayer 2005).

As described by many women who took part in this project, the receipt of welfare is about duty and deservedness, paid work is considered good in a moral sense and considered valuable as a tool to increase social standing. In this vision, paid work is the basis of both the good society and the good, responsible citizen. In contrast, for poor, single mothers, the receipt of welfare and the focus on the importance of paid work and the lack of financial value attached to unpaid work means that work, both paid and unpaid then is not exclusively economic but imbued with symbolic value of a moral and cultural kind. When faced with issues surrounding paid employment versus the receipt of benefits, most participants were able to explore these topics with a high degree of insight. This is the key to why ethnographic exploration and anthropological understanding are so important to this thesis topic. It emphasises the challenges, constraints and opportunities that poor single mothers on benefits face, while traversing the realities of policy.

Conclusion

The contribution of this research is to explicitly explore the complex circumstances leading single mothers to take up and reject welfare benefits and/or paid employment. This chapter analysed, beyond rather simplistic calculations of the relative financial benefits of welfare-to-work programmes, how is the life of single mothers on benefits and illustrates how social policy initiatives affect the lives of these individuals. The majority of participants believe that raising children entitles them to economic support by the State. At the same time, many participants seemingly contest and engage in processes of othering.

Overall, this chapter served to highlight contrasting meanings associated with welfare receipt. It showed that there are varying degrees of critical engagement with the dominant discourse of social exclusion. While service providers showed little interest in challenging it, participants questioned it most notably through emphasising the tensions that exist in terms of the value assigned to paid and unpaid work. As much, as many participants draw on dominant understandings of welfare receipt, they also represent an

oppositional stance. Given their often limited economic options, this should not come as a surprise. But it is rather surprising that these participants are the majority, in contrast with the research conducted in the United States where many participants have been less likely to question the validity of welfare reforms from the 1990s onwards (Hays 2004; Edin and Lein 1997; Edin and Kefalas 2005).

While the focus of this research is on exploring New Labour's social policies, it is equally important to note that with the election of the Coalition government in 2011, this trend of moral evaluation has been reinforced. However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore any effects on the participants in the context of welfare reform measures introduced under Cameron and Clegg. In addition, the moral evaluation is not only limited to the receipt of welfare but as the following chapter will show, also to contrasting meanings associated with consumption, class and taste.

Chapter 6

The Morality of Consumption



(Jenni, July 2007)

Jenni's story:¹⁷

You know it is just the way they look at us. You know, dressed the way we do...you know...But I think we look better. And they look at my rings, I know they do...but it's me rings and I'm proud I have 'em. And I'm proud to come from here. We're not scum. I got the rings from me mum and sisters and I wear what they don't wanna wear and it's nice to have 'em.

Mornings I ask what she's gonna wear and I take the ones I like best and I do that

17 Jenni, the fourteen year-old daughter of a participant shares a small three bedroom house in North Woodland View with her mother and three siblings. She spent much of her time trying to escape estate life on the buses with her friends by travelling to another city, located miles away. Her mother Monica struggles financially, to keep her four children clothed and fed. She smokes to suppress her hunger at times, since the lack of money prevents her from eating enough. Her children receive their free school lunches at the Primary and High School. Her son Logan has, over the course of the first year of my fieldwork, taken to hiding and hoarding food under his bed. Monica also tries to financially support two of her brothers, both of whom suffer from learning and mental disabilities. None of her ex-partners pay child support or are in contact with their children.

with my sisters as well. But sometimes they don't wanna give 'em to me. So I wait and take 'em anyway...Mum has got loads of jewellery. She got loads of it from my Dad when he was still there. He left when I was little but he gave her rings and bracelets and some necklaces. She took most of them to pawn 'cos she needed money for school things and my brothers hadn't given her any of the money they owed her. She was right mad at them, especially Marlon 'cos he's forever at ours and he's always asking to borrow from mum. She always tells him she can't give him any 'cos she gots hardly enough for us.

I want things but I can't get 'em. Makes me mad sometimes. Makes me wonder why I can't have 'em. A bit silly acting mad though, 'cos I know we have just enough and never more than that. Always were like that ever since I remember...I am not living like that when I grow up. I want to become a singer and dancer and then I buy all the jewellery in the world to give to my mum and sisters. Then nobody will look at us funny 'cos then I can do what I want. I won't never have *just* enough when I grow up!

Jenni's childhood and adolescence centres around Woodland View and her words touch on some of the crucial issues related to class-based social divisions and consumption that are embedded in many of the narratives of this chapter. As the daughter of a participant her narrative is full of references to the pervasiveness of discourses that pathologised class and/or the cultural characteristics of poor single mothers on benefits. While this issue has been explored in the previous chapter in the context of paid and unpaid work, Jenni, her mother and many participants have identified comparable concerns connected to consumption that will guide this chapter. The main thrust of this chapter will be the exploration of value systems of consumption and how these are connected to notions of taste, class and morality. In doing so it focuses on a wide range of actors, including different types of service providers and the diverse group of residents and participants located within Woodland View. The central argument of this chapter is that class-based social divisions in Woodland View are most readily experienced by participants through the visibility of consumption- particularly clothes and jewellery.

This chapter is organised broadly into three sections. In the first, I consider how processes of consumption have come to play such an important part both in reinforcing and furthering social divisions in Woodland View. This includes a theoretical exploration of consumption and class, where I will outline discussions around spending money and consumption and their connections to the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion. Of particular interest here is how the emergence of the "chav" discourse has found its way into more general discussions on welfare recipients.

However, equally important is an exploration of consumption more generally and the meaning attached to particular material goods in Woodland View.

The second section will show how project workers within statutory and third sector organisations and Managers of The Company and Company-funded local programmes engage in this process of moral evaluation. It is important to note that most service providers see the majority of the participants through the lens of financial deprivation and not as meaning-makers themselves. Furthermore, assertions inherently connected to the receipt of benefits, that there are no rights without responsibilities, resonate through many of the accounts of service providers. My arguments throw into sharp focus their assumption that because single mothers receive benefits they have to 'perform poverty' in set of conventions about consumption demanded by those who might never be recipients of benefits.

The third section will build on and draw from chapter five to place the experiences of single mothers on benefits in the context of their economic experiences, specifically in the context of consumption. This focus is important to provide a more nuanced understanding of how participants on benefits manage their money and to gain a deeper understanding of how the visibility of consumption affects their life experiences. More broadly, it addresses how the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion has influenced how single mothers on benefits are viewed by individuals both residing within and outside Woodland View.

6.1 Morality of Consumption: Theoretical Considerations



(Woodland View, Summer 2009)

Across cultures, social groups have been associated with specific types of consumption. For example, in the United States the representation of the ‘welfare queen,’ has come to be connected to urban street culture particularly of single, usually racialised women, with an emphasis placed on their display of gold jewellery and urban sportswear (Edin and Lein 1997; Bryner 1998; Hancock 2004). In the United Kingdom, the term ‘chav’, is a fairly recent phenomenon but has become part of vernacular language of the public in a relatively brief period of time (Jones 2011). Even though it passed its peak in popular depictions in the media, its impact has been immense comparable to similar studies conducted in the United States on the perceptions regarding media representations of ‘Welfare Queens’ (Hays 2004). This is an important factor in understanding the various responses to consumption patterns of poor women in Woodland View. All respondents in this research project actively engaged with the chav discourse. Despite the fact that participants bore the brunt of moral evaluation, the overwhelming majority of women did not contest its existence or the importance of the discourse itself. This is mirrored in research conducted exploring public perceptions of welfare recipients in the United Kingdom (Golding and Middleton 1982). In the context of consumption, particularly, as it relates to outward signifiers of excessive consumption, these concerns are important in better understanding how taste becomes a minefield of assumptions and moral evaluations.

What sets the chav discourse apart from other similar depictions cross-culturally, is the fact that being a chav denotes class and social status in equal measure. To be a chav does not necessarily mean poverty *per se* but it almost always means tasteless display of consumer goods. Therefore, even though many participants might aspire to achieve the ability to consume like chavs they are caught between a rock and a hard place, in equal measure scrutinised because they are poor and should not be able or allowed to consume and display goods and to aspire to tasteless consumption in the first place.

Social inequalities have increased in the UK over the past thirty years or so, with economic polarisation between the wealthiest and the poorest social classes. Whilst the mockery and derision of many marginal groups is now widely considered to be in “bad taste,” several recent studies have argued that the caricaturing and contempt of the working classes is encouraged and celebrated (Skeggs 2004; Gilbert 2006; Tylor 2008; Jones 2011). This recent work has emphasised how new discourses on class behaviour

associated with the term *chav* centre on issues of taste and consumption. From very early on in my fieldwork I was aware of the importance of the way in which Woodland View residents talked about each other in terms of how they looked, with jewellery and clothes being some of the seemingly most obvious outward signifiers of moral evaluation.

Wilk, among others, argues that consumption is:

basically a moral matter, since it always and inevitably raises issues of fairness, self versus group interests, and immediate versus delayed gratification (Wilk 2001:246).

Everyday spending is closely associated with morality, with taste and with class, and these affect choices and decisions about the allocation of money. These 'moral matters' are in many ways a more dominant reality for poor single mothers on benefits, rather than for individuals who have more money because they belong to a social group already negatively morally evaluated because of their failure to engage in paid employment. The amount of money many Woodland View single mothers have access to, determines to a large extent, but not exclusively, how money is spent. While there are also times throughout the course of any given year when additional pressures to spend money that might not readily be available exist, such as birthdays, holidays and unexpected emergencies, there are other more regular choices that are made, which can become subject to highly contested moral evaluations. Furthermore, the act of spending benefits is to a large degree influenced by outside forces, particularly the government that, as well as deciding on the amount of money individuals should receive, is also willing to comment on ways in which this money should be spent. These discourses attach specific meanings to the spending behaviour of those on benefits.

According to Ransome (2005) there is a connection between how you get and earn your money, and the level of consumption you are allowed to display. This sort of consumption seems to be turned on its head when looking at many participants. Single mothers on benefits in Woodland View receive very little money from the government but some of them manage to engage in a relatively high degree of what has been termed conspicuous consumption (Appadurai 1986). 'Low taste' conspicuous consumption is often associated with individuals of a lower class and is frequently regarded by many participants and service providers as wasteful and unnecessary. Wallace and Spanner in *Chavs: A User's Guide to Britain's New Ruling Class* state:

Jewellery-bling, bling, bling. Fabulously big, bold, brassy will be present. Chavs will wear their pendants outside any garment and on full display. Thick gold chains, Sovereign rings and big hoop gold earrings: nothing says 'filthy chavette' quite like a nice, thick pair of big hoop gold earrings. (Wallace and Spanner 2004: 18)

Tylor (2008) argues that the contemporary chav discourse illustrates how today's chav figure embodies in a condensed form a series of older stereotypes of the white poor (Tylor 2008). While these previous discussions of the white working class seem to have focused on appearance, today's chav discourse is distinguished by the perceived excessive consumption of consumer and branded goods. The media has developed identifiers that label their tastes as "bad," "vulgar" and excessive consumer choices. These discussions of chavs can be found in both the right-wing and left-media outlets. As a result, chavs have been identified as a homogeneous group of the non-respectable working classes (Skeggs 2004; Tylor 2008). This definition intrudes into the lives of single mothers on benefits who experience this discourse in their relationships with service providers, as well as with other people living in and outside Woodland View.

While many participants do not necessarily identify positively with notions of class, I argue that the chav discourse has managed to represent class as something pervasive and morally evaluative in their lives. Even if the participants reject the label of working class, their place of residence presupposes belonging to this social group. Woodland View women are not able to shake off this experience of moral evaluation because of their place of residence and their association with service providers who fail by and large to engage critically with the dominant discourse on welfare. As noted by Walsh (1997: 155):

working class means lack: of decorum and beauty, education and influence, knowledge and power; if it means *wrong*, as in uncultured, unskilled, unintelligent; if it signifies poverty and dependence: how can it be admitted, let alone celebrated? How can a language be created which does not reproduce these social stereotypes and stigmas? How can working class women present/represent themselves, without either functioning as the exotic and exceptional 'other' for middle class and ruling class women and men, or, in acts of self-presentation and representation, self-destruct by camouflaging our class roots as we head further and further away from these familial and political ties?

In the context of this research, I argue that the emergence of the chav discourse can, by extension, be located within a dominant discourse on welfare, reinforcing social inequalities through references to the underclass (Skeggs 2004, Hayward

and Yar 2006: 9-10). Skeggs (2004) has argued that the middle class in the UK uses the culture of others as a tool in their own self-making (Skeggs 2004:177). Reay (2007), in her research study on working-class children and middle-class imaginaries, stated that working-class students are 'positioned within middle-class imaginaries as 'the other' to a middle-class norm' (Reay 2007:1192). These processes of othering are not value-free, but might as Lawler (2005) has argued, are achieved through expression of distaste and disgust at while working-class existence (Lawler 2005:429). The processes of pathologising working-class culture are associated with consumption patterns. In similar fashion, social policy initiatives aimed at alleviating social exclusion, have first identified and then targeted specific social groups as being either vulnerable to, or experiencing social exclusion (SEU 1997, 1998). In the process, particular characteristics associated with class and/culture have become pathologised. These include among others language and particular material goods such as gold jewellery. For Skeggs (2004) this resulted in:

a form of representation, enabling the visualisation of the working class so that they can be recognised, whilst also trying to render them responsible for their own representation (Skeggs 2004:88).

She argues that this social division is useful in maintaining class divisions within society and that these divisions are drawn on the basis of respectability. Receiving welfare means you are caught in the culture of poverty, trapped in the cycle of welfare dependency. As I argued in the preceding chapter, there is an increased tendency in social policy to cast poverty in terms of individual and cultural terms. As highlighted in chapters four and five, Levitas, Lister and Silver have pointed out that this means poor individuals are described in terms of their individual shortcomings, or as culturally deficient, or different from mainstream society (Levitas 1998; Lister 1990; Silver 1995). As a result, Skeggs asserts that this position renders the working class as a whole as being “presented as literally useless, as a group as inept as they are dysfunctional.” (Skeggs 2004:94)

In the chav discourses, notions related to taste have taken centre stage. Bourdieu defines taste as a set of cultural preferences and aesthetic judgements and argues that taste in fact expresses the precise position of individuals in networks of power relations (Bourdieu, 1984). This is of particular relevance in the context of Woodland View since

residents are differently positioned in networks that are experienced and negotiated within and outside neighbourhoods. Bourdieu argues that taste functions to make social "distinctions"(1984:41). He observes that even when the subordinate classes may seem to have their own particular idea of 'good taste'...

...it must never be forgotten that the working-class 'aesthetic' is a dominated 'aesthetic' which is constantly obliged to define itself in terms of the dominant aesthetics... (Bourdieu 1984:41)

These concerns echo through the narratives of participants who have been located within the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion through their perceived bad taste and excessive consumption patterns. While there is no direct evidence within social policy documents that concerns itself with outlining specific notions of acceptable consumer behaviour, there are indicators that such notions exist and are utilised in shaping people's perceptions of poor individuals. For example, in the spring of 2009, I was visiting with participants in Woodland View and noticed a large billboard on the local bus displaying the following message.



(Crimestoppers May 2009)

As it turned out, this message was displayed only on buses running through specific neighbourhoods in the City, commonly associated with higher levels of criminal activity, unemployment and larger numbers of single mothers, like Woodland View and

Hillview. In conversation with the local bus company I was informed: 'It wouldn't make much sense showing the image in good neighbourhoods, would it now?' Further, there is acknowledgement that even though things might not change, there are many reasons to celebrate the possession of material goods that are imbued with more symbolic value than is recognised by outsiders to Woodland View. These symbolic values are one significant theme in Jenni's account that opened this chapter.

It is important to offer a more nuanced understanding from the inside of the value and meaning attached to specific material goods in contrast to the moral evaluations of perceived excessive consumption that Sayer (2003) and Miller (2001) argue are based on 'elitist prejudices rather than on empirical evidence of how people consume' (Sayer 2003:344). The value and meaning assigned by Woodland View single mother to pieces of gold jewellery and clothes, such as Nike trainers, far outweigh their particular price in the shops. These values and meanings are closely linked to moral sentiments, beliefs and social relations (Miller 2001; Appadurai 1986, 1996). In Jenni's description of the value she attaches to the jewellery she wears, many individual items have been gifts within particular relationships and clearly served to express commitment and feeling. These gifts provide a map of the history of some affective relations and as acts of consumption serve to express, solidify and maintain relationships (Miller 1997:45). At the same time, the fact that these individuals receive welfare benefits helps to establish and maintain social control. Through different kinds of consumption associated with chavs, social control can be linked to social reproduction of poor women, an issue explored by Skeggs (2004) and Reay (2007). This research project delineates that further degrees of social control are exercised by poor women within Woodland View. Clear markers seem to exist, to be understood and are perpetuated among participants and most can be linked to the dominant discourse on welfare and its concerns with social reproduction.

6.2 “Like Vicky Pollard, dripping in gold...”



(Valerie, her mother's cross, 2008)

Valerie once told me that she would never stop wearing her gold because ‘it means the world to me. Everything I have, everything I am, is in those boxes and I be damned if I don’t show it to everybody...’ Valerie is a sixty-five year old twice widowed resident of East Woodland View, who has lived in the same house since the early 1970s. She comes from a large family of working-class background. All the members of her family were employed at the local manufacturing plant until redundancies started taking their toll on her family life. Her father lost his job along with her brother. Neither of them were able to secure further employment in Woodland View. As a result her brother moved away from the City altogether, finding work in a factory along the West Coast of England. Her sisters married young after meeting their husbands at the local

manufacturing plant. All have since moved away from Woodland View to other neighbourhoods in the City. Valerie started her first job at Scott Dusters at age fifteen working on the shop floor. She enjoyed assembling products ranging from switchboards to motor engine equipment. She married at nineteen when she became pregnant and continued to work in Woodland View, working as a bar maid in the local pub.

After the birth of her first child she was able to secure a job as tea girl at a University and also started to take on additional cleaning jobs for members of faculty. By the time her first husband died she had already fallen in love with her second husband and had her first child by him. Her employment history continued to grow and by the mid-1980s included working in local and city-wide Bingo halls and cinemas, hairdressing, short-order cook, shop assistant and waitress. When her second husband died she was left distraught and barely able to function for several months. She learnt during that time that he had been unfaithful and fathered four additional children with another woman during their marriage. Because her husband had been unable to work because of a work-related injury the nature of which she never fully explained to me during fieldwork, he looked after their children while she worked. With his death Valerie had to give up her various jobs to be able to take care of her family full-time.

Valerie has six grown children, all but two who have semi-permanently moved away to another neighbourhood and she cares for several of her grandchildren. All of this happens in a smallish three bedroom house, with original wiring and fixtures from the 1950s. Her two adult sons, one of whom is mentally handicapped share one bedroom and three of her grandchildren share the second bedroom. Just recently her daughter, Trudy has taken up residence in the third bedroom along with her husband and two children after they were forced to move because of combined job losses. Valerie is sleeping in the living room for now. The house has felt very busy whenever I had gone for a chat but since Trudy lives there feels utterly claustrophobic. What little space there was before has now all but vanished in the onslaught of four additional people. This is not helped by the fact that the house had been constructed to sit below street level and never receives much daylight.

While she never had much money, she always 'made do,' as she called it, referring to struggles maintaining security and safety for her family throughout the years. One of the most important aspects of her life is her incredible collection of jewellery: not only gold but silver and costume pieces as well. And while the sheer

number of pieces is impressive, the stories linking them are even more so. When her mother died she received one of her crosses as part of her inheritance, her first husband indulged Valerie's love for garnets with some stunning rings and a necklace with a ruby pendant. Her second husband started a new trend of providing her with chain bracelets, cameo and sovereign necklaces. Valerie has continued to wear what some might call an excessive number of jewellery but contends that these gifts were well-earned and well-deserved reminders of a life lived well.

It is noon and I have popped over to visit with Valerie because she told me that most of her children would be out of the house and we could have a quiet chat. Not yet dressed Valerie ushers me in wearing her pyjamas and bathrobe, both shocking pink. I take a double-look because she is not her usual glamorous self and to my eyes looks plain without gold necklaces, bracelets, rings, clips, make-up and nail polish. She says smilingly: 'Not dripping in gold.' I laugh, sit down, accept the obligatory cup of sweet, milky tea and while she lights a cigarette I ask her to recount again the story of her mother's cross. I had heard this story on a number of occasions but I am continuously impressed by the fact that she regards this item as a symbol of things that matter most to her: family and the support it provides through all times. Valerie states:

No matter what happens, no matter what they say about me, my family knows me, I know them, we can rely on one another. They call me Vicky Pollard all they want, they never know what it means to show what love means to the world. I wear it all, the littlest ring, the biggest earrings 'cos they were from my kids. I love 'em dearly but they drive me crazy but I love 'em dearly and them people who's in power never understand that love. And that you wanna show it...

The second section of this chapter will show how service providers engage in the process of moral evaluation about the consumption patterns of those on benefits. Specifically, it appears that the receipt of welfare precludes the capacity to have choices in terms of consumption. This view is closely connected to asserting there are 'no rights without responsibilities', for those in receipt of benefits. I will argue that because single mothers receive benefits, service providers require them to perform poverty through a set of conventions about appropriate spending and consumption.

In one of our chats over lunch Amanda, a lone parent advisor at the Job Centre Plus stated:

I remember when I was on benefits. I had so much money for myself because I lived with my parents and I could spend this money on myself because they would just spoil my daughter rotten. It was great.

I know, I am pretty sure that there are many women who still do this now, you know, have all this money for free and then spent it all on themselves. They just don't look out for their future and I wonder what those kids *need*; I mean *need* those Nike's you know.

I never bought my daughter any of those things. My parents used to get her clothes from friends, it's more personal that way and they would've never bought those things for my children anyway. They were not wasteful but I suppose that is different too.

Some of those women I see here, the way they are dressed and their kids...it is like from a catalogue or worse (lowers her voice) like Vicky Pollard, dripping in gold. I know I shouldn't say this but you wonder where they have their priorities. Why do they waste their money like this?

The government has all those programmes where they can go back to work and they just won't do it. They could go to College or University but not many will do that. It is so important that one works or has a good education. Gold won't get you a good job. It will just show the world that you are on the dole, that you have too much money to spend, that you are lazy....

What this extensive quote shows is a definite understanding that paid employment and education would provide the best route to address social exclusion. Furthermore, this excerpt stresses the links between particular types of consumption, class and taste.

While Amanda could not tell me exactly how much money single mothers receive in benefits, she was quick to state that the money they received was generous because that is what *she* was able to remember from her time spent on welfare. It is important to note that discussions related to money in the context of the social exclusion debate remains highly contested and challenged among participants and service providers. There seems to be a widespread understanding that individuals on benefits are rather generously remunerated. In turn this perception accentuates the degree of moral evaluation that those on benefits are subject to.

Most participants, either in receipt of Income Support and/or Job Seeker's Allowance, were entitled to receive a maximum of £47.95 per week between 2008/2009 (Rights to Benefits 2009). Placing the content of Amanda's discussion into context to some extent the core of her exploration demonstrates the permeability of the boundaries that exist between individuals who receive benefits and those who have either not received them in the past or whose experiences like Amanda's had been very different. During some of our earlier chats Amanda told me that as a single mother she had a good

understanding of many concerns that her clients faced because she found herself as a single parent at a young age. However, one of the striking differences between her own and many experiences of participants in Woodland View was a matter of financial security provided by her family upbringing. For Amanda, having her first child and then a second one as a young unmarried middle-class woman, did not instil in her a deeper understanding of women struggling financially but brought forth middle-class values espousing visible outward displays of visible consumption particularly as they locally relate to the display of gold jewellery

Visible consumption and spending patterns have become a highly contested field. Mainstream ideas on what it means to be respectable have identified specific types of frugality and spending, such as those briefly mentioned above, which are considered appropriate to those with limited income (Skeggs 2005; Tylor 2008). These mainstream ideas are challenged by different ideas of individual choice, morality, taste and class by Woodland View single mothers who feel they do not receive enough financial support to provide adequately for the care of their families, but understand only too well the implications of receiving and spending benefits. In turn service providers comment negatively on their levels of education and its links with their knowledge of policy discourses and as a means to understand and engage with the 'system' of benefits. At the same time, service providers may also narrate their own abilities to critically place themselves in these discussions, their overall understanding of the wider world and their interest in improving living conditions for those who do not understand these discourses. For example Lily, a member of a local NGO in the area said:

...some of these women I met down at the Hall are something else. You would think that in this day and age we know how to eat healthily, but they are still getting their fry-ups for breakfast and giving their kids fizzy drinks and hardly ever any fruit. You would think we all know how important your five a day are but there are always people who don't seem to understand any of it.

And you can always tell who they are. They are always, I would say they are always the ones who have the gold and the Nike's and the pram, the best pram and then their kids have earrings when they are babies. It doesn't matter if they are boys or girls they all have their ears pierced. I know they don't get much money, not sure how much they even get in benefits but if they can afford all these luxuries....I think they should get their money in food vouchers and then they need to buy certain healthy foods rather than waste their money on just stuff, things that are useless. The baby will grow out of these trainers but they need a good start and good, healthy food provides a good start...

In the course of my fieldwork, I have heard many statements like the ones above, while at the same time many service providers considered themselves to be 'fair' in their assessment of the importance of paid work and consuming in a socially appropriate manner.

What discussions with many service providers have shown is that they do not necessarily engage critically with the fact that people very seldom wake up poor from one day to the next. There seems to be a misconception that poverty can be understood in terms of individual situation at one point in time only but, as Daly (1989) points out, we should consider their life experiences over time. This thesis emphasises this discrepancy and tries to understand the experiences people who are poor go through.

Leigh grew up just outside the City in a detached house overlooking parkland, with a father employed in the financial sector in London, a stay-at-home mother and a younger sister. Her father died at the age of thirty-one leaving his family saddled with debt and a widow whose sole financial support had been her husband's income. First they gave up some luxuries: the cleaner was let go; then the Jaguar, then the sporting equipment, the pony. Within a year, the house was sold and the family had to move into a Council flat located within the city-boundaries of the City. Leigh then just in her early teens lost her stability and financial safety she had taken for granted in her short life. She missed her friends and started skipping classes in her new school. She graduated from high school and started an apprenticeship as a secretary. She hated the work and began a new career as a care assistant in a local hospital. She met her first husband, got married and had their first child. During her first marriage she was a victim of domestic violence and finally left after her third child was born. Her ex-husband was born in Woodland View and she was content to remain in the neighbourhood because her children had their friends and family in the area. She continued to work throughout her first and second marriage and only decided to focus her full-time care on her youngest daughter because of health concerns. Leigh continuously reminded me that she was not 'council,' that she was indeed middle-class that she had 'married down.' Her sister moved to another estate in the City and has not been able to retain any of their middle-class background. Lesley works in administration at a University and her husband, Bob is a painter.

Their mother Mary, is still recalling the glory days of her own upbringing as the spoilt daughter of an Irish painter, whose name I never heard of and even after extensive

research neither Leigh nor Lesley are able to trace. This upbringing of vacations abroad and visits to museums and art galleries was interspersed with some formal college schooling but an early marriage to an eligible husband seemed to be enough for Mary: ‘That is all I ever wanted, all I really needed. I was beautiful, at least I was told I was and this made sense because I wanted to marry and not go to school.’ Mary never let her daughters forget that they are better than others, is disappointed in their choice of partners and is not particularly fond of their children who she feels embody slight traits of vulgarity. As she told me ‘they do not know any better but it hurts my ears to hear them use that kind of language and to see them dressed like that’. Mary was referring mostly to Leigh’s eldest daughter, who at nearly fourteen embraced the style of the day sported by many young women and girls across Woodland View: pink velour pants and matching hoodie, big silver hoop earrings and bold streaks of blonde and pink running through her hair. She topped off her hair with extensions, could not go a full day without using her hair straightener, used acrylic nails and very expressive make up. Her favourite TV shows included the ‘X Factor’ and ‘Britain’s Got Talent’. Her grandmother did not approve of her style of dressing, talking and recalled the early days of Leigh’s and Lesley’s childhood with nannies and riding lessons and ‘nice’ ways of spending your money and raising your children.

In light of Mary’s regret for the life she had lost her daughter Leigh, summed up her position in life up as follows:

I don’t *like* having to take the money. My second husband is always telling me that he works to provide for scroungers taking the tax-payers money like *me*. It was one of his good points. He doesn’t pay a single Penny in child support. Why should he? I’m living off all the tax he’s paid.

In the previous chapter I have argued that the government’s focus on the importance of money through paid employment stood in contrast to the lives of many participants who instead contest the current dominant interpretation of the relative value of paid and unpaid work. In this chapter, I add an additional layer of interpretation, that of the *morality* of consumption. While many participants barely make ends meet, surviving on very little money each week, many feel that they have *earned* their benefits. However, through additional processes of moral evaluations about how these women supposedly waste their benefits on luxury goods, service providers often feel entitled to pathologise spending behaviour of participants who, in turn, seemingly have to give up any right on how to spend their money. This is a trend that has been explored

in detail in several studies on women, welfare receipt and consumption patterns in the United States. As in the United States poor single mothers are afforded specific cultural characteristics. This creates and maintains a picture of a self-absorbed individual seeking immediate gratification and pleasure at the expense of future consequences (Hays 2004; Edin and Lein 1997; Edin and Kefalas 2005.) What becomes more apparent in this research is the fact participants are very aware that receiving benefits entails an automatic critique of their spending behaviour.

6.3 “I just get enough...”: Surviving on Benefits

This section contrasts the moral evaluations made about spending against the realities of living on benefits. While mainly concerned with how participants budget their spending, I also imply that punitive aspects of welfare receipt fail to acknowledge the fact that most individuals can manage to survive on this very limited financial support. This lack of acknowledgment happens despite ample academic evidence to the contrary (Rank 1994; Edin and Lein 1997; Duneier 1999; Newman 1999; Dohan 2003; Hay 2004; Shiple 2004; Edin and Kefalas 2005; Venkates 2006; Collins and Mayer 2010; Morgen 2010). Instead of displaying reckless spending behaviour the women in this research project struggled to provide for their families.

This is Milly's experience. She is a divorced mother of two and has lived in a neighbourhood bordering East and North Woodland View since her two children were little. Both are now in their early to mid-teens and Milly has been working in a full-time job as a book keeper spending most of her time worrying about her children's future. For Milly raising her son and daughter was a task that needed her full attention. She worked odd jobs, like cleaning and even dabbled less successfully in hair-dressing, to earn extra money to support their living expenses. This extra money, at that time meant the difference between barely surviving financially on the financial support the government provided and having enough money to have a treat on the weekends. However, this extra cash did not create a sense of financial security, a nest egg for times of emergencies or special events. Furthermore, unsure of government stipulations on additional earnings this extra income was a source of worry for Milly. At the time she believed she in fact committed welfare fraud. Milly remembers:

thinking back...I think it was something like £117 or £123 a week...I think it was £117 to begin with and then went up to £123. Out of that I had to pay the bills and bills were sort of £80 a week, electric, gas, water, council tax. I didn't have to pay,

TV,...I mean any bill you can think of is even now, possibly a bit more, but even more bills are around £80 a week. Possibly it was about back then around £60 or £70 a week. I had about £25 a week that had to go to groceries. That's why it was FarmSource because you would get more for it so, I had about £25/£26 a week for groceries.

Milly continued:

As long as the bills were paid, there was food in the fridge. 20p in my purse, I might still have that on a Friday, you know? There was nothing needed. So, that 20p wasn't so bad. It was only when it was somebody's birthday came up or something like that or they needed trainers or...you know...school uniform...Christmas. Then you get hit. They are the times when you would go 'What do I do now?'

I mean and you do, do dodgy things. I mean I remember I done cleaning for like cash in hand for £20 a week, which I never knew that time you was allowed to have anyway. [laughs embarrassed] So, I thought I was doing it like underhand but I could've declared that. Because that £20 was so much, it was so much to us. It was like madness.

That would actually get us....I tell you what, I buy some pizzas and on Saturday night we have pizza and coke and we'll actually go and get a video and we get two sweets. And that was our treat, you know? I actually buy them a bag of sweets or a cake. I remember, I never forget, when I used to get the £20 I used to buy a pack of three cakes and that was for after dinner Friday. I can remember looking forward to a Sunday because you had a nice Battenberg cake on a Sunday. And gosh, you're really looking forward to it, you know, it was such a treat and the excitement. The kids would say: 'We're gonna have pizza and we're gonna watch a movie....,' you know?

These quotes are important because they bring to life the discrepancies that seem to exist between assumptions made by project workers within both Statutory and Third sector, who believe that participants receive enough money to live comfortably, and the research conducted which presents a different story. In many instances, the stories compare to those in ethnographies, which explore the lives of poor women making ends meet (Edin and Lein 1997; Hays 2004; Morgen 2010). The thrust of these explorations stress the frugality and careful budgeting, both a daily reality of living on benefits. However, this chapter also seeks to place their realities in the realm of consumption. Here, the daily struggle to survive on a very low income clash with perceived notions on how to live respectably. These tensions will be discussed in the last section of this chapter.

For Leigh, the realities of managing benefits have become a source of much stress and anxiety. She avoids checking her bank statements and spends much of our interview times struggling to come to terms with the fact that she is heavily indebted,

even though she tries to keep expenses down. She describes her financial income as follows:

Right, I got one statement here. Do you wanna jot this down? I get £153.11 for my children, then I get £54.40 for child benefit, it's called child tax credit which is what *everybody* gets whether you're working or not, you get more for the oldest one and then it gets less and then I get £59.15 a week for me and that's the income support and that's it. That's what I get a week.

I spend around £120 per week on groceries and that is no luxuries. It is SmartPrice stuff. Okay, I might pick up a packet of socks or a packet of knickers for the kids or a bra for my oldest daughter. And then I got my car insurance which is £25.60 a month, for the telly, the phone and the broadband it's £45 and my water £26.99, TV license is £11.37, electric is £49 a month..... I can't find the gas but I'm sure it's a little bit less than the electric I think it must be around £40 a month and then I have the mobile phones top-up, which is about £10 a week for the two of us my daughter and me and then I got petrol which is £20 a week and that is just living... I know I could get rid off the broadband, I could get rid off the Virgin but the children need it for homework and things like that, I could get rid off the telephone (sighs deeply, pause...)

So, the money I have coming in is barely covering our basics. It's just basic living, that's without going out, that is without uniforms, shoes but they get free school lunches but they don't always like them, which is fair enough so they like some money sometimes to buy their own things and I know I got pets but to be honest with you the money I pay on pet food for the *whole* lot of them and that's three cats and a dog is £6 a week. I mean even if you take everything away the car and everything just my electric and gas alone is about **£90** a month just for that and then the water on top and it's just ridiculous...

Throughout most of our conversations Leigh talks about money troubles and how she deals with the expenses of raising four children on a very small financial budget. She expresses considerable degrees of anxiety linked to her level of debt. Again, similar issues were explored in several ethnographies from the United States (Edin and Lein 1997; Hays 2004; Collins and Mayer 2010). Here research shows that lack of financial resources lessens the ability to maintain a safety net for families, something that was to some extent represented in Leigh's story as well. Leigh's mother Mary, after the death of her husband, had lost all her financial security and could not even fall back on re-entering the labour market since she had never entered it in the first place.

As well as a deep understanding of the pervasiveness of moral underpinnings of the US welfare reform from 1996, these studies stress the pressures experienced by poor women in the low-paid labour market and the welfare system. All of these factors are likewise experienced by the participants of this research project. Leigh continues to outline her financial situation:

I don't know how much I'm allowed to go up to but at the moment I'm over £1000 overdrawn and that worries me because I don't like being overdrawn and then I have Christmas coming up and I just wonder how I'm gonna do this. It's £1,200 and something.... (pause) and it's just like going up and up and up... and now the cost of living is going up and I'm not getting any more money.

I mean it's ridiculous, a thing like a block of cheese, that's all my son eats, he doesn't eat meat and I have to buy a big block from Smartprice say I paid £3 for it and it's over £5 now and that's just *one* thing and I'm thinking only on top of my head now and then I have to worry about clothes because I had one starting nursery and the other starting secondary school and that's two lots of uniforms.

Thank God for my mum she paid and she helped me out but I just don't know, I don't know how I'll manage I just *have* to. Thank God for the overdraft... (pause). I don't go out, the last time I went out *on my own* for an evening out was New Year's Eve 2006 (It is now spring 2008.) I smoke, but 100 cigarettes last me three weeks, so that's five packets every three weeks and I buy them at ASDA and I buy twelve packets when I go there and that's around £20.

Both Milly and Leigh are faced with a very real daily struggle for financial survival and these constraints result in relatively modest wants and forays into consuming beyond basic needs. I collected dozens of near-identical stories like the ones above. The only exception was Sam, who told me that with all the financial support she receives from her ex-husband, simultaneously working cash-in-hand, she suffers few financial worries. The majority of participants face a monthly financial struggle to keep their families fed, sheltered, and clothed, while many scramble to identify, as Leigh put it, possibilities to 'scrounge and scavenge.' All but one participant told me that they were worse off financially when entering the benefits system.

The contrast between these financial constraints and anxieties and the perceptions of some service providers of the amount of benefits participants receive is stark. This apparent disconnect enables them to hold exaggerated perceptions of the consumption patterns of an entire social group. While participants take pains to emphasize the diversity of the analytical category of single mother, the women fall victim to the homogenising processes of moral evaluation themselves. The following section will look more closely whether these evaluations of consumption are experienced as a tool of empowerment or as a tool of oppression. It will then move on to explore how exaggerated perceptions linked to consumption are perpetuated within Woodland View.

6.4 “I’m not like ‘em...” Revisited



(Tori, July 2007)

While I am very interested in highlighting the economic adaptive strategies of single mothers on benefits making ends meet on a limited financial budget, the issue of how to survive financially for many participants was only significant as a tool to highlight the inadequacy of the financial support they receive. As noted in the previous section and throughout many studies on the economic strategies of poor individuals, “poverty is shit” is a theme that commonly occurs (Stack 1974; Edin and Lein 1997; Newman 1999; Dohan 2003; Hays 2004; DeParle 2004; Edin and Kefalas 2005; Collins and Mayer 2010; Morgen 2010).

In this research project, all but one participant stated that they struggled each month to keep their heads above water financially. For the majority of participants talking about spending their benefits quickly led to discussions about processes of moral evaluation. Tori is a young single mother of two children under the age of three. She was born and raised in East Woodland View, an area with negative associations in the collective history of Woodland View. It was been the site of several violent crimes while I conducted my fieldwork, and on several occasions I was attacked in this particular neighbourhood. Since the birth of her oldest son, Sean, she moved to an area formerly recognised as South Woodland View. She became very involved with the initial inception of The Company. Back in 2004 she secured funding for a variety of Company-funded projects and was employed by The Company until 2006, when she

was dismissed because of lack of funding. During this time Tori completed courses towards a degree in community development at a local University. Tori crossed boundaries between class and geographic locale that seemingly set her apart from other participants. Her story is important because she is a particular type of actor that help to better understand the nature of specific boundaries, be they geographic or class-based. At the same time, it helps to examine assumptions behind the way boundaries of class in the context of consumption are conceptualised.

I asked her one afternoon in the early summer of 2007, how she feels about being labelled a 'Woodlander' - the local version of a chav. This question set in motion the following thoughts, as Tori explained in detail what it means to be visibly identifiable as a resident of Woodland View based on outward signs like her love for gold jewellery and tattoos:

I'm proud now, I'm proud *now*. It is not a derogatory word... I mean 'Woodlander', being council. It goes back to all them social exclusion things, being on benefits. It's like calling somebody a Chav.

To me a chav...It's somebody with baseball caps and big gold earrings and slang language, you know...It's in the dictionary. It's not even a derogatory word nowadays. People toss it about.... (Pause) If I would be describing somebody as a Woodlander it's a person coming from Woodland View. It's not a derogatory word. It would be different to call somebody a slag or slut or something...(laughs)

Chavs goes back to council estates and Burberry clothing and track suits. ...It's the same thing asIf somebody was to call me a chav it wouldn't bother me. It would be like: Whatever. That's your opinion. As if your opinion could change my life, you know what I mean?

Middle-class people would call a chav, us lot. I could show you some people where you seriously get that idea. Like fifteen, sixteen-year old girls with babies in buggies, big gold earrings, possessional, like material possessions and things. That's what I mean you can buy the latest TV, and the latest play stations and all of that stuff...material possessions...

Yeah, yeah. It's important more so than for middle-class people. 'Cos people in Woodland View they like to think they are better than everybody else so they like to show... just 'cos you live in Woodland View you're not a council estate person. You know what I mean? Tryin' to...you can't deny the fact that you're coming from a council estate. You can't hide the fact but people do try and make out that they have more than what everyone else has, if you know what I mean.

There are several concerns related to the morality of consumption embedded in Tori's account. In this excerpt and others like it, she is making distinctions in terms of varying degrees of respectability associated with consumption. Vulgar levels of consumption for Tori and many other participants are most closely connected to the possession of

branded and material goods, like gold jewellery, electronic equipment, while respectable consumption is associated with its opposites. Every time I visit Tori she ensures that we sit down to a home-cooked meal, containing often locally grown organic vegetables, whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, quinoa, couscous. She only has fruit juices in her fridge and gives her children neither crisps nor chocolate bars. Her flat looks like a page from an IKEA catalogue. She smokes her cigarettes outside and complains about her neighbours drinking lager and cider on the weekends. She attends several mother-baby groups in the centre of the City rather than on the estate and enjoys readings 'real books' as she claims. Real books include a smattering of University text books, displayed on her bookshelf in the living room.

Considering Tori can be visibly identified as a 'Woodlander', it is rather telling but not unsurprising that she both condemns certain kinds of consumption yet also engages in them. As research conducted in the UK examining the system of othering has shown, how the working class has increasingly been pathologised (Maxwell and Aggleton 2010). For young women like Tori and others, the symbolic control exercised over them, is then applied to others residing within Woodland View. Furthermore, though she realises that moral evaluations related to consumption operate at different levels, she also feels unable to shake off these processes, especially if they are applied by outsiders.

Tori returned to notions of respectable consumption and spent a considerable amount of time in many of our conversations describing a morally acceptable hierarchy of spending: it is fine to spend money on healthy foods but less so on tattoos, TVs and branded items. The capacity to monitor spending on certain items contradicts the desire to spend and consume items that Tori and many other participants nonetheless consider desirable, including tattoos and gold jewellery. Since she is aware of the fact that chavs have been identified with 'bad', 'vulgar' and excessive consumer choices, Tori has been able to identify those individuals as the "the non-respectable working classes". It is possible to relate and link her assertions to some of Miller's writings. Miller argues that thrift and frugality in the context of consumption seem to be a tool for working-class individuals to differentiate themselves as respectable, using the connotations associated with frugality as a moral distinction (Miller 2001). But this was not about frugality. While it is a reality that individuals on benefits are poor financially, they need not 'act' poor. For example, Lindsey, a mother in her early twenties argued:

‘Cos they know who I am, they look at me and go: ‘She’s one of them chavs.’ But, but I say to myself: ‘You don’t know me. You don’t judge me.’ They do anyway ‘cos of how I dress. It’s okay though because I know what I do. I look it but I’m not it, you know what I mean? I’m not wasteful. What I wear and my jewellery are gifts from my family and my boyfriend.

And Saskia is like an angel. She’s well-behaved, she’s a doll and that wins them (referring to middle-class parents at Saskia’s school) over. And I talk different than people here too. But I guess I’m still part of here (Woodland View.) Always will be I suppose.

Class and culture-based social divisions are reinforced through shared lifestyles, which are formulated through accepted patterns of consumption (Hayward and Yar 2006). While participating in these patterns of consumption, individuals become part of wider processes of moral evaluations by others within and outside their neighbourhood. Here, according to Southerton, shared consumption practices provide individuals with the opportunity to establish and maintain social divisions (Southerton 2002). Participants are not excluded from this process. Lexi notes:

I was sitting on the bus, you know (a bus route serving a majority of middle-class individuals) and Lilly was having a fit. She was tired, fussing about and I told her to be quiet and you should’ve seen the looks I got. I get them all the time. There’s that wall there. They just sneer at you when the little ones fuss and cry and sneer when you tell ‘em to shut up. And then they look you up and down and they just look at you like you’re poor. It’s like two worlds there. There’s us and then there’s them...

There are other participants like Diane, whose story resonates with similar sentiments:

They just look me up and down and then they looked at Angie and we had be real loud, telling them to move so we could park the buggies properly (on the bus.) I laughs and says to Angie: ‘No manners kids today.’ That set the whole lot off. I could feel it...

I wonder if it’s ‘cos they know we get benefits, you know...I wonder maybe we shouldn’t be allowed to leave here (Woodland View.) Or like they tell us we should just eat bread and have nothing, like those poor people in the olden days...like dressed in rags. They would like that wouldn’t they? [laughs]

Several quotes in this chapter highlight that parallel processes of moral evaluations are at play when it comes to positioning themselves within Woodland View. For example, Lexi and Diane among others commented on their perception of moral evaluations from outsiders and how this has been accomplished through perceived notions of distaste associated with appearance. Leigh, Tori and other participants in this chapter express the same thinking on this subject:

Why shouldn't my children have trainers that everyone else has got? I don't agree with paying a £120 for a pair of trainers but why can't they have a decent pair? Because I can't afford it why should they have the Mickey taken out of them? This is where the social thing comes into it, because if they went to school in ASDA trainers they would be *bullied* basically, their lives would be made hell. So, you *have* to get into debt so that they can look respectable. I don't know how else to describe it. I'm just using trainers as an example.

'Being respectable' and 'looking respectable' I suppose it's just the way I've been brought up. I mean sometimes I just throw some clothes on but..... this sounds very snobby again but you can tell a council person sometimes by what they're wearing and how clean their clothes look and what they've got on and I think to myself that there is *no need* to be like that *because* most of my children's clothes, you can dress your children nicely there is no need for them to walk around in holey, smelly clothes.

I couldn't let my children do it because why should they be picked on? And it's those sort of people what give council estates that bad name. But it's not always but sometimes you see some walking down the road and you would go: 'Look that's council...' Some are dressed over the top with *everything* name brand, dripping in gold and some are in a pair of old leggings that look like they haven't been washed in six months and with their hair all greasy and tied back in a ponytail and old trainers but there's no care at all for themselves.

It is important to note that the individuals referred to in these quotes, are commonly associated with geographic locales within many areas of East and North Woodland View that in turn have been linked to higher levels of crime, anti-social behaviour and lower social ranks than those from South or West Woodland View. There are two important issues that can be teased out of Leigh's statement. Her quote can be situated in some of the literature from the UK exploring the hierarchy of poverty, for example, Roberts' exploration of the low-income neighbourhood of Salford from the early 20th Century. Roberts states that while his family might have lived in a slum, they in fact were not 'of' the slum (Roberts 1971: 14). So then, even though Tori and many other participants were 'of' the slum, there are different social rankings that affected most streets at the lower level and neighbourhoods at the higher level. In this sense morality and class can be established to form a set of relationships rooted partly in geographic location, something explored in E.P. Thompson's book on *The Making of the English Working-Class* (Thompson 1963.) At the same time it is important to understand that most women actively engaged in processes of moral evaluations embody a wide range of interests and ambitions, something considered in Campbell's *Wigan Pier Revisited* (Campbell 1984:116). She notes that it is fruitless to search for the archetype of a typical worker, as much as I found it impossible to locate the stereotypical single mother on benefits. Most participants engage in similar attempts at positioning themselves as

far away as possible from any possibility at being labelled but in turn engage in these labelling processes themselves. In this sense then, Leigh's characterisation of other poor women can be located in the literature around the 'culture of poverty' debates (Lewis 1966; Murray 1990, 1996). Like processes of moral evaluation experienced by many participants, the argument put forth by Leigh and others is that some individuals remain poor because they are part of a culture with pathological values and practices. For Leigh and Tori, even though both are easily identifiable as Woodlanders, these women remain steadfast in their belief that they are not like them. Interestingly, even though they might believe in the existence of a culture of poverty, they are less likely to accept the fact that poor people are likely to accept these practices and treat them as legitimate codes of conduct. It is quite telling that they situate these characteristics only to certain geographic areas within Woodland View.

Evans' study of white working class women in Bermondsey contains accounts of some very similar sentiments around the moral evaluations of spending benefits and being respectable, but also pays attention to other ways of achieving self-respect (Evans 2006: 33). Ideas and practices of cleanliness are important in establishing self-respect for her working class families, but in Woodland View consumption practices carry both self-respect and stigma. In several examples, self-respect in terms of consumption emerges as a theme, showing how many participants, including Leigh and Tori struggle to clothe, feed and keep their children within the children's own culture of normative ideas of what this clothing should be. Like Gemma who says: 'Fuck' em, Don't care what they say. I know she gets bullied if she don't wear them trainers'. Kerri was emphatic about the repercussions faced if her son does not conform to specific dress-codes:

I wouldn't hear the end of it, I can tell you that. It's bad enough as it is but now he needs those things to be part of his gang, his posse. If he can't show them that he's got the right clothes, the Nikes, ADDIDAS, Lacoste, they wouldn't stand for it. He wouldn't be part of it then...So, I try to do it...but then they don't really fit in anywhere else....they knows it too....

The above instance shows that it is not just the fear that their children might get bullied at school, although this is a good enough reason, but that it is also for their self-respect. This idea is implied and further developed in discussion of how women are responding to being stigmatised. An example would be Tori, who in the introductory quote added:

it's a certain type of track suit and it's stereotypical estates.....It's the *stigmatism* of the word, isn't it? Nobody wants to be called a prostitute. You know what I mean?

Goffman argues that people who experience stigma generally judge themselves in much the same way and by much the same standards as other people do (Goffman 1990). Particularly in the context of consumption, through a process of morally evaluating others many participants classify themselves as respectable. Again Tori notes:

And they'll do it with material possessions. That's the only way that you can do it. But I think it's all up there [points to her head] it doesn't matter what you have, it really doesn't matter what you have as long as.... You can use your brain, I can use my mouth to talk to people and people know that...Not that I'm better than anyone, do you know what I mean? Do you know what I mean?

I don't need material possessions to make me better than anyone 'cos I have it in my head. And I know that....I know that I've *done* more with my life, I know that I can *be* more and that's not being big-headed. That's being a better person. That's not 'cos I wanna be better than anyone else that's because I wanna better myself. I don't wanna live by the way I have been told. I'm not prepared to do that.

Here, Tori embraces what she considers respectable notions of consumption: education, and contrasts those to less respectable levels of consumption: namely consumer goods. Related to surviving on benefits, this level of moral evaluation is connected directly not just how you dress, but more obviously, to the extent to which you are able to reconcile apparently acceptable notions of consumption. These considerations are very important, particularly in light of contextualising policy expectations and lived realities of participants.

Again, as noted in Chapter five, many participants acknowledged their complicity in reinforcing pathologised characteristics of class and culture, this time in the form of the chav caricature. Here, as in the previous chapter, it is worth noting that in many of these narratives the line blurs between participants on one hand, viewing the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion as an external phenomenon with which they strategically engage, and on the other internalising it, and accepting it as an accurate representation of social reality. Evans found her respondents took 'pride in being common as shit,' (Evans 2006: 23), but I found little evidence of this and perhaps what is most characteristic of accounts from Woodland View is their uneasy ambivalence. Tori, for example acknowledges her belonging to a specific social group

stigmatised for its propensity to spend indiscriminately. Heather, a mother of three young daughters told me:

I know how it is. You don't have to tell me how the world works. I tells my oldest that she needs to not do what I done and get herself all inked up. I tell all of them that if they wanna better themselves not to be like me...I could try to be more like 'em but I don't want to. I likes what I likes. I like my gold, my bling, I call it. But I don't want my oldest, all of them to do it.

In order to offer a more nuanced understanding of the value and meaning attached to material goods, I want to return to a theme briefly mentioned in the first section, which represents a rather more positive position about these consumption practices. As noted there, the value and meaning allocated to gold jewellery and clothes such a Nike trainers, far outweighs its particular price in the shops. Some of these positive associations were clear in Jenni's story, where she describes the value attached to the gold jewellery owned by her mother and sisters. Here, as Miller argues, consumption expresses, solidifies and maintains relationships Miller (1997:45.) For many participants the importance of maintaining relationships through exchanges of material goods is explored in detail. As Appadurai (1986) says, material goods have social lives:

I want them to know that Darren will be there for them but it's hard sometimes 'cos when we first started dating he was nice giving me gifts and getting me all settled in the flat and buying me a TV and DVD player and games and I got nice jewellery and when Harry was born he gave me this ring (displays her 'Mum' gold ring) and he was so good to Nicky playing with her and giving her cuddles (Rosie, participant).

In the course of their relationship Rosie has received several high-priced gifts from her ex-partner and he still provides gifts to both his son and Rosie's older daughter. Rosie has made positive judgements about these gifts instilling them with economic and personal value. So, while outsiders might perceive these gifts as wasteful and vulgar (such as Harry's baby Nike's), for Rosie they firstly represent a value to her in outfitting her child in what she deems appropriate and secondly strengthen her often insecure relationship with an ex-partner. Such consumption therefore is not 'excessive' because some of the value of the material goods is symbolic value, visibly affirming and maintaining bonds, both to Rosie herself and to others. Her daughter's Barbie stove has been a constant source of discussion and obvious delight to both Rosie and her daughter.

If as Appadurai believes, consumer goods embody social lives, Rosie's passage helps us understand how they gain and lose their value for single mothers in Woodland View. This analysis recognises the potential positive effects of material goods in the face of poverty as Miller in *The Comfort of Things* (2008) argues:

...it becomes clear that for most people commodities are not about waste, commodities are about love. They are not something we are going to give up readily unless we absolutely have to, even if all advertising was abolished. But some of this we do absolutely have to give up. (Miller 2008:57)

So while some types of objects have a situated cultural history, individual objects have their own biography and their value lies in the history of those who have possessed it and in the meaning attached to it during the exchange. This was apparent for many participants who during conversations emphasised the social value of their jewellery. They recalled the people, occasions and contexts that initially inscribed meaning and value to the jewellery and talked about the history of each ring, bracelet and necklace. The following is an excerpt taken from a series of discussions about gold jewellery with residents and participants in North Woodland View. This chat started with Eileen locating the value and meaning of gold jewellery:

I wear it like so and I am not in debt! It means that you're *proud* to show your history, just like so and you know the history of each piece by heart. It means that you have got family that *cares* for you and that love you.

Laurie picks up this sentiment and provides a more detailed example:

When my mother died we all of us got one piece of her jewellery that she wore and I got her cross and my younger sister she got her cameo and the other sister got the locket and we treasure them because they remind us of our mother when she was still alive. That's the thing the stories that you get with the jewellery is what makes it more precious really.

I mean I remember when Billy gave me that locket. It was special because we never had much to begin with and he saved up for it for a year, a *year* without telling me and I remember I was mad at him because he never had enough money and I didn't know why he was always short on his money I gave him each week and he stopped having his pint after work on weekends as well and I couldn't understand what he did with the money and I remember that I was quite worried at the time because I thought he might have took to gambling you know and I was worried because we just had our second child and we hadn't got much money and I never thought he saved the money so I could have this necklace just because I told him that I wished I could have one.

And when I got it that year for Christmas you could've knocked me over with a feather and I remember I was relieved he wasn't gambling after all but the cheek on him to hide that from me and me worrying like that.

Here, as discussed by Douglas and Isherwood (1980), the gold jewellery has very many meanings, which include its roles as a gift in an expression of relationships. The timing and character of the gift follow social and cultural conventions and place the individual relationship within this wider social frame. Many narratives of the participants included similar experiences of positive associations with material goods. The importance of social, cultural and individual meaning is completely ignored when poor people are regarded through the lens of financial deprivation and are not seen as meaning-makers themselves.

At the same time, since financial hardship is a reality for most participants and they cannot easily get many basic material resources, the gifts of material goods take on additional positive function. They affirm and maintain the important network of close social relations that show that a 'lone mother' is not alone. These important positive values and meanings attached to consumption practices are completely undermined by the generally negative moral evaluations of them by outsiders. As Stephanie summarises:

I am older; I have nearly raised my kids. One to go. And you know, we haven't got much but they do give me gold jewellery and then Terry (boyfriend) is good that way and now I wear the things he's given me all these years ago and I got so much to choose from andnow I just don't care no more what they think about me. It's hard sometimes to have 'em look at you like that...

Tiffany, a mother in her early thirties told me she stopped wearing much gold jewellery after becoming more conscious of glances from strangers outside Woodland View. She first started noticing these glances around five years prior to this quote [2009] and recalled her experiences:

I remember when I got my oldest and I got this ring from Steve (displays a MUM ring on her finger) and I was ever so proud then. It was like a gift that was just for me because I was a mother now. I remember feeling very special back then. Mind you I didn't wear it hardly ever 'cos I felt people were looking at me funny and it made Steve mad I didn't but I would take it out often and look at it and now I always wear it. But I don't wear my necklaces no more 'cos it's just too much. People looking at you funny.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a description of the contested nature that spending and consumption assumes for welfare recipients. This topic was explored by examining

how the lives of lone mothers on income benefits are affected in the context of consumption.

This chapter also showed the discrepancy that exists between perceptions about the amount of benefits received and the realities of surviving on a very strict financial budget. Tied into this discussion is the realization that because single mothers are on benefits anyone engages in processes of moral evaluations. However, equally important is the fact that these processes demand that those on benefit ‘perform poverty,’ in a set of conventions about consumption demanded by those who might never be recipients of benefits.

This, then, led to the last section of the chapter, where participants emphasised the emergence of class based social divisions, primarily but not exclusively in the context of the chav discourse. Here I argue that these social divisions were most readily experienced through the visibility of consumption – especially gold jewellery and clothes. The narratives of the participants contest and challenge one-dimensional assumptions connected to consumption. In fact, the data begins to convey more nuanced understandings of the significance attached to consumption, highlighting the link between moral evaluations and consumption while also showing personal histories expressing different types of relationships.

Chapter 7

The Violence of Policy

Introduction

I don't want to go back to East Woodland View tomorrow. I feel like everybody is watching me from behind their curtains. I know because I can see them watching me. This is a horrible road. Lower apartments is literally below street level and even though the main road is wide it feels fenced in, closed in. I have talked to Joan (Community Warden) about it and she told me that she feels never safe here and she will only go with a (male colleague) on home visits. I think this is because there is this feeling of watchfulness and distrust here. I feel the same way but different when I go to the upper end of the area, and then over to North Woodland View. Most of North Woodland View feels like this but there are some pockets that feel safe (Early Fieldwork notes, 2007).

I described in Chapter three how some particular areas in Woodland View, specific streets in East Woodland View and most of North Woodland View, are experienced by many Woodland residents as dangerous and crime ridden places. As such, Woodland View belongs to the category of deprived urban neighbourhoods identified in New Labour publications such as its report on Neighbourhood Renewal and Urban Regeneration, which stress the violent and anti-social aspects of these areas (Bridging the Gap 2000; DfEE 1999, 2001).

In my early encounters with Woodland View as a place and physical space, I found its public spaces and those closely associated with new welfare policy initiatives just as intimidating as the streets or homes of residents. Very early on in the spring of 2007, I paid a visit to the Children's Centre, in one of my first official fieldwork meetings and observed:

As I enter the road from the bottom I notice the nice landscaping that has been done along the road. There are several planters filled with blooming flowers, wooden benches and litter bins and I am struck with the difference between the top part of the road and the lower part. Overall it feels not like many others part of Woodland View I have visited so far. The residential areas of some of the women I have spoken to so far can be described as dingy and outright dirty in some areas. Here it feels 'nice', it looks clean and orderly and looks tidy.

I sit on one of the benches to wait before I proceed to the car park of the Children's Centre and have another look at the general scenery and I am struck with the fencing that surrounds the whole compound. There are 7-feet high dark green metal fences that seem to surround the Children's Centre and that are also connected to the other City buildings below.

I have come across these fences on the other side, when I visited the Children's Library on previous occasions but had not noted before that the effect is quite startling. I start to feel more uneasy noticing the fences more than the flowers. While I am still trying to get my bearing, a woman walks past me with her young daughter on a rein, and heading towards a City building. I look across the road and notice that there are no fences surrounding the Sports Centre.

When I look back to the woman and her child, they have disappeared into the container building housing a City service. I get up and enter the parking lot of the Children's Centre surrounded by those high fences and notice that the basketball courts are enclosed in an identical fashion. Suddenly I don't notice the flowers and the order of the street but only the high dark green metal fences with their spiked tops and wonder if they are there to keep people in and trying to keep them out (Early fieldnotes, 2007).

In the context of exploring the effects of welfare reform in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, it is important not to isolate shifts in the delivery of welfare benefits from the physical environment. I argue that while some neighbourhoods within Woodland View have come to represent dangerous geographic locales, and this is in part the result of the implementation of programmes like the local NDC, to tackle concerns of social exclusion. The development of services within Woodland View located behind high fences and secured building does little to project safety and security of its residents. My experience regarding the physical environment and the housing was not an isolated one, on the contrary, it resembled the experience of a number of key service providers working within and outside Woodland View and affected in particular organisations like the Children's Centre, The Company and the Children's and Young People Trust. Alan, a former director of The Company, describes his own impressions:

...you have to come up *this* road, CYPT down at the bottom and another one at the top, along a path, along all those fences, why did they have to build these fences... it's intimidating, it's unpleasant to walk along here, through those gates, along more fences into a building and that's my fear...

Several participants from all categories have added to this discussion. For example, Ernie stated:

It looks like they (Children's Centre staff) are in a fortress. They lock themselves in, you never see them walking in Woodland View, other than going to a meeting at the Hall and they keep them (residents) out...

Julie, a single mother of two, who before her involvement in this research project had regular meetings with front line service providers at the Children's Centre, confirms the theme of the 'fortress' by affirming that,

they've built a castle and we're the peasants, no we're like serfs, slaves. And it looks like a prison up there but the other way 'round. They keep us out and themselves safe in there. I hate going up there. You need to buzz through all these doors and they's got these monitors that watch you but you can't see them....

This chapter presents an ethnographic exploration of the various categories of service providers associated with the delivery of The Company, which highlights their basic structural position within the framework of New Labour's welfare regime. These structural positions are experienced both in terms of service delivery and as players in the context of policy expectations. This analysis is very important because these individuals operate directly and every day at the interface between new ways of organizing and delivering services and the actual recipients of those services. As such, these individuals know the realities of single mothers' lives as well as any outsider can. In many instances they experience directly the contradictions, inconsistencies and problems that the actual design and discourses associated with this welfare regime entail. Here I refer in particular, as I have done in Chapter five, to the inconsistencies that exist in terms of differing values assigned to paid and unpaid work. Of special interest in this chapter are the understandings that service providers have regarding these contradictions, inconsistencies and problems.

In this chapter, the discussion framed by the social exclusion discourse, is partly driven by the fact that the interviews with service providers took place late in the time line of New Labour's NDC initiative. Most of the examples of symbolic and structural violence discussed in this chapter come from a time when the majority of local NDC projects were being wound up, between 2007 up until the end of 2009. Since March 2010, the Conservative party set out policies to help mend Britain's 'Broken Society', including the creation of a new 'neighbourhood army' of 5,000 professional community organisers that would give communities the help they need to work together and tackle their problems (Conservative News 2010). After the formation of the Coalition government later that year, this was translated into their plan "The Coalition: our programme for government", stating that: 'We will train a new generation of community organisers and support the creation of neighbourhood groups across the UK, especially in the most deprived areas' (HM Government 2010). The following year, in April 2011, evidence presented by the Centre for Comparative Housing Research

(CCHR 2011), summarized the potential involvement of the government in community and neighbourhood regeneration as follows:

the significance of community-based regeneration has been underplayed in recent decades but has considerable potential in shaping a future trajectory. There are many neglected examples of community-based regeneration such as social enterprises, community land trusts and neighbourhood initiatives.

And on April 4th 2012, Big Society Capital, a new financial institution set up by the Coalition government to finance charities and community groups has been launched. Its primary goal is to support:

social enterprises that prove they can repay an investment through the income they generate (BBC News, April 2012).

These recent developments highlight the consistencies with which these governments pursue their political agendas within the context of social policies addressing poverty and social exclusion. This chapter will introduce ethnographic evidence of the impact that welfare reform and the social exclusion discourse had on the lives of service providers located within the statutory, private and third sector organisations within and beyond Woodland View. The service providers have been broadly categorised along the following criteria: statutory, private and third sector organisations, as well as managers and project workers within these organisations, and single mothers. I am inspired here by the New Poverty Studies, which highlights the ways in which welfare reforms and subsequent changes to social policy establish 'new pockets of poverty' (Goode and Maskovsky 2001:16) through reinforcing existing boundaries between service providers and participants.

The first section of this chapter will provide a brief theoretical discussion outlining key elements of symbolic and structural violence that will have a bearing on the remainder of the chapter. In addition, I will present the basic structural position of the service providers and outline some of the challenges they face in this context. It is important to note that the local NDC initiative will be at the centre of this inquiry. The second section will continue with this discussion, but exploring these challenges and contradictions in the context of Woodland View. In the third section, I will highlight how policy expectations, particularly attempts to incorporate new buzzwords and analyses in New Labour's welfare regime, conspired to alter how the service providers' work objectives are described, and shift evaluations of single mothers' lives and behaviour in more negative directions. This will be done through examples from staff at the Work Programme and participants. The fourth section will consider how New

Labour's focus on 'joined-up' thinking had been realised through collaborative efforts amongst a variety of service providers, public, private and third sector organisations, and residents. This section will also address challenges attached to 'community buy-in' in the context of collaboration and how this affects service providers in situations where funding gets pulled, schemes are dropped, people lose jobs, and where there is fear, anger, frustration and overwhelming insecurity.

7.1 Symbolic Violence, Language and Power Relations

When Bourdieu explored the relationship between symbolic violence and social space he argued that:

almost everywhere one can observe spatial segregation, people who are close together in social space tending to find themselves, by choice or necessity, close to one another in geographic space. Interactions which bring immediate gratification to those with empiricist dispositions...one can "reach out and touch them"-mask the structures that are realized in them (Bourdieu 1989:16).

In the case of Woodland View the structures and observable difference between service providers, participants and residents is marked in the physical presence of the buildings and areas where they are located. The observational fieldnotes passages used to start this chapter described some of the issues related to this aspect of symbolic violence. I argue that, although I refer to the spatial violence I felt many times in Woodland View, these sections imply a distance that is created through the layout of these sites. This distance is as Bourdieu argues to, 'keep their distance', or to 'maintain their rank'...' (Bourdieu 1989:1). Therefore, it is in these excerpts that much of the following discussion on symbolic violence within Woodland View is located. This chapter will introduce evidence of the impact of welfare reform and the social exclusion discourse on the lives of service providers. I hope to bring new understandings to the definition of poverty, and in particular to allow for contestations regarding analytical categories such as social exclusion to take centre stage. This will be done through emphasizing some of the contradictions and inconsistencies inherent in policy as experienced by service providers. I argue that these inconsistencies and contradictions in many instances mask symbolic violence.

In the process of implementing New Labour welfare reform, processes of social and cultural domination developed and are often not recognized as such. While these processes are explored in ethnographies dealing with welfare reform in the United

States, such analysis has been largely absent from ethnographies in the UK. Of special interest here are explorations how relationships between service providers, the government and participants are thus situated and develop within the confines of symbolic violence.

While there is evidence of structural violence when examining the relationships that are established in the context of service provision in Woodland View, the focus of this chapter will be on examples of symbolic violence. However, it is noteworthy that both are highly contested concepts that need to be placed into the context of everyday life; particularly to better understand how service providers experience their position at the interface between policy expectations and the lived realities of single mothers on benefits.

Bourdieu takes language to be not merely a method of communication, but also a mechanism of power (Bourdieu 1991). The language one uses is designated by one's relational position in a field or social space. Different uses of language tend to reiterate the respective positions of each participant. Fairclough notes that the discourse around social exclusion 'is an outcome rather than a process-it is a condition people are in, not something that is done to them'. (Fairclough 2000:54) As such, policy language becomes embedded in the dominant discourse of social exclusion. Revisiting Silver's conception of social exclusion, she notes that within the confines of Anglo-American Liberalism, the ideal type representing both the US and the UK, social exclusion is seen as resulting from individual behaviour and exchanges in society (Silver 1995). Within this paradigm, society is built around a division of labour and exchange in both economic and social spheres. Here, the social order is regarded as a variety of networks of voluntary exchanges, and citizenship is based on contractual exchanges of rights and obligations. Within this setting social exclusion happens when the ability of individuals and social groups to engage in these networks is hindered (Silver 1995). In addition, Levitas has noted that social exclusion, when placed in the context of the "Moral Underclass Discourse", focuses on its consequences for the social order and on particular social groups like single mothers on benefits (Levitas 1998).

I argue that the combination of these factors with New Labour's narrow focus of social exclusion, led to experiences of symbolic violence. According to Bourdieu and others, these factors can be located in changing relationships between the state and its citizens, particularly in the context of increasing flexibility of work and employment

which can have negative effects on service providers' everyday lives (Bourdieu 1998; Waquant 2010). Furthermore, this restricted definition determined who has a "right" to be listened to and to ask questions. Therefore participants, even if they had been intimately involved in setting up community initiatives, were relegated to the back seat. These inherent contradictions will be explored in detail below.

Through the use of key terms or as discussed below, 'mobilizing metaphors', the New Labour government managed to reintroduce notions of the underclass and the culture of poverty into the debates on welfare and social exclusion. Thus, the dominant discourse of social exclusion challenged diversions from norms established through government discourse, in a similar fashion as it happened in the United States (Sennett 2003; Morgen 2003, 2010; Morgen and Maskovsky 2003; Morgen and Gonzales 2008). In the US, a more 'intensive culture of work enforcement' resulting from an interplay of neo-liberal ideologies, coupled with short-term welfare benefits, the value placed on paid work and processes of stigmatization inherent in the welfare bureaucracy of the US exists (Morgen 2010:124-125).

In the UK these changes included a re-positioning of individual responsibilities in the debate on poverty by placing emphasis on perceived pathological characteristics of these individuals. Placing social exclusion within the relatively narrow confines of the political imperatives and interpretation of New Labour resulted in social policy efforts that were as narrow, but couched in the language of inclusion and collaboration.

While the main thrust of the chapter is an exploration of service providers, participants are part of this process. In Bourdieu's description of symbolic violence everyone accepts the social order, even people who are disadvantaged by it. Symbolic violence often leads people to blame others or themselves for their own suffering whilst the role of society remains hidden (Bourdieu *et. al.* 2006). Bourdieu defined symbolic violence as follows:

a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling (Bourdieu 2001:1-2).

However, I argue that despite its 'gentleness', symbolic violence is the most powerful weapon because it is almost invisible. At the same time, it creates the conditions of possibility for other more immediate and explicit forms of violence; whether economic, social, political or physical. It is in relation to these forms of violence that the

immediate position of service providers is located. There are several authors who have drawn the connections between the violence of the government in the context of welfare reform, specifically in the context of US reforms, while simultaneously placing neo-liberal ideologies at the core of this debate (Fraser 1993; Morgen and Maskovsky 2003; Goode and Maskovsky 2001; Wacquant 2009; Morgen 2010).

Furthermore, Bourdieu noted that the “state is the holder of the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence. Or, more precisely, the state is a referee,” (Bourdieu 1989:22, 1998: 59). Through ethnographic data, I attempt to render these connections between violence and policy visible to show the contested nature of these concepts. I contend that in the context of welfare reform initiatives implemented under the first New Labour government from 1998 onwards, symbolic violence became embedded in many policy initiatives. The replacement of the right to benefit and its simultaneous move toward the obligation to work is apparent in many New Labour policy papers (SEU 1999, 2004, 2006.)

While Bourdieu seemed to focus much of his exploration of symbolic violence on the elite, he did discuss the symbolic violence experienced by workers in the workplace. Anxieties and fears related to lack of funding and job insecurity marked discussions with many project workers, particularly (but not exclusively) those located within private and third sector organisations. Concurrently, whenever I spoke to participants about their interactions with service providers within the employment-related sector, I believe I found a pattern in the replication of anxieties and fear, albeit unrelated to funding, very much linked to financial support. It was then I decided to explore the notion of symbolic violence in the context of social policy and subsequent service provision within Woodland View.

Both single mothers and a large segment of various types of service providers arguably experienced varying degrees of symbolic violence through their interaction with each other and the government. As noted by Sennett (1998), the 1980s and 1990s saw the rise of unemployment, flexibility, innovation and risk in the context of employment. At the same time, decision-making structures changed with increasing encroachment of the private sector into the public sector and rising involvement of third sector organisations in both arenas (Drucker 1989; Sennett 1998, 2003). These changes resulted in increasing levels of symbolic violence as various agencies and organisations

competed for funding and because there was overlap in the groups of individuals they served. Bourdieu (1998) observes that:

It has emerged clearly that job insecurity is now everywhere: in the private sector but also in the public sector, which has greatly increased the number of temporary, part-time or casual positions...In all these areas it produces more or less identical effects, which become particularly visible in the extreme case of the unemployed: the destructuring of existence....and the ensuing deterioration of the whole relationship to the world, time and space... Casualization profoundly affects the person who suffers from it: by making the whole future uncertain, it prevents all rational anticipation and, in particular, the basic belief and hope in the future... (Bourdieu 1998: 82).

Furthermore and as Foucault noted, institutionalized forms of 'discipline and punishment', have acquired a positive social value, without much further thought about the violence involved in these practices (Foucault 1979). I argue that many policy initiatives implemented under New Labour's welfare reform exhibited these characteristics. Bourdieu states that such "soft" violence is subject to misrecognition in everyday life. Therefore, I contend that this misrecognition allows symbolic violence to hide itself within dominant discourse of social exclusion and within relationships that are formed as part of policy initiatives. The following section will demonstrate how this has been played out in a variety of relationships in the context of The Company project delivery and perception.

7.2 Mobilizing Metaphors

Atkinson argues that there is:

no single authentic mode of assigning meaning to terms such as partnership and empowerment, that their meaning is constructed (i.e. produced and reproduced) in a context of power and domination which privileges official discourse(s) over others (Atkinson 1999:59).

This section of the chapter will explain what Wright meant by 'mobilizing metaphors'¹⁸, and argue that the use of such terms in fact contributes to symbolic violence experienced by service providers in the context of delivering policy in Woodland View. As described by Wright, mobilizing metaphors like social exclusion gain their meaning from values imbued in these terms (Shore and Wright 1997:20). As

¹⁸ Mobilizing metaphor refers to a term coined by Susan Wright in 1993, describing keywords usually at the centre of a cluster of emerging and discarded terms. The importance lies in the fact that they are fluid and changing (Shore and Wright 1997: 20).

noted by Jeanine, The Company development worker wondered where the concept social exclusion had developed:

...and how that works and where it is actually shifting to because it seems to me it is not fixed. I don't really know what it means. I know I feel good helping people not be socially excluded but I am not sure what that means. But I suppose it doesn't really matter because I am doing my job...

For New Labour the value of social exclusion as a mobilizing metaphor cannot be underestimated. When this key term was first used it denoted the plurality and the multi-dimensional aspect of poverty and served as a mobilizing metaphor to garner support for welfare reforms. However, in the process of implementing social policy I argue that, as these terms are adapted to embrace changes to the welfare system, changing vocabulary indeed creates possibilities of symbolic violence.

Service providers have been chosen as the focal point of this section because they are located and operate directly at the interface between new ways of implementing and running programmes and the actual recipients of these services. Shore argues that 'policy is a form of wording and language more intended to please and persuade than to inform and describe' (Shore and Wright 1997:20). It is important to affirm that, in the context of The Company, social policy seemingly endorsed tackling social problems through the implementation of new policy measures. However, these initiatives did not take place in a social, political or economic vacuum. What will be highlighted through the data is the fact they happened in crowded spaces already filled with moral values and preconceptions. They required prescriptive language which says policy is *needed*, rather than descriptive accounts 'telling it as it is' (Shore 1996:21).

It was this context of prescriptive and also ambiguous language that provided a great deal of conflict for service providers when working in the context of project delivery. As a result, mobilizing metaphors occupied a very important role in the daily lives of service providers, policy makers and participants. It is through these terms that service providers attempted to explain power relations. Simultaneously, owing to this arsenal of key terms and their uses in The Company, power relations are established and maintained, where service providers and participants are confined to a particular position within existing power structures (Bourdieu 1991). For many service providers, this position within existing power structures meant that they could establish themselves as part of policy-making rather than being marked as socially excluded. Thus,

mobilizing metaphors become markers of class and/or culture-based social divisions in a neighbourhood that had experienced an onslaught of policy to reduce social exclusion.

When I started my fieldwork in early 2007 ‘social exclusion’ was already part of the vocabulary used by service providers and participants, but I was able to gain insight into the ever-changing landscape of key terms while conducting my research. During the early stages of my fieldwork I hardly challenged the meaning of many of the key terms, especially in discussions with service providers, but quickly realized that such terms were highly contested and imbued with social, cultural, economic and political meaning:

So, we have a geography-based approach *but also* a targeted, probably family-based, focused *deeply* excluded approach that is the new term we're using now, *deeply excluded* families. It is interesting, isn't it? I think terms like hard to reach are pretty problematic and we haven't found a way to describe it yet.

I think they're are *pretty* meaningless but you need to keep up with the language because otherwise you are left *behind* by the government. You need to keep up to date to see opportunities for funding and to be able to move ahead.

But I know if you say they are deeply excluded it puts them into a real difficult category but they are not really affected by it because this language is more used and understood by professionals and they wouldn't know really what we're talking about because it is such abstract language.

I am not quite sure where this term deeply excluded comes from but I am pretty sure it came out of the reducing inequalities material. I am pretty sure I read it in there and it is just about testing some of the principles and it is important that one tries new things and learns from them and it is important to move forward with language as well and not to become stagnant and inflexible.

(Tanya, Project Development Team Manager, The Company 2008)

What makes the above passage significant in the context of this chapter and my thesis is the fact that, while other research has noted the inconsistencies and contradiction in terms of policy messages, as the comments of the Equalities manager indicate, there were also basic problems in the discourses and practices of the New Labour welfare regime. For example, for Julie, a single mother from the previous chapter, to be called ‘excluded’ is yet another way in which she sees herself marginalised. As she states in a voice dripping with sarcasm:

I am socially *excluded*, I am *poor*, I am a *scrounger*. I know all of this makes me feel like shit. They know how to do it. They know how to keep me down. Walk a mile in my shoes I always say...then you know how it feels to want to scream or disappear...

Discourses are forms of what Bourdieu calls symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1991). Discourses classify people, things, places, events, etc. - and indeed other discourses. There are few other instances in the public eye where this becomes more apparent than in the distribution of welfare in the United Kingdom. Within the context of various welfare reforms since the end of World War II a wide range of opposing ideologies compete for legitimacy on how to distribute benefits. Within this arena tensions and contestations can be attributed in part to experiences of symbolic violence and can be linked to the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion.

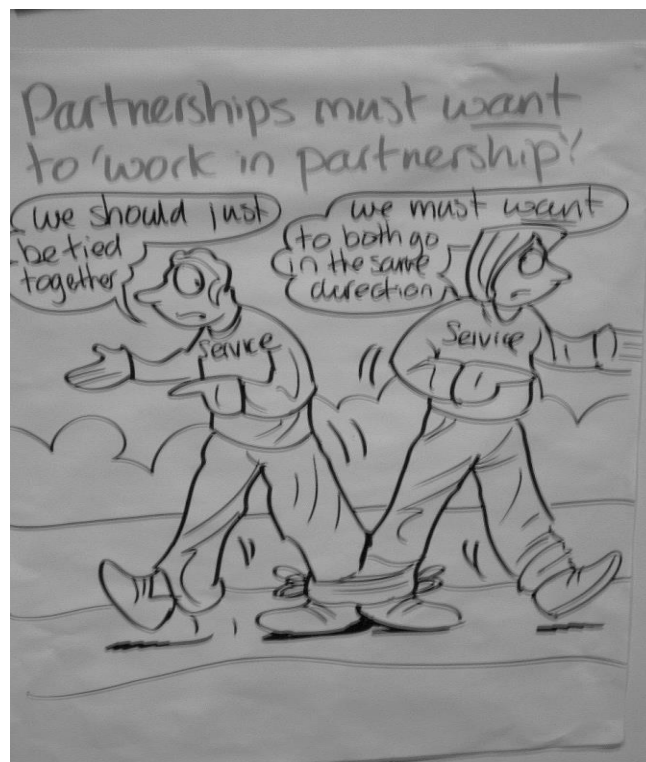
Prior to the establishment of The Company, mobilizing metaphors utilized by the government highlighted social divisions between outsiders and insiders, by 2007 almost everybody in Woodland View was familiar with key terms like social exclusion. By 2008, new terms had taken on similar functions such as 'including the excluded', 'deeply' excluded,' 'reaching the hard to reach.' It was during the winding-down phase of The Company that these terms took on an additional function. Since many of the service providers were faced with prospects of project closure, many engaged more often with these key terms to demonstrate their ability to integrate into new networks of metaphors. These networks of metaphors included a cluster of keywords with social exclusion at the centre.

For all service providers, project workers amongst statutory, private and third sector organisations, an understanding of key policy metaphors was an important factor in promoting their flexibility as knowledge workers, something that will be explored in the next section of this chapter. It also emphasized their commitment to continue offering services in Woodland View. These metaphors indicate that welfare policy can arguably become problematic factor imbued with symbolic violence because it shows the disjuncture that exists between the realities of welfare receipt and policy expectations. Welfare reform is not simply the straightforward implementation of new policies but is experienced as a set of negotiations and navigation in the muddy waters of mobilising metaphors. Here service providers become progressively more engaged in a difficult process of traversing policy expectations and the everyday of single mothers on benefits. Much of this navigation involves processes of re-defining social identities of their clients based on an increasingly punitive welfare system. In addition, here, Alan voices his concerns how changes in policy might result in the withdrawal of projects, which in turn negatively affects residents and participants in Woodland View:

It is an interesting point to look at how local people, let's say lone mothers in Woodland View are *truly* affected by these changes if the funding for projects stops. For example they will just say that that woman who was here for three years and she really supported me and I got to know her as a friend and she wasn't one of them, she became one of us. Well she's gone, there was a three-month gap and then somebody else came along and they wonder how all that came about? You then have to tell them because *that* funding stream ended, she had to go and find another job and then the governments says: 'Oh, never mind we'll replace that funding stream' and you go: 'Yeah you *did* but it wasn't continuous' because there was a gap and people drifted away and losing trust and that's what we're worried about with the NDC project.

Alan asserts in the quote above, that changes in policy and subsequent changes to programme implementation and operationalisation affect not only the trust of individuals affected by these policies but also negatively affects the lives of service providers. His examination of the key terms and the significance of the connection to the (in)ability to reach communities and individuals provides the basis for the following section where the realities of community engagement and participation and empowerment are discussed in greater detail.

7.3 The Discontent of Collaboration



(Employment Conference 2007)

Since the end of World War II there has been a shift in the composition of the labour force in the United Kingdom. The move became more apparent from the late 1960s onward. This encompassed a reduction of manual labour and the increase of what is commonly termed “knowledge work” in some literature (Drucker 1989; Sennett 2003). According to Drucker, knowledge workers are those individuals who primarily work with information of varying kinds or one who develops and uses knowledge in the workplace (Drucker 1989). While Drucker initially coined the term to apply to individuals working mainly within a business context, service providers fit the profile of knowledge workers as they supposedly embody contemporary flexibility in employment, and the ability to respond to the shifting demands of capitalism.

In the context of this thesis, knowledge workers are key to an exploration of symbolic violence because, in Bourdieu’s philosophy, symbolic violence is embedded in their ability to take in the structures and hierarchies of the social settings in which they exist (*fields*) into their ‘mental structures’ (*habitus*) (Swingewood 2000:214). This acceptance of the existing social order, even by people disadvantaged by it, is what Bourdieu calls the ‘paradox of doxa’ (Bourdieu 2001:1). However, it is in the context of this thesis regarded as a conflict hidden under the surface of the common sense notions which seemingly rule our social reality.

I contend that they represent, as outlined by Bourdieu, ‘the left hand of the state But they do not all work for the state....all those who are called *social workers*....,’ while the right hand of the state refers to ‘the ministerial cabinets’ (Bourdieu 2004:2.) Even though, not all service providers in this research project work *for* the state but they all rely on funding *from* the state. This creates a climate of competition and confusion were in Bourdieu’s view, ‘the right hand no longer knows, or worse, no longer really wants to know what the left hand does’ (Bourdieu 2004:2). This encompasses the contradictions and inconsistencies that symbolize the position of service providers at the interface between new ways of implementing and operationalizing services and the recipients of these services. For example, as outlined by Drucker, even though central to his idea about the importance of knowledge workers for organisations, little space has been assigned in his discussions to explore their position critically (Drucker 1999). However, in research conducted on the impacts of the welfare reform in the US, Morgen established the often difficult positions case workers in welfare offices inhabited,

having to enforce workfare programmes but also sympathizing with positions of poor mothers sometimes unable to comply with policy (Morgen 2010).

However, during my fieldwork additional pressures were uncovered, particularly in the context of the 'winding-down' phase of The Company. Service provider comments highlighted the precarious position these individuals occupy. This position became increasingly vulnerable to the inconsistencies and contradictions that were embedded in New Labour's policy initiatives. Most service providers from statutory, private and third sector organisations, I encountered over the course of fieldwork take on these problems and, instead of reflecting their status as a valuable resource, they show signs of inability to perform well in their jobs. For example Eleanor a project worker of a project addressing community safety working in the Woodland View office, told me on several occasions that:

I am always stressed out. I never know what is going to happen from one day to the next. And the worst it's got nothing to do with my *work*. It's got to do with how we are *made* to work. We don't know what will happen next. We are not told. We are expected to jump as high as they tell us to. I told my husband that I really want to quit but I am not sure where I would go....There are so many options but not one that would suit me....You know with all those slogans like social exclusion and community engagement the government got us in a mess with their talk about working together and changing the community. Too many promises and then we're stuck trying to keep everybody going....You can't all work together. We have too many different organisations and then to get the voluntary sector to share with statutory services....They all have different agendas....

Knowledge workers especially individuals who work at the front line of project delivery embody both the power and powerlessness that are part of the job: designing, implementing and operationalizing services, resenting those they offer their services to, while struggling with the lack of mostly financial support they themselves receive to facilitate their work. Both Sandy and Ronnie worked as Community Development worker, with Sandy in a more senior position. Sandy has worked in Community Development for over fifteen years and has become jaded in her expectations regarding the positive effects of community development programmes, resentful of perceived lack of interest from residents in these areas and anxious about future funding. She states that:

I should've gotten out when I had the chance to do something else. This work does not really give me the chance to do something useful. Most days it's about writing proposals and getting funding from different streams, networking with people who don't want to work with and then we end up with projects that don't work. We know what works but then the people (residents) don't want to get support or we

always get the same people. I get angry at them sometimes when we have community meetings. They should know that we know what works best. There is not need to get everybody involved when they don't know what to do...I tell you what, I probably shouldn't tell you but...I have gotten rid off some residents who were still on the Steering group. I told them they should not be there because we would have to get people on board who were better suited to learn from us.

When I left the office in Hillview that day, I ran into Ronnie who had just returned from a community meeting in Woodland View to discuss with residents their interest in setting up a neighbourhood clean-up day. According to Ronnie the residents in attendance had shown a great deal of interest but she was not sure that the residents should be in charge of organizing the event. She noted:

They just don't know how things are done properly. That is what I am there for. I show them how things work well and then maybe next time they can help me a bit more. But they are good for cleaning up. No, seriously, there is so many of us (various service providers, particularly community development workers) that there is too little work for all of us. And to be honest, I don't want to have to work together with all these people (other project workers). What's the use? And when the funding is gone, so are we. Then they (residents) can go back to doing their own thing.

Here there is a sign that collaboration between various sectors of service provision becomes a theme in discussing symbolic violence. The two elements that will be discussed here are the problems associated with getting different agencies within and beyond Woodland View to collaborate locally, and in the process getting 'community buy-in'. Community buy-in in the case of Woodland View referred to acceptance of The Company as a local programme.

As outlined in Chapter four, by 2005 the local NDC was turned into two separate organisations and a company with limited liability named The Small Company was formed. The Company had already split into eight different teams organised around a variety of target areas including Community Health, Community Development Project, Community Safety Team, Neighbourhood Management Project, Community Advice and Guidance Team, Project Development and Appraisal, Youth Inclusion Project, Neighbourhood Wardens and the associated Communications and Site Management and Support Teams. These different teams employed altogether nearly one-hundred paid staff throughout most of the duration of The Company, the majority of whom were employed by or in some capacity linked directly to the City Council. On the other hand, a survey conducted through a project conducted in the neighbourhood indicated that no more than 0.8% of Woodland View residents were at any point in time involved as

community volunteers (MBH 2008). Alan, the Project director of The Company maintained that:

well-informed residents and stakeholders who understand The Company's goals are more likely to support it than those who are kept in the dark or given only small amounts of information out of context.

For The Company this meant specifically developing its own branded logo, newsletter, mouse pads, mugs and assorted promotional material that were handed out to residents and participants when they attended public meetings, workshops and seminars. This included links to projects and media announcements, fact sheets and other personal stories about people's involvement in the project. Through such persistent measures, community buy-in was achieved.

This first element is of particular interest for this thesis, because collaboration was an important element of New Labour's approach to tackling social exclusion through, as Luke, employee at the Community Safety Team said, 'joined-up thinking for joined-up problems' (SEU 1998, 2006). However, this produced a variety of negative effects, which will be explored here. Collaborative efforts for The Company included setting up teams of individuals within the public, private and third sectors. These teams, as discussed in previous chapters, were then assigned to one of eight key teams within Woodland View.

Beginning in the summer of 2007, service providers were in the process of being re-assigned to different projects within The Company and other government-funded measures, or re-deployed into other programmes or sectors in the City Council structure. The process of 'community buy-in' had been completed and many of the individuals involved in setting up The Company were able to explore their involvement with the project with some degree of reflection. Many service providers located within the structures of private and third sectors felt abandoned by the City Council and the national government for their unwillingness or inability to continue The Company. As a result, I argue that some facets of collaboration created arenas for possible experiences of symbolic violence, both for service providers and residents in Woodland View.

Even though existing social relation between various organisations across sectors seemingly created naturalised inequalities these are not seen as problems to be solved but rather accepted as facts of life, indicated through the lack of critical engagement with the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion. Thus, with

the withdrawal of funding service providers, those receiving services are denied much of the support they need and exposed to a logic which claims that their worsening situation (meaning tougher, more short-term contracts for service providers) is their own fault.

For Bourdieu, the government and its willingness to embrace neo-liberal components is complicit in numerous types of symbolic violence. Not only does it 'betray' and abandon of all types of social workers or knowledge workers (Bourdieu 1998: 3), but the ideals of individualisation and self-help serve to hide the role of neo-liberalism in the creation of suffering and '[make] it possible to 'blame the victim' who is entirely responsible for his or her own misfortune' (Bourdieu 1998:7). One example that might support this argument was the fact that many of my discussions with various groups of service providers centred around strategies for obtaining the money to survive for an additional six, twelve or eighteen months.

This concern was, in turn, related to the difficulty faced by some service providers in managerial positions of having the right staff team in place for the transitional period that was well under way in 2008 when I conducted part of my fieldwork. Alan, the former managing director of The Company was worried that:

that there is nobody willing to work for us for such a short time now. Now we only offer six-month contracts right now and the prospective staff who are qualified do not wish to leave their positions with the Council to take up this job. So, there will be a problem again if we have to find inexperienced community workers lacking key skills or areas of expertise in the field.

Diminishing programme funds and changing priorities for existing partnerships meant that, in many cases, fundamental restructuring of existing staff teams had been necessary. The Company had interim arrangements in place for its Management Team for the 2008–09 financial year consisting of a Director responsible for partnerships, community engagement, proposal development and an Equalities Manager, expanding on existing partnerships and broadening The Company's reach within the geographic locale (Fieldnotes, July 2008). At the same time, many organisations and agencies (statutory and voluntary alike) providing services to individuals within Woodland View were reducing their number of staff employed across Woodland View (Fieldnotes, July 2008).

The discussions that took place between myself and key staff in a variety of agencies, organisations and City Council during the final phase of The Company were interesting because they gave me the opportunity to examine some processes of 're-

deployment,' that seem quite common in short-term contract work. There were many service providers I had got to know over a number of years who were redeployed into other sectors or neighbourhoods and some were made redundant, while others got promoted and many moved within sectors. While retaining staff to deliver the remaining components of The Company was not an issue, insecurities have developed among staff due to the general upheaval and contracts coming to an end. Some partnerships experienced lack of full communication and assurance at an early stage, even though in The Company's case there was an agreement in place with the City Council in the early stages of their succession planning which gave all staff on council contracts the opportunity of redeployment within the council (Fieldnotes, October 2008).

However, there are many service providers within a variety of sectors who feel that their work arrangements have become a site of power struggles. Sybil got hired to work for the Health team of The Company in the autumn of 2001. She had worked as a Community Development worker for a number of smaller, City council-funded projects in other estates within the city boundaries. At that time she was offered a full-time position within the City Council as a Community Development worker, making her eligible for ongoing employment within the council organisational structure but also vulnerable to re-deployment to projects and geographic locales not as familiar as Woodland View had become to her since the start of her tenure. She was one of the earliest workers to be recruited for the Health team and the first member of the team to be re-deployed, so vividly recalled in February 2008:

I remember when they asked me to put my project up on the website CuliVISION but that is when I realized, that is about eighteen months ago that my project was going and it was not just a lack of funding. It was done in a different way.

I realized back then how I had been *dampened down*, the project had been dampened *down* quite a bit, quite severely and that is how *they* knew, that I knew eighteen months ago that the project was going. But I wasn't told, *no*, I wasn't told and it wasn't *just* of it maybe running out of funding. It was done in a different way. You don't have to be ultra-sensitive to see the writing on the wall then.

While knowledge workers like Sybil represented the picture of the flexible empowered worker in the post-industrial society, the fact remained that these individuals face severe challenges in their ability to conduct their job. Issues discussed by Sybil included job insecurity and powerlessness. However, Bourdieu states that 'symbolic violence is the violence that is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu &

Wacquant 1996:167-168) and in the context of this research many service providers were acutely aware of the violence they experienced.

Sybil was mindful of her precarious situation within the structure of The Company-funded projects, and she acknowledged that her position as knowledge worker further increases levels of symbolic violence to permeate working relationships. At the same time it shows the complicity alluded to in Bourdieu's definition of symbolic violence. Furthermore, she echoes some of the concerns raised by Alan stressing the importance of service provision yet acknowledging the contradictions inherent in this sector:

I think it has been because I have been too connected and maybe too outspoken and possibly because they don't understand the work and the fact that you build really close relationships with the residents and that is how you get the work done and I don't think they understand that.

With them (referring to short-term contract workers also mentioned by Alan above) it is more a job to move on from like the others. There is no connection to one job because lots of us work in this *business* almost where we do all this *expert* work but we are *not* experts at all. We just pretend to be because we have the education and they can *re-deploy* us anywhere and let us do anything and we can because we pretend to know that work but in most cases we don't really know what we do and then these people forget that and start to believe that they have some *knowledge* to give instead of listening to the residents because we are supposed to learn from them, to change their lives....

As service providers have been moved on to other positions within the local City Council, The Company has been promoting staff from within its organisational structure to ensure a smooth wind down process for the rest of the programme. Even though Alan hoped that this will help to ensure continuity for the remaining projects, Sybil is one example of an employee who questions her position within the structure of the programme. On the other hand, according to Lucy, whose contract was renewed within the Health team and who was promoted to take on Sybil's position:

We all knew it was going to happen sooner rather than later but there really was no point in telling her about it. She started off the projects, that is true but what is more important is that we keep them going. We change them. We grow together as a team. At some stage you need to become more *savvy* to get the funding. Then it is no longer enough to just run good projects.

What the passage above highlights is the precarious position of those service providers, who mainly occupy lower-tier positions within statutory service provision or work in the front line of service provision mainly within the voluntary sector, an issue described

in some detail in Morgen's account on poor families and welfare reform in the US (Morgen, Acker and Weigt 2010). This issue, afforded to individuals employed outwardly in similar or identical positions, shows to some extent the fluidity of employment opportunities within the service sector industry, statutory, private and third sector. In my discussions with Sybil and other service providers, I became aware that these individuals knew that inherent contradictions and inconsistencies permeated much of their work experience. I contend that while there seemed to be an outward appearance of taking on government ideas about collaboration between service providers, the realities of these processes could be located in relationships underpinned by symbolic violence.

Ernie, the Job Centre Plus outreach worker, told me on several occasions that the interaction he had with other Company project workers and service providers attached to the programme was marginal and non-supportive at best, and whenever he had to work from the local Children's Centre or Community Education Centre he felt isolated and unwelcome. He stated:

They want us to work together, but...I'm not sure, not sure at all that's possible. I work here (Woodland View) but they (project workers) know I work for the Job Centre. When I go to the Community Centre I get barely a 'Hello' from the people who work there and same with Children's Centre and nothing much good coming from the Woodlanders too.

The distinctive feature of the NDC was to put local people 'in the driving seat' (SEU 2001:5) and it was acknowledged that 'communities need[ed] to be involved' (SEU 1999:34). A key element of New Labour policies was to embrace ideas related to the potential for positive engagement with residents through engaging them directly in project development and implementation. However, while community buy-in might have been a relatively easy task, community stay-in was less so. This was partly based on the fact that unequal relationships developed between various categories of service providers, residents and participants. As many participants and residents realized, collaboration with The Company did not automatically lead to changes within policy. Penny, a long-term resident and participant told me:

We all knew it wasn't gonna change nothing, *nothing* at all. But, but as I said before it sounded like it could, could, you know. But in the end that didn't happen. There were us, the ones who really knew what the community needed, really needed. You know like (resident volunteers), *you* know. And then there was the

others, like (The Company and Council employees),....you know all the ones who had the money, who had the power and they weren't gonna let us lot tell 'em what we needed. They were gonna tell us what they thinks we need.

There are two groups that Penny refers to in her quote. The first group includes residents in Woodland View coming from different neighbourhoods within the area but all have been very active as community volunteers. The second group Peggy refers to include the outsiders to Woodland View, not just any outsiders but those managers and directors of agencies and organisations that had been instrumental in providing the much-needed Council-support to get The Company included in the NDC national project. This caused a variety of conflicts that have been experienced by many resident volunteers as negative.

The distinction that can be made based on the position of individuals involved in The Company, reflecting their positions as voluntary versus paid employees. In the context of this research I propose to apply the distinction that is made between single mothers on benefits and those providing services to them. In many instances single mothers have contested the notion of outsiders regarding their inability to take up paid work. As so many women told me that they (policy makers and service providers) need to appreciate the value of unpaid care work, in the same vein resident volunteers argue for collaboration based on community participation.

In the UK, with the funding opportunities arising with the New Deal for Communities, an effort was made to include 'communities' in the process of developing and regenerating deprived neighbourhoods. This was done through assigning neighbourhood representatives working on a voluntary basis to provide input into policy and support outside development workers and managers. However, this process of community participation was often at best confined to matters of the management of details and did not necessarily influence strategy (Byrne 2005:129). Then there are individuals like Jane a participant and former The Company volunteer who complained to me in the summer of 2007:

They have about £10 million left and the most money they spend on again is people in suits, bosses and managers and I think it's wrong, it's so wrong. It's like they expect us to do these things for everybody for free...

In the worst case scenario John, a former member of the Company Steering group, describes his experiences working as a volunteer within Woodland View for nearly

thirty years and then explores his disillusionment with The Company. John had been instrumental in first getting Woodland View involved in The Company:

Originally The Company was for Hillview only...Bernie and me used to run the Association and we then lobbied to include Woodland View into The Company and obviously they did. I suppose you can say from the onset it was quite exciting but I think within three years those that had been involved in estate work realized that it was really *not* about improving our environment. What it was more about was creating jobs and paying for things that the council should pay for and basically that's how it turned out.

There was rules around The Company, i.e. no project could do originally a job that should be done by the council but it was not long before that was changed, I mean parks and gardens and things like that were getting funded for playgrounds and things like that which should've been the responsibility of the City council....they should've been funded by *the City council*...Which was *why* most of the ones that had been doing voluntary work within the estate for many years walked away because we just saw that...all their dreams of having a better place to live was *really never* their intention...

I *watched* people that had worked voluntary for this estate for twenty, thirty years going back and closing their doors behind The Company because it was not going *how* we hoped it would and once they built up the structure, when they set up the board of directors role and the residents but they were *picked* residents. They wouldn't...there was always...because it was fifty percent residents and fifty percent councillors and The Company directors, so the board of directors could never get anything through that wasn't agreed on high level.

So really they were just puppets, they were just *faces* to *appease* the estate, they actually never had any clout at all. They'll still say today: 'it's resident-led'. *Never has been* never will be. There was lots of people, lots of companies, big companies took the biggest part of that 47 million. If you actually break down what was actually spent on the local community it's *nothing*.

This excerpt shows in part the unfolding of the discursive construction of partnership and empowerment in New Labour neighbourhood regeneration programmes. John and many other residents had initially been highly committed and devoted a great of time and effort to The Company. With increasing involvement in the project there was a realisation of increasing discrepancies between expectations and realities of perceived benefits for Woodland View.

Mobilizing metaphors like 'partnership' and 'community,' were not neutral value-free concepts, but were utilized and interpreted in various ways by a range of actors throughout the process of community buy-in. The meaning assigned to particular terms like partnership and community are considered by John the result of exercises of power. These played a crucial role in structuring the discursive context within which urban regeneration partnerships operated.

As stated by John in subsequent conversations, too much emphasis was placed on constructing and implementing a top-down view of neighbourhood regeneration programmes and, as discussed in the literature, too little concern was given to the restricted role the community plays in that process (Atkinson 1999). In the context of drawing the connection between the dominant social exclusion discourse and aspects of symbolic violence, Fairclough concludes that the operation of discursive constructs in urban regeneration reinforces existing social relations and can indeed contribute to symbolic violence (Fairclough 2000). While John's statements could be regarded as biased, national evaluations of local New Deal programmes across the UK indicated, that his concerns were replicated across many of the other local NDC communities. Furthermore, Alan, the managing director, echoed John in saying that:

Residents actually came out as quite negative and the reason for that I think they started on that journey and were given a false idea of how much control they would have. While they started off with saying: 'Come along you'll make the decision' and they sat down and went: 'No we're not...' and if we go on to say: 'You as local residents will control how council budgets are spent'

No they *don't* and if residents then come on board it turns a real *positive* into a real *negative* and I also think that the residents will want to be part of it and they will understand but it has to be made clear in the start and if they don't want to get engaged they can decide that and it's better than being engaged under false pretences.

Individuals like Alan operated directly and every day at the interface between the new ways of designing and implementing services and welfare under New Labour and the actual recipients of those services. For many of these individuals it was imperative that key elements be included in their ways of thinking around including agencies, organisations and residents into collaborative efforts. .

Outwardly, The Company and associated staff, both at the Managerial and front line service level seemed to display a lack of understanding how mis-interpretations to implement and operationalise The Company would affect the resident volunteers. However, it was these individuals who had been instrumental in lobbying for the inclusion of Woodland View into the national NDC has consequently made many participants more unwilling to get involved in other community programmes. Janice is one of the residents who after committed involvement (she spent the first two years compiling specific, very detailed information on any needs residents within Woodland View identified) in The Company has become more reluctant to work with service providers within statutory, private and third sector:

I wouldn't want to do it again. Not after they broke all their promises. All that talk about what did they call it? Empowering people? You know, giving people, local people a say. But they didn't do that. I wouldn't want to put myself out there again. Not after all that happened. They are in it for themselves only.

Such processes of community development actually produced a further exclusion from power, which according to Byrne (2005: 130) is a crucial part of the social exclusion process. This resulted in increased polarization between service providers and residents. Even those residents who decided to remain on Community boards to have at least a nominal voice remained sceptical and realized that needs of the community were often not taken into consideration. As Pauly told me:

There's nobody available to get things moving along the lines of what we would need, the *community* needs. They're not dealing with things like that or they tell you to write it down and they will get back to the points later and in fact, there's always a reason why they won't. Good reasons too. And then in the end you ask yourself what is the point in asking them in the first place and you end up leaving it...But I stuck with it. I think some of us should. Even if it is just to know what is going on...

It was a farcical notion of collaboration and was summed up by Alan as follows:

You stay to tell us what we should do but we will tell you what we do because we know better: we are the experts...but we need you here 'cos you're the local, you know what *they* are like.....you can tell us things about *them*...

However, he also explained the predicament that many service providers faced:

I'm trying to make sure that people like lone mothers in Woodland View don't go: 'Why has everything suddenly gone backwards? Why are there abandoned cars around? And why aren't the police around as much? And why is there more crime? And why are streets dirtier?'

It should be seamless for them. They shouldn't know the difference but I'm worried that they will. And it's right back to where we were ten years ago. But this is what policy does. They come in, do something they say will change the way we think and work with poverty and it's never new, it's already been done. They are just using new words, new catch phrases and then *we* have to re-think how we package these and sell them and bring them to the communities.

And it's always trying to get the funding coming in, trying to keep on top of policy, always trying to anticipate but never quite being able to be on top, always worrying and always feeling you could have done more. It's an uphill battle really.

This disjunction has become a site of considerable tension and contestation played out both in narratives like Laurie's one and in the critical interface between service providers and single mothers in Woodland View. In its simplest form these tensions are about labelling. The SEU enabled and assisted New Labour in identifying and targeting

specific groups of individuals vulnerable to social exclusion – and single mothers on benefits were one such group. The tensions and contestations between policy expectations and lived realities of single mothers on benefits frame much of my participants' experiences with social policy and their interactions with the various groups of service providers in many more complex ways. However, as a result, I argue that these tensions become sites of symbolic violence framing the lives of participants.

7.4 Keep Your Mouth Shut

The last section of this chapter will briefly outline how symbolic violence was often experienced by the women who participated in this research project. Drawing upon the narratives of participants and personal observations, it becomes clear that the violence experienced covered the spectrum from symbolic to physical or a variation of types at any given time. While I do not suggest that the participants were victims at all times, it was clear that their position and status in their neighbourhood and society, as well as their relationships to service providers, seemed to contain features of various types of violence, most definitely symbolic violence. The discourse of social exclusion and resulting social policy measures had immense influence on shaping the levels of symbolic violence many of these individuals experienced.

The discussion in this section pertains especially to the Work Programme initiative as I noticed a specific type of interaction between service providers and single mothers. This interaction I had come to understand as illustrative of a form of symbolic violence, one that Bourdieu thought possible to occur in the 'field of power' (Bourdieu 1989: 16). This kind of symbolic violence is shaped through interactions based on the social position of all actors. For example, women were aware of their precarious position as welfare recipients and were actively encouraged to find employment by Work Programme staff. Many women felt that they had no choice but to attend job search interviews at the Job Centre Plus or accept referrals to the local Work Programme office. In the context of relationships between service providers located within employment-related sector (both statutory and private) and participants, symbolic violence was a regularly occurring form of interaction. This form of violence was directed especially towards class and/or culture-based differences but also applied to gender. It found its expression through dismissive statements on the part of frontline service providers, and high levels of anxiety on the part of the single mothers who were

part of this project. This kind of violence directed towards women accessing the Work Programme in turn made 'buy-in' more difficult to achieve. This was of significant concern for the company since their profits were determined by how many clients they were able to move into paid work. Some of these tensions have been explored in more detail in chapter five.

There was a discrepancy between advisers and participants, specifically in terms of the importance placed on taking up any type of paid work. The following exchange took place one morning at the Work Programme office in Woodland View. Sophie had a consultation with Anne who told her she was not interested in working at Primark or Aldi which at that time had both just opened several large stores across the City. She told Sophie she wanted to train to become a taxi driver. I observed the interview and was struck by Sophie's insistence that Anne should start work at any of the large retail stores in the City, while maybe later training to become a taxi driver. At the same time Anne seemed equally set on becoming a cab driver rather than working as she put it: "any old job."

Sophie countered by telling Anne she might need to accept an entry-level position first because she lacked the prior knowledge required to become a taxi driver. She told her that her literacy skills were not up to par, to which Anne replied that she knew the City like the back of her palms.

I sat quietly as Sophie huffed and resisted and finally pulled out her trump card:

Sorry, Anne but there seems to be a mistake. We don't offer a *complete* re-training but training for *specific* jobs, like retail and support for buying office appropriate clothing and other such support.

Anne sat back quietly and then asked what she would get if she went to work at ASDA in Hillview. Anne described her experience with the Work Programme in subsequent discussions as 'rough, difficult' that 'they don't want to help you.' Anne received almost no help in the time she was actively engaged with Work Programme staff over a three month period. She received no financial support except bus fare while she was applying for jobs across the City, despite being told at her initial interview that this kind of support would include a clothing allowance, in the end Sophie said 'No.' Anne resented the fact that Sophie did not support her decision of becoming a taxi driver and instead felt as though 'she pushed me to do another crummy job.'

Such a culture of work enforcement provides a negative impetus to take on paid work, any low-paying job, to leave welfare (Morgen, *et.al.* 2010:125). However, along with moral evaluations linked to being a benefit recipient and to spending behaviour, the focus on the importance of paid work in Woodland View created a climate inundated with symbolic violence, through shaping of social spaces and social policies. Specifically, support for people who take part in the programmes is often not appropriate, and available jobs do not offer much in terms of long-term types of employment. Here, the regulation of poverty takes places through employment related policies such as the NDLP. Participants are caught up in this culture of work enforcement, with their entitlements to benefits reduced under the guise of combating social exclusion through getting them into employment. For example, through their engagement with employment-related services many had been subjected to humiliating job search interviews. I have explored the apparent disjuncture between policy expectations and lived realities of single mothers in chapter five, I am adding here additional data that will show how symbolic violence is embodied in such interactions.

While the Work Programme and The Company had taken on some of the provision of employment-related services under New Labour, many services were simultaneously offered through the Job Centre Plus. It was through information received from participants returning from job-focused interviews that connections between symbolic violence and service provision became more apparent. Leigh, a twice-divorced mother of four told me that her experiences with a Job Centre employee had been fraught with negative associations for a long time. She stated that:

I tell you what I was down there and talked to Dylan (Job Centre employee) and he was like: 'You know once the kids go to school you have to go back to work.' And I said: 'What do you mean, once they go to school I still can't afford childcare, what about school holidays? I am *not work-shy* but I **can't** afford to do it.' And he was like: 'No, no but you could do a course at the Community Centre' and I said: 'Yes, I would be willing to do that. 'Oh,' he said, 'in my dreams I could imagine you belly-dancing' and I just looked at him and thought '*ewwww*' (laughs). I mean he shouldn't be saying things like that he really shouldn't and then what would a course in belly-dancing get me, where is that gonna get me? It is inappropriate but it was lucky it was me because I don't take any notice of it but that could've really *offended* somebody it really could've upset somebody big time but I just took no notice.

However, in subsequent chats Leigh indicated that she felt 'humiliated' in her interactions with Dylan and that she found it 'demeaning' to listen to his what she perceived as sexual overtures. She expressed negative assessment of Dylan, who she felt

did not see or treat her as ‘real people,’ as individuals with needs. She told me that staff do not care about her and that she at once resented the fact of being judged and having her needs being assessed as ‘being lazy’.

Leigh, like most other participants, was engaged in the NDLP programme whose driving force was the emphasis on paid work. In her dealings with service providers she had numerous encounters with Lone Parent advisers that were underpinned with symbolic violence. Much of the violence as described in the exchange above was embedded in policy programmes such as the NDLP and involved an “explicit ideological policing [that is] embodied in the mundane practices” (Morgen *et.al.* 2010: 112). However, I argue that much of these ‘mundane’ interactions were in fact part of a larger system of symbolic violence - a system which for example led many participants to disengage from interaction with Job Search Centre staff. For single mothers an equally significant source of violence was the coercive way services were offered, not only spatially and physically but also in from the point of view of simple interaction - the way they were treated by service providers.

Bourdieu has argued that individuals are imbued with predispositions to think and act in certain ways based on historical factors (Gledhill 2000: 139). If viewed in this way, service providers and the powerful messages provided by the welfare reform are historically shaped, and the ideological messages that underpinned much of New Labour’s welfare reform affected the experiences of service providers. It was Alan who once told me in passing that he likes chatting to the service users even though he feels bad for them because:

You can’t really help them, you know. They are not always very bright. Even if they try they might not always do really well in school. I think they need to work and now we really need to get them to work because we have the Work Programme breathing down our necks. What do they know about how to get jobs to people? Nothing!

This quote demonstrates how powerful ideological messages embedded historically in relationships between service providers and participants can impart symbolic violence in many of these relationships. By labelling participants as ‘not always very bright,’ as well as assuming that the Work Programme knows nothing about how to provide jobs to individuals, Alan tells us more about the contradictions and inconsistencies that pervade these relationships. This, in turn, can teach a lot about the perspective from which they

are considered. The dominant discourse on social exclusion permeated ideas, experiences and perceptions of policy.

At the same time these were influenced by the social positions of individuals involved in these processes, which, as Bourdieu argued, were involved in reproducing the social structure (Bourdieu 1984). Furthermore, utilizing mobilizing metaphors as discussed earlier in the chapter, particularly in this context, added another layer of symbolic violence and could result in disengagement from services altogether. In Nicky's words:

I just don't care what she (Engagement consultant at the Work Programme) does. I just don't listen. I just do what she tells me to do.

Or Reilly's words, who described how she perceived single mothers being regarded by policy makers and service providers:

We are not even considered working class anymore. It is as though we are classless.

As Julie told me:

You can't trust them. You never know what they do to screw you over. You better keep your mouth shut or it will come back...

What is striking is that many of these stories, in which the relationships between various service providers within employment-related organisations and their clients are described as unfair and unhelpful, contrast with and the belief of many service providers that, with changes to the benefits system, they are better able to help and support their clients. In most of these experiences this expectation was rarely, if ever met. At the same time, as many of the experiences of the service providers in this chapter have shown, their own work has been mostly negatively affected by an increasingly pressurised work environment, where through processes of internalising dominant discourses on welfare and social exclusion they recognise them as acceptable and natural. This emotive notion of symbolic violence is ever-present in many of the relationships across different of service providers within the employment-related sector and single mothers on benefits.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the position of service providers who are mainly employed in the employment-related sector. I have shown that their basic structural position within the context of the welfare system was based on often contradictory and inconsistent experiences. These individuals operated directly and every day at the interface between the new ways of implementing and delivering services designed under New Labour, and the actual recipients of those services. As such, they occupied a very important role for two reasons: they knew the realities of life for single mothers on benefits as well as any outsider could, and they experienced directly the contradictions, inconsistencies and problems that both the realities of policy and dominant discourse of social exclusion entailed.

Chapter 8

Conclusion



(political advertising.co.uk, 2010)

‘Help for those who want to work. No excuse for those who won’t.’ (Conservative ad campaign, 2009)

On May 12th 2010 a Coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats was formed. In July of the same year, this major concern of this government throughout its election campaign was directly addressed and the route towards a new welfare reform had begun. In November 2010, after a three-month consultation process, the White Paper ‘Universal Credit: welfare that works,’ was produced and presented by Works and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith,

It says this Government is unashamedly ‘pro-work’. We believe in work and its wider benefits. We recognise it is *the* best route out of poverty, and we should always reward those who seek a job.

..As I travelled to many of Britain’s poorest communities I concluded that tackling poverty had to be about much more than handing out money. It was bigger than that.

I could see we were dealing with a part of society that had become detached from the rest of us.

People who suffer high levels of family breakdown, educational failure, personal debt, addiction – and at the heart of all of this is intergenerational worklessness.

Only in understanding this can poverty be defeated.’

(DWP, November 2010)

Social exclusion, a primary mobilizing metaphor of many of New Labour social policies, had been removed from the lexicon of political and policy language. For the Coalition government the mobilizer for their welfare reforms was that of ‘social justice.’ Even so echoes of the idea of social exclusion are to be found in the phrase ‘detached from the rest of us’.

Less than two years later, on March 8th 2012, the Welfare Reform Bill conceived under Iain Duncan Smith became law, marking yet again changes to the benefits system and its delivery. The key point of this welfare reform (DWP, March 2012) is its focus to,

restore the welfare system to one that is fair for society and will make work pay.

The Universal Credit will mean that work will pay for the first time, helping to lift people out of worklessness and the endless cycle of benefits. Whilst those people who need our help and support will know they will get it without question.

Despite the rhetoric of a break with Labour policies this statement and others like it, sound eerily similar to the previous Labour government’s mantra of welfare as a ‘hand-up not a hand out.’ As Labour did before, the Coalition government lauded the welfare reform as the biggest reforms since the introduction of the Welfare State. The Coalition also promised to

change the lives of millions of households, providing support to the most vulnerable people in society, with around 2.8 million low to middle income households better off and around 900,000 adults and children lifted out of poverty under Universal Credit (DWP, March 2012.)

This continued the trend towards increasing degrees of moral evaluations based on levels and degree of employment of poor individuals. While the Coalition government has been attacked by the Labour opposition for its changes to the welfare system, these developments, focusing on key elements such as penalizing the unemployed, which include single mothers and privatizing public services (a process continued from the Thatcher government onwards), have long existed in the UK. Under New Labour, single mothers on benefits have remained the focus of many of these current social policies bound through asset of principle making the provision of welfare increasingly connected to notions of the merits of paid employment, individual responsibilities with a moralistic and behavioural focus (Levitas 1998; Lister 1990; Silver 1995). For single mothers, their economic contribution in the context of unpaid housework and care work seems no longer be a valid reason to abstain from paid employment.

Summary of Arguments

Chapter two presented a methodological overview of conducting long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Woodland View. I outlined several aspects of the process involved including how I used specific analytical and/or interpretative categories in recruiting participants. In the beginning of the fieldwork, the category I developed to frame my research topic - lone mothers on income benefits - was met with suspicion by potential participants. Through their critical engagement with the dominant discourse on welfare, many women were acutely aware how processes of moral evaluation shaped perceptions of them and by them. In this sense, this early fieldwork experience became an important tool in analysing the more theoretical concerns of this thesis.

Chapter three began with a review of the relevant literature connected to the theoretical ideas of welfare and social exclusion in the context of New Labour's welfare reforms from 1997. Welfare provision and the financial support of vulnerable members of society have long been contested and a focus of intense political debate. The focal point of this chapter is most importantly an ideological exploration of welfare provision as it applies to single mothers on benefits. Here, a discussion on some of the anthropological literature on social reproduction was used to illustrate how the provision of welfare payments has reflected changes in society at a broader level.

The politics of New Labour's welfare reforms have to be seen in the context of the major welfare reforms brought about since the Amendment of the New Poor Law in 1834. While the introduction of the Welfare State in 1948 supposedly fundamentally changed the payment and provision of welfare at the same time, the growing loss of entitlement in the last twenty years of changes to welfare provision returns us to elements of social policy and welfare philosophy that were already in place in the first half of the twentieth century – and which – *to some extent* harked back to the ideas and categories of the old poor law, including the difference between outdoor relief and the very punitive workhouse conditions, the extreme forms of test of entitlement required for both indoor and outdoor relief and their moral judgements – leading to some poor being seen as deserving and some as undeserving. I argued that these factors contribute to the reinforcement of a dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion, which pathologies and normalised poverty through the introduction of specific social policy measures (the NDLP and NDC.)

Chapter four provided a description of some of the historical, economic and social aspects of Woodland View and placed these into the on-going debate of ‘worst estates’ and ‘deprived neighbourhoods,’ which was also briefly outlined in chapter two. The chapter highlighted the contested nature of collective identity particularly in the context of the dominant discourse on social exclusion. The NDCs’ primary goal was to be a means of narrowing the gap that appeared to separate some communities from the rest of society, by injecting large amounts of money to Britain’s poorest areas. However, for many Woodland View residents, rather than alleviating social exclusion and poverty, The Company created further social divisions. Exploring the spatial, social and economic aspects of the development of the neighbourhoods of Woodland View, is an important means of bringing to light discrepancies that exist between policy expectation and the lived realities of single mothers on benefits and residents of Woodland View. Even though residents and participants might contest the dominant discourse on social exclusion, its policy initiatives became embedded in the cultural landscape of participants. By charting more detailed narratives of Woodland View’s residents and their responses to The Company a more nuanced description of the impact of social policy emerges. The main argument is that The Company served as a tool to frame elements of the dominant discourse on social exclusion, in particular its focus on deprivation and associated problems and implemented these in specific geographic areas. Even though I do not assume that poverty and social exclusion go hand in hand, single mothers on benefits are directly affected by the dominant discourse on social exclusion and its accompanying policy initiatives. These impacts and responses to them were explored in detail in chapters five, six and seven.

The central aim of Chapter five was to highlight the discrepancies that exist between policy expectations and lived realities of single mothers on benefits in the context of debates between the value attached to paid and unpaid work. Within the boundaries of this chapter the interface between policy expectation and lived realities of single mothers on benefits was an empirical claim as well as an analytical focus. Here, I emphasised the normative dimension of paid work, particularly within discussions with key informants working in employment-related services like NDLP and the Work Programme. While service providers seemingly accept the dominant discourse and subsequent policies as fair and appropriate, for participants the realities of this discourse can become increasingly difficult to manoeuvre. In discussions many women located

the discourse along a spectrum describing it as an external phenomenon, with which they strategically engage, and internalising it and accepting it as an accurate representation of social reality. However, most participants critically engaged with the dominant discourse and almost all traversed a tightrope of desert and moral evaluation.

In Chapter six I examined ethnographic evidence of the importance of value systems of consumption and how these are connected to notions of taste, class, morality and the reality of living on benefits. In doing so included service providers and the diverse group of residents and participants located within Woodland View. The central argument of this chapter was that class-based social divisions in Woodland View are readily experienced by participants through the visibility of consumption- in particular clothes and jewellery. I carried on the discussion from the previous chapter to further the understanding of processes of normalising and pathologising poverty, first discussed in Chapter four. I showed how detailed accounts of ideas of how money ought to be spent, exposes single mothers on benefits in processes of moral evaluations, with which they in turn engage. These processes demand that those on benefit 'perform poverty' in a set of conventions about consumption demanded by those who are not recipients of welfare.

In strong contrast, the narratives of many participants contest and challenge often rather one-dimensional assumptions connected to consumption. However, the data in this chapter begins to convey more nuanced understandings of the significance attached to consumption, highlighting the link between moral evaluations and consumption while also showing personal histories expressing different types of relationships. I illustrated in chapter three how some areas in Woodland View are portrayed by many City residents as dangerous places. Woodland View had been identified as a deprived neighbourhood to receive government funding to address social exclusion. The justification for outside intervention was based on its identification as a violent and anti-social marginal neighbourhood. This theme was the subject of further analysis in chapter seven, where I discussed the basic structural position of the various categories of service providers positioned within the framework of New Labour's welfare regime, not only in terms of service delivery but also as recipients of policy expectations. I provided an exploration of their different positions within the system of service delivery. Here their various positions located within the structure of the local NDC programme was quite thoroughly differentiated. This discussion is vital in creating

a more thorough understanding of individuals who operate directly and every day at the interface between new ways of organizing and delivering services and the actual recipients of those services. Especially front line project workers know the realities of single mothers' lives as well as any outsider can. They also experience directly the contradictions, inconsistencies and problems that the actual design and discourses associated with the welfare regime entail and the aim of this chapter was to assess these. This examination aimed to deepen understandings of the contemporary experience of poverty, and in particular to allow for specific locality-based contestations regarding analytical categories such as social exclusion to take centre stage. I argue that in many instances these inconsistencies and contradictions mask varying degrees of symbolic violence.

Findings and Contributions

Overall, this thesis contributes to a more critical understanding of the realities of the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion that was the driving force of many New Labour policies. The introduction of recent welfare reforms of the Coalition government are permeated with much of the same ideology. A dominant theme in many of my chapters is how these contemporary welfare provisions incorporate any number of moral evaluations about single mothers, and others. Service providers and participants hold contrasted meanings associated with welfare receipt. While various groups of service providers do not always critically engage with the dominant discourse on welfare and social exclusion, participants challenge the dominant discourse at many levels.

Ethnographic research is important here because it reveals the tensions that exist in many key areas: in wholly dissonant values assigned to paid and unpaid work for example or in very different ways of linking notions of class and/or culture. Overall it also shows in detail how the flexible and ambiguous nature of social exclusion presented constraints that emerge in the interface between policy expectations and lived realities of single mothers on benefits. My research explicitly places single mothers on benefits and their lived experiences into the landscape of the ever-changing dominant discourses on welfare and social exclusion, while demonstrating the extent to which these discourses and subsequent social policy initiatives affect their lives. At the same time, I have highlighted how single mothers engage with and respond to these dominant

discourses on welfare provision and poverty. In the process of this exploration, the research contributes to the existing discussions about whether the realities of their lives are taken account of in policy initiatives.

Furthermore, by drawing on of the literature from the United States, the research contributes to a cross-cultural understanding of poverty, examining the similarities and differences that exist between the two national discourses on welfare and poverty and associated effects of social policies. Even though there are a number of US ethnographies, they do not deal in detail with the links that exist between changing welfare discourses, policy expectation and the lived realities of single mothers on benefits. This thesis adds to a body of literature that might aid in cross-cultural comparisons.

Context, Implications and Further Research

Although the focus of this research is on exploring New Labour's social policies, the context is one in which with the election of the Coalition government in 2010 has reinforced the trend of moral evaluation so prominent in the previous government. While this thesis contains some information that I collected on the impacts of the new reform the bulk of it still needs to be analysed. A critical theme for further exploration will be an examination of young men in Woodland View. In addition, I am involved in ongoing data collection, regarding the impact of the latest wave of welfare reforms on the lives on single mothers and other marginalized social groups within Woodland View.

Since the Coalition's welfare reform came into law, participants have contacted me, fearfully discussing these changes, imagining what effects the welfare reform might have on their lives. However, one thing has not changed since the introduction of the proposal to the welfare reform and that is the fact that participants continue to remain as critically engaged in this process of change as they have ever been. While they continue to struggle to make ends meet financially, socially and politically, participants continue to engage critically with ideas underpinning the moralistic stance that has openly permeated the Coalition's drive to change the benefits system. It is key to why ethnographic exploration and anthropological understanding are so important for this thesis.

As Sheila told me:

It is never going to change. They will always treat us like dirt. Where were we when they decided on the fucking *reform*? Fucking *reform*. Do we need less money? No, I need more money. Everything's so much more expensive now.

Maureen adds:

We weren't asked. They will never ask us. Nothing is ever going to change. We will still be here and be treated like we don't matter.

It is with another story I want to end this thesis. Upon first reading the introduction to Owen Jones' *Chavs. The demonization of the working class*, I was struck by his description of a dinner party where open ridicule of working-class people was not discouraged but in fact seemed commonplace and funny. I was left wondering, as did he was 'how has hatred of the working class become so socially acceptable?' (Jones, 2011: 2) There was also a question that kept lingering in the back of my mind: How did he react to this ridicule when presented with it? We were never told.

I remembered this anecdote when attending a belated Christmas dinner in January 2012, where, when asked about my research topic several colleagues and their partners proceeded to explain to me that the welfare system was in need of an overhaul because too many people were taking advantage of its financial benefits. My assertions that it is a fallacy to assume women have babies to get more money or a bigger apartment, nor my descriptions of the very real challenges of surviving on a limited financial budget deterred friends from their opinion. Even though I argued that my long-term involvement in Woodland View has shown that the lives of single mothers and others might not quite be in line with the official picture of the welfare scrounger as it has increasingly been painted in mainstream media and political outlets, my colleagues remained steadfast in their defence and even told me that they knew people 'like that' in Woodland View, that they could indeed 'point them out to me.' This debate left me dismayed: those who I considered to be critical researchers were unthinkingly drawing on prejudicial processes of moral evaluations and on discourses that pathologised other classes and/or the cultural characteristics of poor single mothers on benefits. Once the conversation turned to tackle perceived problems related to the number of children poor people had without having the financial means to support them I raised my voice and asked loudly: 'What about introducing *A Modest Proposal*?' The table fell silent and the conversation changed. Even though it was meant as satire the following passage remains a fairly accurate reflection of the realities of the dominant discourse of welfare and social exclusion in contemporary UK society. At the same time

it highlights the discrepancies that exist between living on benefits, policy and societal expectations.

It is a melancholy object to those who walk through this great town or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabin doors, crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers, instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in strolling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants: who as they grow up either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country to fight for the Pretender in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbadoes (Swift, 1729).

And I was reminded of Herman Melville who in 1854 noted that:

Of all the preposterous assumptions of humanity over humanity, nothing exceeds most of the criticisms made on the habits of the poor by the well-housed, well-warmed, and well-fed (Melville, 1854 quoted in Rosenberry, 1979: 122).

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