Dependency or Enterprise? Political discourses and lived experiences of benefit claiming in Britain.

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I certify that I am the sole author of this work.

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explore the conceptual gap between political discourses and lived experiences of benefit claiming in Britain. Following a social constructionist perspective, I argue that the 'policy problem' of benefit claiming has been constructed in particular narrow ways that both shape and limit policy responses. I also show that this narrow political construction is contradicted by claimants' understandings and experiences of what constitutes the 'problem' of unemployment and benefit dependency.

The thesis is structured in two parts. Part one comprises a critical discourse analysis (following Fairclough) of British welfare reform policy. Policy reform is increasingly couched in terms of replacing *dependency* (associated exclusively with benefits) with *enterprise* (associated exclusively with paid work). The policy imperative is to replace unemployment with particular kinds of paid work. Part two of the thesis draws on a series of group and individual interviews with long-term benefit claimants. In contrast to politicians' presuppositions, interviewees report numerous and varied connections to worlds of work; they subscribe to dominant discourses about the value of work; and they display considerable enterprise in surviving on the low incomes provided by benefits. The dependency/enterprise dichotomy is further challenged by those interviewees who are members of their local LETS (local exchange trading system). LETS, while no panacea to the problems of depressed labour markets and 'poor places', operate effectively as arenas where alternative discourses and values of mutuality and interdependency are produced and circulate; as a space between enterprise and dependency.

The increasing use and importance of notions of dependency and enterprise in government circles provides an ideological justification for reductions in social security spending while increasing targeting and means-testing. It also allows the causes of poverty and unemployment to be attributed to supply side issues, largely concerning the employability of individuals. More recently, this individualising tendency has been tempered by political interest in the notion of 'social capital'. The thesis therefore continues with a critique of this 'new' idea. While the switch of

attention from the individual to the social is welcomed, the direction of much of the social capital debate, in particular the continued problematisation of the quality of labour supply, is criticised. In conclusion, alternative policy opportunities are considered, including the citizen's income and government sponsored full employment. Above all, a plea is made for a social welfare policy that engages more with economic geography, and an economic geography that engages more with those who suffer the brunt of economic and welfare restructuring.

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The thesis is dedicated to the beloved memory of my inspirational mother, Lily O'Connor, who died on the 15th December 2000.

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Chapter One   Introduction

This thesis is about discourses of public policy in Britain in the field of welfare reform. Recently, a number of geographers have expressed concern that the discipline lacks an invigorated 'geography of public policy'. This introductory chapter assesses this current debate about the perceived barriers to geographical research on policy issues. The 'cultural turn' within human geography is commonly considered to be prime amongst barriers to a renewed geography of public policy. I argue that policy concerned research and post-structural social theory are not necessarily antithetical. The chapter expands on the specific theoretical inspirations of social constructionism and critical discourse analysis that informed the research reported in the thesis.

Preamble

In April 1998 I was interviewed in the Geography Department of Edinburgh University for a departmental studentship to fund the research reported in this thesis. One of the interview panel members asked me a question about the research proposal I had developed. The proposal described my aims as deconstructing dominant discourses of 'dependency' and 'enterprise' in British public policy and comparing these discourses to benefit claimants' lived experiences of welfare and work. (In essence, the proposal is very much what I did do, and the chapters of this thesis are organised around these themes of dependency, enterprise, welfare and work.) I was asked, though, how I expected the change of government in Britain to affect the research. The subtext of the question was that 'dependency' and 'enterprise' were quintessential Tory keywords and the 'New' Labour government would be expected to take a different stand on the nature of the 'problem of welfare' with concomitant different language, keywords and discourses. The inference at the time was that the topicality or political relevance of the research might be over before it began. New Labour had already been in power for almost a year, and although then Minister for Welfare Reform Frank Field had allegedly been charged with 'thinking the unthinkable' with regard to welfare policy, it was evident that there was to be many

continuities with the previous government's analysis of the problem of welfare. I said something like this in my answer, but in retrospect it is clear (and hopefully demonstrated in later chapters) that dependency and enterprise have, if anything, increased in salience under New Labour as discourses that say so much about how the Labour government views and constructs the worlds of benefits and work.

Structure of the chapter

There are six sections to this introductory chapter. First, the recent debate within the geography discipline around a perceived lack of a vibrant '**geography of public policy**' is assessed. This lack of research on geography and policy is commonly attributed to a number of barriers, including the problem of instrumentalism, and the 'cultural turn' in human geography. Nevertheless, despite these barriers, the contributors to the debate (especially Peck, 1999b, 2000; Martin, 2001a) agree that there are notable examples of geographic contributions to public policy debates. Indeed, Jamie Peck, one of the instigators of this policy debate has himself made a significant contribution to geographic research in the substantive area of this thesis: welfare reform (for example, Peck, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a; Peck and Theodore, 2000; Theodore and Peck, 1999; 2001). The second section of the chapter describes the **context** of the welfare reform changes of Peck's analysis. Post-war changes in political ideologies have led to a position where, across the western world, extensive welfare states came to be considered part of the problem of poverty, rather than part of the solution. This conclusion has been contested, and the debate around 'welfare dependency' soon polarised around the familiar sociological structure/action binary, with left wing critics of notions of 'underclass' and 'dependency' insisting on the structural causes of poverty, and new-right (and increasingly centre-left) commentators blaming poverty on the individual character traits of poor people. This thesis represents an attempt to move on, to some extent, from this structure/action debate, and the **theoretical arguments** employed to enable this are the focus of section three. The thesis employs the concept of *social constructionism* in policy studies, and (as intimated in the preamble) the research focuses on particular policy *discourses*. There are different (but overlapping) theories of discourse adopted in contemporary social theory (for example, Foucault, 1972;

Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Fairclough, 2001; for a comparison see Mills, 1997). This section draws on each, but principally Fairclough, to advance a conception of discourse that acknowledges both the *ideological* nature of discourses and their *materiality* (both in constitution and effect). A focus on discourse is very much part of the 'cultural turn' in human geography that Martin and Peck partly blame for the poor state of geographic research on public policy. One aim of this research is to show that post-structuralist social theory and public policy research are not *necessarily* antithetical (as Martin himself acknowledges, 2001a: 207n).

Section four is a discussion of the **methods** used in the research project. The empirical work was in two stages (represented by the two parts of the thesis): first a political discourse analysis of dependency and enterprise, and second a series of interviews with long term benefit claimants in a town in central-belt Scotland. This methodological approach was used to explore the gap between the discursive construction of the problem of benefit claiming by New Labour politicians, and the lived experiences of benefit claimants themselves. In section five, I try to explain *why* this gap was explored: to offer a **rationale** for the research undertaken. Finally, section six briefly outlines the **structure** of the rest of the thesis.

1.1 Geography and Public Policy

1.1.1 Lack of policy relevance in geography

It is nearly thirty years since the session of the annual conference of the Institute of British Geographers where delegates advocated a renewed engagement with public policy (Transactions (1974), volume 63). There was concern expressed on two fronts: first that geography as a discipline would be lesser without a policy dimension, and second that public policy would be lesser without the influence and insights of geography and geographers. Almost thirty years on, the debate has resurfaced within the pages of some of the discipline's principal journals (Peck, 1999b; 2000; Pollard et al, 2000; Banks and MacKian, 2000; Massey, 2000; Martin 2001a). The consensus of the current debate is that the 'policy turn' advocated in 1974 never really happened, and that there remains a lack of policy relevant research

in geography. Further, this lack is generally considered a problem for geography and for policy. The contributors to the debate identify various barriers to a 'geography of public policy' and recommend that these barriers are overcome so that a reinvigorated policy sub-discipline might develop.

Each contributor to this renewed debate advances different explanations for the problem, however there are common themes as to what the barriers to a geography of policy are deemed to be. In this section, these perceived barriers are discussed. They are, broadly, a) the problem of instrumental knowledge; b) the status of policy research within geography; c) the status of geographers within policy circles and d) the 'cultural turn' in human geography.

1.1.1a Instrumentalism

The first perceived barrier to a geography of public policy relates to concerns amongst critical geographers about the dangers of instrumentalism inherent in policy work. In brief, critical geographers are sceptical of the value of working with or for policy makers who operate within, and help to sustain and reproduce, unequal economic and social systems (Blomley, 1994). For example, when, in 1974, David Harvey (1974) asked 'what kind of geography for what kind of public policy?' he was referring to the dangers of un-critical geographic work for policy makers that may serve the interests of certain powerful groups at the expense of less powerful sections of society.

Related to this is Jamie Peck's distinction between 'shallow' and 'deep' policy research: shallow being the 'cash-for-contracts' evaluative style work done *for* policy makers in contrast to deep theoretical research, Peck's example being regulationist theorising of the changing role of the state. In the context of instrumentalism, it is clearly the shallow type research that is more problematic. Peck cites Blomley's disdain for geographers who "market themselves to capital or the state" (1994: 383) in what he sees as being in the service of the state's inequitable interventions in space (Peck, 1999b: 133). Further, Ron Martin cites concerns that all types of policy research (shallow and deep) are potentially compromised by virtue

of their public state funding. As Martin writes, the concern is that "no government or other policy making body is likely to commission or welcome research which it believes could be strongly critical of its policy programmes" (2001a: 199). Neither Peck nor Martin deny that such problems exist, although Martin warns against them being exaggerated and used as justification for avoiding policy research altogether. Similarly, Peck is critical of Blomley's disdain, worried that such a blanket dismissal of policy research is good for neither geography nor policy, and anyway, "surely someone has to do it" (1999b: 132). More importantly, Peck and Martin agree that policy research is not *necessarily* a principle-compromising limited exercise in preserving and reproducing the status quo. I agree, and would add further that while policy work (and public policy itself) may be criticised as mere reformist tinkering around the edges, researchers cannot but work within the realities and confines of present day milieux and the policy part of that milieux does affect people's quality of life, for better or worse. Policy work therefore represents an opportunity for critical geographers to influence the development of policies in ways that might ameliorate the effects of, say, economic restructuring.

1.1.1b Low status of policy research within geography
Of course concerns remain, and they are linked to a second perceived barrier to an invigorated geography of public policy: the low status of policy work within the discipline of geography (Peck, 1999b; 2000; Massey, 2000; Pollard et al, 2000; Martin, 2001a). For Peck the division between 'pure' academic research and 'dirty' policy research is long running, but amplified by professional-institutional pressures such as the Research Assessment Exercise in the UK. Pollard et al (2001) agree that "geography has promoted the 'pure' or the 'scholarly', rather than the 'applied'" and they suggest that this is in part due to "the current RAE-driven managerial culture in the discipline which favours particular kinds of 'outputs'" (2000: 246). Martin labels this phenomenon the "intellectual bias against policy studies" which he describes as the "widespread view within human geography that policy study is somehow intellectually inferior to the 'higher' pursuit of 'theorizing'" (2001: 198).

Whether or not this bias exists (it is not something I have yet experienced) it is important to distinguish here between policy work that is "research-for" policy makers and work that is "research-about" policy development (what Peck might label 'shallow' versus 'deep' research). The crux of the problem is that while the commissioned "report in cardboard covers" (Peck, 1999: 131) might be a less valued academic output in RAE terms than the article in Transactions, it is the former that has more influence in policy making circles. For Peck, "we have to do more than simply write about policy, or map and measure outcomes, but must engage critically and actively with the policy process itself" (2000: 255). The ultimate aim is to influence the direction of policy, and those that do research with and for policy makers are said to be more influential than geographers who prefer 'blue-skies research' (Massey, 2000).

1.1.1c Low status of geographers within policy making circles
The low status of geographers within policy-making circles is a third perceived barrier to geography and policy work (Peck, 1999, 2000; Martin, 2001). It is argued that there remains a lack of understanding amongst policy makers about what it is, exactly, that geographers do (Massey, 2001; Castree, 2000). Further, policy makers are much more receptive to economists than economic geographers, especially when it comes to designing large-scale policies such as welfare to work policies (Peck, 1999). It is economists, not economic geographers, who have the "ear of the minister" (Peck, 1999: 134); whose theories and ideas influence the direction of public policy. Even when policy makers turn their attention to traditional geographic topics of study (such as regional development or high tech clustering) it is economists who are "flown into country after country to advise policy makers" (Martin, 2001: 198) rather than economic geographers. This relative lack of influence may discourage geographers from researching policy issues.

This barrier is linked to the problem of instrumentalism, though, as it is argued that policy makers are more receptive to the theories of orthodox economists than they would be to those of critical geographers (Henry et al, 2001). Peck acknowledges that the "ideological power of economics is such that that it may not actually matter

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whether or not there is an academic economist whispering in the minister's ear; the minister can hear the whispers anyway" (2000: 256). Nevertheless, Martin (2001a) argues that this should not discourage geographers from engaging with policy makers, and further, it is difficult to ignore well evidenced, rigorous and clearly presented research, even if it does not say what ministers want to hear. In Martin's experience policy makers are put off by what they perceive as the increasingly 'jargon-filled' human geography, which bears little relevance to contemporary policy concerns. Martin, with others (Hamnett, 1997; Peck, 1999; Martin and Sunley, 2001) contends that this apparent rise in obfuscatory jargon is partly the influence of the 'cultural turn' in human geography.

1.1.1d The 'cultural turn'

> One reason for the neglect of public policy research in human geography is the postmodern/textualist/discursive and cultural 'turns' that have had such a pervasive impact across the discipline in the last few years.
> Martin, 2001a: 194

Martin blames what he calls "the public policy irrelevance of the postmodern and cultural turns in human geography" (2001a: 194) for the lack of 'policy turn' in the discipline of geography. This, he contends, is due to three factors. First, 'postmodern' human geography does not study the pressing policy issues of today, amongst which he includes "poverty, unequal access to public and social services, housing problems, unemployment, ill health, unequal health care" (2001a: 195). Second, the postmodern turn is said to have heralded "theoretical and linguistic obfuscation" (2001a: 195-6) which distances geography further from the 'real world' of policy problems and responses. Third, and related, 'postmodern geography' is said to deny an extra-discursive reality and as a result "disengages itself with movements and practices which might challenge material power and so change outcomes" (2001a: 196).

With relation to the first two factors, it is clear that it is not *necessarily* so. A focus on 'discourse', for example, need not preclude research on policy (as this thesis aims

to demonstrate, and has already been evidenced by, for example, Schram, 1995; Leonard, 1997; Levitas, 1998, amongst others). Second, discursive research need not, of course, be obfuscatory. Third, there are post-structural theories of discourse that *do not* deny an extra-discursive reality, (Laclau and Mouffe (1985) call this a "common misunderstanding" of discourse, this is expanded in section three below).

Nonetheless, Martin is not alone in linking the rise in 'postmodern theory' with a decline in the 'relevance' of contemporary social enquiry.

> [T]he academic and the lay worlds seem to be moving in opposite directions, for there is also a striking contrast between what is happening inside radical academia and what is happening outside. Whereas the former shifted into culture and the esoteria of postmodernism outside it has been gung ho neoliberalism-rarely acknowledged in radical academia-that has been in the ascendancy, and the key issue has been 'the economy, stupid'.
> Sayer, 1994: 636

Again, the obvious response is that it need not be so, and further, caution should be exercised lest false oppositions are set up between 'postmodernism' (all that is cultural, woolly, verbose, irrelevant and bad) and 'policy studies' (all that is political-economic, practical, realistic, relevant and good). This thesis argues for an economic geography that is *both* policy relevant *and* alert to the importance of struggle over ideas and meanings and is open to multiple futures. Further, there are geographers who believe the purported demise of political economy (at the hands of the cultural turn) to be overstated. For Noel Castree, for example, "Anglophone geography has a larger and more vibrant Left community than at any time in its history" (2000: 2091). Similarly, Trevor Barnes (1995: 428) tries to allay Sayer's fears:

> Sayer (1994:636) in his editorial says he is worried about the neglect of political economy compared to the emphasis on things cultural. I don't think he needs be. Political economy's greatest assets as an intellectual framework are its ability to adapt, and to accommodate and respond to criticism.

1.1.2 Geography and Policy

Of course, having said all this, there *are* many examples of geographical policy research in a number of fields, as Martin (2001a) and Peck (1999b) acknowledge. There is a large body of geographical work on housing (for example, Smith and Malinson, 1996); transport (for example, Hoyle and Knowles, 1992); health and health care (for example, Kearns, 1993); education (for example, Bondi and Matthews, 1988) and the environment (for example, Routledge, 1994). Just in the substantive area of this thesis there has been geographical work on the topic of welfare reform (Pinch, 1997; Peck1998a, b, 1999a; Peck and Theodore, 2000; Theodore and Peck, 2000, 2001), the national minimum wage (Sunley and Martin, 2000) and the geography of unemployment (for example, Pattie and Johnston, 1990; Green et al, 1994, 1998; Green, 1995; Fieldhouse, 1996, Martin, 1997; Turok and Webster, 1998; Turok and Edge, 1999; Webster, 1999, 2000). This geography of unemployment is largely concerned with regional variations in the rates of unemployment and the vital questions of under employment, non-employment and long-term sickness levels, especially in the UK (see, for example, the special issue of Regional Studies, volume 34, number 7 in October 2000 on "employability, adaptability and flexibility: changing labour market prospects").

That there is a developed geography of welfare reform is largely thanks to the work of Jamie Peck himself, with Nic Theodore (Peck, 1998a, b, 1999a, 2000; Peck and Theodore, 2000; Theodore and Peck, 1999, 2001). This work has convincingly critiqued the "workfare offensive" dismantling welfare systems in western nation states. Peck and Theodore have traced the processes of policy transfer from the US to the UK, identified different models of delivering welfare-to-work policies (including 'human capital development' and 'labour force attachment') and advocated that British governments move "beyond employability" in their explanations of unemployment.

All of these geographies advance our understanding of social injustice and the policy areas of unemployment, benefit claiming and welfare reform. However, they all contain a remarkable omission: none engage with the people affected by these

changes. There remains in human geography a discernible gap in the literature (including the policy relevant literature) on the experiences of those 'excluded' in a myriad of ways. There seems to be a reluctance to engage with those who are often most affected by policy changes, especially in the field of social policy. As Noel Castree (2001: 3) comments:

> Economic geography is too pre-occupied with deconstructing the discourses of (the) power(ful) while neglecting the economic geographies of the disadvantaged.

The aim of this thesis is to do both: to deconstruct dominant political discourses of welfare reform (specifically 'dependency' and 'enterprise') *and* to pay full attention to the experiences of the 'disadvantaged', in this instance, benefit claimants.

1.2   The Context of Welfare Reform: From 'cradle-to-grave' to 'welfare-to-work'.

The context of the welfare changes that are the focus of this research is one of profound post-war changes in society, economy, politics and culture. These changes have been variously conceptualised: economically, the end of a so-called 'golden age' of mass production and mass consumption has been theorised as a move from 'Fordism' to 'post-Fordism' (Amin, 1994) and the 'end of organised capitalism' (Lash and Urry, 1987). Cultural shifts in architecture and art have been conceived of as a shift from 'modernism' to 'post-modernism' (Cloke et al, 1991). Social changes are said to have led to a distinct 'risk society' (Beck, 1992) and political-economic shifts are described as a move from Keynesianism to Monetarism (Wilkinson, 2000).

1.2.1 From Keynesianism to Monetarism
 Changes in the welfare state (now sometimes said to be 'in crisis'- Esping-Anderson, 1996) have been traced to this ideological shift in the 1970s from Keynesianism to monetarism (Wilkinson, 2000; Martin and Sunley, 1997). Crucially, this shift involved a change in the way the causes of unemployment were

understood. Crudely, Keynesian economic theory understands unemployment to be mainly a problem of labour *demand*. Full employment is considered achievable if governments intervene by using public spending as a tool to counter cyclical slumps in demand inherent to a capitalist economy (Mullard, 1992). The welfare state (although not necessarily an inherent part of Keynesian economics-see Martin and Sunley, 1997) does fulfil a number of functions including sustaining national aggregate demand and maintaining social order, and it is made 'affordable' through tax revenues at 'full employment'.

However, since the 1970s, this Keynesian orthodoxy (which has probably been romanticised and idealised-see O'Neill, 1997) has come under fire. As Martin and Sunley (1997: 281) write:

> The Keynesian Welfare State has been undermined from without and from within and is now widely viewed as obsolete, a project no longer relevant to the changing imperatives and contours of socio-economic development.

A factor in this undermining of the Keynesian Welfare State was the increase in both price inflation and unemployment in Britain from the late 1960s, in apparent refutation of Phillip's Law (which states there is an inverse relationship between inflation and unemployment) (Wilkinson, 2000). This change was accompanied by fundamental economic and social restructuring, including increasing flexibilisation and feminisation of the labour force, which has led to a "crisis both of economic management and social legitimation" for Keynesianism (Martin and Sunley, 1997: 281). The ideologies of monetarism and neo-liberalism, inspired by the New Right economics of Friedman and Hayek (Smith, 1989) became the new orthodoxy, replacing Keynesianism. The new politics, personified by Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the US, reinstated the market as the central plank of society and propounded a diminished role for the state (Martin and Sunley, 1997).

Even if pronouncements of the 'death of Keynesianism' in the 1980s were premature (in terms of rhetoric if not practice, see Martin and Sunley, 1997: 283) and regulationist claims of the 'hollowing out' of the nation state overstated (O'Neill,

1997), it is clear that at least in terms of how the problem of *unemployment* is understood, the shifts towards monetarism and neo-liberalism have been profound. The parameters of the debate around what causes unemployment (and later, as I argue in chapter two, benefit claiming in general) have shifted. The parameters closed almost exclusively around supply-side causes of unemployment (a situation which remains today). The causes of unemployment were located in unemployed people themselves: their skills shortages, detachment from the labour market, poor job contacts, even poor self-presentation, in short what has become known as their lack of *employability*. The magnitude of this shift in the goalposts of what the causes of unemployment are considered to be should not be underestimated. Changes in and slumps in labour demand, related to capitalist cycles of growth and contraction, have been given central roles in explanations of the causes of unemployment in a broad spectrum of theories from the left to the right. That demand is so underplayed in contemporary political explanations of unemployment is significant, and may significantly limit the effectiveness of government welfare reform policy (see chapters two and eight; Webster 1999; 2000; 2001).

1.2.2 The 'underclass' debate

These shifts in political-economic thinking were mirrored in sociological debates around the causes of entrenched and spatially manifested poverty, particularly in urban areas of the US and UK. The political climate of Thatcherism and Reaganism was receptive to explanations of poverty that located its causes within the character of individual poor people and their allegedly separate culture. In the 1980s and early 1990s the debate around the notion of an 'underclass' of the economically disadvantaged and culturally distinct raged (a sample of the enormous literature generated includes Bagguley and Mann, 1992; Cornford, 1992; Dahrendorf, 1992; Field, 1989; Gallie, 1994; Gans, 1993; Green, 1992; Heath, 1992; Hughes, 1989; Jordan and Redley, 1994; Macniol, 1987; Mann, 1992; Morris, 1993, 1994; Murray, 1984; 1990 a, b; Smith, 1992; Walker, 1990; Wilson, 1987, 1991).

The underclass debate had long and inauspicious roots (Macniol, 1987). Its predecessors included, in the UK, Sir Keith Joseph's unsuccessful attempts in the

early 1970s to prove the existence of inter-generationally transmitted poverty. Joseph voiced his concern at the 'excess' number of births to mothers from lower social classes, stating: "the balance of our population, our human stock, is threatened" (cited in Macniol, 1987: 294). Despite funding numerous research projects to explore this notion of transmitted poverty, no evidence was found to substantiate Joseph's dubious preconceptions. A US predecessor to the underclass notion was Oscar Lewis' anthropological accounts of a 'culture of poverty' in certain US urban areas (Lewis, 1968). Lewis' account sought to explain poverty as the fault of behavioural patterns (such as what New Labour ministers might call the 'poverty of expectation') of poor people, again allegedly causing the reproduction of poverty between generations. As Macniol (1987: 296) writes, "underclass stereotypes have always been a part of the discourse on poverty in advanced industrial nations".

The underclass debate of the 1980s and early 1990s originated in the US and was introduced to the UK by American social commentator Charles Murray (1990b). Murray's populist accounts of the nature of the 'underclass' were written in a polemical and inflammatory style, published originally in the *Sunday Times* (1990a). He described himself as a "visitor from a plague area come to see whether the disease is spreading" (1990b: 3) and concluded that the underclass was a problem in the UK berating those members "whose values are now contaminating the life of entire neighbourhoods" (1990b: 4). Murray substantiates this conclusion by claiming a problematic increase in the three phenomena he relates as defining the 'underclass': "illegitimacy, violent crime and drop-out from the labour-force" (1990b: 4).

Distinct from Murray's conservative (and thoroughly criticised) version of 'underclass' is the more empirically grounded work of William Julius Wilson (1987, 1991). Wilson focuses on the geographical segregation of the (largely African-American) poor in US urban areas, and in a more structural causative account blames "basic economic shifts and transformations" for their plight (1991: 8). Further, in his later work Wilson became concerned with the direction the concept of underclass had taken in the writings of Charles Murray, and decided to abandon the term (partly

because he agreed with Gans (1990) that the term 'underclass' had become "hopelessly polluted") in favour of the term 'ghetto poor' (Wilson, 1991).

Despite this often made distinction between the conservative Murray and liberal Wilson, some British commentators have suggested that little really separates them in their explanation of the causes of poverty because they share the crucial dimension of locating the 'problem of poverty' firmly within poor people themselves:

> For Murray it is still a case of the underclass rationally maximising their welfare benefits, for Wilson it is a case of localised cultures of poverty and low self-esteem. Whichever way you look at it, the poor remain poor because they've got an attitude problem.
> Bagguley and Mann, 1992: 117

Other critics argue that the concept of underclass (especially as advanced by Murray) involves the denial of structural causes of poverty, including class and gender inequalities and the consequences of economic restructuring (Gans, 1990; Walker, 1990). For these authors, 'underclass' explanations of poverty serve only to 'blame the victim':

> Mr Murray's underclass, like all previous attempts to individualise the causes of poverty, diverts attention from blaming the mechanisms through which resources are distributed, including the role of the Government, to blaming, in William Ryan's famous phrase, 'the victims'.
> Walker, 1990: 58

Gans (1993), while acknowledging the social construction of all such 'keywords' (such as underclass and victim) nevertheless refers repeatedly to the "victims of the postindustrial economy" (1993: 328). Westergaard summarises such structural explanations of poverty, which he argues understand the "new poor as victims of market restructuring, enterprise rationalisation and regression in public policy" (1992: 577). The debate polarised around a structure/culture binary:

> While those on the right sought to identify a culturally distinct deprived minority, those on the left sought to identify a structurally defined underclass. The 'culturalists' were concerned with 'the problem family'; the 'structuralists' with 'poverty'.
> Dean and Taylor-Gooby, 1992: 36

This underclass notion is the direct antecedent to the 'dependency' discourse that is the focus of chapter two. As I am critical of how 'dependency' has been constructed, so would I sympathise more with the structural critiques of notions of 'underclass' described above. Nevertheless, appealing to notions of poor people as 'victims' of economic and social restructuring, however well-meaning, remains problematic, because it tends to remove from individuals the capacity to effect change in their circumstances: in other words it denies *agency*. The difficulty for the critical researcher of such topics as welfare, unemployment and benefit claiming is how to acknowledge the crucial determining structural factors of economic and social inequality while still allowing space for the agency of individual benefit claimants. Left wing analyses of welfare tend to avoid such accounts of agency "for fear of offering hostages to right-wing opinion" (Jordan and Redley, 1994: 156), and this is perhaps understandable for it is commentators like Murray (from whom left wing analysts would be keen to distance themselves) who advocate the need to "sharply reduce our readiness to call people 'victims'" (1990b: 71). However, there are critical researchers who find constructing poor people as 'victims' similarly problematic, and suggest a new orientation for critical social research which "[i]nstead of constructing the poor as victims of restrictive government policies...would investigate their survival strategies and cultures of resistance" (Jordan and Redley, 1994: 156). The key concept here is the notion of the *construction* of poor people in certain narrow ways, and I argue in the following section that theoretical arguments around social constructionism and discourse enable an approach to researching welfare change and benefit claimants that allows space for structure and agency.

1.3   Theoretical Inspirations

1.3.1 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is an umbrella term that covers social scientific approaches to enquiry that understand knowledge about reality to be constructed rather than

naturally given. Social constructionist perspectives have become increasingly common in policy studies as analysts seek to explain how and why certain phenomena come to be viewed as problematic and therefore in need of policy intervention, while other phenomena do not (for example, Fraser, 1989; Land, 1989; Fraser and Gordon, 1994; Schram, 1995; Leonard, 1997; Levitas, 1998; Peck, 1998c; Haylett, 2001a, b). These approaches contrast with functionalist approaches, which seek to explain social disorder as pathological deviance from normality.

The current manifestation of social constructionism in social science can be traced to developments in sociology in the 1960s including Becker's 'labelling theory' (1963) and Berger and Luckmann's *Social Construction of Reality* (1967). Becker sought to upset functionalist accounts of 'deviance' by examining how certain activities or certain groups of people (in his example, people smoking marijuana) become *labelled* as deviant. Berger and Luckmann focus on epistemology in their "treatise on the sociology of knowledge" (1967). They emphasised the production of meaning through human face-to-face interactions, which constructs an everyday world of common sense (see also Garfinkel, 1967; Goffman, 1969). Berger and Luckmann (1967: 208) argue that an appreciation of the social construction of knowledge allows for a theory that has space for both social structure and individual action:

> "We would contend that the analysis of the role of knowledge in the dialectic of individual and society, of personal identity and social structure, provides a crucial complementary perspective for all areas of sociology".

Further, while their approach focuses on theories of action, they maintain the importance of structural explanations (albeit in more definitive terms that might be used today): "this is certainly not to deny that purely structural analysis of social phenomena are fully adequate for wide areas of sociological inquiry".

That these early social constructionists focussed on the social construction of *knowledge* is important. They did not deny the existence of a material world 'out there' rather, it is the knowledge about that world, and the meanings we impute to objects that was (and is) understood as constructed rather than inherent. This distinction is important because, as Trevor Barnes has argued, the view that nothing

exists outside our heads can lead to "paralysing solipsism" (2000: 748). Laclau and Mouffe (1990: 101) explain clearly how 'reality' *as we know it* is socially constructed *and* there remains a material reality outside this construction:

> If I kick a spherical object in the street or if I kick a ball in a football match, the *physical* fact is the same, but *its meaning* is different. The object is a football only to the extent that it establishes a system of relations with other objects, and these relations are not given by the mere referential materiality of the objects, but are, rather, socially constructed...
>
> the discursive character of an object does not, by any means, imply putting its *existence* into question. The fact that a football is only a football as long as it is integrated within a system of socially constructed rules does not mean that it thereby ceases to be a physical object. A stone exists independently of any system of social relations, but it is, for instance, either a projectile or an object of aesthetic contemplation only within a specific discursive configuration.

In seeking to approach public policy from a social constructionist perspective, I am not denying a material poverty 'out there', but suggesting that how this problem is constructed has enormous impact on the policies that are deemed appropriate. This relationship between the construction of policy problems and their solutions is fruitfully approached through the lens of 'discourse'.

1.3.2 Discourse

There are many different definitions and theorisations of 'discourse' (Mills, 1997). The conception I work with and use in the first part of the thesis draws principally on the work of critical linguist Norman Fairclough (1995; 2000; 2001) but also (as Fairclough himself follows) Laclau and Mouffe (1985; 1990) and Foucault (1991). Fairclough offers the simple definition of discourse as "language as social practice determined by social structures" (2001: 14), signifying his stress on practice which, he argues, is a way of connecting theories of social structure with theories of social action. In this section Fairclough's notion of practice is first expanded, before his conceptualisation of the ideological and material dimensions of discourse is outlined. Then, following Foucault, I suggest the power of the theory of discourse in policy studies lies in its understanding of how discourse (as embodying 'regimes of truth' and 'regimes of practice') shapes what is to be known and limits what is thought can

be done.

1.3.2a Discourse as social practice

Fairclough (2001) assigns a central role to the notion of discourse as social practice. He explains this as meaning three things: that language is a constitutive (rather than reflective) part of society; that language is a social process and that language is conditioned by non-linguistic elements of society. To take each in turn, the notion of language as constitutive, rather than reflective, of society relates to the notion of social constructionism outlined above. Instead of society conceived as some external reality which language neutrally describes, language and society are thought to be in an internal and dialectical relationship (2001: 19). This means that the social (in part) constitutes language, and in turn, language (in part) constitutes the social. The *description* of this dialectic is said to be one of the tasks of the critical discourse analyst. In explaining the second element of discourse as a social practice, Fairclough describes language as a social process involved in the production of texts. Texts (written, spoken or other) are understood as 'moments' of discursive production which can be analysed because they contain 'traces' of the process of their production, and 'cues' for the process of *interpretation* (which is said to be the second task of the discourse analyst). The third element of discourse as social practice- language as conditioned by extra-linguistic social elements- hints at Fairclough's concerns with wider structural and ideological conditions ('orders of discourse') under which specific discourses are produced. The analyst's task in relation to this third element is the *explanation* of the relationship between the wider context of discourse production and interpretation and specific discourses (as embodied in texts).

Fairclough takes this understanding of discourse as social practice further, by explaining the relationship between social practices (including discourses) and social structures (for example, social classes in society) as dialectic. By this he means that discourses are constrained and enabled by structure, but in turn, social structure is affected by discourse (see figure 1.1).

```
┌─────────────┐                    ┌─────────────┐
│ Discourse as│                    │   Social    │
│   social    │ ◄─────────────►   │ Structures  │
│  practice   │                    │             │
└─────────────┘                    └─────────────┘
```
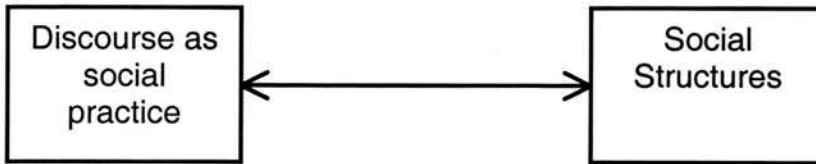
Figure 1.1 Dialectic of discourse and structure

1.3.2b Discourse as ideological practice

This dialectical relationship is, for Fairclough, illuminating of the importance of discourse in producing and maintaining unequal power relations in society (2001: 31). This is linked to the *ideological* nature of discourses as social practices. Fairclough understands ideological power to be exercised through discourse, discourse, he writes is the "favoured vehicle" of ideology (2001: 30). Thus he writes, "the way in which orders of discourse are structured, and the ideologies which they embody, are determined by relationships of power in particular social institutions, and in the society as a whole" (2001: 26).

Figure 1.2 Ex Leader William Hague at a Conservative Party Conference

As with 'discourse', there are many and various definitions of 'ideology', (McLellan, 1995) but Fairclough favours a conception of ideology that stresses its role in sustaining unequal power relations through the 'naturalization' of certain practices and conventions (making them seem 'obvious' and 'common sense') (Fairclough, 2001). (Figure 1.2 above shows ex-Conservative Party leader William Hague speaking at a Conservative Party Conference against the backdrop of their campaigning slogan of "time for common sense". Politicians are only too aware of the ideological power gained through the acceptance of certain world views as 'common sense'.) Fairclough's conception draws on the Marxist tradition of ideology including Gramsci's notion of *hegemony* (Forgacs, 1988) and Althusser's notion of 'obviousness' as a primary ideological effect (Althusser, 1984). Hegemony stresses the role of consent in unequal power relations of domination and subordination; the effective exercise of power is said to involve the consent of those relatively subordinated groups (social classes in Gramsci's work) in societies marked by unequal power relations. For Althusser, 'obviousness' is a primary ideological effect involved in the 'interpellation' (meaning calling into being) of individuals as *subjects* (for example 'patient', 'client', 'claimant'). Thus, for Fairclough (2001: 89), discourse is intimately bound up with ideology:

> "[T]he *coherence* of discourse is dependent on discoursal common sense...[which] is *ideological* to the extent that it contributes to sustaining unequal power relations, directly, or indirectly...
>
> A dominant discourse is subject to a process of *naturalization*, in which it appears to lose its connection with particular ideologies and interests and become the common-sense practice of the institution...
>
> [I]n the case of the *subjects* and *situations* of discourse, their self-evidentness and apparent independence of discourse are illusory effects of naturalization, for they are both to a significant degree *products* of discourse."

To some extent, ideology has fallen out of favour as a concept in social science as it is linked with essentialist Marxist understanding of ideology as 'false consciousness', with the role of the Marxist analyst being to stand outside this false consciousness in order to view and critique it. 'False consciousness' is a problematic notion for constructionists some of whom steer away from using the concept 'ideology' because

"it is always in virtual opposition to something like the truth" (Foucault, 1979e: 36 cited in Mills, 1997: 32). Further, the notion of 'false consciousness' allows little space for notions of agency or resistance. Fairclough has acknowledged these criticisms, but holds on to a critical conceptualisation of ideology through insisting on the link between ideology and power relations:

> "In claiming that a discursive event works ideologically, one is not in the first instance claiming that it is false, or claiming a privileged position from which judgements of truth and falsity can be made. One is claiming that it contributes to the reproduction of relations of power. On this view of ideological analysis, attacks on ideological critique because of its supposed privileged truth claims…miss their target".
> Fairclough, 1995: 18

1.3.2c Discourse as material practice

The criticism of geographers (above) that the linguistic and discursive 'turns' in human geography has militated against policy work within geography is linked to the feeling that linguistic and discursive work somehow neglects the brute materiality of things like poverty and social inequality. However the fact that something is discursively constructed does not deny its material reality; rather it is its *meaning* that is socially constructed. To draw again on Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 108):

> "An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity of objects is constructed as in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God', depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive conditions of emergence".

According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 108), this "common misunderstanding" about the discursive lies in the assumption that the discursive lies only in the 'mental': "against this, we will affirm the *material* character of every discursive structure". They do this by drawing on Wittgenstein's notion of 'language games' which "include within an indissoluble totality both language and the actions interconnected with it" (1985: 108). Thus, for Laclau and Mouffe, discourse comprises both the linguistic and the extra-linguistic. The extra-linguistic represents

the materiality that is constitutive of discourse.

Fairclough (2000b: 168) illuminates the materiality of the constitution of discourse by linking social practice to the practice of production of *texts*. Fairclough uses a broad conception of 'text' to include "spoken as well as written language, and combinations of language with other forms of semiosis including gesture and visual images" (2000b: 168). So, for example, the discourse analysis of part one of this thesis interprets such texts as political speeches, official publications and accompanying press releases, as the products of orders of discourse that in turn construct particular discourses (in this example, 'dependency' and 'enterprise'). Fairclough (2000b: 171) theorises this dual relationship as follows:

> "The order of discourse is seen as both a precondition for and constraint on textual action, texturing as a mode of work, and an effect of textual action, both reproduced and transformed through textual action".

However, discourses are not only material in their *constitution*, they have material *effects*. This has been made clear by analysts working in the substantive area of 'welfare reform' who have adopted theories of discourse in studies of policy change (for example, Schram, 1995; Leonard, 1997; Levitas, 1998). Sanford Schram in a critique of the "poverty of social science and the social science of poverty" in the US (1995) is keen to show "how the material and the symbolic are interrelated" because his "concerns about discourse are not limited to literary exercises about 'how to do things with texts'" (1995: xxiv). Rather, he believes that "interrogating discourse provides a way to challenge structures of power that constrain what is politically possible" (1995: xxiv). In her study of discourse of social exclusion in the UK Ruth Levitas argues, "the idea of discourse underlines the fact that the matrix of concepts through which we understand the world and act in it profoundly affect those actions and thus the world itself, without denying the material character of social relations" (1998: 3).

To answer the question of *how* discourses produce material effects it is useful to see discourse as a way of both *shaping* what is to be known on a specific subject, and *limiting* what is thought can be done. Again, the concept of practice is useful here.

For Foucault (1991: 75), for example, the focus of study is social practice:

> "[T]he target of analysis wasn't 'institutions', 'theories' or 'ideology', but *practices*-with the aim of grasping the conditions which make these acceptable at a given moment; the hypothesis being that these types of practice are not just governed by institutions, prescribed by ideologies, guided by pragmatic circumstances-whatever role these elements may actually play-but possess up to a point their own specific regularities, logic, self evidence and 'reason'".

Mitchell Dean (1998) interprets this focus on 'practice' (or as Foucault later expands, 'regimes of practice') as evidence of Foucault's materiality. 'Regimes of practice' comprise what is actually said and done in any given context and the consequences of this. The consequences of regimes of practice are twofold: the limiting of 'what can be done' and 'what is known' (Dean, 1998).

> To analyse 'regimes of practice' means to analyze programmes of conduct which have both prescriptive effects regarding what is to be done (effects of 'jurisdiction') and codifying effects regarding what is to be known (effects of 'veridiction').
> Foucault, 1991: 75
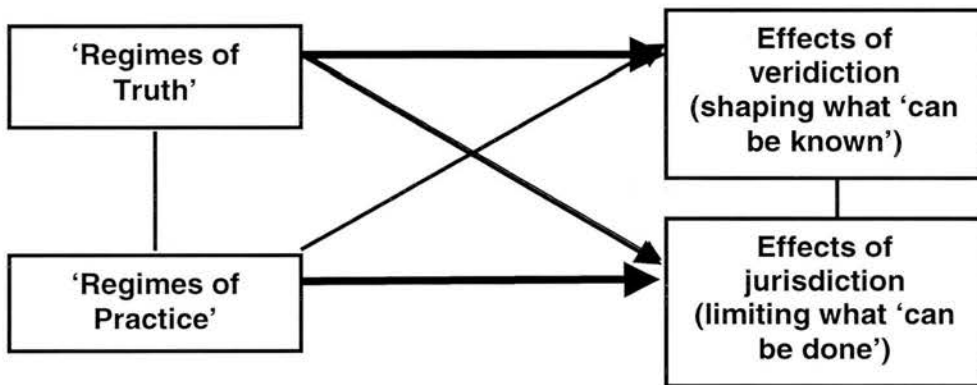
Figure 1.3 The role of discourse in shaping 'what can be known' and limiting 'what can be done'

If the production of discourses is part of the regime of practice (that is, part of what is said and done) then it is possible to follow a link from, for example, the construction of 'lone motherhood' as an undesirable state that is one of the constituent parts of 'dependency' (demonstrating the effects of veridiction) and the

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policy to cut lone parent benefit initiated by the Conservative government in the UK, completed by the New Labour government, that had the evident material effect of further impoverishing an already impoverished group in society (demonstrating effects of jurisdiction). If this insight is combined with Fairclough's theories of discourse, then discourse is social practice, determined by social structures, which prescribes and limits both the effects of veridiction (what is to be known) and the effects of jurisdiction (what can be done).

1.3.2d Discourse as a theory of structure and action
This section on discourse has repeatedly stressed the conception of discourse as a social practice. This is because, as Fairclough writes, "the great strength of the concept of practice is that it allows analysis of social structures to be brought into connection with analysis of social (inter)action" (2000: 167). Fairclough draws on Gidden's (1984) structuration theory to criticise theories that address only structure, or only action:

> "Theorisations and analyses oriented only to structure are incomplete because structure as well as being the precondition for action is the outcome of action, is transformed in action…
>
> Theorisations and analyses oriented only to action are incomplete, because action not only produces social life, it also reproduces structures which are its precondition".
> Fairclough, 2000: 170-171

Discourse as practice is important because it highlights the productive capacity of discourse, (productive of texts) and 'textual moments' mediate between structure and action:

> Analysis of the textual moment of social practices mediates between the perspective of action, that is the specificity of the particular text…and the perspective of structure i.e. the order of discourse.
> Fairclough, 2000: 171

Figure 1.3 illustrates the conception of discourse outlined in this section, and used in part one of the thesis. This conception includes the dialectical relationship between

discourse and practice, the notion of discourse as ideological and material practice, and the role of discourse as a theory of structure and action.
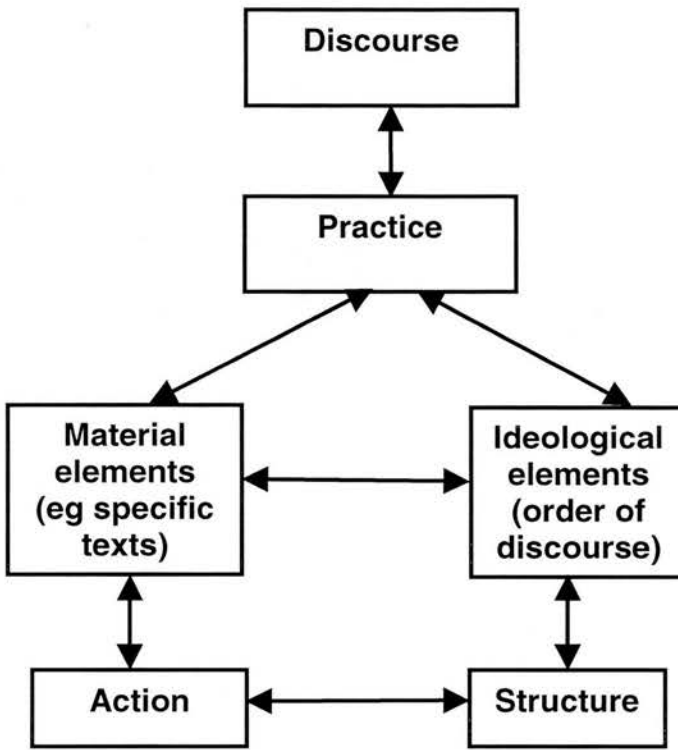
Figure 1.4 Discourse as a theory of action and structure

Fairclough understands texts and discourses to evidence the dialectical relationship between action and structure; their *indissolubility*. There is a further way this relationship is demonstrated: by the action of the *subjects* of discourses (in the case of this thesis these subjects are benefit claimants). Dominant discourses are structurally determined, but never fully hegemonic, sealed, all-powerful or inevitable, instead always partial, internally contradictory and open to challenge or *resistance*. This ubiquitous resistance to dominant discourses represents the ever-present capacity for action (that is, agency) held by individuals. Gibson-Graham (1995: 270), following Mouffe (1995), describe this partiality of dominant discourse as the ever-incomplete articulation of elements of society, writing that "often though not always, the elements of society are articulated, 'sutured' as moments in a

'hegemonic' relational structure, but this articulation is always ever incomplete and temporary".

What is appealing about these concepts of discourse is that they allow the space for agency that is sometimes squeezed out from structural accounts of, for example, the causes of poverty. This agency is more usually conceived of in post-structural theory as 'resistance'. However, while this *theoretical* potential is allowed in such post-structural accounts of power, this is not to claim that *materially* 'everything is ok' because power is always shifting, never held exclusively by some groups over others. Equally, it is important not to assume too much for the notion of 'resistance', or at least to recognise that resistance may be extremely uneven and/or unlikely to threaten hegemonic relations of power. As Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 152) caution:

> Although we can affirm, with Foucault, that wherever there is power there is resistance, it must also be recognised that the forms of resistance may be extremely varied. Only in certain cases do these forms of resistance take on a political character and become struggles directed towards putting an end to relations of subordination as such.

Nevertheless, these theoretical conceptions of discourse and resistance create a space for the development of progressive politics of 'radical democracy' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). If what Gibson-Graham above call 'hegemonic moments of articulation' are temporary (although they may, of course, remain sutured for long times and appear unchallengeable, this, after all, constitutes part of their power) then there is always the potential of their dis-articulation. As Tom Shakespeare (1998: 171) puts it: "the clear benefit of taking a social constructionist approach is that it allows for social change: if an experience is not natural then it is dynamic and open to social intervention based on progressive values".

1.4 **Method**

To summarise this introductory chapter so far, the thesis is broadly concerned with geography and public policy and specifically concerned with recent 'welfare-to-work' policies in the UK. A primary aim of the research is to deconstruct dominant discourses embedded in these welfare-to-work policies, namely those of 'dependency' and 'enterprise'. The second aim is to compare these discourses of dependency and enterprise with accounts produced by the primary subjects of the discourses, in this case benefit claimants. These aims were addressed with a two-pronged methodological approach: first, the analysis of discourse in political texts, and second, a series of interviews with benefit claimants. This methodological approach is reflected in the two-part structure of the thesis. Part one presents an analysis of the political construction of benefit claiming as a problem of dependency, whose cure is enterprise. Part two contains the 'bottom-up' accounts (see rationale section below) of lived experiences of benefit claiming, which challenge the discursive account of part one.

This method section discusses three elements of the research process: first the analysis of discourses in political texts, second, the interview-based methods and the 'natural history' of this research stage, and third, the analysis of the interview based materials.

1.4.1 The analysis of discourses in political texts
This section is headed 'the analysis of discourses in political texts' to distinguish the methodological approach taken from the quantitative content analysis methods of structural linguistics (Mills, 1997; Silverman, 2000, Crang, 2001). The methodological intention was not to perform such textual analysis, but, following the theoretical discussion above, to do three things. First, to excavate the different meanings of dependency and enterprise and describe how these meanings are linked to what dependency and enterprise are associated and not associated with. Second, to interpret who and what dependency and enterprise refer to (in Althuserian terms, which subjects they interpellate) and how this has broadened or narrowed over time.

Third, to explain the enduring popularity of these discourses and their continued (re)construction. As Mills (1997: 134) writes:

> [Critical discourse analysts'] form of analysis is usually less concerned with content analysis or thematic analysis and more with questions of the possible meanings of different discourses used by participants in speech and in text.

Fairclough (2000a) argues that critical discourse analysis is particularly useful in contemporary political research partly because what he terms the "mediatisation" of politics has increased the significance of language in political culture. In particular reference to New Labour, Fairclough (2000a: 6) writes "language is becoming an increasingly prominent element of the practices of politics and government" and that "a focus on the language of New Labour can enhance our understanding, as well as analysis, of the politics of New Labour". Critical discourse analysis can aid the uncovering of an ideological rationale behind a particular direction in government policy (for example from welfare to workfare), and this policy direction has enormous material effects on peoples' lives.

In analysing the discourses of dependency and enterprise I focus on three 'genres' of political text: *official publications (OPUBs)* such as Green Papers, White Papers, and other position papers published by government departments; *political speeches*, especially the annual budget and pre-budget speeches delivered in parliament by the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and *press notices* released by government departments to advertise a new policy initiative or keynote speech of the relevant minister. OPUBS in the general field of welfare and work and the budget speeches were the primary texts analysed as these embody what government prioritises, both discursively and financially. Press notices were chosen because, as stated above, the New Labour governments have been and continue to be increasingly aware of the power of media 'spin' and the importance of 'manipulating the message' (Fairclough, 2000a). Press notices serve as a genre where important elements of discourse are distilled for wide dissemination in newspapers and other media genres. The complete list of texts analysed is listed in the sources section at the end of the thesis.

A further aim of this methodological approach was to discern the extent of coherence of the political discourses of 'dependency' and 'enterprise' as produced by New Labour. While contradictory aspects of the discourses are highlighted in part one, it is argued that a recurrent hegemonic discourse remains.

1.4.2 Interview based methods

The interview-based methods were used to directly access claimants' accounts of the worlds of 'dependency' and 'enterprise' (see comparison with Schram (1995) discussed in rationale section below). Specifically, interviews were used to access the attitudes, experiences and opinions of claimants on a range of topics in the interest of producing alternative knowledges about the 'problem' of benefits.

The process of gathering the interview-based data followed a path of progress and setbacks, unforeseen trials and tribulations, fortuitous chance meetings, periods of paralysis and periods of intense activity. In other words, it was a fairly typical tale of doing qualitative research (see, for example, the accounts in Silverman, 2000). After completing initial reading I had already focussed in on dependency and enterprise as framing political discourses, and knew I wanted to analyse these discourses in terms of their primary subjects' experiences, attitudes and opinions. It seemed surprising that despite the prominence of 'dependency' and 'enterprise' discourses (and their prominent construction in opposition to each other) there was little research done that compared the two discourses. An exception is the work of sociologist Robert MacDonald (1991, 1994, 1996) on efforts to encourage an 'enterprise culture' in areas of the north-east of England traditionally conceived of as 'dependency' ridden. When I wrote to ask Robert Mac Donald about research on 'dependency' versus 'enterprise' he replied, writing "there are few, if any, studies which directly contrast discourses of enterprise with those of underclass and dependency" (1997). I was hopeful that my research would fill this gap.

I was also interested in spaces where 'dependency' and 'enterprise' seemed more ambiguous and shifting than their portrayal in political discourse. There had been a

growth in interest in the geographical literature on the role and nature of local exchange trading systems (LETS)-community trading organisations whose members use 'virtual' currencies to buy and sell goods and services (for example, Lang, 1994; Lee, 1996, 1999; Linton, 1986; North, 1999; Pacione, 1997a, 1997b; Purdue et al, 1997; Seyfang, 1997; Thorne, 1996; Williams, 1996a, b, c, d, e, 1997). At this time (at the beginning of the interview stage), LETS were springing up all over Scotland, and I thought they would provide a fruitful space for research around the themes of dependency and enterprise. Members of the schemes depend on each other for trading, and LETS seemed an archetypal example of social initiative and enterprise. My specific interest was in benefit claimants who were LETS members and the research path began with a fortuitous coincidence. I contacted and met with a 'LETS promoter' who put me in touch with a well developed LETS in a town in central-belt Scotland.[1] At the time I first contacted this particular LETS the co-ordinators were in the process of starting a project to encourage LETS membership amongst residents of a particularly deprived part of town. This area, as 'Alex', (the worker hired to develop LETS in the area) put it in a later interview, "has all the usual indicators that the Scottish Office says are used to define deprivation". Unemployment is high, at around 20%, and there is in the area a high proportion of both lone parent households and residents claiming sickness related benefits.

At this stage of the research I was not sure how big a part of the overall project the LETS would be. The LETS development worker (called 'Alex' in chapter five) allowed me to join him in his initial meetings with key community figures in places like the local family centre, community centre and credit union. Alex was extremely helpful throughout this entire stage of fieldwork, and I ended up working alongside him on a voluntary basis for most of the following year. I thus became a relatively well-known face in the various centres where the LETS development work took place.

During this time I took field notes and developed ideas about themes and questions for the series of interviews I was planning. Three focus groups with benefit

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[1] I promised the interviewees confidentiality, and given their frankness in interviews, think this is only

claimants who are also LETS members, were completed as a pilot exercise. These focus groups fulfilled a number of functions. They enabled me to experiment with questions and ways of phrasing topics I wished to cover in the individual interviews and they yielded a wealth of 'local' knowledge and information about, amongst other things, the state of the local jobs market, the priority assigned to poverty traps and the degree of cynicism (or realism, depending on your perspective) about the potential for change with the then new New Labour government. They also provided a useful early warning sign of the potential logistical difficulties of actually arranging interviews.

The interviews were focussed on three broad themes: work, benefits and community. The interview schedule was worked and re-worked a number of times, in collaboration with supervisors and in the light of the focus groups interviews. The final interview schedule used in the thirty individual interviews is attached in Appendix 2. The three main themes of work, benefits and 'community' (questions about what respondents thought of the areas in which they lived) were used as an attempt to operationalise the concepts of dependency and enterprise, and a third substantive concern of *alternatives* to dominant narratives of poor people and poor places. It is argued in chapters two to five that dependency and enterprise are individualising discourses, meaning they work to locate the nature of problems and solutions in the character of individuals to the exclusion of social structures. The third section of the interview schedule was designed to access questions of networks, trust, 'neighbourliness', mutuality and informal support common to contemporary debates on the importance of the social (chapters six-seven).

My first attempts at recruiting interviewees involved putting up posters in the family centre, community centre, credit union and housing office in the study area (see Appendix 1a for a copy of the poster). I should have listened to Alex, as there is a theory in community development circles that posters do not work (either because no-one reads them or people do not like to be the first to sign up to something). Either way, the posters did not work very well. Only four people responded and

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effectively and meaningfully ensured if the area where the fieldwork took place is anonymized.

were interviewed (these were my first four interviews). In retrospect, the poster was not very well worded for the family centre at least, as most of the centre's users are lone mothers who (if they claimed benefits) claimed Income Support rather than Job Seeker's Allowance and might not be considered, or consider themselves, to be unemployed (although some of course, might). In retrospect, I should have just put "are you claiming benefits?" on the poster.

Having said this, one of the four who first responded is a lone mother on Income Support. Through my readings of the political texts on 'dependency' I was beginning to develop an argument about the broadening of the discourse in recent years to encompass more and more groups of claimants, other than just unemployed people (see chapter two). At this early stage (despite the poster asking "Are you unemployed?") I decided to aim to interview a range of claimants of different types of benefits, including unemployment related benefits (Job Seekers Allowance), income support benefits and sickness related benefits. The next challenge was to 'recruit' this range of interviewees.

The lack of response to the first set of posters was a worrying hiatus in the research. Luckily, Alex and the other LETS workers on hand offered advice and help in recruiting interviewees. I focussed on the building where the LETS had an office and a café. This gave me a physical focus for trying to get interviewees and there was always someone in the office to chat to. I put a poster up in the office and spread the word around my contacts that I was keen to interview LETS members who were also benefit claimants. Through this poster, though mainly through physically hanging around at the centre, a further thirteen interviewees were recruited. The accounts of this subset of thirteen interviewees forms the basis for chapter five.

However, I hit a second stumbling block once this willing pool of interviewees was exhausted. This caused another period of anxious reflection about 'not getting enough data' or the 'right kind of data'. I was also worried that the arguments I was beginning to develop (for example, about claimants displaying enterprise in their

everyday lives, contrary to dominant discursive accounts of benefit claiming and of enterprise) might be undermined by the dominance of LETS members in my group of interviewees. A counter-argument could be made that benefit claimants who are LETS members might be a relatively *atypical* group of claimants. These concerns about sampling and generalizability are long running in debates about qualitative research (see for example, Burgess, 1984; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Mason, 1996; Bailey et al, 1999; Baxter and Eyles, 1997; Silverman, 2000; Dwyer and Limb, 2001). Qualitative researchers are sometimes reluctant to use terms such as generalizability because of their connotations of 'statistical representativeness' associated with some quantitative research methods. For example, Limb and Dwyer (2001: 6) write:

> The emphasis when using qualitative methods is to understand lived experience and to reflect on and interpret the understandings and shared meanings of peoples' everyday social worlds and realities.
>
> [Qualitative researchers] seek subjective understandings of social reality rather than statistical description or generalizable predictions.

Accepting this, it still obviously remains the case that *who* one interviews is crucial for the research design, execution and building of later arguments. Mason (1996: 93) suggests this crucial aspect of interviewee selection should be thought of as "theoretical sampling", which, she writes, means "selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position…and most importantly the explanation or account which you are developing". To deal with my concerns about the predominance of LETS member interviewees I aimed to ensure the final group of interviewees were not LETS members. To this end, the flexibility of qualitative research was advantageous, as researchers are expected to adapt to circumstances as they arise. "Theoretical or purposive sampling is a set of procedures where the researcher manipulates their analysis, theory and sampling activities *interactively* during the research process" (Mason, 1996: 100).

Again, Alex helped me over this second impasse. He had a contact who worked at an employment company that was contracted by various institutions to deliver

'welfare-to-work' type policies (the company, which I call in later chapters "Work Connect" received funding from, for example, the New Deal and the European Social Fund). I met this contact and explained the project to him. He was happy to let me talk to his 'client' group (all by definition long-term benefit claimants) to see if any of them would be interested in talking to me about their experiences of work, benefits and community. Having gained the approval of his boss (see letter in Appendix 1b) a further thirteen people volunteered to be interviewed.

Between these thirty individual interviews and the three focus groups (with a total of ten people) I spoke with forty benefit claimants, and felt confident that I had a sufficient range and depth of data to work with. I completed a further interview with Alex (the LETS development worker) that I draw on in chapter five.

I still had one area of concern regarding the third theme of the interviews-'community'-where I asked interviewees about their opinions and views of the areas in which they live. Through the months when I assisted and worked with Alex I became increasingly aware of the numerous community groups and the associated activity going on in the poorest parts of the town. It was during these months that I started to think about including questions on the residential areas of the interviewees in the schedule. I had originally planned to only interview people who lived in what one interviewee describes as "areas in need", that is areas of relatively high unemployment that are the focus of local, national and European regeneration schemes. It is these types of 'neighbourhood' that are the focus of the Labour government's New Deal for communities, and are the topic of study in recent debates about the nature and role of 'social capital' (see chapter seven). However, the employment company worked with a 'client' group from a wide area, and four of these interviewees live in areas that are not characterised by high unemployment. Again, I became anxious that this did not fit with my original plans. In retrospect, however, I think I was probably being a bit too rigid, and as it turns out, these four cases provided interesting counter-examples that I draw on in chapter seven.

The above description of what Silverman (2000) calls the 'natural history' of this part of the research process is probably not an unusual account of the ups and downs of doing qualitative research. At times I despaired because it felt like nothing was going according to plan, but at the end of the process looking back, I was satisfied that I had (eventually and with much help) responded positively to the various challenges that arose. As the interviews were transcribed my confidence grew that they had accessed the range and depth of data sought, as part two of the thesis hopefully shows.

The interviews were conducted either in respondents' homes, in a community café or, in the case of the thirteen respondents from the employment company, in an office at the company's building. All but two of the respondents agreed to me tape-recording the interviews[2], which ranged in length from 25 minutes to over 2 hours, although most interviews lasted approximately one hour. The interviews were transcribed in full, and the transcriptions (and notes from the two non-recorded interviews) were analysed with the assistance of a qualitative data analysis software package called HyperResearch.

1.4.3 Analysis of interview material

The development of appropriate categories with which to code the interview transcripts was another process which went through various stages of refinement in consultation with supervisors through reading and re-reading interview transcripts and anticipating the way in which the material would be subsequently written about in the thesis. The full set of codes as they were used in the analysis is attached in Appendix 3. It will be clear that they mirror both the interview schedule and the structure of this thesis, and as Ian Dey (1993: 111) writes, "developing categories usually involves looking forwards to the overall results of the analysis as well as looking backwards towards the data".

Although the initial attaching of codes to sections of transcripts using HyperResearch was a time consuming process, it was invaluable for the later speed of retrieval of

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[2] In these two cases I took contemporaneous notes.

thematic sections of data. However, geographers should be wary of the uncritical use of such software programmes as HyperResearch in analysing qualitative data (Crang et al 1997; Hinchliffe et al, 1997). While Crang et al (1997: 783) acknowledge that such programmes can provide a "structure to which fledgling researchers could cling" and "tangibility to the process of interpretation", they warn against viewing such programmes as attempts to gain some notion of 'scientific respectability' for qualitative research. The authors recommend a critically reflexive use of such programmes, and a scepticism of some perhaps over-zealous aspects of the programme design (Hinchliffe et al, 1997). I tried to adopt such an approach. For example, the main part of HyperResearch involves clicking on sections of text (from, in this instance, interview transcripts), selecting a code and clicking to assign the code to the highlighted section of text. Multiple codes can be assigned to each section of text. This part of the programme proved extremely useful, not least because I had to re-read (and think about) each transcript line-by-line while coding. By the end of the coding stage I had done all the interviews, transcribed them all in full and coded each line of each transcript, so I felt I knew the material in depth in its entirety. However, there is another optional element of the HyperResearch programme called 'hypothesis tester' which I did not use. During the coding stage I felt fully in control of the process of interpretation and analysis, but this 'hypothesis tester' was not relevant to the conceptual frame of the project. In short (as I hope is clear from the discussion so far), I did not conceive of the research as a series of hypotheses I wished to test in the field, and did not feel this part of the programme to be appropriate. Computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) are best used critically (Hinchliffe et al, 1997).

This coding process is also a critical part of the analysis of the material, and conceptual lines of thought initiated in field diaries and scraps of paper (what Strauss (1987) calls 'theoretical memos') were later developed through the process of coding. As can be seen in Appendix 3 the data was, in the main, coded directionally, that is the direction of opinion about a certain theme was included within the code (for example, 'benefits system helpful' and 'benefits system unhelpful'). HyperResearch requires codes to have a maximum of eight characters, with no

punctuation or numbers, hence the code names listed in Appendix 3. Pairs of codes were developed within four over-arching themes of work, benefits, LETS and social capital, which later became the themes (and titles) of chapters four to seven. This process of "looking forwards and backwards" data analysis has been described by Dey (1993: 265) as an iterative process which:

> [E]mphasizes the interdependence of procedures used in the analysis. In reading and annotating the data, for example, we anticipate the tasks of categorizing and linking the data. While making connections between categories, we review our initial links and categories. At any particular phase in our analysis, we may return to re-reading the data or look forward to producing an account.

This account of the process of reading and annotating, categorizing (or coding), linking and connecting, corroborating and producing an account describes well how I went about this stage of the research.

Geographers have been forthright in acknowledging the challenges, problems and pitfalls than can characterise all stages of doing qualitative research (Limb and Dwyer, 2001; Kobayashi, 2001). Certainly my experience, despite attendance at 'advanced qualitative data collection and analyses' courses, was more one of 'learning by doing'. However, while this section has explained *how* I did the research, it does not explain *why* I did it. It is to this I now turn.

1.5 Rationale

I have described the research discussed in this thesis as an attempt to contribute to a newly reinvigorated geography of public policy, in this instance, on the substantive topic of welfare reform. The theoretical inspirations of the research have also been outlined, with the aim of showing that it is possible to combine critical geographic research of policy with conceptions of the role of discourse. The methods that follow from this approach, particularly critical discourse analysis and semi-structured interviewing, were the focus of section four.

However, I have yet to answer a simple question about the research: why do it? Before moving on to describe the structure of the thesis I offer some tentative explanations as to why such a study is worthwhile.

1.5.1 Producing resistant knowledges

One of the innovative elements of this work is that it compares political discourses with 'lived experiences' of benefit claiming. As noted above, it is no longer unusual for political discourses to be the focus of study in academic work on welfare reform (Fraser, 1989; Fraser and Gordon, 1994; Schram, 1995; Leonard, 1997; Levitas, 1998; Peck, 1998c; Haylett, 2001a, b). However, within geography at least, it remains relatively unusual for the subjects of discourses of welfare reform (benefit claimants in the UK) to be interviewed. The interview based research reported in much economic geography is more often based on 'elite' or corporate interviews than on interviews with unemployed people or people disadvantaged by economic and welfare restructuring (for example, Schoenberger, 1989, 1994, 1997; McDowell, 1997a, b; Clark, 1998; O'Neill and Gibson-Graham, 1999). Part of the rationale behind the research reported here is to fill this gap.

To expand, Sanford Schram (1995: 59) advocates a focus on what he calls "bottom-up discourse" as a strategic choice for researchers to enable an examination of the "political-economic system in terms of its consequences for those on the bottom". Schram goes on to describe the proliferation of soup kitchens, food shelves and food banks in the US which he argues is a consequence of retrenchment in public assistance programmes and has led to the point where "by 1992, one in ten Americans was receiving food stamps" (1995: 60). This proliferation is in the form of private emergency food programmes and shelters, effectively resulting in the privatisation of much public assistance, without such an *explicit* public policy. However, "private contributions have never matched the lost public funding" (1995: 61) and the result has been the further impoverishment of the poor.

Schram (1995: 75) evokes the notions of resistance to dominant discourses described above, and Haraway's (1991) notion of 'situated knowledge', in his rationale for studying "bottom-up discourses":

> Narrating political economy in terms of a discourse that accounts for the consequences of those on the bottom can help produce situated knowledges resistant to the homogenizing and marginalizing practices of top-down discourses. Inverted political economy can make central what is taken to be marginal. Without claiming a monopoly on the capture of authentic or genuine experiences of those on the bottom, bottom-up discourse can help offer alternative understandings that are attentive to how those on the bottom are denied voice, identity and agency.

Schram's emphasis on the consequences of welfare retrenchment programmes is taken up in chapter five of this thesis, where the notion of an 'over-generous' benefits system is critiqued. However, it might be argued that Schram could have produced "situated knowledges resistant to marginalizing discourses" by listening to those 'on the bottom' and allowing space in his narrative for their words. Of course, there are dangers in assuming too much for this strategy, and Schram warns against 'claiming a monopoly' on the 'genuine experiences of those on the bottom'. Nonetheless, interviewing those 'on the bottom' could be considered a more direct way of accessing knowledges resistant to marginalizing discourses. Thus, in a way analogous to developments in the disability movement, benefit claimants might be seen as experts in their own lives in more than one way: as ordinary members of the public they are aware of popular constructions of welfare 'scroungers' and as benefit claimants they are the focus of welfare reform policies. While *not* suggesting that claimants speak with a single voice, working with the idea of 'claimant as expert' rather than 'claimant as victim' allows space for the agency that Schram writes is frequently denied.

1.5.2 *"Getting indignant about income inequality".[3]*

Of course, there is more to it than this. The main impetus behind the research was an indignation (Martin, 2001b) about the enormous social and economic inequalities of modern western societies (let alone between 'developing' nations and the 'west') that

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[3] This phrase is taken from a recent editorial in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (Martin, 2001b).

are increasing as redistributive policies are weakened or withdrawn, and a feeling that governments seem to be increasingly absconding responsibility for this situation. (Even The Economist is asking if inequality matters-see figure below).

Figure 1.5 The Cover of The Economist, 16th June 2001

For Martin (2001b: 267) there is a key role for geographers as social critics, whose goal should be:

> [T]o expose and explain the inequalities and injustices that our socio-economic system produces and reproduces. And following from this, we have an obligation, indeed a duty, to assess and debate policy responses to those inequalities and injustices, with a view to exposing the limitations of existing approaches and helping to reshape the political and public opinion as to possible alternatives.

Noel Castree writes in a similar vein, recommending that geographers should ask themselves "how *urgent* is my research?" (2001: 4). Of course, this depends on who

you are and where you are looking from, but for Castree, the urgency is about combating the oppressions caused by capitalist economic relations.

The notion of some all-inclusive 'we' of geographers that 'should' agree to only do 'urgent' research in terms of combating capitalism is of course highly problematic. Geography is a wide-ranging multi vocal discipline with space for different theoretical approaches to different substantive topics. However, I sympathise with the sentiments of Martin and Castree above, which suggest (in a similar way to the geography and policy debate discussed above) that there is room for more geographical work on socio-economic inequalities. This thesis aims to contribute to this.

To return to Schram, the reason why it is important to study such inequalities is because of their devastating *consequences* for those at the wrong end of the socio-economic spectrum (as well as their damaging effects on societies as a whole). To take just one causal component of benefit claiming, unemployment, there is much evidence of the psychological damage that can be caused by long spells of unemployment (for example, Jahoda, 1982; Ezzy, 1993; Burchell, 1994; Gallie et al 1994; Gershuny, 1994; Nordenmark and Strandh, 1999; Strandh, 2001). There is much debate in this literature around how unemployment and mental health problems are linked, nonetheless commentators agree that, at the least, negative consequences often arise from unemployment. In later chapters I argue that claimants, including unemployed people, display remarkable enterprise and resilience in, for example, getting by on the low incomes provided by benefits. However, this is not to deny the damaging effects of unemployment, but to show the complexity that defines subjectivities of benefit claimants.

A further rationale for this research is linked to my comment earlier that public policy affects people's quality of life for better or worse, and that critical geographers can have a role in attempting to affect the way policy develops. Public policy that acknowledges and incorporates, for example, benefit claimants' own multiple understanding of what the 'problem' is might lead to better and more

effective policies. Again, there are analogies here with the "nothing about us without us" campaigning of the disability movement. I expand on this theme in chapter eight.

To summarise, the rationale behind this research is partly to fill the gaps in geographical research and produce resistant knowledges about the 'problem' of benefit claiming, and partly because of a feeling of injustice at worsening socio-economic inequalities and the role of a particular ideologically driven welfare reform policy in constructing these. The final section of this first chapter outlines the general structure of the rest of the thesis.

1.6   Structure of Thesis

I have already described the structure of the thesis as comprising two parts, first a discourse analysis of political discourses of 'dependency' and 'enterprise' and second a study of long-term benefit claimants and their understanding of the worlds of work, benefits and community. Part one comprises chapters two and three, with chapter two focussing on the discursive production of 'dependency' and chapter three focussing on 'enterprise'. This part of the thesis argues that dependency is associated almost exclusively with benefit claiming and constructed in opposition to enterprise, which is associated almost exclusively with paid work and business.

Part two of the thesis comprises chapters four to seven, which are based on the interview material. Chapters four and five analyse the themes of work and benefits in the lived experiences of the long-term claimant respondents with the aim of contesting the discursive production of claimants' subjectivities as described in chapters two and three. It is argued the discourses of dependency and enterprise are individualising, and with the aim of illustrating the lack of inevitability of such dominant discourses, chapters six and seven highlight contemporary examples of sites where the social is privileged: the local exchange trading system (LETS) and the academic debate around "social capital". Chapter eight concludes with examples

of alternative policy opportunities in the field of welfare reform and advocates further research into the "struggle to make a living" (Lee, 2000b).

As with this introductory chapter, each chapter commences with an abstract of the principle argument of the chapter in bold type. There then follows a brief section introducing the chapter and outlining its structure. Although much of the presentation of data in chapters two to seven follows the conventional presentation style of qualitative research (quotes from sources followed by interpretative commentary from the author), I attempt to accompany this with different presentation techniques. *Tables* are used in each chapter to group similar responses together or to contrast different 'typical responses' to a particular question, or, in chapter three, to highlight the budgetary changes made by New Labour in the name of promoting enterprise. In part two of the thesis it will (hopefully) be clear that the interviewees were frank and articulated so well the intermingling worlds of work and benefits. In some instances respondents tell aspects of their stories at length and in gripping ways. I wanted to give full space to these parts of interviews, and use *excerpts* of interview transcripts in these chapters. Third, *vignettes* (bullet-pointed brief character sketches) are used to offer background biographical details of pertinence to a particular point being made. Finally, the thesis uses a variety of *figures*, either to illustrate a general point (for example, figure 1.5 above) or to diagrammatically represent an argument (for example, figure 1.4 above).

To conclude, in arguing against the relative under-valuation of policy research in academia, Ron Martin asserts the demanding and complex questions faced by the policy researcher, including "How do we deconstruct policy practice, to reveal its ideological, political and instrumental as well as social purposes?" (2001a: 199). It is my ambitious hope that this thesis shows one way of doing exactly this.

Part One: Interrogating Political Discourses

The Construction of 'Dependency' versus 'Enterprise'

Chapter Two   Dependency

Chapter two argues that the political debate about the welfare state in the UK has, to a large extent, narrowed around a political discourse of dependency on social security benefits.   The aim of the chapter is to analyse this discourse and its implications for social policy.   Unemployment policy, and social security policy generally, has been declared in need of urgent reform by governments since 1979.   The various attempts to reform the system have been based on discourses about the nature of work, the structure of the family and the existence of a benefits "dependency culture".   The problem of unemployment, and, increasingly, *all* benefit claiming, has been constructed as a problem of "dependency".

> The greatest challenge for a democratic government is to refashion our institutions to bring the new workless class back into society and into useful work. Governments can all too easily institutionalise poverty rather than solve it, lock people into dependency rather than give them a means to be independent.
>
> Tony Blair in his first speech as Prime Minister of Britain, Aylesbury Estate, London, 2 June 1997

"Welfare reform" is a central plank of New Labour policy. Tony Blair indicated this centrality by dedicating his first keynote speech as Prime Minister of Britain to the problem of the " new workless class". The choice of location for the speech was significant: although only a few miles from Westminster, unemployment and poverty are high in the estate. By choosing such an estate as the backdrop to his speech, Blair was producing a visual geography of the types of places that are, by implication, outside society. As Haylett (2001b: 351) has remarked, "the symbolism of the event was heavy". The language of Blair's speech, the associations (and lack of associations) made between issues, is a signpost for the direction New Labour welfare reform policy was to take. Immediately obvious is the central role ascribed

to "useful" work, and the problematising of government institutions as "dependency" inducing. The construction of dependency is the focus of this chapter. While the New Labour government continue to construct welfare reform policies on the basis of reducing dependency, the dependency discourse has a long and ignoble past.

Structure of chapter

The chapter is organised into four sections. First, a brief **history of the dependency** discourse is traced and the specific dimensions of the New Labour version of dependency mapped. Second, the **increasing reach of the dependency label** is charted, from unemployed men to all people 'of working age'. Third, **internal contradictions** of the dependency discourse are analysed, particularly the tension between the self-interested, active 'knave' playing the benefits system and the passive, dependent victim 'trapped on benefits'. Finally, despite these internal contradictions, it is argued that the dependency discourse is increasingly dominant in government circles, and that this is directly related to the government concern that Britain be **'competitive' in an increasingly 'globalised' world**.

2.1   The History of 'Dependency'

2.1.1   *The origins of social security*

The idea that poor people are to blame for their poverty is not new. As long as there has been public assistance for the poor there have been concerns about its potential effects, especially on the moral character of recipients. The aim of the Poor Relief Act of 1601 was "to provide aid to the deserving and to deter wandering beggars and vagabonds" (DHSS, 1985b: 59). This distinction between the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor became a common theme in subsequent public assistance programmes, and was explicit in the New Poor Law of 1834. The "undeserving" poor were those who could work, but 'chose' not to, the indolent, lazy and workshy. Work was considered a 'civilising' force, therefore any public assistance had to be lower than the lowest available wage, lest 'idleness' was made attractive.

The first and most essential of all conditions, a principle which we find universally admitted, even by those whose practice is at variance with it, is, that his [the able-bodied person's] situation, on the whole, shall not be made really or apparently so eligible as the situation of the independent labourer of the lowest class...every penny bestowed, that tends to render the condition of the pauper more eligible than that of the independent labourer, is a bounty on indolence and vice"
Webb and Webb, 1929, quoted in Ditch, 1991:25

Some of the themes of the dependency discourse of the last two decades are illustrated in this quote. The value of independence, the importance of work and the link between non-work and moral degeneration have been prominent discourses in social security policy for at least the last 160 years.

Concern about the distinction between the deserving and undeserving poor remained prominent at the beginning of the twentieth century, the time of social reformers such as Beatrice Webb and Charles Booth. William Beveridge, architect of the welfare state, wrote of his concern about distinguishing between categories of poor:

The line between independence and dependence, between the efficient and the unemployable, has to be made clearer and broader...[the latter] must become the acknowledged dependents of the State, removed from industry and maintained adequately in public institutions; but with complete and permanent loss of all citizen rights-including not only the franchise, but civil freedom and fatherhood.
Beveridge, 1906:327, cited in Jones and Novak, 1999:120

Further, Winston Churchill in a speech on the new programme of National Insurance (introduced in 1911) was concerned to stress the role of work and insurance in combating the perceived threat of socialism:

The idea is to increase the stability of our institutions by giving the mass of industrial workers a direct interest in maintaining them. With a 'stake in the country' in the form of insurance against evil days these workers will pay no attention to the vague promises of revolutionary socialism...It will make him a better citizen, a more efficient worker, and a happier man.
Churchill, cited in Jones and Novak, 1999:122

The labour market and social policy parameters have substantially changed since these words were spoken, (neither the "mass of industrial workers" nor insurance

based unemployment payments exist on anywhere near a similar scale today), but the overall themes of ensuring economic stability for business, of workers having a stake in society, of the idealization of work and its conflation with efficiency and happiness, have proved remarkably stable.

2.1.2   *The Tory Years*

The current discourse of dependency is embedded in this long tradition of concern for the unproductive and non-working poor. It is, however, possible to trace the origins of the phrase "dependency culture" in current British political discourse to the mid 1980s. The 1985 Fowler Review of Social Security concluded that Britain's welfare state was in urgent need of reform.   There was concern that 'over generous' benefits were encouraging large sections of society to stay 'on the dole'. In the 1985 Green Paper on Social Security Reform efforts were made to ensure that the earnings gap between benefits and wages was widened. American welfare policy strongly influenced British social security reforms throughout this period (Dolowitz, 1997). Welfare payments were thought to exacerbate poverty, not relieve it, by encouraging the development of a "dependency culture" of claimants. It became common sense that over-generous benefit payments were creating a 'something-for-nothing' society.

The concepts of dependence and independence became more prevalent in British social security policy at this time, and featured prominently in a 1987 speech by John Moore, then Secretary of State for Social Security. Moore gave the speech to the Conservative Political Centre Conference, shortly after he returned from a tour of US welfare initiatives. The 'problem of dependency' was a concern in US political discourse at this time with President Ronald Reagan warning in his 1986 State of the Union address of America's need to "escape the spider's web of dependency" (quoted in Dolowitz, 1997:31). John Moore used similar language in his speech:

> Dependence in the long run decreases human happiness and reduces human freedom. We believe the well-being of individuals is best protected and promoted when they are helped to be independent, to use their talents to take care of themselves and their families and to achieve things on their own, which is one of the greatest satisfactions life can offer. Welfare measures, if

they are to really promote economic and social welfare, must be aimed
ultimately at encouraging independence, not dependence
Moore, 26-09-87, Conservative Political Centre

David Dolowitz stresses the extent to which British employment policy in the 1980s
was transferred from America, commenting that "two of the key attitudes transferred
were the need to blame the victims for their unemployment and the rhetoric of
dependency" (1997:31). The 'rhetoric of dependency' became part of the polarised
thinking around work and benefits that has persisted to this day. This polarisation
conflates work with independence, activeness and enterprise, as opposed to benefits,
which are conflated with dependence, passivity and unhappiness. This polarisation
has been (and continues to be) central to social security reform, and yet, as later
chapters show, it is unrelated to many people's lived experience of work or benefits,
and unhelpful in the formulation of policy.

The final major change in social security policy by the Tories before they lost power
in 1997 was the replacement of Unemployment Benefit and Income Support with the
new "Jobseeker's Allowance" in 1994 (Department of Social Security, 1994).
Again, the morally corroding effects of public assistance were railed against and the
distinction maintained between the deserving 'actively job seeking' unemployed and
the undeserving skiver:

> The new Jobseeker's Allowance, as its title makes clear, will be a means of
> support while an unemployed person looks for work, not an income for a
> lifestyle divorced from work.
> DSS, 1994, Cm. 2687:10

The notion of unemployment as a "lifestyle" works to deny the issue of labour
demand, and focus the blame for unemployment on those who suffer it. The blame
slips between the welfare state and the claimant, with the state of the labour market
conspicuous by its absence.

2.1.3 New Labour
The construction of benefit claiming as welfare dependency has continued apace
under the New Labour government. Throughout Blair's Aylesbury speech he

stressed the need to reform the welfare system, warning of the "tough choices" ahead. The first minister put in charge of making such tough choices as Minister for Welfare Reform was Frank Field, M.P. for Birkenhead and veteran campaigner on social welfare issues. Field was given the oxymoronic but catchy task of 'thinking the unthinkable' on welfare reform. His thoughts on the problems of the benefits system are well documented in numerous publications (for example, Field, 1996, 1997, 2000). Field bases these thoughts on the assumption that people act in self-interested rational ways to various incentives and disincentives (much like the 'rational man' of orthodox economics). Benefit claiming is understood as a symptom of dependency enabled by a misguided welfare state:

> I wish to stress that this debate about welfare dependency rests on a simple, but I believe important truth, namely that welfare provisions affect both people's behaviour and thereby their character.
> Field, 1997: 38

The principle problem with current welfare provisions, according to Field, is their emphasis on *means testing*:

> Means tests ensure that claimant's energy is channelled into working the system rather than working themselves off welfare. It is the way they have an impact on effort, savings and honesty that means tests are the most potent recruiting sergeant there is for the dependency culture.
> (Field, 1996: 17)

Although Field castigates the system as part of the problem in this analysis, it is the character of the individual that comes under attack. The assumption is that, as self-interested rational actors, all claimants of means tested benefits lack effort in their job search and are dishonest about savings or other income that might affect benefit levels. Further, there is a presumption that all benefit claimants share some notional 'culture' by virtue of their claiming, as unemployment was described above as a "lifestyle".

However, it seems that Field went too far in thinking the unthinkable. His plans, aimed at reducing the means testing he blames for inducing dependency, included universal contributions and mutual benefits, at a policy cost of £8 billion pounds (Toynbee and Walker, 2001). Alistair Darling took over as minister and the focus on

means testing as the problem suddenly dropped. Since Darling's take over, government social security policy has focussed almost exclusively on work. Significantly, 'social security' as a phrase is rapidly disappearing from political and government language, succeeded by 'welfare' and work. The Department of Social Security is no more, succeeded by the Department Work and Pensions. The new emphasis is on *employability*. The dividing line between deserving and undeserving poor has shifted during this current period of low unemployment. As I argue below, increasingly, *all* benefit claiming is problematised as 'dependency' with a subtext that dependency epitomises the undeserving poor who fail to take responsibility for exploiting 'opportunities' in the labour market.

Benefit claiming has become de-legitimised to the point where claimants/dependents are not considered full members of society, just as Beveridge, above, assured 'dependents' should lose their franchise. Blair's challenge to get the workless classes 'back into' society is illuminating here, and repeated often in government, for example by Employment Minister Andrew Smith in a press release supporting the Princes Trust business start up scheme:

> It is excellent too in that the young people involved [in the scheme] do not come from wealthy backgrounds. Many are helped back into society from welfare dependency and the threat of exclusion from the mainstream of economic and social life.
> DfEE, 1999c, PN

Self-employment and business start-ups are the epitome of the 'enterprise culture' deemed the necessary antidote to the 'dependency culture' (see chapter three). The young person who starts a business is welcomed 'back into society'; the young claimant is outside the mainstream. Other Labour government ministers continue this notion of dependents located outside society: Peter Mandelson, launching the Social Exclusion Unit in 1997 said:

> This is about more than poverty and unemployment. It is about being cut off from what the rest of us regard as normal life.
> Mandelson, 1997:1

Harriet Harman, then Minister for Social Security, talks of these 'others' cut off from 'the rest of us' in a similar way in a speech to launch the Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) at the London School of Economics in 1997:

> They [the 'socially excluded'] and their families are trapped in dependency. They inhabit a parallel world where income is derived from benefits, not work … these are whole communities which are completely disconnected from the world of work.
> Harman, 1997

The way Harman describes 'families trapped in dependency' as *inhabiting* a parallel world implies in some way that claimants are a different species who *inhabit* the world called Dependency in contrast to the 'rest of us' normal people who *live* in the world called Work. The 'less-than-human' element of the dependency discourse is compounded through the continuous use of the metaphor of entrapment. Benefit claimants are said to be 'trapped in dependency' (for example, the families Harman refers to above), or to quote Alastair Darling, to 'fall into' the dependency trap.

> This Government is determined to modernise the welfare state and end the dependency trap so many people fall into.
> DSS, 1999b, PN

> A benefits led strategy becomes increasingly expensive and to no good effect-it leaves people trapped on benefits and excluded from the mainstream of society.
> Harman, 1998, Speech at University of York

The effect of this entrapment metaphor is to evoke a slightly intimidating feeling about dependency and benefit dependents and continue the discourse of dependency as a state outside the mainstream. Harman also alludes to the economic imperative of welfare reform as benefits become 'increasingly expensive' (this is expanded on in the conclusion of the chapter).

Another element of the entrapment metaphor is the documented existence of what have been termed poverty traps and benefit traps, where individuals are financially better off claiming income support and housing related benefits than they would be

in a job at the lower end of the labour market. These concerns are similar to the Poor Law's 'principle of less eligibility' and the drive to widen the gap between earnings and benefits in the 1985 social security reforms. In the New Labour version, on the surface there are signs of a shift from blaming individuals for their benefit claiming towards a more sympathetic interpretation of claimants as victims of an out of date benefits system. Thus, Tony Blair in the forward to the 1998 Green Paper on Welfare Reform writes:

> We want to make the system work better for the thousands who want to work but are trapped on benefits.
> DSS, 1998, Cm 4101: 2

The Green Paper continues with another entrapment metaphor and a further castigation of the system as the problem:

> Welfare should become more focused on helping people to become independent, rather than locking them into dependency.
> ibid, p.8

Alistair Darling too blames the benefits system:

> The system has become part of the problem-encouraging dependency by passively paying out benefit.
> DfEE, 1999b, PN

The benefits system is associated with passivity in contrast with the 'active labour market' policies deemed essential in a 'modernised' Britain. Blaming the system rather than the claimant might be seen as a positive development. Unfortunately, what such a discursive strategy also enables is the development of policies to change the system, and the subsequent blaming of individuals who remain claimants, despite the welfare 'reform'. This is in effect what has happened around the introduction of the New Deal for young people, which obliged young JSA claimants to choose one of four options: subsidised employment, full time education, voluntary work or work on an "environmental task force", with the constant reminder that there was to be no fifth option of staying at home doing nothing.

"New Deal is also putting an end to the culture of benefits dependency and there is no longer an option of a lifetime on benefits for those who are fit to work"
Department for Education and Employment, 1999d, PN

Notions of unemployment as an 'option' deny uneven geographies of labour *demand*. This is the defining characteristic of contemporary understandings of unemployment in the UK and across the OECD. The 'work detachment' perspective dominates government (especially Treasury) thinking on the causes of unemployment and benefit claiming. The thinking behind this perspective stems from economists such as Richard Layard and Stephen Nickell (Layard, 1997a, b, Layard et al, 1991) who have been influencing UK government policy on unemployment for the last twenty years. Layard and his colleagues focus especially on long-term unemployment, for it is thought that the long-term unemployed are so far removed from the labour market that they no longer operate as an effective labour supply, and therefore have little effect on wage levels. By focussing on the long-term unemployed, the argument goes, it is possible to reduce unemployment without putting upwards pressure on inflation. As Layard (1997b: 56-7) writes:

> Can we reduce unemployment without simply pushing up inflation?
> The answer is yes, especially if we focus on eliminating long-term unemployment. Once people have been unemployed that long, their chances of finding work have been largely destroyed. The very fact of failure makes failure more likely, and many employers will not even look at someone who has been out of work for a long time.

It is clear from this quote that it is the quality of the labour *supply* that is deemed problematic and the causative factor in unemployment. Consequently, the emphasis is on supply-side solutions or 'active labour market' policies, focussed exclusively on unemployed people. These supply-side policies are said to reduce unemployment without increasing inflation by pushing down the 'non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment' or the NAIRU.

As Harman, above, asserts, the 'socially excluded' are said to be "completely disconnected from the world of work". Gordon Brown (2000), Chancellor of the

Exchequer, laments the lack of "work ethic" in areas of high unemployment. The 'work-detached' are said to be removed from worlds of work, lacking in positive attitudes towards work and unaware of job opportunities around them. As the following section illustrates, young long-term unemployed claimants were the first of many targets of the new 'welfare to work' orthodoxy.

2.2 The Expanding Boundaries of Dependency

One of the principle pre-conditions for 'membership' of the "dependency culture" is financial dependence on the state, but as the Royal Family and even Tony Blair himself would qualify under that condition, there is obviously a bit more to it. Specifically, it is dependency on state social security benefits that is deemed problematic. The welfare system, and efforts to reform it, are based on assumptions about society, the nature of work, the structure of the family and the roles of women and men. The discourse of 'dependency' depends on, and interplays with, these other discourses of work and family. By interrogating the dominant discourses of work and family it is possible to begin to deconstruct and destabilise the discourse of dependency.

The boundaries of the 'dependency culture' construct have continuously shifted and expanded since its introduction. Various groups of 'dependent subjects' have been under attack at various times. One of the objectives of the social security system is the surveillance and control of claimants (Dean and Taylor-Gooby, 1992). As part of this surveillance, government polices the boundaries of the 'dependency culture', shining their spotlight on different categories of claimants at different times. One group of claimants that has remained constantly in that spotlight is unemployed men.

2.2.1 The Unemployed

> Work brings a sense of order that is missing from the lives of many unemployed young men.
>
> Harriet Harman, then Secretary of State for Social Security, speech at the launch of CASE, 1997

It is not surprising that unemployed young men have been the principal target of social security reforms and welfare to work programmes. When the discourse of dependency first became prominent in the mid 1980s the stereotypical dependent subject was the young able-bodied unemployed male, lazing around, waiting for his giro to arrive through the door every fortnight, infamously goaded by Norman Tebbitt to get on his bike and get a job. The unemployed young man threatens the dominant discourse of paid work, still gendered despite the increase in women's participation in the paid labour market. The dominant discourse of work is concerned almost exclusively with paid work in the labour market (Leonard, 1997). This is precisely the type of work men have traditionally been expected to do (in contrast with unpaid domestic work), and when young men are failing to do paid work in large numbers it is imagined in part as a moral threat to the natural order of things. Fairclough (2000a: 58) has argued that this is the implication of language such as that in Harriet Harman's speech at the launch of CASE. He analyses the excerpt above:

> Harman might have said: 'Work brings a regularity which is not found in the lives of many young unemployed men'. By saying the sense of order is 'missing' she suggests a lack, by referring to a lack of sense of 'order' she implies a morally reprehensible disorder, and by referring to a lack of 'sense' of order she implicitly points to deficiencies in values and culture.

However, the New Labour government believe that "a job for most people is the best route out of poverty" (DfEE, 2001, Cm. 5084: 29) and a government focus on poverty and policies to address poverty is to be welcomed. Theodore and Peck (2001) contrast 'human capital development' and 'labour force attachment' models of welfare-to-work in the US and UK and although elements of the UK welfare to work policy centrepiece-the New Deal-focus on skills (HCD) the primary aim is to get claimants into jobs (LFA):

> The aim of the New Deal for Young People is to help them back into the labour market as quickly as possible, whilst at the same time investing in their long-term employability.
> Cm 5084, 2001:12

There is a degree of disingenuousness in this aim, though, as young people who do get 'back into the labour market as quickly as possible', say, in a temporary 'Macjob', come out of the New Deal programme, often only to sign on again once the job has ended: the phenomenon of labour market churning (Peck and Theodore, 2000; Sunley et al, 2001). (This contradiction is elaborated in the following section).

The young unemployed are also the focus of the harshest language of the dependents targeted, with most emphasis on compulsion and sanctions for failing to comply with New Deal rules:

> The New Deal also introduces a change of culture-for the first time there would be no option of a life on benefit, and this was backed up by benefit sanctions for those who repeatedly failed to attend interviews or to participate in the options available.
> Cm 5084, DfEE, 2001: 13

> For young people in particular dependence cannot and must not be an option. That is why the New Deal is so important in rooting out those living on the sub-economy, but claiming benefit. We must constantly update the balance of support and sanctions, to ensure that no-one fit to do so should presume to live off the hard work of others.
> Blunkett, Speech at University of London, 19 May 1999

The notion of 'life on benefit' and 'dependence' as an *option* is significant, and resonates with the Tory concerns of unemployment as a "lifestyle". It implies that youth unemployment is a lifestyle *choice*, which fits in with the historical discourse of the morally lacking idle scrounger. As noted above, what is lacking from this discourse, and from the dependency discourse in general, is any notion of unemployment as a problem of depressed labour markets, indeed any comment on the demand side of unemployment. The implicit message is that youth unemployment is an individual choice.

The older unemployed have also been targeted in the New Deal 50+ (for those over 50 years old) and the New Deal 25+ (for over 25 year olds). The less sympathetic language of sanctions common to the NDYP continues to some extent with the

language of the New Deal 25+. These claimants are given extra 'help' from Personal Advisers to seek work, and in turn their 'responsibilities' increase to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the New Deal, otherwise there will be "benefit sanctions of up to 6 months for those who refuse to take part" (Cm. 5084, 2001: 28). More unusually, unemployment problems faced by the over 50s are attributed in part to something outwith the individual claimant's control: employer attitudes: "the Government is tackling age discrimination in the labour market, as well as providing help for those who want to work and re-train" (Cm. 5084, 2001: 28). Nevertheless, a spatial analysis of unemployment, including an acknowledgement of the uneven geography of labour market buoyancy, is largely absent from the policy documents on these New Deals.

The geography of unemployment is acknowledged in the government paper on full employment (HM Treasury, 2000), part of the Treasury series "Modernisation of the Tax and Benefits System". However, the cause of this uneven geography is again attributed to supply issue of 'employability', not demand issues of lack of jobs.

> Within regions...there remains pockets of high unemployment. However, the problem of Britain's most deprived areas is not necessarily a lack of jobs-in almost every case, these areas sit alongside, and within travelling distance of, labour markets with high levels of vacancies. People need to be equipped to take advantage of those opportunities. The Government therefore needs programmes to increase the employability of people in deprived areas.
> HM Treasury, 2000:1

In describing the geography of unemployment as "pockets" of deprivation next to buoyant labour markets the Treasury understates the economic fall out of de-industrialisation and its distinct spatiality across the country, especially in the north of England, Wales and Scotland (McKendrick, 1995; Dorling and Tomaney, 1995). Even on this rare occasion of the geography of unemployment being acknowledged, it is the personal qualities of the unemployed that are still deemed the sole problem.

2.2.2 Lone Parents and Partners of the Unemployed
The position of women within the discourses of dependency, work and family is

more complicated. Traditionally, women were not expected to go out to work, indeed, part of the nuclear family discourse depended on them staying at home, raising the children. Women's financial dependence on men is implicitly encouraged in the discourse of 'familialism', which as Leonard (1997:39) remarks, is 'not yet fatally weakened', despite bearing little relation to contemporary (or, for working class women, historical) household structures. The assumptions underpinning the planning of the welfare state included full employment for men and the confinement of women to the domestic sphere, and financial dependence on men (Pascall, 1994).

Women's financial dependence on the state was first problematised with the growth of single parent families in the late 1980s. Indeed, lone mothers were not initially problematised as members of a dependency culture (Lewis, 1998). The Fowler Review and following Social Security Act included a new benefit premium for lone parents in recognition of their extra financial difficulties (removing this premium was one of the New Labour government's first moves). However, later Conservative governments grew concerned with the growing social security budget, and the growth of expenditure on benefits to single parents (the majority of whom are single mothers) began to be viewed as a serious problem. The spotlight of the 'dependency culture police' shone on single mothers. This was also the time of the 'underclass' discourse discussed in the previous chapter (Wilson, 1987; Macniol, 1987; Murray, 1990, Smith, 1992). Integral to this discourse was the problematising of lone parenthood, specifically lone motherhood, and its alleged role in the moral breakdown of a certain sector of society. Associated with this was the moral threat posed to the discourse of familialism by growing numbers of single mothers.

The Child Support Agency was set up in 1993 to ensure that absent fathers met the financial responsibilities for their children. It is possible to view this policy development as an attempt to switch women's financial dependence back to men, and away from the state, as maintenance payments are taken into consideration in the assessment of benefit levels. The expectation that single mothers should transfer their financial dependence onto the labour market by getting a paid job (in New Labour language, by 'working', as if lone mothers don't already work) has increased

with the New Labour government. The first major backbench revolt was over benefit cuts to lone parents in November 1997. These cuts were related to the Chancellor's promise to remain within Conservative spending plans for two years, although there is a moral/cultural dimension to the decision in the wish to avoid any benefits that may make lone parenthood appear more "attractive". A second moral/cultural dimension to the welfare programme for lone parents is the assumption that lone parents who also do paid work offer a better role model to their children than "non-working" lone parents.

> Having a parent in work provides children with an active, valuable role model. It helps provide the parent with self-respect and a social network. And most important of all, a waged family is less likely to be poor and benefit-dependent than an unwaged one.
> DSS, 1998, Cm. 3805: 58

In contrast to the frequent collocation of passivity, dependency and benefits, work in this excerpt is associated with the words "active" and "valuable", the implicit suggestion being that it is not the nature of the parenting that determines one's value as a role model, rather the nature of one's relationship with the formal labour market. This is a significant change, as women's worth and value have traditionally been constructed through the feminised attributes of caring and nurturing, epitomised in the mothering of children. Under the NDLP, women's worth is determined by their "attachment to the labour market".

> NDLP is crucial in helping to create a culture change among lone parents, giving them the confidence to see employment as the best path out of poverty.
> Alistair Darling, DSS/DfEE PN, 24th May 2000:1

> NDLP is creating a culture of work, making savings in benefits and lifting people out of dependence and into independence.
> David Blunkett, DSS/DfEE PN, 24th May 2000:1

Both ministers stress the cultural dimension (with Blunkett also alluding to the economic imperative of "making savings") of the NDLP, reinforcing the notion of a "dependency culture" of benefit claimants in need of salvation through work. Despite initial language of "empowerment" rather than "enforcement" of the NDLP,

the measures have become increasingly mandatory for an increasing range of lone parents. Personal Adviser interviews to "explore work options" were initially mandatory for lone parents of school-aged children. They are now mandatory for all lone parents:

> Most lone parents say they would like to work. Now the Government wants to make sure that all lone parents are aware of the choices and support available to help them to make the move towards work. *So from this April the Government will start to introduce mandatory interviews with a Personal Adviser for all lone parents making a claim to benefit, initially to discuss their opportunities for taking up work or training.*
> DfEE, CM. 5084, 2001: 29, emphasis in original

The complex nature of women's position within the dependency discourse is further illustrated in the New Deal for Partners of the unemployed. Employment minister Tessa Jowell welcomed the "radical change to help get both members of a couple back into work" saying:

> Over 85 per cent of partners of claimants are women, who have previously been regarded as 'dependants' on a Jobseeker's Allowance claim. Today's change scraps this outdated view of the world, where 72 per cent of all women are now economically active, and makes sure we are no longer missing the opportunity to help these people.
> Tessa Jowell, DfEE PN, 19th March 2001:1

To view women as dependants of men is outdated, but women's dependency on the state (as partners of "the unemployed") is presented as an incontrovertible fact. The aim of the New Deal for Partners is to "prevent couples from adjusting to benefits dependency from an early age" (ibid). In short, women are problematically dependent as lone parents, and as partners of unemployed men, not as "workers", nor as partners of employed men.

For New Labour, welfare reform revolves entirely around paid work: "The Government's aim is to rebuild the welfare state around work...for both individuals and families, paid work is the most secure means of averting poverty and dependence" (Cm. 3805, DSS, 1998: 23). The people who are targeted now as 'dependent subjects' are all people "of working age" who receive state benefits. The

boundaries of the "dependency culture" are stretching.

2.2.3 *Claimants of sickness and disability benefits*

Just as under the New Labour government there is a greater expectation that lone parents should go out to work, the same is true of people receiving incapacity or disability benefits. Disabled people have long been discriminated against in the labour market, faced with societal and employer prejudice. The government wants to 'reduce the barriers' to employment faced by people with disabilities, and disability groups initially welcomed the focus on improving labour market accessibility for people with disabilities. The language of the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) is progressively less harsh than the NDYP or the NDLP. Benefit dependency amongst the disabled and long-term sick is presented less as a "lifestyle choice" than it is with unemployed claimants. In further contrast to other groups described as trapped in dependency and constructed as lacking agency, disabled claimants are granted agency with then Minister for Employment and Equal Opportunities Margaret Hodge stating:

> There are over 1 million disabled people who want to reject dependency and find work and the New Deal's job brokers will go a long way to helping many disabled people reach their full potential.
> Margaret Hodge, DfEE PN, 28th March 2000:2

The language of disabled people wanting to "reject dependency" is repeated by Stephen Timms, describing the introduction of the Personal Adviser system for disabled people:

> Disabled people have rejected the label of dependency that, in the past, the system has tried to place on them.
> Stephen Timms, DfEE PN 30th September 1998:1

This last quote is unusual, in that there is an acknowledgement of the constructed nature of "dependency" as a label, and the construction is attributed to the "system", although Timms does not expand as to whom the system might include, it is apparent he is referring to the "welfare state" in some way. In other words, a New Labour government minister criticises the construction of dependency by the state! This is

the only incidence of such critical interpretation of dependency I uncovered. Overwhelmingly, dependency is a taken-for-granted assumption of the inevitable consequences of an out-moded welfare state. However, the language around the NDDP and Incapacity Benefit reform is not always quite so sympathetic. The mantra of "rights and responsibilities" is repeated by David Blunkett in a press release:

> We will take a fresh view of the balance of rights and responsibilities encouraging more people with long standing illness or disability who can work to look for a job whilst honouring the pledge of security for those who cannot.

> It's a "something for something" approach, in which people have an obligation to help themselves if they can.
> David Blunkett, DfEE PN, 11th October 2000

There has been a move away from the language of civil rights and disability used in the 1998 welfare reform green paper, towards the emphasis on obligations. The New Labour Government is critical of previous governments 'writing off' people on disability benefits, and encouraging the transfer of large numbers of claimants from the unemployment rolls to sickness benefits in an attempt to make the unemployment figures look better. The subtext of the excerpt above is that claimants of disability and sickness benefits have, under previous regimes, received nothing in terms of job-seeking support from the state. The New Labour government, in contrast, is said to have improved the help given to disabled people to appreciate those opportunities open to them; it is now the obligation of claimants to take advantage of those opportunities. The underlying implication is if such efforts are not made, then disabled claimants would be receiving "something for nothing", and in consequent moral danger of succumbing to dependency.

> Disabled people are nearly seven times more likely to be out of work and claiming benefits than non-disabled people, so the Government is providing the choices and opportunities they have been denied in the past, in return for greater responsibilities to find out about the help on offer.

> A national network of Job Brokers with specialist expertise will have the flexibility and freedom to decide how best to help their clients, responding to

each as an individual. They will be funded by results, receiving a fee for each person they move into employment and a bonus payment if they are still in work after six months.[4]
DfEE, CM. 5084, 2001:32

The language surrounding the reform of Incapacity Benefit is notably harsher. As mentioned above, Labour accuses previous Conservative administrations of unofficially encouraging widespread shifts of claimants from unemployment related benefits to Incapacity Benefit. Numbers claiming Incapacity Benefit increased threefold in the 1980s and 1990s. The Secretary of State for Social Security, Alastair Darling, criticised this expansion of IB in a speech introducing the second phase of the government's welfare reform programme:

> We propose a fundamental reform to Incapacity Benefit for future claimants only. The benefit is meant to be for people who are unable to work, yet the number of claimants has risen threefold over the past 20 years, at a time when the nation's health has been improving[5]. We are concerned that the benefit is being abused as an enhanced early retirement subsidy. For future claimants, we will discourage the use of incapacity benefit as an early retirement subsidy...Too often, it has been abused as a more generous form of support for the long-term unemployed.
> Alastair Darling, Hansard, 28/10/98, col.341

Benefits being "abused"; claimants subsidised on "enhanced" and "more generous" early retirements: this is the language of the undeserving poor, the scrounger and the cheat. Most recently, Darling has announced a new test regime for Incapacity Benefit claimants, who will be required to attend regular interviews to prove (or not) their continuing incapacity and inability to work. The 1999 Welfare Reform and Pensions Act also introduced cuts in disability benefits and increasing means-testing in Incapacity benefits. (This met with resistance from disability groups-see figures 3.1 and 3.2 below). However, to claim that the large increase in numbers claiming Incapacity Benefit is related only to benefit fraud is, at best, an over-simplification. It has been argued that "the main reasons for the increase stemmed from a

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[4] The issue of Job Brokers receiving payment per claimant employed is a concern of some of those interviewed, as discussed in chapter 4. The main concern was that Brokers would be less concerned with the quality of job options for their 'clients' than encouraging or persuading clients to, as one claimant phrased it "take a job, any job".
[5] Health *inequalities*, however, increased during this time (Wilkinson, 1996).

combination of the impact of long term unemployment on the health of communities and profound changes in the labour market in the 1980s, particularly for older unskilled manual workers" (Munby, 1998:12).

Figure 2.1 Protesters against New Labour disability benefit cuts

Figure 2.2 Protesters sceptical of a new 'third way?'

To sum up, not only has the discourse of dependency increased in influence throughout time, its reach has widened in terms of groups of people labelled members of a dependency culture. From initial concerns with the young unemployed, now all people "of working age" are deemed potential dependants. There are even signs that those not usually considered "of working age", children and retired people, are increasingly seen as suffering from dependency. Gordon Brown wants to strengthen the ties between business and schools in order to increase enterprise in education and make pupils more aware of their labour market opportunities in the future (see chapter three). Welcome proposals to address child poverty are linked to the existence of a dependency culture:

> The new Child Trust Fund and the Savings Gateway will provide a vital first step on the road to self-reliance-taking people out of the dependency culture and giving them a real stake in society.
> David Blunkett, DfEE PN, 26th April, 2001

The image of a child's "first step" is a highly evocative one, bringing to mind young babies struggling to maintain their balance, but the link with self-reliance jars that initial image: are even babies not permitted a degree of dependency? At the other end of the life span, dependency is being used to describe those without private pension provision who claim the basic state pension.

> Stakeholder Pensions will be the first step in the long term programme of pensions reform.
> Taken as a whole, our changes will shape this country's pensions system for the next fifty years. They will guarantee for the first time that a lifetime's work won't lead to dependency on means-tested benefits in retirement.
> Alistair Darling, DSS PR, 6th January 1999:1

As work is the panacea for all society's ills, there are even signs that retirement from work itself is being problematised.

> Possibly through private sponsorship, we could ensure that people moving from work into retirement or semi-retirement receive the necessary information and guidance on what voluntary opportunities exist-for example-reading schemes in schools, family support networks and helping local charities.

We want to lift people out of dependency.
David Blunkett, DfEE PN, 11th October 2000:1

It seems the dependency discourse has inveigled itself (or rather, been inveigled by Government) into every corner of contemporary life, with no-one safe from its harms.

2.3   Contradictions and tensions in dependency discourses

2.3.1 The active 'knave' versus the passive dependent

Up to this point, the picture painted is one of 'dependency' as a deep-rooted, increasingly popular and coherent discourse, firmly entrenched in the minds and motivations of New Labour welfare reformers, and, to a large extent, this is an accurate picture. There are, however, as with any hegemonic discourse, gaps, inconsistencies and contradictions riven through the contemporary discourse of dependency.

One of the more striking tensions in New Labour language is that between the passive, dependent claimant and the active knavish claimant. (The metaphor of the knave is taken from Le Grand (1997), who argues that policy makers' view of the character of claimants informs their policy making. Le Grand identifies three 'ideal types' of character: the altruistic 'knight', the passive 'pawn' and the self-interested 'knave'). As discussed above, the dominant construction of claimants' subjectivities is closest to Le Grand's 'pawn': the claimant is said to lead an essentially passive existence of receiving state 'hand-outs' resulting in a gradual loss of employability, detachment from the labour market and entrapment in dependency. The key features of this subject (apart its very definite distance and separation from 'normal life' lived by the 'rest of us') are its passivity and dependency, and, more recently, despair as alluded to in the language of benefit claimants being "written off" to a "social scrapheap":

> We want to lift people out of dependency. We want to make sure people do not write themselves off. We want to ensure society does not write them

off.
David Blunkett, DfEE PN, 11th October 2000

There have been too many people consigned to a social scrapheap in the past.
David Blunkett, Speech at DEMOS, London, 3rd November 1999

This image is very much at odds with the contemporary claimant image of the 'knave' who actively seeks ways to work the system. This subject is personified in the 'benefit cheat'. Benefit fraud, a famous preoccupation of Conservative governments in the 1980s and 1990s, has remained high on the welfare agenda of the New Labour government. The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate was set up in 1997, followed by a Green Paper: "Beating Fraud is Everyone's Business" in 1998. Government estimates on the annual 'cost' of benefit fraud to taxpayers vary from £4bn (DSS, 1998 Cm 3805:67) to £7bn (DSS, PN, 13 July 1998).

To a certain extent, the contradiction between the passive dependent and the active knave is overcome through this focus on fraud: the knavish are isolated as benefit fraudsters who are then legitimately attacked and vilified as anti-all that is good and citizen like. Instances of a discursive separation of such fraudulent claimants from the 'decent' others include the assertion at the beginning of chapter nine ("Rooting out Fraud") of the 1998 Green Paper:

> Most claimants, of course, are honest, but fraud still costs taxpayers and claimants an estimated £4 billion (of which about £1 billion is Housing Benefit fraud), enough to give every family with children an extra £10 a week.[6]
> DSS, Cm. 3805, 1998: 67

This excerpt highlights the distinction between honest and fraudulent claimants, and contains the new concern that *claimants* as well as taxpayers suffer the consequences of fraud. This was a concern of Frank Field's, which he repeated in a press release marking the launch of the fraud Green Paper later that year:

"Benefit fraud is theft. Theft from the nation, theft from taxpayers and-worst of all-theft from those people who are properly entitled to benefit".
Frank Field, DSS PN 13th July, 1998

This focus is part of the government's wish to develop an "anti-fraud culture" and to "change people's attitude to fraud, from condoning it to condemning it" (ibid). The lack of an 'anti-fraud' culture was bemoaned by Frank Field when he complained that "in some communities, successful fraudsters are celebrated as having beaten the system" (DSS 1998, PN).

Notwithstanding Frank Field's subsequent departure from government, the distinction between the honest and fraudulent claimant, and the desire to change attitudes against fraud continues, as evidenced in the continuing campaign "Spotlight on Benefit Cheats" highlighted in a series of television adverts in 2001. However, it is perhaps not so useful to imagine this contradiction as a simple binary between honest and fraudulent claimants, nor to suggest that inconsistencies are overcome through the use of this binary. There is evidence that the distinction is blurring, and was, perhaps, never as distinct as the above makes out. Writing in the forward to the welfare reform green paper Tony Blair states that:

> It is not just fraud, though that is unacceptably widespread, for example in Housing Benefit. The rules themselves can be bent as well as broken, rewarding those who play the system.
> Tony Blair, 1998:v

The concern with the more broadly defined 'playing the system' is repeated in David Blunkett's speech to DEMOS in May 1999:

> We need to stop some-and only some-playing the system at the expense of others and defrauding those around them who are genuinely desperate for work. Some 6,500 youngsters have been sanctioned over the last six months, but some have learnt to get the most for giving the least. So coming off the New Deal to avoid work, but then expecting to return to it,

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[6] This description of the extent of fraud in terms of how much extra benefits other claimants could get is particularly rich, as raising benefit levels has not received the remotest consideration in this welfare reform agenda.

only to leave it again, is not an option. Not working is not an option.
David Blunkett, 19 May 1999

Blunkett is talking here about the young unemployed, those targeted by the NDYP. It is perhaps more useful to imagine the distinctions between various categories of honest and fraudulent claimants as a spectrum of blameworthiness, ranging from young fraudsters at one extreme to children, pensioners and the severely disabled at the least blameworthy extreme. As illustrated in the previous section, the young unemployed have been subjected to the harshest language and sanctions, with other groups of claimants afforded progressively greater degrees of sympathy. Blunkett, above, is referring to a "three strikes and you're out" policy where young unemployed claimants who refuse a New Deal option three times have their benefit stopped for six months. The extreme of fraudsters is contrasted with the least blameworthy extreme of children (see Green Paper chapter nine quote above) and pensioners ("The amount lost to benefit fraud is estimated to be as much as £7 billion a year. This is equivalent to an extra £10 a week to every pensioner in the country" DSS 1998, PN). Included in this "least blameworthy" category are the "severely disabled who cannot work" and it is these categories of welfare recipients who, although still liable to be labelled dependent (see section 2.2.4), are deemed to be deserving of support (all other categories of welfare recipients are deemed better off in work).

> We all have a duty to build a better future for our children by reforming the welfare state.
> A welfare state that embodies decency, fairness and opportunity for all.
> One that rewards work and effort. And provides the greatest help for those people in greatest need. With support for children, for disabled people who can't work, and for our poorest pensioners.
> Alistair Darling, Speech in Newham, London, 18 July 1999

Discourses, though powerful as the dependency discourse is in contemporary UK politics, are never all powerful, they shift and change and are replete with discontinuities that are never 'overcome'. In regard to the passive dependent versus active knave, the glaring contradiction is around the issue of (undeclared) work: the

dependency discourse constructs claimants as removed from the worlds of work, as unemployable, de-skilled, not 'job-ready'. Yet a large part of what is imagined as benefit fraud is those claimants who work illegally while claiming benefit, thus evidentially being close to the worlds of work, employable, skilled and job-ready. This issue is expanded on in chapter four, suffice for now to highlight that the tension exists.

2.3.2 *"Not working is not an option" versus "Rapid Reclaim"*

The phenomenon of labour market churning causes a second tension in government thinking on welfare reform. Labour market churning describes how individuals move back and forth between short-term jobs and benefits. As is argued in chapter four, and contrary to government discourse of the work-detached, benefit claimants often have in-depth knowledge of their local labour market, and, in depressed labour markets, that knowledge is that if any job 'opportunities' are available, they tend to be poorly paid, temporary, part-time and generally highly insecure. This explains the phenomenon of churning, where people oscillate between precarious forms of employment and benefit claiming. There is already evidence of churning amongst NDYP participants (Sunley at al, 2001).

The government rarely address this phenomenon, preferring to stress that any job is preferable to the curse of dependency, although there are a small number of instances where a "low pay-no pay cycle" is acknowledged in government documents. For example, the fourth publication of the Treasury's Modernisation of the Tax and Benefits System series was launched in March 1999, and it drew attention to this cycle to which it attributed in part the "persistent and scarring nature of poverty" (HM Treasury PN, 29th March 1999:1).

> Work history also has a profound effect on the life chances of individuals and their children: in the mid 1990s half of those leaving unemployment were unemployed again within the year; people get stuck in a low-pay, no-pay cycle. The number of men stuck in this cycle or on a long term, low-paid job has doubled since the early 1980s from 1 in 14 to 1 in 7.
> HM Treasury PN, 29th March 1999:1

The assessment of the low-pay, no-pay cycle as a contributory factor to persistent poverty seems to run counter to the new measure called "Rapid Reclaim" which enables claimants to take up temporary work (up to 12 weeks) with the assurance of rapid processing of their new benefit claim when the job ends. Alistair Darling welcomed the Rapid Reclaim initiative saying "it will address one of the most common complaints from those wanting to take up temporary work-the fear that they will face problems if they re-claim benefit after the job has ended" (Department of Social Security, 2001, PN). However, it could be argued that Rapid Reclaim works to facilitate to low-pay, no-pay cycle.

This second tension arises partly because of the government's reluctance to address the uneven geographies of labour markets. Labour markets vary considerably in terms of labour demand and the types of jobs on offer (if any). The benefit claimants interviewed cannot afford the luxury of ignoring their local geography of labour demand, and their accounts described in chapter four offer a challenge to this aspatial supply-side orthodoxy.

However, despite these tensions and contradictions, the dependency discourse remains as prominent as ever. The next section attempts to explain this continuing popularity.

2.4   Dependency: Why so popular?

2.4.1   'Globalisation' as a shaping factor

Although there is much debate around defining 'globalisation', the term is generally used to describe the increasing importance of the global scale in terms of economy, culture and governance, and (in some versions) the associated decline in importance of other scales, especially that of the nation state (Dicken 1998, 2000).   Part of the academic debate around 'globalisation' is about whether or not such a phenomenon 'really' exists (Ohmae, 1990; Hirst and Thompson, 1996, Dicken et al, 1997). This debate has, to some extent, polarised around two extremes. Ohmae (1990) argues

that the world has become effectively borderless, with nation states losing power to affect the direction of their economies. In contrast, Hirst and Thompson (1996) argue that 'globalisation' is nothing new, and nation states retain much power in terms of affecting the direction of economic and social policy. Many commentators argue from a position somewhere between these extremes (Dicken et al, 1997; Pierson, 1998).

For the purposes of this chapter, the question, however, is not whether or not globalisation has 'really' happened (or is 'really' happening). 'Globalisation' as a discourse is really 'out there' and (to the extent to which certain globalisation scripts are accepted/promoted by governments) it has definite effects on shaping the social policy terrain. Geographers have paid increasing attention to the social construction of globalisation (Gibson-Graham, 1996; Thrift, 1996; Leyshon, 1997; Cox, 1997; Schoenberger, 1998; Peck, 2001). Accepting 'globalisation' as (in part) a discursive construction does not mean it is any less powerful in shaping and limiting what is thought politically possible by governments. As Andrew Leyshon (1997: 143) warns "while it is indeed important to recognise that globalisation discourses provide only a partial view of the world, and can be seen as mutually reinforcing representations of a 'small world within a world'...this recognition does not necessarily blunt their power".

The power of globalisation discourses help explain the continuing popularity of the discourse of 'dependency' as a supply-side construction of the problems of unemployment in particular and benefit claiming in general. An important insight into the link between constructions of globalisation and constructions of dependency comes from a speech (and its accompanying press notice) made by David Blunkett in June 2000. Speaking to the Institute for Public Policy Research, Blunkett made explicit what he called the "hard-headed economic imperative" for welfare reform, outlining "five key objectives for the modernised welfare state so that it functions as a positive element within the economy" (Blunkett, 2000). These five key objectives are:

Ensuring the welfare state and Government serve as an enabling force in the

lives of men and women, removing barriers and helping them to overcome fear of change, minimise risk and seize the opportunities of the new economy for themselves, their families and their communities;

Ensuring it serves as a provider of skills for the economy as a whole, helping individuals and communities to develop their capacity but also ensuring that people have the skills that employers need: employability is the watchword for our new economy and the new welfare state;

Positioning a reformed welfare state at the heart of our economy by increasing flexibility of both in-work and transitional benefits, as well as the more traditional safety net, to take account of the substantial change in the labour market, working patterns and the challenge of globalisation;

Ensuring we maximise the productive capacity of every individual-maximising potential, talent and well-being. This includes looking further at the patterns of people's working and family lives, and the balance between the responsibilities of individuals, family and the State;

Updating the role as safety net, including looking at how to ensure people have access to the assets they need to be self-reliant and invest in their education and well-being: a hand-up not a hand-out.
Department for Education and Employment, 2000c, PN

Immediately apparent from this extract is the economistic language used by Blunkett in his description of the proper role of the welfare state. Blunkett talks about the welfare state as a *facilitator of the economy's needs*, as a 'provider of skills' and a provider of flexible 'in-work benefits' to enable individuals to 'seize opportunities in the new economy' and deal with the 'challenge of globalisation'. Individuals are important in terms of their 'productive capacity'. This 'productive capacity' can be enhanced if individuals properly 'invest' their 'assets' into education. The welfare state and the individual are reduced to the imperatives of 'the economy'. The direction of the relationship between the social and the economic seems inverted: rather than the economy serving the needs of society, society (at least social policy) should serve the needs of the economy.

Effective social policy reduces the inequality that hampers economic development. Tackling social exclusion-this Government's greatest challenge-creates new markets and new consumers, while removing barriers to economic prosperity such as crime.
Department for Education and Employment, 2000c, PN

In this discourse, the role of government is to remove barriers to economic progress and to facilitate globalisation in the name of modernising Britain. The way this is deemed to be done is through promoting 'competitiveness'.

2.4.2 *'Competitiveness' as a limiting factor*

'Competitiveness' shares with 'globalisation' an elusiveness of definition. Economist Paul Krugman (1994: 44) writes "competitiveness is a meaningless word when applied to national economies". Nevertheless, this has not stopped British governments declaring its necessity for at least fifteen years. The Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s often stressed their concern for Britain to be economically 'competitive'. This concern was linked to unemployment policy in the 1988 White Paper "Training for Employment":

> Human resources are now one of the keys to international competitive success. Britain must develop and bring back into productive use the skills and capacities of the unemployed
> Department of Employment, Cm. 316, 1988

There are clear continuities between this concern with the productivity of unemployed individuals and Blunkett's speech above. The New Labour government has proved to be similarly concerned with 'competitiveness' in general. Three White Papers on competitiveness have been published in three years (Department of Trade and Industry, 1998, 2001a, 2001b). These papers have set out the Labour governments' considered role in embracing the challenges of globalisation. If 'globalisation' shapes the social policy terrain (for example, by re-defining the welfare state in the service of the economy), 'competitiveness' limits the policy options. The government limits their role to creating the right environment for business through favourable tax regimes (see next chapter) and supply side 'active labour market' policies. The forward of the February 2001 White Paper *'Opportunity for All in a World of Change'* sums up this role for government.

> We reject that there is no role for Government in helping to achieve this success in a changing world.
>
> We must ensure that people can obtain the learning and skills they need to

take on new challenges at work; help the new industries and businesses of the future develop and succeed; encourage existing industries and firms to transform themselves; and widen the circle of winners so that individuals, businesses and communities in all our regions can benefit from change.

In this way, we can provide increased security within and between jobs, overcome resistance to change, and assist people through painful transitions. Through investment in key supply side measures, including re-skilling and support for enterprise and innovation, Government can enable individuals and businesses to meet the challenge of international competition.
Department of Trade and Industry, 2001a

Again, the overall theme is that government should act as a facilitator to business. Whilst rejecting the extreme view of globalisation as nullifying governments' power to intervene, it is clearly a limited role for government that is promoted. This limited role is explicitly focussed on "key supply side measures", specifically "re-skilling" (an active labour market policy) and "support for enterprise" (discussed in the following chapter). This extract describes the new international orthodoxy on competitiveness and the welfare state (Atkinson, 1997). According to this orthodoxy, public spending on social security benefits is 'uncompetitive'. Government intervention in labour markets should be limited to training and 'encouraging'/compelling claimants into jobs. This is deemed necessary because claimants are constructed as work-detached members of a dependency culture who have allegedly lost their work ethic. Gordon Brown, in a speech to the British Chambers of Commerce national conference in April 2000, links this construction of the diminished work ethic to concerns about Britain's 'productivity gap' and its detrimental effect on the nation's competitiveness.

I believe Britain can now set a new economic ambition, indeed an economic mission, for the next decade: a faster rise in productivity than our main competitors as we close the productivity gap. And for that to happen there is a …precondition: reinvigorating the work ethic in every community of our country.

For too long many people had become accustomed to not working and to a benefits system that failed to make work pay and led to the 'why work' syndrome at a cost to the work ethic. For too long historic British virtues-hard work and self improvement-had been drowned out. For too long opportunities in our economy had become detached from responsibilities to take them up.

> Now, because we expect everyone who can work to go to work and not sit at home on benefits we are matching opportunity with responsibility.
> Brown, 2000b

It appears that the New Labour governments have an ambivalent relationship to geography. On the one hand, government appeals to geography in its promotion of a particular globalisation script, which shapes and limits their social policy options. On the other hand, though, government denies the geography of uneven labour demand within Britain. The assumption in the Brown extract above is that 'opportunities in our economy' are a) worth taking up and b) equally accessible throughout the country. This is not the case.

In a way, the principle appeal of the 'dependency' construct is that it separates and problematises the unemployed rather than unemployment. This allows governments to abscond from any responsibility they may have for job creation, as the structural and geographical causes and consequences of unemployment are underplayed. Instead, the 'dependency' discourse focuses all attention on the unemployed and the benefits system, and all policy efforts are geared towards welfare reform. This limited focus on part of the 'problem', suggests it is questionable just how successful these efforts at welfare reform will be.

Chapter Three   Enterprise

If 'dependency' is what governments have been anxious to get rid of, 'enterprise' is what they wish would take its place. While other 'big ideas' have come and gone (for example, stakeholding) the concern with promoting 'enterprise' has been a fairly constant theme in British political discourse since 1979. In this chapter I chart the rise of the 'enterprise' discourse, pull apart its baggage of meanings and analyse why it has proved so popular and resilient. In charting the rise of the 'enterprise' discourse I review its roots in Conservative government policy and political rhetoric before examining more extensively its construction and usage by New Labour. This examination is part of the attempt to pull apart what 'enterprise' has come to mean, who it refers to and how its meaning, in policy terms, has narrowed and been restricted. The chapter argues that despite a small degree of debate around "social enterprise", dominant political discourse constructs enterprise in relation to the private sector, paid work and business and in opposition to dependency. There continues to be a concerted political project to create an enterprise culture in Britain, imagined as the cure for the pathology of dependency.

> The Government's ambition is to make opportunity for all the foundation of a more dynamic enterprise economy, breaking free of the old dependency culture in high unemployment areas.
> Gordon Brown, Speech at UMIST, Manchester, 29 January, 2001:4

The previous chapter argued that claiming benefits has become constructed as a pathology of dependency. This chapter argues that the cure for this dependency is said to be enterprise. Gordon Brown uses four New Labour keywords in the quote above: ambition, opportunity, enterprise and dependency. Dependency and enterprise are assumed to be mutually exclusive states; enterprise associated with 'dynamic' (in contrast to the passive dependency described in chapter two) and with

'economy'. If dependency has been made the problem, enterprise is deemed the solution.

Of course, in wider usage enterprise is a more slippery concept. The Oxford English Dictionary defines enterprise as:

> An undertaking, especially a bold or difficult one; the personal attribute of readiness to engage in such undertakings or a business firm.
> Concise OED, 1995

The adjective 'enterprising' is defined as "resourceful, imaginative, energetic". In the context of British political discourse, however, enterprise is often used to denote a business firm, especially a small business start-up. Enterprise is less often used to mean a difficult undertaking or resourcefulness, more often compared to imaginativeness and energy. Enterprise is also associated with independence, innovation and wealth creation, but rarely with getting by on a low income. To understand these associations, or the lack of them, it is helpful to examine enterprise as a discourse which is produced and reproduced through a particular political culture as expressed in White Papers, parliamentary speeches, conference speeches, and other policy documents.

Structure of the chapter

As with the phrase "dependency culture", the discursive roots of enterprise in the UK lie in the neo-liberal 1980s. The growing importance of the discourse prompted a number of conferences and edited collections in the early 1990s on the themes of 'enterprise' (for example, Burrows, 1991; Hutton et al, 1991; Keat and Abercrombie, 1991). This academic attention is understandable. As the first section on these **"enterprise years"** argues, enterprise was the centre of an economic and moral crusade whose ultimate goal was the re-forming of individuals' characters: a project of redeeming the self.

The self-professed crusader of this time was Lord Young, then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Lord Young oversaw the 1988 White Paper '*Department of Trade and Industry-The Department for Enterprise*', which is the focus of section

3.1. If Lord Young was the 'enterprise evangelist' in the Conservative Governments, Gordon Brown has taken over that role in the Labour Governments. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, annual Budget days are crucial to Gordon Brown: all eyes are on him, his budget speech is delivered to a packed House of Commons, televised live, and analysed by news programmes and newspapers (see figure 3.1). The budget speech provides an important platform for Brown to deliver his message about what is 'right for Britain'. Analysing the structure and content of these speeches can help illuminate what Labour prioritise in terms of public policy, and I draw much of the following discussion from the four budget speeches of 1997 to 2000, and the three intervening 'prebudget speeches'[7].

Figure 3.1 Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown on Budget Day

In the second section on **"enterprise and business"** explicit changes made in Budgets under the heading of 'enterprise' are examined. These changes have tended

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[7] These speeches are coded in the text as B/PB for Budget/Prebudget, followed by the year, for

to construct enterprise almost exclusively in relation to business and taxation. The focus of the third section is the more recently developed discourse of **'enterprise and fairness'**, a slogan which is used to highlight Labour's 'third way' in Government. Fourth, I highlight some resistances to the dominant discourse of 'enterprise'. Enterprise has been discussed in parliament as an under-recognised feature of low-income areas, and the concept of **'social enterprise'** has been gaining currency. In conclusion, though, I argue that these alternative constructions of enterprise are overwhelmed by the dominant constructions of enterprise as something shown only by those who 'work'.

3.1   "The Enterprise Years"[8]: Constructions of enterprise in the 1980s

3.1.1 Reclaiming Britain's 'native enterprise'

As with dependency, the current version of the enterprise discourse began as a product of the ideological shift in Britain towards neo-liberalism in the 1980s. Unlike dependency, the enterprise discourse does not have the long and ignoble path spanning centuries described in chapter two. Writing on the "enterprise culture" in 1991, Roger Burrows comments "whatever its exact character its emergence has been a recent one" (1991: 1). Commentators on the enterprise phenomenon in the early 1990s attributed its growth to the political project that came to be known as Thatcherism. As Burrows continues:

> The political project of Thatcherism has involved an attempt to reformulate national history in relation to the fall and rise of a 'spirit of enterprise'. Thus, the post-war years up until 1979 are characterized in terms of the creation of a socialistically inspired anti-enterprise culture leading to indulgence, degeneration and national demise. Thatcherite policies are then presented as a painful but unavoidable 'cure' leading to a quasi-spiritual rebirth of enterprise leading to widespread industriousness, regeneration and hence national recovery
> Burrows, 1991: 1

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example, the pre-budget speech of 1997 is cited as PB1997.

The champion of enterprise in the Conservative Governments of the 1980s was Lord Young, the self-styled "businessman in the Cabinet" (Young, 1990). Lord Young continually stressed the *'naturalness'* of enterprise. In a speech to the Queen Elizabeth II Conference he stated, "we are all born with enterprise. None of us would survive without enterprise"(Young, 1987, quoted in Selden, 1991:63). In the autobiography that chronicles his years in the cabinet Lord Young also stresses the *Britishness* of enterprise, quoting from a speech to the Conservative Party Conference shortly after their third election win he dramatically concludes:

> "Our native spirit of invention and enterprise is at work again. The industries of Britain are profitable again. The people are free again. Great Britain is Great again"
> Young, 1990:252

The contradiction between the naturalness and nativeness of enterprise and its apparent loss in the post-war years is resolved partly by blaming Labour style collectivism, and partly by blaming the education system. As Burrows argues above, history is re-cast to fit the enterprise story. Paul Du Gay (1996) also argues that post-war British history has been re-written as the story of the fall and necessary rise of enterprise.

> Basically, the government argued that the permissive and anti-enterprise culture that had been fostered by social democratic institutions since 1945 had become one of the most serious obstacles for reversing decline. The economic and moral regeneration of Britain therefore necessitated exerting pressure on every institution to make it supportive of enterprise
> Du Gay, 1996: 56

Those institutions and areas of social life on whom pressure was exerted included education, "the regions", business, government and "competition". The ideological spirit of the time was captured in a Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) White Paper published in 1988 when the department gained the subtitle "The Department of Enterprise". The White Paper that introduced this change and stated the DTI's new list of objectives was saturated with references to the holy grail of enterprise.

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[8] The Enterprise Years is the title of Conservative government minister Lord Young's autobiography.

> Enterprise is fundamental to a dynamic and growing economy. Lack of enterprise played a major part in the relative decline of the British economy; its return has played a major role in the recent economic revival. The key to continued economic success lies in the further encouragement of the enterprise of our people.
> DTI, 1988:1

Post-war Labour style collectivism and corporatism were blamed for this loss of enterprise with "the ability of the economy to change and adapt" being "hampered by the combination of corporatism and powerful unions" (ibid, p1). The theme that the market knows best, and that government should let businesses 'get on with it' is evident throughout the paper. In the 1970s, it is claimed, the government failed to do this, thus hammering another nail in the coffin of 'native British enterprise'.

> Government intervention directly affected the fortunes of companies and industries, protecting those industries which were unable to adjust to world conditions, yet often neglecting the potential of new companies in emerging sectors. Social attitudes mirrored these attitudes to enterprise; business and profits were disparaged and money making itself was despised.
> DTI, 1988:1

This emphasis on social attitudes is part of the desire to recreate an enterprise *culture*, where business is appreciated and respected and money making celebrated rather than despised. Unsurprisingly, the resurrection of 'native British enterprise' was deemed to have begun in 1979, the year the Conservative Party won the election and Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister. "The change in policies in 1979 marked the major turning point. Since 1979 the whole climate for wealth creation and enterprise has improved" (DTI, 1988: 2). The emphasis on changing the whole climate for enterprise is indicative of the pervasiveness of the enterprise discourse in all areas of government policy. "The need to encourage enterprise has infused a wide range of Government policies" (DTI, 1988: 2). The political project of Thatcherism was about more than monetarist economic policies and "freeing" up the markets. Re-creating the enterprise culture was a project of re-constructing individual identities, forging a new "ethic of self" (Heelas, 1991; Du Gay, 2000). As Du Gay (2000: 166) quotes Margaret Thatcher: "Economics is the method. The aim is to change the soul".

3.1.2 Spreading the gospel of enterprise

Changing souls is no easy task, and was considered to require the resurrection of the enterprise spirit in all areas of social and economic life. The education system was a primary target for the attempted renewal of the enterprise culture. Education was considered part of the initial anti-enterprise problem, accused of being biased towards the Arts and Law, and failing to recognise the importance of business and industry. By bringing the fields of education and business together, education could become part of the solution, by re-teaching the lost virtues of enterprise.

> Individuals need positive encouragement to participate actively in the challenge of creating prosperity, if only to combat the past anti-enterprise bias of British culture. DTI will seek to bring business into education and encourage education to consider the needs of business"
> DTI, 1988: 3

The policy outcome of this desire to make education more enterprising was a plethora of enterprise initiatives directed at every level of the education system. These initiatives included the Mini Enterprise in Schools Programme, Enterprise in YTS, Enterprise in Higher Education, Enterprise Awareness in Teacher Education and the Training Agency's Graduate Enterprise Programme (Coffield, 1990; MacDonald, 1991). Durham University Business School also published curriculum material for schools including Primary Enterprise, Key Skills in enterprise for 14 to 16 year olds and for 16 to 19 year olds.[9] Robert MacDonald (1991) estimates that thousands of millions of pounds were spent promoting an 'enterprise culture' in the education and training system. Enterprise needed to be taught again. This re-socialisation was considered more necessary in some areas than others.

Regional inequalities were pronounced during the 1980s and the existence of a north-south divide was a common topic of debate (Martin, 1995). Most commentators attributed this divide in part to the rapid de-industrialisation of the north especially the demise of heavy industry of coal and steel. In the political discourse of the time it was largely people's *attitudes* in the 'regions and inner cities' that were blamed.

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[9] This desire to "get in early" and socialise young children into the values of the enterprise culture and away from the trap of the dependency culture is a recurring theme in British politics to this day, see chapter 2 on Sure Start and the Child Trust Initiative and the rest of this chapter.

Dependency in the inner cities and entrenched collectivism in traditional industrial heartlands are deemed culpable for preventing the flowering of the 'enterprise culture'. As 'enterprise' is synonymous with business and commerce, the private sector is believed to hold the key to rejuvenation in depressed areas.

> Private sector involvement is essential in tackling the problem of inner cities and the Government's major aim is to increase further the participation of companies in inner city development.
> DTI, 1988:32

Alongside this aim to increase the participation of private companies in inner city development was the desire to increase the number of small business start-ups and prevalence of self-employment. To encourage this desirable growth in self-employment the Conservative Government established the Enterprise Allowance Scheme in 1983. The goal of the scheme was to encourage people unemployed for 13 weeks or more to start up their own business. Each applicant needed start up capital of one thousand pounds, and each received a weekly allowance of forty pounds for the first year of their business to ease the transition from benefits. The scheme provided a stage on which to reconstruct the mutual exclusivity of dependency and enterprise, and the exclusive association of dependency with benefits and enterprise with work. During a parliamentary debate at the time of the scheme's introduction Conservative MP Mr Tony Marlow asked:

> Is it not the case that not only does this excellent scheme give an opportunity to people who would otherwise not have it, giving them the dignity of self-employment, but it is also an exceptionally good investment for the tax-payer, because within a short period of time the person who goes on the scheme becomes self sufficient and starts paying taxes, rather than being dependent on the dole?
> Hansard, 1983, Vol.50, Col. 151-2

The same debate provided a rare occurrence of the dependency/enterprise dichotomy being challenged, with Alan Clark MP stating, "The recent increase in demand for places on the scheme confirms our belief that there is no shortage of entrepreneurial spirit even among those who find themselves unemployed" (ibid). This could be viewed as a welcome admission that people who claim benefits can be 'enterprising',

though it is somewhat tempered by the surprise evident in the phrase "even" the unemployed can show entrepreneurship. It is also the only example I found in 15 years of Hansard debates that associated enterprise or entrepreneurship with unemployment. Again, 'enterprise' is constructed as a property of business, industry, commerce and work and the Enterprise Allowance Scheme reinforced this construction through its aim to encourage people away from the 'dependency' of benefits towards the 'enterprise' of work. Of course, many people on benefits do want a route off them, and the EAS has proved that route for some. However, the politically constructed dichotomy between 'enterprise' and 'dependency' falls down when applied to the actual experiences of EAS participants. The National Audit Office in 1988 calculated that only 57% of businesses were still running after three years (MacDonald, 1991). MacDonald, in an extensive survey of the 'enterprise culture' in Cleveland, concludes that *dependency* on the EAS is a factor in some of the business 'failures':

> EAS money was crucial in supporting these firms. The withdrawal of £40 per week after 12 months was the major factor in explaining the actual or potential collapse of businesses after a year
> MacDonald, 1991: 266

So the Conservative Governments of the 1980s wanted to re-enterprise education, and target those (poor) areas and individuals deemed especially lacking in enterprise. Not only this, but the entire process of governance was considered to be in need of an enterprise shake-up. This shake-up contained two elements: one, that 'big' Government should reduce its burden on business, a kind of laissez-faire of the late twentieth century, and second, that the institutions of governance themselves should become more enterprising and less bureaucratic. Government was viewed as a *burden* on business, a burden to be reduced through policy. The objective for enterprise and government in the 1988 White Paper was that "We work with business to promote best practice and within Government to create a climate that stimulates enterprise and reduces red tape" (DTI, 1988: 38).

It was not only trade policy the DTI wanted imbued with 'enterprise'. Every Government department needed to think of 'enterprise' in every policy area, in case they inadvertently adversely affected the world of business:

> Good communication with business provides essential information which informs DTI's aim of creating a climate to stimulate enterprise throughout Government policy. Of course other policies which are not normally regarded as economic – on education, social security, the environment, foreign affairs, defence and law and order – have their own legitimate objectives. But the way in which these policies are pursued, and the instruments used, can have a major and sometimes unintended impact on business and enterprise. There is a need to influence the implementation of such policies so that they help more, or interfere less, with the essential process of wealth creation.
> DTI, 1988: 39

It was considered that in every part of Government policy makers should ensure they consider how their decisions affect 'the essential process of wealth creation'. As discussed in the previous chapter, the traditional conception of a national economy providing the resources for society (including the welfare state in its broadest sense of health, education and social services) is turned on its head (Du Gay, 2000). These social needs are now conceived of as potential drains on national economic efficiency and 'competitiveness' in what Du Gay (2000: 171) calls the "entrepreneurial reversal that the globalisation hypothesis demands: societies serve economies, not the other way around".

Competition policy making at this time covered two main areas: mergers and regulation. Competitiveness was linked to keeping down 'unnecessary' costs to business. This was the rationale behind allowing the Director General of Fair Trading greater discretion in deciding whether or not mergers should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC). The aim was to reduce the number of referrals to the MMC, thus lessening the 'burden' of government on business. Regulation was also conceived of as a potential threat to competitiveness, thus "Government policy is to keep the burdens on business as light as possible in areas where some regulation is needed" (DTI, 1988:12). The mutual incompatibility of enterprise and regulation were reinforced in the name of the body responsible for

coordinating regulation reform, the "Enterprise and Deregulation Unit". Keeping the Government burden on business as light as possible necessitated government officials knowing what business needs, supporting business needs and seeing themselves as "facilitators of business" (DTI, 1988: 13). The White Paper continues, "Achieving this improved relationship with business requires positive attitudes towards business development from officials at all levels. Training is an important feature of this" (DTI, 1988:13). The project to develop an 'enterprise culture' was (and is) about changing *attitudes* and these attitudes can be learned through education and training.

To sum up, 'enterprise' in the Conservative years was constructed in relation to business, industry, commerce and work in the areas of education, the regions and inner cities, small business, government and competition. It is to be expected that a Department for Trade and Industry White Paper would be concerned with business and industry, but this paper is also concerned with individuals and society, and changing attitudes towards enterprise. The problem is that is it is a narrow and specific type of enterprise that is constructed, a type of enterprise that excludes many individuals on low incomes and any individual on benefits, and excludes the possibility that benefit claimants can also have enterprising dimensions. The qualities of resourcefulness and imaginativeness become subsumed under the features of profitability and competitiveness. 'Enterprise' and benefits are only discussed in the same breath when addressing schemes such as the Enterprise Allowance Scheme, designed to take people from the supposed 'dependency' of benefits towards the supposed 'enterprise' of work. This 'enterprise' versus 'dependency' dichotomy became so entrenched at this time that the notion that benefit claimants could in any way be considered enterprising was unthinkable. In chapters four and five, I show the many and varied ways this dichotomy crumbles when the lived experiences of benefit claimants is examined. Before this, I turn to the New Labour governments' continuing promotion of the necessity of a certain type of 'enterprise'.

3.2 The construction of 'enterprise' by Labour: enterprise and business

3.2.1 Continuities and discontinuities with Conservative concerns

The New Labour government has continued to talk about 'enterprise' as something necessary, desirable and to some extent missing in British economy and society. Labour's construction of 'enterprise' shares many attributes with the Conservative construction. New Labour are similarly concerned that the education system will benefit from the enterprising influence of the private sector, "we will endow up to eight new institutes of enterprise in British universities" (PB, 1999), and that those regions suffering a dearth of enterprise get special attention, announcing "major reforms to reward enterprise and entrepreneurship and to promote balanced growth across all the regions" (B2000). Small businesses are recognised as the biggest employers, and have been the focus of many of the tax cuts announced in New Labour budgets. The government have also established a new 'one-stop' small business service, the "champion for small business in government" (B1999). Further, 'enterprise' is promoted throughout Government, "every Government Department will have an obligation to encourage enterprise and entrepreneurs" (PB, 1999) and continuities between New Labour and Conservative constructions of enterprise are evident in New Labour's competition policy, "the sharpest spur to enterprise, the ingredient too often missing in our country is…competition"(B2000). New Labour has, therefore, expressed the need for 'enterprise' in the five areas that previous Conservative governments have linked with 'enterprise', education, the regions, small business, Government and competition.

There is much continuity in general between the new Labour government and the previous Conservative administrations, and it is hardly new to point this out. Labour have, of course, stressed their difference, the 'newness' of the government is continually promoted. There have been various 'big ideas' propounded, including stakeholding, communitarianism and the 'Third Way'. A version of stakeholding, employee shareholding, has been promoted as a way to encourage a 'new enterprise culture':

Today, only a fraction of British employees-and an even smaller minority of those outside senior management-own shares in the company they work in. Yet the evidence is that employee commitment is a vital strength for companies competing, and then succeeding, in the global economy. I want to remove, once and for all, the old "them and us" culture in British industry. I want to encourage the new enterprise culture of teamwork in which everyone contributes and everyone benefits from success. In the next Budget, we will make it easier for all employees-not just a few-to become stakeholders in their company.
PB1999

Breaking free from old ideas of state control on the one hand and crude laissez-faire on the other, our new ambition for Britain must be to encourage enterprise and entrepreneurship.
B1998

It is clear that promoting enterprise remains a priority. Closer inspection of budget speeches illuminates what has actually been done in policy and financial terms to advance this priority.

3.2.2 Facilitating 'enterprise' through cuts in business taxation

'Enterprise' debuted in the 1998 budget, and has steadily crept up the agenda to become the number one priority in the 2000 budget, "First, I announce major reforms today to reward enterprise and entrepreneurship" (B2000). When 'enterprise' debuted it was the second (after stability) of the 'new ambitions for Britain' around which the budget was structured. 'Enterprise' was immediately linked with taxation and work, and separated from the third ambition for Britain, welfare reform.

Secondly, enterprise. Instead of punishing success by high taxation or offering the incentive of low taxation to only a few, the new ambition is a tax system that ensures that work always pays, that encourages skills and that rewards enterprise and entrepreneurship throughout the whole economy. Thirdly, welfare reform. The new ambition for Britain is a modern welfare state that, instead of trapping people in poverty, provides opportunity for all.
B1998

From this debut in 1998, enterprise became a central theme in the following years' budgets around which bundles of budgetary changes were announced. These

changes are overwhelmingly in the field of business taxation, as the following three tables highlight.

Table 3.1   1998 Budget changes under the heading 'enterprise'.

1. Abolishment of advance corporation tax
2. New instalment system of payment for larger companies' corporation tax
3. Corporation tax reduced by 1p to 30p (reduced in previous budget by 2p to 31p)
4. Medium and small sized companies' exempt from paying corporation tax by instalment to improve cash flow
5. Further cuts in small companies' tax rate from 21p to 20p (reduced in previous budget by 2p to 21p)
6. For 12 months from July 1998, 1st year capital allowances for small & medium businesses set at 40%
7. Inland Revenue to offer small business help in setting up payroll systems, to enable them to take on employees
8. New £50m venture capital 'university challenge' fund set up to help turn British inventions into successes for British business
9. Enterprise Investment Scheme and Capital Gains Tax Reinvestment relief merged; 50% rise in tax relief
10. New structure of capital gains tax to explicitly reward long-term investment. Short term investment rate to stay at 40%; invest for 10 years=>rate 24%; own business investments=>rate 10%
11. Changes to ISAs incl. 10 year guarantee that up to £5,000 a year can be invested with tax relief

Table 3.2   1999 Budget changes under the heading 'enterprise'.

1. Corporation tax cut from 33% to 30%*
2. Small companies' tax cut from 23% to 20%*
3. New starting tax rate for small businesses of 10%
4. Manufacturing: SMEs allowed to write off 40% of what they invest in new equipment and new technology
5. Tax allowances for new films made in Britain extended
6. New Enterprise Management Incentive Scheme to allow award of equity of up to £100,000 for success in building new companies
7. Capital Gains Tax reforms: long term rate of 10%*, and individual threshold raised=>first £7,100 tax free
8. Inheritance tax threshold raised by £8,000 to £231,000
9. New R&D tax credit at cost of £150m pa, "this targeted tax cut will underwrite almost one third of R&D costs for small business"
10. £100m new investment in university science laboratories and equipment
11. 30% increase in University Challenge Fund
12. New corporate tax incentive to encourage large companies to invest venture capital in smaller companies
13. £20m allocated to start-up funding for hi-tech venture capital funds
14. New Competition policy, 20% extra resources to Office of Fair Trading
15. New single 'small business service'
16. All-Employee Share Ownership Scheme=>"democracy of enterprise", employers can match, tax free, what employee buys
17. New targeted tax cuts for IT development; employees to secure computers on loan from their companies as tax free benefit
18. Lifelong learning=> Individual Learning Accounts; discounts on course fees.

Table 3.3   **2000 Budget changes under the heading 'enterprise'.**

1.'Radical reforms on capital gains tax', CGT for business assets held for 10 years or more cut from 40% to 35% after 1 year, 30% after 2 years, 20% after 3 years, 10% after 4 years
2. CGT bands changed, Business investors who own between 5 and 25% of growing business, for 4 years or more, will gain from 10% rate
3. 10% rate for investments held for 4 years in Britain's unquoted companies
4. Inheritance tax threshold raised from £231,000 to £234,000
5. Employee shareholders to benefit from 10% CGT rate
6. Abolishment of withholding tax on the interest paid on international bonds
7. Small businesses to be allowed write any IT investment off against tax
8. £100 tax cut for electronic filing of tax returns
9. New network of regional venture capital investment funds, with partnership with the European investment bank and the private sector, with target of £1billion for new economic development
10. New Regional Innovation Fund to facilitate local clusters of hi-tech industry
11. Two new enterprise funds to target business loans and management scholarships to high unemployment areas, using partnership between CBI, Institute of Directors and chambers of commerce

Of the 38 new changes documented in these three tables, 27 are concerned with tax, particularly business tax cuts and targeted tax relief. The message is that enterprise is achieved and encouraged by tax cuts.

> The lower and fairer tax regime to encourage investment that business has wanted for years is now in place under a Labour Government. It will contribute to making Britain the best place in the industrialised world in which to invest.
>
> So with a 30p main rate of corporation tax, a 20p rate for small business tax and a 10p long-term rate of capital gains tax, this Government today sends a clear signal of support for enterprise to those who invest in the United Kingdom. My message to business is: "When you are ready to start out, start up, start investing or start hiring, this Government are on your side".
> B1998

As discussed in chapter two, it is Britain's economic 'competitiveness' in the international global economy that is the prime concern:

> Today, in a competitive global economy, Budgets must meet the long term challenge of helping to expand the national wealth. We must build a pro-investment, pro-competition, pro-enterprise Britain to meet our first ambition to raise our productivity to the world's best.
> PB2000

Excessive Government intervention (believed to be a fault of 'old Labour') is seen as a threat to this competitiveness; tax on business should be kept low to reward businesses who help achieve the greater competitiveness of the British economy. In a similar vein to Conservative concerns noted earlier, the Government's role is seen as a *facilitator* of enterprise; direct Government intervention would distort the market, and the market knows best, "The route to success is not for the Government to try to pick winners, but to create an environment in which more firms have more chances, by their own efforts, to succeed" (B1997). The way to create this environment is to cut taxes, "that is why…I have decided to cut the small companies tax rate by 2%" (B1997).

The theme that enterprise is encouraged through tax cuts was repeated in the 1999 Budget speech, "we are bringing forward seven major reforms for a new enterprise economy open to all. First, our tax cuts for business" (B1999). The second measure for 'enterprise' was to raise the inheritance tax threshold by £8,000 to £231,000. It is difficult to see the connection between 'enterprise' in any of its numerous guises outlined in the introduction and inheritance tax, except perhaps that inheritance tax is annually uprated, and as a tax change it fits into the Government's conception of an enterprise-encouraging policy. The other five measures for enterprise in this budget were a new R&D tax credit; a new competition policy charging the OFT with a more 'proactive remit to root out restrictive behaviour'; a new small business service, employee shareholding for all and more tax relief for IT investment. Enterprise is constructed as something business does; what Government does to encourage enterprise is lower taxes to enable business to 'do enterprise' better. The consequences of these business tax cuts for welfare spending is that the notion of using welfare transfers to nurture other kinds of enterprise (see for example chapter six) is moved off the agenda. This means that enterprise remains narrowly defined.

3.3   Enterprise and Education

If tax cuts are the Government's tool for encouraging enterprise (in their narrow interpretation of enterprise as the private sector, small business and self-employment), the goal of achieving the enterprise *culture* requires a grander vision. The site of this grander vision, with no small sense of déjà vu, is the education system[10].

> But changing our culture to one that favours enterprise in every area needs not just incentives but a real shift in attitudes too. And that will come about quickest if it starts, not in the boardroom, but in our schools.
>
> I want every young person to hear about business and enterprise in school; every college student to be made aware of the opportunities in business; every teacher to be able to communicate the virtues and potential of business and enterprise.
>
> I want businessmen and women to visit our schools and talk to their enterprise classes; I want every student to have a quality experience of working in a local business before they leave school. I want management training scholarships to be available even in the poorest areas and I want every community to see business leaders as role models.
> Gordon Brown, Speech at UMIST, 29th January 2001

The cultural crusade continues, and no-one is outwith its reach: "every young person, every college student, every teacher, every student and every community" needs enterprise acculturation. Just as the boundaries of the dependency culture are expanding to include children (chapter two), so now are children the focus of enterprise. Again, enterprise is associated with business, indeed, virtually synonymous with business, and business is depicted in exclusively positive ways, with Brown talking of its "virtues and potential", and identifying business leaders as "role models". The association of business and education is not only for the better inculcation of children, though, it is so the public sector can benefit from the enterprising influence of the private sector, through, for example, public-private partnerships.

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[10] For Althusser (1984: 31), education has taken over from the church as the dominant vehicle of political ideology: "In fact, the Church as been replaced today *in its role as the dominant Ideological State Apparatus* by the School".

Having received an overwhelming response from universities…to our new university challenge fund, which is a public-private partnership for commercialising scientific inventions, we are now inviting further private sector involvement. I now want to complete the path that takes inventions from the science lab through high-tech venture capital and then to the national and global marketplace. So I am announcing that to develop business expertise in science and to transfer technology from the science lab to the marketplace, we will endow up to eight new institutes of enterprise in British universities.
PB1999

Just as social welfare has been re-defined in terms of serving the needs of the economy (see previous chapter), so education is in danger of being reduced to job training. Business is presented as only a good thing, and business leaders assumed to be worthy role models.

To sum up, enterprise continues to be narrowly constructed as an antidote to dependency. The government's perceived role remains a facilitative one of improving the environment for business and changing attitudes through education. Improving the environment for business translates into policy as introducing tax cuts of business. This reinforces the dominant construction of 'enterprise' as a feature of businesses acting competitively in an 'open global economy'. This 'enterprise' is little to do with imaginativeness or resourcefulness, more to do with straightforward profit making in a capitalist economy, and how Government policies can better enable this. This unconditional support for this construction of 'enterprise' proves problematic, though, for a Labour Government keen to construct their separateness from the neo-liberal right, typified by the Conservatives. A potential solution to this has been the construction of New Labour politics as 'Third Way' politics, as noted earlier. The narrow, economistic construction of 'enterprise' is fitted into this Third Way politics through the development of a discourse of 'enterprise and fairness'.

3.4   "Enterprise and Fairness"

3.4.1 Enterprise and Fairness as an example of third way politics

The 'Third Way' has been the most consistent (and elusive) 'big idea' of the New Labour political rebirth. The development of 'Third Way' thinking in New Labour circles has been influenced by LSE director and sociologist Anthony Giddens, Tony Blair's 'guru' (Giddens, 1998, 2000). The name 'Third Way' is suggestive of the concept's main thrust: that there is a need to move away from the 'old' politics of left and right, of state controlled public planning versus laissez-faire unfettered capitalism, and adopt a new path ('der neu mitte' in the German version) that acknowledges the need for both 'competitive' economies and some form of social intervention. This third way has been translated into New Labour enterprise policy by tagging 'fairness' onto 'enterprise', as the opening of the 1999 budget speech demonstrates:

> With this, the last budget of the 20th century, we also leave behind the
> century-long sterile conflicts between Governments of the left, who have too
> often undervalued wealth creation and enterprise, and Governments of the
> right, who have been too indifferent to public services and fairness. In
> contrast, this is a new Labour budget built on the central idea that our future
> depends on enterprise and fairness together.
> B1998

The portrayal of traditional left-right politics as outmoded and sterile is useful because it allows New Labour to be seen as dynamic and forward-looking. New Labour's Third Way takes the 'best bits' from the right and left and pragmatically combines them to make policy. Thus 'enterprise' reflects the right and 'fairness' the left; combine them and you get New Labour.

> The reforms made and the reforms to be made today reflect our resolve that
> Britain must leave behind the sterile, century-long conflict between enterprise
> and fairness-between the left, which promoted the good society at the
> expense of the good economy, and the right, which promoted the good
> economy at the expense of the good society, and too often achieved neither.
> Only by pursuing enterprise and fairness together-enterprise and fairness for
> all-can we equip all of Britain and secure rising living standards for all.
> PB2000

This emphasis on 'enterprise and fairness together' can be seen as part of the keenness of New Labour to occupy the middle ground of politics and to present what might previously have been considered as a choice between market-friendly policies and social justice friendly policies as a 'false choice': "Too often in the past we posed a false choice between those who supported fairness and those who supported enterprise" (Brown, 1999, CBI speech). New Labour, by supporting enterprise *and* fairness, apparently avoid this false choice, and construct further their separateness both from the Conservatives (too concerned with enterprise) and 'Old' Labour (too concerned with fairness). This coupling of seemingly irreconcilable goals is a feature of New Labour rhetoric, described by Fairclough (2001) as the "not only, but also" tendency. In other words, New Labour deliver not only enterprise, but also fairness, a sort of "two for the price of one" policy deal. The problem is, though, that these are not the only two options available. By presenting policies as fitting either an enterprise or a fairness agenda, the existence of other agendas is silenced. Why not "enterprise and justice", for example, or "enterprise and equality", or even "enterprise and redistribution"? Fairclough (2000a) uses Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) concept of "symbolic violence" to explain this selective highlighting and silencing of agendas through language. Symbolic violence involves the linguistic 'killing off' of certain agendas through, for example, the construction of (falsely) exclusive choices. To continue the metaphor, through 'enterprise and fairness', the agendas of poverty, income inequality and redistribution are seriously wounded.

3.4.2 'Enterprise and fairness' and an acknowledgement of geography

These agendas of poverty and inequality remain alive, though, in other fields of discourse such as academia. Within critical geographic studies, the uneven geography of wealth in Britain is still researched and written about (Philo, 1995). This uneven geography is underplayed and even denied in Government circles, with, for example, the Prime Minister keen to end the notion of a north-south divide in Britain (Massey, 2001). When the uneven geography of wealth is acknowledged, it is talked about it terms of "pockets" of high unemployment and a "patchwork of deprivation and prosperity" (HM Treasury, 2000: 7). This seriously understates the

continuing patterns of higher levels of unemployment and poverty in de-industrialised areas. However, with the language of enterprise and fairness came the acknowledgement that more needed to be done to "open enterprise to all", as Gordon Brown explained in a keynote speech entitled "Enterprise and the Regions[11]". The following long excerpt contains Brown's explanation of how the Government's enterprise and fairness agenda should work to benefit poor areas:

> In an enterprise Budget we will consider extending capital gains tax relief and the 10p tax rate.
>
> In an enterprise Budget we will consider extending our R and D tax credit by examining proposals to do so from the CBI, EEF and others interested in improving Britain's R and D effort.
>
> In an enterprise Budget we will consult on new reliefs for corporation tax including for intellectual property.
>
> As we move to an enterprise Budget we will consult on capital gains tax relief for the sale of substantial shareholdings.
>
> As we move to an enterprise Budget we are considering improvements in our enterprise management incentive scheme, the share options we offer new and dynamic companies.
>
> As we move to an enterprise Budget we will consider new incentives for urban renewal and inner city development.
>
> And an enterprise Budget means measures to encourage an enterprise culture in high unemployment areas where the greatest need is not more benefit offices but more businesses as we move from a dependency culture based on entitlements to a dynamic business culture based on enterprise.
>
> Instead of acquiescing in the old giro culture-simply paying benefits to compensate people for their social exclusion-we must back success rather than accept failure. And to do that we must extend fiscal and other financial incentives that open up economic and business opportunity in high unemployment areas, and encourage and reward new enterprise.
>
> Gordon Brown, Speech at UMIST, Manchester, 29th January 2001

In one way, this (relatively rare) acknowledgement of uneven socio-economic geographies is welcome. However, just as individual claimants are constructed as

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[11] "The" regions being those areas of the north traditionally lagging behind the wealthier south.

work-detached (see previous chapter), so certain areas are constructed as enterprise-detached. The only way government can deal with this, according to the above, is through tax incentives and enticing business into poorer areas.

'Enterprise and fairness' is more than a rhetorical device to construct the distinctiveness of New Labour. In practice, 'enterprise' is about business; 'fairness' is about Government intervention, especially welfare policies. The language of 'fairness' seems to have supplanted the language of entitlements; equality of *opportunity* has taken over from plain old equality. This mapping of 'enterprise' onto business policy and 'fairness' onto welfare policy is evident in the 1999 prebudget speech.

> …with business…we are putting into place a strategy to tackle a fundamental long term economic weakness-the 40% productivity gap with our most successful competitors. These measures will include investment in education and innovation, and new encouragement for enterprise and for competition…With our welfare-to-work programme and by ensuring work pays, we are extending opportunity to all in our country, creating a Britain where no-one is excluded, no potential is neglected and everyone has a contribution to make. It is a Britain that is both enterprising and fair.
> PB1999

In the conclusion to the 1998 budget, when 'enterprise and fairness' made their first appearance together, they were similarly mapped onto business and benefits respectively.

> This is a Budget which, by its measures, advances both enterprise and fairness. We have cut corporation tax, small business corporation tax and national insurance for every employee in the country, and we have raised child benefit for every family.
> B1998

Rather than offering a "third way" of genuine new choices and policy developments, the danger is that "enterprise and fairness" operates to reinforce the dependency/enterprise dichotomy.

3.4.3 Reinforcing the enterprise/dependency dichotomy

As discussed in chapter two, for Gordon Brown and New Labour welfare reform policy is all about *work*, Brown is as concerned with in-work benefit change such as the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) as he is with benefit changes for the out of work, which are now presented under the banner of welfare-to-work. In the same way that business tax cuts have been bundled together under the budgetary heading of 'enterprise', social security changes such as the New Deal are presented under the heading 'work'. In the 'work' section of the 1999 budget, Brown declares there will be better provision in the New Deal, but with 'tougher conditions'. The 'fairness' is the Government offering good quality training, "in return, their [unemployed people] responsibility is to come into the New Deal, get the skills and prepare to take a job" (B1999). In the conclusion of this budget speech, there is a rare occurrence of 'fairness' preceding 'enterprise', and 'work' (meaning to a large extent, welfare reform) preceding 'business':

> Today's' budget is a better deal for work, a better deal for the family, a better deal for business. It is a Britain now united around the values of fairness and enterprise
> B1999

The discourse of 'enterprise and fairness' might have provided the space for a broadening of the meanings attached to enterprise. Instead, the private/public, enterprise/dependency dichotomy is further entrenched as enterprise is continually mapped onto business, and fairness onto welfare changes. In more recent speeches, such as the prebudget 2000 speech, enterprise and unemployment are discussed together. However, they are discussed together in a way that reinforces the idea that poor people and poor communities are lacking enterprise, and that enterprise, in the form of private sector businesses, is the only solution:

> We are determined also that Britain will break out of the closed circle that has too often restricted the opportunities of enterprise to a few. We want to encourage those who start with nothing, and who, in the past, thought that they could never reach higher or rise far and tell them that there is not only a chance for them to do better, but no limit to their ambitions for themselves and their children. Our poor communities do not need more benefit offices; they need more businesses creating more jobs, so we are resolved to extend

the opportunities of enterprise to people and places that the economy has too often forgotten.
PB2000

Benefit offices are a symbol of dependency, a blight on the desired landscape of successful business enterprise. Society is discursively separated into those in 'work' and those out of work. State in-work benefits are paid through the pay packet because "no one who is in work should in future have to go to the benefits office to receive a living income" (B1999). The message in the above quote is that poor communities do not need any more benefit offices because benefits induce dependency. They need more businesses, because businesses are, by definition, enterprising-they provide jobs which move people away from 'dependency'. Even if those jobs are badly paid, and people remain dependent on state benefits in the form of top-ups such as the WFTC, this 'dependency' is permissible; it is evident on the pay slip, not the giro, the worker doesn't have to sully themselves by associating with 'non workers' in benefit offices. The economic problem is again individualised, and thought remedied by individual changes. There is little analysis of how context might condition possibilities.

To sum up this far, I have argued that 'enterprise' in British policy is constructed in narrow, economistic terms as something business and the private sector does, something necessary for economic well-being and something that should be encouraged and unhindered by the public sector. It is constructed in opposition to 'dependency', and dependency is associated with the state, welfare and benefit offices. There are, of course, challenges to this dominant construction of 'enterprise', alternative constructions that do not shut out the possibility that enterprise may have wider meanings, and may be evident in 'poor people and poor communities.' It is to these resistant strands of 'enterprise' discourse I now turn.

3.5   Social Enterprise[12]

> Enterprise is trickier to define, though most of is know it when we see it. We will be looking primarily at ways of improving young people's knowledge and understanding of business, and attitudes to enterprise, in the context of wealth creation.
> But we will not ignore the social dimensions. There are many remarkable examples of social enterprise, in the not-for-profit sector, or in public services.
>
> Howard Davies, Chairman of the Financial Services Authority, Speech at CBI dinner at Manchester on review he is undertaking on behalf of the Government on "Enterprise and Education", 10th July, 2001

The first half of this excerpt from Howard Davies' speech fits very much with the argument made in this chapter so far: enterprise is associated primarily with business, the enterprise project is defined in cultural terms as one of changing attitudes (especially amongst the young), and the ultimate aim is wealth creation. The second half though, invokes a distinctly different conception of enterprise-"social enterprise"-praised as remarkable, and associated with not-for-profit organisations and-remarkably!-the public sector. Of course, Howard Davies is not a Government spokesperson, nonetheless he is close to Government, or at least respected enough to be entrusted with the recently commissioned Government review of "Enterprise and Education". The concept of social enterprise is beginning to gain currency, thanks in part to the work of organisations such as the New Economics Foundation (for example, Thake and Zadek, 1997). Davies even suggests that enterprise and the public sector might not be completely antithetical-a rare position, and one which shows the existence of what Fournier and Grey (1999) might call alternative or resistant spaces of enterprise.

One of the more promising potential resistant conceptions of enterprise belongs to the social economy (within which local exchange trading systems are sometimes located-see chapter six). The Government has expressed its support for Intermediate

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[12] There seems to be a trend emerging of prefixing words with "social" to denote a focus on poor/problem people/areas, for example, social exclusion, social enterprise, and social capital (see chapter 7).

Labour Markets, for example, as social economy companies such as the Wise Group and Glasgow Works, both of Glasgow. The social economy is also promoted in the Social Exclusion Unit's reports on the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (1998). There has been a parliamentary debate on the merits of social enterprise, with Gareth Thomas MP stating:

> Social enterprises and, indeed, social entrepreneurs are powerful forces for regeneration, community empowerment and increased employment. I hope that this debate, even though it is brief, will serve further to promote these enterprises and entrepreneurs, who do not get the recognition they deserve.
> Hansard, 20th January, 1999

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Michael Wills, replied:

> Social enterprise is also important because it is part of a wider agenda of promoting all forms of enterprise, which lies at the heart of Government policy.
> Hansard, ibid

So, it has been recognised in parliament that enterprise is not the preserve of the for-profit private sector, the phenomenon of social enterprise has been heralded by think-tanks and Government agencies and the person in charge of the Government's "Enterprise and Education" review has promised not to "ignore the social dimensions" of enterprise. From the viewpoint of someone advocating broader conceptions of enterprise to include those struggling to get by on benefits, such new territories of the starship enterprise-discourse are promising developments.

However, these alternative renditions of enterprise are really sideshows in comparison to the main event of enterprise as business and work. Social enterprise is deemed unhelpful where it obstructs 'real' work. The more familiar binary of public-bad/private-good is evident in the following excerpt from David Blunkett in an article on social enterprise:

> Unlike simple investment in the expansion of the public service, the link to the local economy and to long-term prospects for self-sufficiency offers real hope of developing entrepreneurship and enterprise within the wider community
> David Blunkett, Opportunities to Earn: Labour's Proposals for Tackling Long-Term Unemployment, 1998:3

Further, in welcoming the Social Investment Task Force report "Enterprising Communities", Gordon Brown said:

> Our new approach to regeneration is about building on the potential strengths of local people-encouraging new dynamism, not the old dependency; backing success, not the old subsidies. In this approach there are three pillars:
> -First, in every area we want to build an enterprise culture not for the few but open to all;
> -Second, in the high unemployment areas, we want to encourage private investment flows and new businesses;
> -Third, as we create more job opportunities, we want to tackle all the barriers that people face in getting into work."
> Gordon Brown, HM Treasury PN, 24th October 2000: 2

Even though the report Brown was welcoming is one which could conceivably be imagined as contributing to an alternative discourse of enterprise, Brown's words of welcome are situated firmly in the dominant version of enterprise as a cultural project of ridding people and areas of dependency through the influence of private business. As is evident in Brown's words at the beginning of this chapter, it is only that which is linked with the economy that is dynamic and enterprising, and this is contrasted with the dependency induced by not working. Addressing the cultural and attitudinal barriers to work amongst those dependency culture members in the "pockets" of high unemployment will seemingly create space created for enterprise to flourish.

The experiences of living on benefits at the edges of the formal labour market as relayed by the respondents interviewed do not concur with this vision. It is to these stories that I now turn.

Part Two: Producing Resistant Knowledges

Lived Experiences of Benefit Claiming

Chapter Four   Work

Couched in the discourses of dependency and enterprise, New Labour welfare reform policy is centred on 'work', as the 1998 Green Paper states, "the Government's aim is to rebuild the welfare state around work" (1998: 23). However, the long-term benefit claimants interviewed discussed their many and various connections to the worlds of work. Using this data, I argue it is time to question the depiction of long term benefit claimants as far removed from the world of work and pathologically demotivated in terms of seeking work; 'work-poor' and 'work-shy'. Interviewees explain the problem as being poor in work rather than 'work-poor'. Interviewees also reported doing numerous jobs, declared part-time work, undeclared work on the side, voluntary work, unpaid work in the home, making the label 'work-shy' incongruous to say the least. The evidence reported in this chapter suggests that the work detachment perspective is not an adequate representation of the diversity of experiences of unemployed people, and of their own perceptions of the margins of the formal labour market. Its popularity may be more a reflection of prevailing economic ideology than a helpful explanation of life on these margins.
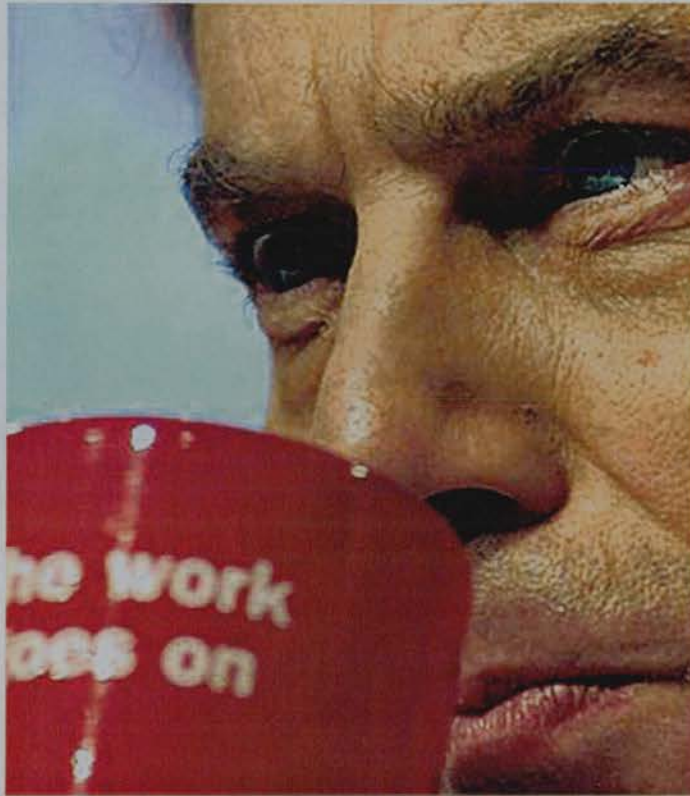
Figure 4.1 The centrality of 'work' to New Labour: "The Work Goes On" was their 2001 Election Campaign Slogan

So far, I have argued that dependency and enterprise have been and continue to be to the forefront of British policy discourse. The previous chapter argued that it is a very particular and narrow version of enterprise that is promoted, one in which enterprise and paid work are synonymous. In this chapter, the focus turns to this issue of work, in particular by examining claimants' own accounts of their current and previous experiences of work, their feelings about work and their hopes for their work futures. Where analysts and policy makers have seen 'weak labour force attachment', respondents have discussed struggling to keep numerous jobs going; where experts have blamed lack of motivation to work I have repeatedly heard the desire to get back to full time employment; where experts have trumpeted the job vacancies waiting to be filled 'nationwide', respondents display in-depth knowledge and sophisticated appreciation of the problems and dynamics of depressed local labour markets. These stories, accounts and perceptions of people on the 'edge' of the formal labour market are the source for this and the following three chapters.

To recap from chapter two, the principal argument that underlies the 'work detachment perspective' element of dependency discourses is that long-term benefit claimants have almost completely lost contact, or become detached from, the world of work and employment. People who are long term unemployed, it is argued, lose the habits of work, have less structure in their day to day lives, tend to socialise with other unemployed people, lose motivation in their search for work and are less likely than other 'job seekers' to be considered favourably by employers. They become unaware of job opportunities around them, hence the unfilled vacancies decried so often by government. The argument, then is that people who are on benefits for 'too long' become unsocialised in the ways of work, they lose *employability*, and are resocialised into the 'benefits dependency culture'. It is for precisely these reasons that Gordon Brown felt confident to restate the commitment to full employment, a commitment unheard in British politics for at least twenty years. The argument is that the long-term unemployed are so unemployable that they have no effect on wage levels-they are not an effective labour supply. If the employability of the long term unemployed is increased, they can then compete more effectively for jobs, thus helping to control wage levels and therefore inflation. This argument has been developed by economists such as Richard Layard (1997a, 1997b; Layard et al, 1991) and has convinced the Treasury and influenced government policy on welfare-to-work, policy created as much, if not more, by the Treasury than the Department for Social Security (now Department for Work and Pensions)[13]. As I show in the rest of this chapter, the evidence found does not, in general, support this picture of long-term benefit claimants far removed from work, unaware of job opportunities and unenthusiastic about job prospects.

Structure of the chapter

The chapter is divided into four sections about respondents' feelings, perceptions and experiences of the worlds of work. The first question I asked interviewees was what they thought the pluses and minuses of work were. This was both to access their

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[13] Most of the big ideas on welfare reform stem from Gordon Brown and the Treasury. It is the Treasury, for example, that publishes the series of papers on the "Modernisation of Britain's Tax and Benefits System" and Andrew Rawnsley reports in his book "Servants of the People" that Frank Field complained to Tony Blair that "the Department of Social Security night just as well be folded into the Treasury" (2001:120).

attitudes towards work and to start the interview with an easy, non-personal 'ice breaker'. The interview then generally moved onto the respondent's previous jobs, current connections to work and feelings about future job prospects. I broadly follow this structure in this chapter. First, I examine respondents' general **attitudes to work**, drawing mainly on replies to that initial question on pluses and minuses of work. Second, I describe and analyse respondents' **connections to work**, both past and present, including the surprisingly (to me) large number of experiences of self-employment[14]. Third, I recount respondents' opinions on their **future prospects of work**, based on their **knowledge of the local labour market**. This is in part to examine the thesis that the long-term unemployed are often unaware of job opportunities around them. The fourth section, under the heading **'flexible labour'**, focuses on respondents' accounts of living on the margins of the formal labour market and their emphasis on the continuing relevance of the 'poverty trap'.

4.1   Attitudes to work

4.1.1 The benefits of income from paid work

On balance, the majority of interviewees said they enjoyed work, missed full-time employment and wanted to get back into a reasonably well-paid full-time job. Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering the low level of benefit payments, money was often mentioned as one of the 'pluses' of work.

> The benefits of paid work is that you can get by easily, whereas on benefits it's a nightmare, that's the main difference. The benefits system as it stands doesn't really cover you, you exist rather than having a reasonable standard of living.
> Noel

However, 'money' was rarely given as an unqualified answer; the problem of low pay in entry-level jobs was often referred to, and the minimum wage perceived to be insufficient to take one's income higher than combined benefits. It was the two youngest respondents, who had both previously been students and were hoping for

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[14] This, of course, shows the power of dominant discourses of enterprise and dependency.

graduate jobs, who explicitly, and without much qualification, mentioned money as the main plus:

> Niamh: What do you think the pluses of paid work are?
>
> Nick: Well, the money obviously…the potential to get further. I worked for eight years for ICI…I left voluntarily, I'm only here to try and get some funding for a course, try a different career path…I don't like sittin around on the dole, without the potential of making more money.

> The pluses of paid work…em…well being a student and not having any money for so long, the pluses are that you have some money for a change.
> Freda

Nick mentions the 'potential to get further' as a further plus, and these two respondents, in their concern to develop a 'career' were noticeably different from the majority of respondents whose concern was the availability of reasonably well paid jobs.

> Well, my usual position is quite honestly, as long as they pay a living wage, and obviously the more the better, but a living wage basically.
> Malcolm

> Aye, I'm all for paid work, if they're getting a reasonable wage for it.
> Gaynor

The reasonable wage (or living wage) when mentioned, was often around the same amount of money, at least two hundred pounds a week take home pay. Minimum wage jobs were not generally seen as reasonably waged jobs, as the following respondent explained at some length:

> It all depends if you're makin' a livin' oot o' it, you know, they're advertisin' jobs for 3.60 an hour, which is just em…well some people can do that, some people cannae, and the majority o' people that are lookin' for jobs just couldnae possibly dae it, you couldnae do forty hoors at 3.60 an hoor and have a hoose and a wife and wains[15] and a dog and a car, it's just impossible, you just couldnae dae it, you couldnae pay a mortgage or pay the rent or, you just couldnae have things like that at 3.60 an hoor…
>
> so havin' a job is all right as long as you're livin' off it. I mean there's nay

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[15] Children

point in me goin out and goin off the broo and going to do a job as a security guard or something in a shopping centre and working 60 hours a week for 3.60 an hoor, you know, you just couldnae dae it!

Then again, if you go get a job as a delivery driver or something, or working in a store room or something, you know, and getting 5.50 an hoor, it's an easy enough job to do, it's sensible money, and you'd have a wee bit of money at the end of the week.

Other than that, you're just…you're sittin in here and you're looking for jobs and you're really restricted to what you can do, likesay me anyway, once I go off the broo[16] I've to go to payin' the rent and everything for the hoose, that's 44 pound a week, then you've got your council tax to pay on top of that as well! Plus you'll mebbie have travelling expenses if you've got a job and that, and 3.60 an hour?!

I think 3.60 an hoor was devised for likesay, mebbie folk leavin' school and getting a job, you know? Companies were payin them 2 pound an hoor, and the government saying well, you're just trying to rip them off, you know. I mean 3.60 an hoor is how much a week? 140 pound a week, less tax, I mean that's alright for somebody that's 16 and staying with their mother and father, you know, that's alright for somebody like that, it's nay use for somebody trying to run a hoose! It's just totally unbelievable that they expect you [to do that]
Kevin

This respondent was incredulous that he was expected to be able to get by on 3.60 an hour. Much of the sentiment expressed in this quote was expressed by other respondents: it would be good to get a job that paid more than benefits, but most of the jobs on offer are the 'security guard in the shopping centre' type of underpaid positions with limited future prospects. The respondent's opinion of a sensible wage at 5.50 an hour hardly seems outlandish, but is remarkably difficult to obtain in the majority of jobs at the 'lower' end of the labour market. I come back to these issues of low pay and the difficulties of finding jobs that pay more than benefits in the concluding section of this chapter on the poverty trap.

4.1.2 Work as a source of status and esteem

There were occasions when 'money' was not the first plus of work mentioned. Many respondents were acutely aware of the higher social status enjoyed by the employed

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[16] Scottish slang word that can mean both unemployment benefit and the benefits office.

and the damaging effect on their self esteem of being 'on the broo'. Respondents repeatedly referred to the positive effects of work in terms of pride, confidence, self-esteem and a sense of being valued and appreciated in society.

> The pluses of paid work…well I suppose you're more valuable
> Darren

> Pride comes into it, doesn't it…on my part I suppose pride comes into it
> Gladys

The extent to which identity is defined by the jobs people do is noted by Gary in the following quote; who you are and what you do become the same issue. The following quotes reflect the dominance of ideas about work being good for you and part of one's contribution to society. Crucially, they also show these respondents' acceptance of these ideas and subscription to what I referred to in chapter two as dominant discourses of work. These quotes are responses to questions about the *positive* aspects of work; they suggest that respondents believe work is good because it provides a route to status and acceptance in society. These responses do not fit in with the construction of a benefit dependency culture of people that fail to subscribe to dominant discourses around the importance of work.

> I think the pluses of paid work are just in the sense of society being like that, it gives you self-esteem, to be in paid work. *'What do you do?'* 'Oh, I'm a train driver'. You know, something like that, just the very fact of being paid is a huge psychological boost in a way, it means that somebody really appreciates what you do
> Gary

> Rose: Pluses are self-esteem, self-respect, em, conformity…right, acceptance by others who work.

> Niamh: That's interesting that you said self-esteem first. Do you think that's important?

> Rose: I think it is aye, because you feel you've done something, and contributed, not just for yourself but for society.

> Speaking off the top of my head I would say the plus points of employment obviously is being able to hold your head in society that you've got full-time

employment. There's still a sort of stigma, depending on where you are and depending on who you speak to, I have no problems with my friends, but with some people there's a certain stigma if you're not in full time employment
Larry

As well as this evidence of subscription to dominant discourses of the value of paid work, interviewees express concern when dominant gender discourses are disturbed. Male respondents often expressed anxiety due to the difficulty in fulfilling their perceived role of 'breadwinner' within their family, as well as more general concerns of not 'contributing to society'. A male respondent who said his confidence had been dented since being out of work linked this feeling to the fact that it compromised his ability to fulfil the breadwinner role:

Niamh: Why do you think it dents your confidence not being in work?

Ron: It's the whole thing of just providing, eh, providing for your family…there's all that stigma attached to it…you know, you cannae fend for yirsel sort of thing…it makes me feel bad.

The same respondent, though, had recently looked into a job, only to find out that he would have been financially worse off than he was on benefits. He expressed a real desire to get back into full-time work, and mixed emotions at being unable to take up the job opportunity.

Niamh: How would you have been worse off doing that job?

Ron: I'd have probably felt better, but the family would have been suffering, the wife would have been worse off…and I think she's worried that I'd just jump into work and end up wi' less money, which at the end of the day won't pay your bills…but you dinnae want to get caught on benefit, I mean I don't want to sit on benefit to be honest, this is the longest I've been unemployed over the last three year, and before that from the age of 16 to 29 I'd never ever signed on.

Ron admits that his self confidence would have improved had he taken this job, but the family's financial situation would have worsened. He links the lack of confidence from not being in work with the lack of ability to provide for his family, but then explains how he recently could not apply for a job, because doing that job

would have generated less income than benefits, thus compromising his ability to provide for his family. This situation leads to his concern about being 'caught on benefits', a situation he further described:

> Niamh: How does it make you feel?
>
> Ron: Terrible...terrible...
>
> Niamh: You said it was murder earlier.
>
> Ron: Its just, you feel hopeless, I mean I'm used to working and making money, and its no even the money I really miss, it's just doin' something.

This respondent's desire to work is not preventing him get a job, nor is a lack of knowledge of job opportunities available to him. He knows that the opportunities open to him in his trade of paving are generally poorly paid and insecure, and that there is a risk that his family would be worse off if he took one of these opportunities (presuming, of course, they existed in the first place). In political versions of the responsibility of claimants to take up 'opportunities' in the labour market there is little acknowledgement that some such opportunities may pay below subsistence wages.

4.1.3 Positive experiences of work history

While the majority of respondents were from working class backgrounds a few had previously been employed in managerial/professional positions. The following respondent, for example, had very positive attitudes towards work based on his work history.

> Well, there are very few minuses as far as I'm concerned, with paid work. From an individual point of view, I've been very lucky, I've always had, up until recently, full time very well paid work, including world travel, so I'm sort of biased to the point of fact that companies have paid me to go abroad and do things I enjoy doing
> Larry

Other respondents, who had previously worked in less well-paid jobs without such perks as foreign travel, expressed similar sentiments in terms of enjoyment of work.

Niamh: Did you like the bus driving?

Peter: I did, I thoroughly enjoyed it…I mean I'm just a driver at heart really, I loved the bus driving…sitting there in your big bus, and the people that you met when you're on a regular route, you got to know everybody and they would come on the bus and you would ask them how their family was…every summer I used to run to Stranraer, and I ran the buses fae Stranraer to Glasgow, which was great, you'd meet all the folk goin on their holidays, and then you would get on the tour buses as well, I was one of the coach drivers, and all these people were coming over for a good time, so you'd have to be jolly…and you'd get the microphone out and just start ad-libbing and cracking jokes, and people sittin on the bus and singing, and it used to be terrific.

Niamh: Did you enjoy it [previous job]?

Andy: Oh it was good aye, oh I liked it aye. Different sizes, different conservatories, we were oot doin garden sheds, and you were oot doin patios, slabbin' gardens an all that, doin a lot of different things."

Niamh: You said your last job was in Perth, what was that like?
Betty: I loved it!
Niamh: Did you?
Betty: Oh aye, cos it was getting me oot! And meetin other folk. I wish I could start back in the likesay hotels an that, but I've got him [nods at grandson], I cannae do it.

There are many quotes from other respondents expressing their enjoyment of previous work and acknowledging the benefits they see from work. It is difficult to reconcile this picture of respondents, all of whom are long-term benefit claimants, holding overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards work with the picture of a benefits dependency culture of claimants who fail to appreciate the benefits of work. This general enjoyment of work is also evident in the numerous connections to work the claimants maintained, connections which question the portrayal of long term benefit claimants as far removed from the worlds of work, and to which I now turn.

4.2 Connections to Work

4.2.1 Current connections to worlds of work

> I was surprised when I came here, I thought everyone would have not worked at all for six months, or whatever it was it had to be, but there's quite a lot of people that actually still work just now, and its legal sometimes…I've been surprised with some of the guys through there, they've got really good qualifications, had good jobs in the past, but I think a couple of them are here to see what options are open to them
> Nick

The sentiment expressed in the above quote is one I shared. Nick is one of the respondents selected from the employment third sector company described in the methodology section of chapter one ("Work Connect"), and he is referring in the quote to other people on the same course. However, my sense of surprise at the frequency with which respondents discussed current work applies to all respondents, not just those on this particular course. Of the forty people interviewed (between the focus groups and individual interviews), twenty-nine were involved in some sort of work in its broad sense. The types of work being undertaken fell into five categories: therapeutic work (done by people claiming Incapacity Benefit (IB) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA)); voluntary work; caring work in the home; paid part-time declared work and undeclared work on the side. The majority of work done by respondents was either therapeutic work or voluntary work.

4.2.1a Therapeutic work

In this study, it was people who were claiming DLA due to mental health difficulties who were the majority of those doing therapeutic work. Most of these respondents were accessed through their membership of the LETS described in chapter one, and further discussed in chapter six. Many of the work opportunities these respondents undertook arose through their close involvement with the LETS and the building which housed the LETS office, café and hall space for functions. The jobs undertaken by these respondents included caretaking, catering, running a craft group, computing and secretarial work. Another respondent, unconnected to the LETS, was eligible to earn therapeutic earnings due to physical problems, having been medically

retired from his previous job, and worked for these therapeutic earnings by coaching badminton in local schools.

More respondents were doing voluntary work of some description, although there was some overlap between respondents who did therapeutic work and those that did voluntary work. Often, respondents doing therapeutic work also did voluntary work on top of this, although they didn't generally draw a distinction between the two. For example, two women members of a LETS project for people who have had or are experiencing mental health problems, mentioned over the course of the ninety minute interview[17] eight various work commitments, therapeutic and voluntary, between them. Both were on the management committee of the LETS sub-project; Evelyn ran the craft group, went to groups around the country giving talks on LETS and sat on the Social Work department's Venture Fund panel[18]; Fiona worked regularly in the community café, contributed to outside catering for large functions and was at the time a member of the interview panel for a then forthcoming post of development worker within the LETS project. Both, however, expressed the feeling that employers in the formal labour market did not appreciate their skills.

> Evelyn: What I like about up here [at LETS building]…everybody is so willing to work. And you see them, they wantin to do something an that, and yet oot in the community naybody really wants you to work for them, you know what I mean? Because you've got a mental health problem.

> Fiona: [people with mental health problems are] Classed as useless

> Evelyn: And its sad, the types of things that get done up here is unreal, the skills that people have got, a lot of people out there havenae got any skills, compared to what we've got. But we get classed as 'well, they're no able to work'. That really annoys me. The way I feel the noo, I feel like I cannae move on, I'm stuck, I cannae move on to a job, naybody'll have me.

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[17] These two respondents wished to be interviewed together, which although not the way the interviews were planned, worked out fine, providing a reminder that qualitative research needs to be flexible and open to last minute unforeseen changes to plans. The interviews obviously would have been different if conducted separately, but I think that interviewing both women together was better in many ways, for example, one of the respondents was shy and anxious, but made more comfortable by the presence of someone she knew well, who also helped by prompting and reminding her about various previous experiences, which I would have been unable to do.

[18] The Venture Fund distributes money to various organisations dealing with, amongst other things, issues to do with mental health.

The LETS project provided a secure and supported space within which Evelyn and Fiona could work and use their evident skills, in other words, it provided a space for those traditionally excluded from the benefits of work. They comment on this space that it is somewhere where their voices are heard, acknowledged and important.

> Fiona: We've got an opinion, this is what I really like. I've got an opinion, and I was always told I didn't. [talking about being on the management committee] And that's good 'cos you get a say in everything that goes, eh?
>
> Evelyn: That's right…like if we think something's not right we can say, you know. I don't think we're frightened to talk either, because its no, you know like management committees it's all they professionals and that, people that have got jobs and everything, ken, well there's a lot o' members [with mental health problems] on it, and we don't feel threatened, I mean I know John is there and he's a CPN[19], you dinnae feel threatened by him, at least I dinnae.
>
> Fiona: I dinnae either
>
> Evelyn: So that's good, because you dinnae feel threatened that, oh if you say anything they'll fire it back at you…we say what we want and what we think.
>
> Fiona: I was so pleased to get on that, 'cos I thought, 'why have somebody thick like me in there? // I feel awful important! I've never been important in my whole life!

4.2.1b Voluntary work

Other LETS members did voluntary work for the LETS, and often professed to prefer that work to previous paid jobs they had done.

> Cathy: Well I do a wee bit of voluntary work up at the office at LETS, and I have done a wee bit of work for them at home, voluntary basically, where I was the regional contact for LETS for a couple of years and people could phone me at home. Because of my agoraphobia I couldn't get out much, but I could take as many calls from people who needed advice and things like that…
>
> Niamh: Did you like doing that?

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[19] Community Psychiatric Nurse

Cathy: Oh yeah, I really loved that, I really did like that, yeah. If I was able to work at all, or commit myself to work, which I can't because of being unwell, yeah, it's the type of job I'd like to do."

Cathy had previously worked as an office temp and cleaner, neither of which she said she enjoyed, rather she just did them for the money.

I wouldn't say I like it…no, I don't like cleaning jobs (laughter)…I really don't, I was desperate, I was really desperate for the money.

The quote about her voluntary work is insightful because it displays the way 'work' has been constructed to mean full time paid work, with other forms of work denigrated as not really 'proper jobs'. Cathy had worked in the regional contact position for two years, and yet says that she can't work, or commit herself to work. It is true that it would have been difficult for her to commit to a full time post with an 'ordinary' employer due to her health difficulties, however in a supported work environment she thrived and enjoyed her work which consequently helped build her confidence and improved some of the mental health difficulties she was facing. Another respondent who was involved in voluntary work with an organisation that provided horse riding for disabled children[20] commented on the difficulty of doing voluntary work and keeping the benefits office informed, as claimants are meant to do.

I was being very, very careful that when I did some voluntary work I got my letter from the doctor and all this, I was doing it properly, you know, but when you tell them that you're going to do this voluntary work they send you a form saying that you have to get in contact with the doctor, and then they send you another form saying 'exactly what hours and what days you're going to be doing this voluntary work', and I just though 'aaah, to hell with this, I'm not going to do any voluntary work if this is what it means, because you know, the places that I'm working in, like this horse riding place, they phoned me up yesterday saying 'one person's ill, can you come in and do it?' I mean it just doesn't fit in with the whole way that they want it to work in the benefits office…so…I just feel you have to bend the rules a bit if you are

[20] As much of the voluntary work that is done in society is charity and community caring type work, it would be interesting to calculate how much this work would cost, and how much of a saving this creates for the state, who would conceivably have to pay for much of this work to be done, were it not done voluntarily.

going to get back into working life, just to build up references and things like that[21]

(Gary).

This notion that voluntary work can help claimants get back into working life was confirmed by a respondent who at the time of interview was about to take up a new position he had recently been offered.

Niamh: You were saying earlier you've found a job now.

Craig: Found a job now, and that's been I would say very much because of a lot of the volunteer work that I did after my graduation from university in March 1998. I signed on unemployed and I started doing volunteer work, and it was at a sustainability fair that I met Megan Scott who is LETS co-ordinator and we got talking, and it just so happened that I had done my project in furniture recycling. She said that she was thinking of researching a business...to allow work therapy to take place in furniture refurbishment, and she invited me along to a meeting that night of people who were interested in setting this thing up, and after the meeting I was offered a research contract for about...six of seven hundred pounds over a period of a couple of months to research it and come up with a business plan. Well, actually, to be honest I was to do a feasibility study and the business plan they got for nothing. But that's voluntary work! (laughter)

 But following that, it led onto another bigger feasibility study...and I got about 4 months paid employment, three and a half thousand pounds, to do feasibility studies of sustainable businesses that could be implemented within this area

 And as well as that I've been doing work for Friends of the Earth and the Food Links Network in an unpaid capacity, and all those things together gave me the experience to apply for a different type of job in the social sector. So I've ended up with a job as administrator for LETS Scotland, which is to provide support to the organisation, keeping databases and organising publicity and support for the trainers
Craig

There are a number of points I wish to draw out from these quotes from respondents describing their current voluntary or therapeutic work. Firstly, the 'formal' labour market often excludes people with mental health or physical health difficulties, often

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[21] Other respondents who claimed Incapacity Benefit discussed this same problem of the difficulty in doing any kind of work and reconciling this with the demands of the benefits office. I discuss this in

because of concerns about absenteeism and the person's ability to do the job. The different examples from the LETS above show that in a supportive environment people with such problems can work well and enthusiastically, providing benefits for the organisation who get the work done, and the individual who receives an often much needed boost in self-esteem and confidence.

Secondly, the formal benefits system sometimes discourages people from doing voluntary work, or at least from declaring any voluntary work done. This discouragement is often predicated on a fear that benefits will be taken away if claimants show they are capable of voluntary work. The fear is that questions may be raised about why such claimants continue to be considered mentally or physically unfit for work, which may be seen as reasonable questioning on the part of the DSS, but is perhaps insensitive to the point that voluntary work is often very different to paid work for an employer. Some respondents would do just two hours work every week or fortnight, and were free to turn down work if not feeling up to it. In this sense it is the voluntary sector that is flexible to the needs of its workers, rather than the formal paid labour market. Further, the voluntary/therapeutic sectors could be considered the epitome of 'enterprise' as they do get people into 'work'.

Thirdly, and most importantly, these claimants *are working* and are therefore not far removed from the world of work. Indeed, as Craig discusses, voluntary work can be a route to paid employment, and the border between the two may be more permeable that is sometimes thought. For example, expenses are often available to voluntary workers and paid workers working in certain sectors (including the voluntary sector!) are often low-paid. However, this particular respondent owned his own home, had previously worked as a teacher and described himself as middle class. So, for example in terms of education, he had certain advantages over some of the working class respondents who expressed a feeling of exclusion from the paid labour market. Nonetheless, what all these respondents share is the fact that at the time of interview they were all working in some capacity. They appear not to have forgotten the ways and benefits of work, nor to have lost touch with working environments and other

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the following chapter on benefits.

working people. Though not normally conceived of as a 'working environment', a number of respondents similarly worked at the time of interview as carers in their own homes.

4.2.1c Caring work

At least five respondents were involved in unpaid caring work for relatives in their own homes. This work was done mainly by women and the work mostly involved caring for children who could not take care of themselves, either because they were too young or unwell. Similarly to voluntary work, caring work was rarely considered 'proper' work, or even work at all, by the respondents.

> Fae I left the school I've hardly worked, because I've been looking after the bairns. And, eh, when the bairns left the school Lisa [daughter] fell pregnant before she left the school, I was looking after her when she was pregnant and after she had the bairn I've been looking after him! [grandson] (laughter). So I cannae really say much about work, 'cos I've hardly worked maself
> Betty

It is evident that Betty has worked for years at home raising children, and is now continue to work by raising her grandchild, enabling her daughter to seek paid work outside the home. Yet because work is constructed and defined in society as paid work Betty does not recognise the caring she has done and continues to do as work, repeating that she has 'hardly worked'. Other respondents who were carers commented on the increased financial pressures brought on by their caring obligations.

> I think the benefit's terrible…I mean take me right, I'm on Incapacity Benefit and because I'm on that, I've got a brother that I look after that goes to [name of local psychiatric hospital] and I'm his carer, and because I'm on that benefit I cannot get the Carer's Allowance because I'm already on a benefit
> Senga

Another respondent needed to take her unwell daughter to England for medical assessment and had unsuccessfully applied to the DSS for a grant to cover the expenses, being offered a loan instead.

> But the Benefits Agency wouldn't make it a grant at all, and I have to pay the
> loan back at twelve pounds a week, which leaves around sixty one pounds on
> my benefit book and that will be like that for eighteen months, so you literally
> feel, if I was to contact them again and say, 'look, can you look at this again',
> you actually feel like you're begging, so I don't find it easy to handle at all,
> this benefits system. You're made to feel like you're begging
> Cathy

If the state had to bear the cost of caring for these individuals, it would be
substantially more expensive than the amount currently paid to the carers in the form
of benefits. It is the carers who currently have to shoulder the shortfall between their
income in benefits and the cost of full-time caring, causing in Cathy's case, damage
to her already fragile mental health in terms of higher levels of anxiety and damage
to her self-esteem from feelings that she is 'begging'.

A final point worth noting about the issue of unpaid caring work is how it
occasionally enables other members of the family to work full time in the formal
labour market. As Jim comments:

> We look after the two, my daughter in law works full time and he's [son] a
> shift worker in Livingston, so we get the two grandsons. He's four days on,
> and on his four days off he looks after them, and the four days he's on we get
> them for the four days. We had them on Monday there, but he was off then
> till Thursday, so we're getting them again on Friday. I just go for a walk, I
> just take the wee fella in his pram, just take him out for a walk, I enjoy that
> Jim

In this case, the benefits system is enabling full time paid work to be done that
otherwise might not have been done. Again, it is possible to view these transactions
within the family as value for money childminding for the state.

4.2.1d Declared part-time work
Respondents who were doing paid work at the time of interview, besides those
working for therapeutic earnings, were mainly doing undeclared work on the side.
The least common form of work done by respondents was declared part-time work.
Jim, the respondent involved in unpaid caring work quoted above, was one of only
two respondents who did part time paid work which they declared to the benefits
agency. Jim worked in a bar on a part time basis and his comments on his

workmates illuminate the contradictions and ambiguities around work which remain hidden in the dominant ideas of work as full time paid work.

> I can see a lot of people are quite happy doing this [staying on benefits], they're, you know, they make a job out of being unemployed, they don't want to work, I know a few of them that are working behind the bar that are like that, or they're working on the fly, they'll mebbie do a job and not declare it, and earn a lot more money than me! I get jealous, I mean some folk'll grass them, but I wouldn't do anything like that, good luck to them if they get away wi' it fair enough, I wouldn't do that
> Jim

This picture is full of contradictions, of people who make a job out of being unemployed, but don't want to work, but do work behind the bar and to further complicate the picture, Jim does not declare *all* his earnings, as he explains:

> Niamh: So the part time bar work that you do now, do you declare that?
> Jim: Yeah. What I do is, my boss thinks I'm stupid 'cos when I first started in the pub he says 'don't declare that, its fourteen hours a week, so it's only a couple of hours a day'. Well, fair enough, but he used to take us across to the Job Centre, so he says, 'declare something, 'cos I'm taking you across here, and they may see me and say 'what's he doing dropping him off there?' I says, that's no problem to me, so what I do is, 75% of what I earn I declare, and that keeps them happy, but if I declared everything it'd be pointless me doing a part time job, and I like what I'm doing, but at least I feel kinda reasonably…at least I'm declaring three-quarters of what I'm making, which is not all that much.

In a sense, Jim *actively* manages the margins of the benefits system and the labour market by declaring the majority of his earnings, to keep the benefits people happy, but keeping some of his earnings to boost his overall income. If Jim declared 100% of his earnings his overall income would remain the same, and he would effectively be working for nothing.

> Niamh: How would it be pointless [declaring everything]?
> Jim: Well, if I worked and declared everything I earned I'd be working for him for like fourteen hours a week, puttin' the time in to earn him money, and I'm declaring it and I'd be losing it anyway, I'd be losing it.

The other respondent who declared part time earnings also declared only some of his earnings from his various jobs. This respondent worked on a casual basis for two different employers and ran his own business, in many ways the archetypal 'enterprise culture' candidate.

> Niamh: What was the last job you had?
>
> Duncan: My acting work?
>
> Niamh: Or anything
>
> Duncan: Ok, my last job I had was Thursday night working behind the bar, Wednesday night working behind the bar, a little fly one, em, but at present I'm employed on a casual basis driving a wagon for a guy who doesn't use me all the time but if he's got a job, a pick-up form Dundee or something, he'll get me to do that on a casual basis. It's through the books, but 'cos I'm schedule D, do my own tax and national insurance and stuff like that, which isn't too bad, but I don't declare every single penny I earn, plus I've got my own ghost tours company, and we do banquets over a weekend, Fridays and Saturdays.

4.2.1e Undeclared paid work

Of the five respondents who reported doing some level of undeclared paid work, these two respondents, Jim and Duncan, were the only two who did regular paid work every week. By declaring part of their earnings, they both actively manage their relation with the benefits agencies in the hope of deflecting attention away from other earnings they make. Jim didn't consider himself to be working 'on the fly' because he declared three quarters of his earnings. He differentiated between himself and the other workers in the bar who 'don't want to work', and declare no earnings, indeed he often commented on how his manager and co-workers could not understand why he declared his earnings, and teased him about it, saying that he works for his money, just to give it to the broo. When further asked about why he declares so much of his earnings, it transpires that fear of being caught or 'shopped' to the benefits agency is a primary motivation.

> When I get taxed he goes [the boss], he gets most upset when it's taxed, but I say I want to declare it, well three-quarters of it anyway. He says, *'but I'm paying you for that'*, and I say 'but I don't want to do it that way, if I do it that way and I get caught, I could go maybe go for months and months

without getting caught, once I do get caught they want the money back, so what do I do then? Are you gonna pay the difference?' *'Oh I see your point then'* [boss]
Jim

Amongst all respondents it was, in fact, extremely unusual for undeclared work to be described as intrinsically wrong in any way. Many respondents said it was only fear of being caught that stopped them taking up opportunities to earn some money on the side.

I suppose if you're signing on and stuff like that, and you're doing jobs for cash in hand, I suppose its not really allowed, it's against the law isn't it! (Laughter) But em…I don't know, because you don't get a lot of money when you're on benefit, I can understand why people would do it, I think I would probably do it, if I had the opportunity…but I suppose it's a bit worrying as well 'cos you get so many people that sort of watch your every move, and you can get grassed up, and you can get into so much trouble for it
Freda

Freda's comment that undeclared work is understandable because claimants don't get a lot of money on benefits was one of the main ways respondents justified undeclared work.

Niamh: Is getting by a problem?
Larry: Getting by, well, yes, let's be scrupulously honest here, let's put my hand up. I would think, if I'm being honest I would say if you're living on your benefits only, I don't know how you do it, I really don't, because its not a lot. You could scrape by, but you would have a very poor standard of living. I'm very lucky, I still had some dosh in the bank, and some dosh stashed away that I didn't tell them about, which I think, you've got to be not scrupulously honest in some respects.

Niamh: What do you think of it? [Signing on and working on side]
Betty: I would rather do that than fuckin start work full time, I would rather go and get a wee job on the side. 'Cos the bru money, or the social, disnae spin round what you expect it to spin, you cannae get what you want to get, especially at the likesay Christmas and that, if you've got a wee job on the side it would help you out with the bairns.

Niamh: There's a bit here about signing on and working on the side for cash in hand. Do you think that's quite common?
Gaynor: Och aye, that happens all the time, aye, but I don't blame them. I know its against the law and they shouldnae be doing it, but you cannae blame them. When ma kids were younger if I hadnae of been employed I would of done it, if I'd seen what I'm going through the noo, and I had two kids to support, I would say, I'm gonna take the chance, cos I wouldnae see ma kids going hungry for two days oot of seven days.

The Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s were famously evangelical about 'rooting out benefit fraud', and the New Labour government have been similarly (and disproportionately?) concerned with benefit fraud in their welfare reform policies, stressing claimants' responsibilities to play fair and seek full time paid work in the formal labour market. The feeling that comes across in the above quotes is that it is the benefits system that doesn't play fair and that has let down their side of the bargain by failing to provide sufficient income to maintain a reasonable quality of life. Another respondent articulates this feeling of being let down by the system and the lack of quality on programmes and projects for the long-term unemployed.

So far as the unemployed go, they're [benefits agency] not producing the goods for the individual. I'm not talking about myself necessarily in this case, but that's the way its worked out for me as well, in the sense there's nobody up to date that's made any real attempt to say 'look here'...I've been on different projects in the past, no-one says 'look here, this is what we will do, this is what your skills are, let's see if we can match an employer up to them'. It doesn't happen, and so as a result you come along and what they do is 'special confidence skills', and yet another approach to CVs, and to check your basic learning skills, and sadly, come the end of the course you're still unemployed, and that only reinforces the negative, because at the end of the day you feel as if you would have been better off working to your own ends, in other words checking for jobs or taking up jobs that are unofficial, and surviving that way
Malcolm

Malcolm fulfils his responsibilities, according to the government, by actively attempting to improve his 'employability' and attending courses on job-seeking, yet because the system fails to fulfil its responsibilities, according to Malcolm, by failing to provide quality courses, Malcolm feels he would be better off taking up an

'unofficial' job. These respondents see the relationship between them as claimants and the benefits system as precisely that, a two-way relationship, and there is a feeling that if one part of the relationship, the benefits system, is failing to keep up their side of the bargain, it is understandable that the other part of the relationship, claimants, fail to feel obliged to keep up theirs.

The need to earn extra money for the *family* was, however, the primary justification respondents used to defend undeclared work 'on the side'. Both Betty and Gaynor, in the above quotes, refer to the overriding importance of the family, and specifically children, when making decisions such as whether or not to work on the side. Much New Right social policy over the last twenty years has been based on regarding the family as the primary source of welfare, and Tony Blair has repeatedly stressed the importance he places on the institution of the family above all else. The respondents in this study generally agreed with these sentiments, considering providing for one's family to be of most importance even if this involves working 'on the side'. The following respondent recognised that many people in society consider working on the side wrong, but appealed to the family as justification for what may be considered wrongdoing on their part.

> Duncan: I've still got little day jobs here and there, but no full time, and I feel loath to declare it because anything I do earn is deducted from by the broo, so I work the fiddle I suppose, which I used to complain about when I was in full time employment I complained about people working the fiddle, 'what am I bloody paying my taxes for, its getting spent on these bums on the dole!', and now I'm a bum on the dole!
>
> Niamh: So how do you feel about it?
>
> Duncan: Well…see I don't feel any guilt when I go and sign on…em…because I've got a wife and child, and I need to provide for my wife and child, and I couldn't do it all on the benefits that they give us, and especially my, well you saw my daughter, she'll be two in December, and she didn't start off with an easy life, she was pretty ill when she was first born so all that, the bills are extremely high, you know, heating to keep the place a reasonable temperature in the middle of winter, and we haven't got any special provisions, you know, because of having an ill child, and we just scrape by, you know, so I need the extra work, anything just to make a crust.

When later asked about his thoughts on the government's stress on the responsibilities of claimants, Duncan questioned the government's responsibilities, echoing concerns discussed earlier by Malcolm.

> Niamh: The government seem to be stressing the responsibilities that go with rights…
> Duncan: Yeah, but who are you being responsible for? You know, responsible for getting their figures down to make it look as if they've done a tremendous job since coming into power! Bollocks! All I'm responsible for is my wife and child, and, you know, try and be a good person, you know, that's sort of...my main responsibilities are to my wife and daughter, that's it…I'm not a bad person, I don't try and work a great screw, all I'm doing is trying to get by. The moment I do get anything substantial then I'm off the benefit, and I'll contribute my tax.

Respondents understand that the levels of pay in the majority of entry-level jobs are insufficient, and therefore one way to optimise their current positions is to occasionally work on the side. The irony is that certain respondents practise such 'uncitizenlike' behaviour *because* they subscribe to predominant beliefs about the importance of hard work and supporting one's family, not because of their membership of some mythical benefits dependency culture of different norms and rules. Duncan sounds somewhat defensive in the above quotes, and is very conscious that working 'on the fiddle' is often considered unacceptable, however he considers failing to 'provide' for his family less acceptable. Indeed other respondents, such as Gaynor quoted above, suggest that it would almost be morally irresponsible to turn down opportunities of casual work that may arise, as it is children that would potentially suffer.

> As I say, live and let live, if they're making a tenner on the side at least they're putting something in the bairn, they're working to do something, probably feed their bairn. They wouldnae go oot to work if they thought it was just to break the law, they need the money for something, especially if its, no so much single folk, I'd say, well they've no got so much commitments, they're probably just wanting it for drink or something like that, but if it's a family, well, good on them cos they probably do need that wee bit extra for their wee kids, if they want to gi'e them a wee pair o' shoes, or put food on the table, I would hold my hand up to them and say, well there's no way I'd shop you, I wouldnae shop anybody, but especially the families.

Gaynor highlights some of the complexities in respondents' opinions of the rights and wrongs of undeclared work. She was not the only respondent to distinguish between people who work on the side for their families, and single people who don't have the same type of commitments. Another respondent, who himself did very occasional work which he didn't declare, comments on a neighbour of his:

> I know a guy across the road from me, he's signing on, I know he works, it doesn't excuse it but he has a wife and two kiddies and I keep thinking, well, it can't be easy. I don't think his wife keeps well so she doesn't work, it can't be easy, so at the end of the day if he sort of breaks the law who am I to, who am I too…what is it about casting the first stone?
> Larry

If working on the side was considered understandable for people with families and justifiable for people who earned very little, single people who earned a lot on the side were singled out for attack. This behaviour was sometimes seen as unfair, greedy and abuse of the system.

> If you're not making a lot, if you're not getting a lot of money on benefit, I can understand why you do some jobs cash in hand, but there are some people that just sort of abuse that as well, and are just…they're RAKING it in, doing all these jobs, you know, and its all cash in hand, plus they're signing on, and I think that's just kind of abusing it, so it just really depends on the situation.
> Freda

> There's one guy there, some weeks he'll mebbie no turn up at all! He was on the fly a couple of weeks ago, he came out with two hundred pound, plus he's got a giro for another two hundred pound! So some weeks he's sittin there wi' four hundred pound in his pocket! I mean its crazy! So in a way, you gotta see some of the things the government try to do and get these people off that, go back to work, cos you can get that sort of mentality where they're lying all the time.
> Jim

Many respondents told similar stories to the ones above of people they knew earning hundreds of pounds of undeclared earnings and living very comfortable lifestyles. Whether or not these stories were true is perhaps less important than the disapproval expressed by respondents about such behaviour. This disapproval was about more than just envy, I think, but about the belief that to work on the side for one's family

is morally understandable, even praiseworthy, but to do the same for oneself is morally questionable, even condemnable.

4.2.2 Respondents' experiences of self-employment

I have discussed respondents' many and various current connections to work, and will move on to discuss their opinions and hopes about future prospects of work. Before this, I want to discuss respondents' previous work histories, and especially, respondents' experiences of self-employment. I know it says more about my preconceptions than anything else (except, of course, the dominance of discourses of dependency and enterprise), but I was surprised by the number of respondents who had either run their own business in the past or were currently working on business plans for the future. I was reluctant to ask a direct question about running one's own business in the series of thirty individual interviews for fear of sounding like an Employment Service employee. I was anxious that asking respondents if they had thought of self-employment would result in lots of defensive 'no' answers, probably in part because I have never considered self-employment, and imagined that a minority of people consider that employment route. Self-employment is, of course, the epitome of the types of 'enterprise culture' discussed in chapter three, and one of my supervisors rightly encouraged me to include a direct question on experiences of running one's own business. At the end of the section of interview topics on work in the individual interview schedule I asked "Have you ever thought of setting up your own business?" Only eleven respondents answered 'no' straight away, and rarely in a defensive voice.

Seven respondents had had experience of running their own business in the past, four respondents were running businesses at the time of interview and eight respondents had attended courses and/or thought seriously about running their own business in the future. It was more common for respondents to have experience in developing ideas about self-employment than not. In other words, those whose subjectivities as benefit claimants locates them firmly at the heart of dependency discourses refute this through their experiences of self-employment (a subjectivity located firmly at the heart of enterprise discourses). Table 4.1 shows examples of the four different

responses to the question about self-employment; that respondents had never thought of running their own business, had run their own business in the past, are currently running their own business or have plans to run businesses in the future.

Table 4.1 Have you ever thought of starting your own business?

NO	Have you ever thought of starting your own business? No, no I haven't (laughter). I've never really had any idea that's come into my head and thought, 'that would be a really good thing to start up a business', I've never had any sort of concepts, plus my degree's environmental biology, I don't really know how I would kind of intertwine that into a business venture. I don't know. (Freda)
PAST	Have you ever thought of starting your own business? Oh I done it once, I tried it, yeah. What did you do? Painting and decorating. The first year…aye, I done it for about a year and a half, so I got the forty pound a week grant on that scheme and I worked for maself. For about the first six, seven months it was great, it was quite a lot o' work came in, but you'd to keep advertising, but you did get a lot of work, but as the year had went on it started to calm doon, and you were advertisin more and werenae getting much oot o' it. But you were putting that much into the advertisin and no getting the work in, it just wasnae worth continuing it. (Ian)
PRESENT	Have you ever thought of starting your own business? Well, actually I have sort of got my own business, its called '***' and its 'ethical consultancy that doesn't cost the earth' (laughter), as it says on the top of the letterhead. Unfortunately I haven't actually got any business through using that name, but if I get any more consultancy work that's what I'll be operating as, and I'm almost at the stage of putting up a website for it, with information on what's on offer. (Craig)
FUTURE	Have you ever thought of starting your own business? Yeah, I'm deep in that at the moment actually, I've got a good plan…I've got a big problem though, a stone wall I can't get around, and it's a personal one. It's the wife, she's a little bit older than me, and she's terrified if I do that! Threatened to leave me! Big battle there. But its not so scary now with this New Deal, you've got this nice safety net of six months when you keep your benefits while you build the business, market it anyway, its not so bad. And everyone I've gone to has said 'oh yeah, you've found a niche in the market, and do this and do that', and you get a lot of backing from these people now! And I'm not too sure whether I'm getting pushed into it now, I've been sort of tip-toeing towards it! (Keith)

Freda's response, quoted above, was typical of a group of nine respondents who reported that they had never really considered self-employment, as they could not think of what they might do. Two other respondents spoke of assessing opportunities for self-employment in their area, deciding eventually that there was no room for 'yet more painters and decorators'.

> Niamh: Have you ever thought of starting your own business?
> Andy: No
> Niamh: Why not?
> Andy: It would cost too much money to start off wi'. It'd be all right if I won the lottery, if I won the lottery or the coupons or something like that, then mebbie start a wee business, but there's too many wee businesses going around now, too many landscape gardeners, too many gardeners, too many painters and decorators.

Andy perceives the primary barrier to self-employment to be lack of money, but he is also aware of a local surplus in the types of self-employment he is able to do, a surplus caused in part by government policies to encourage 'dependent' benefit claimants to become more 'enterprising'. There has been some criticism of the standards of local small businesses, which Andy interprets as the 'system' attacking local people no matter what they do.

> They tell you to go self-employed and they're turning around and tellin' them they're cowboys!
> Andy

It is clear that Andy has in-depth knowledge of his local labour market, at least in terms of self-employment opportunities, and that he uses this knowledge to base his decisions about potential employment routes.

Some of the respondents who had run businesses in the past had started them with help from the Enterprise Allowance Scheme, and run into difficulties when their forty pounds a week allowance ran out after a year (see similar accounts in McDonald, 1996). One such respondent showed particular resourcefulness and ingenuity in overcoming obstacles to get onto the scheme in the first place. He had a plan to run a window cleaning business, but lacked the necessary thousand pounds in

the bank the scheme requires. His solution involved becoming friendly with his bank manager.

> You have to be on the broo for six months, and you have to have two thousand pounds in the bank before you can do anything. It used to be a thousand. But there's a way around that. Can we switch this off? [Tape recorder] (Laughter) 'X' bank, what they do is, if you're with the 'X' you put money in, take money out, back and forward, you can actually ask the bank manager if it would be possible if he would put a thousand or two thousand pounds into your bank account for a split second, just to show, just to register it, and he would do it (laughter)! I got them to do it for me!
> Billy

This particular respondent, Billy, ran a window cleaning business which ran into difficulties when his car became unreliable. Unsurprisingly, the seven respondents with previous experience of self-employment are less enthusiastic about this potential employment route than those respondents currently running businesses or developing future business plans. Ian, quoted in table 4.1, sounded demoralised as he recounted the story of his business, from the optimism of the initial busy days to the latter days when business dries up and the inevitable folding of the business. Another respondent blamed the stress of legal and insurance responsibilities for the demise of their business, and recorded their preference for working for an employer. Billy, however, is one of two respondents who, despite experiencing failures in previous business attempts, are currently working on proposals for future businesses. Billy wants to go into catering and is working on plans to get a snack bar to take around the markets. He is currently sitting a food hygiene course in a local college, a place he gained through his involvement with the local LETS. He has been actively developing these plans, despite mental health difficulties he has faced in recent years, and hopes to be in a position to start the business in two years time.

Ron is the second respondent who is currently working on a business plan having already experienced one spell of self-employment. Ron is trained in groundwork, doing paving and slabbing, and previously worked as a sub-contractor with a 'squad of seven men' and two contracts in Edinburgh. However-

> Within the space of two months both companies went down the drain, I lost
> all my work, not through my fault, just bad luck basically, and after that I had
> a spell of unemployment, trouble wi' drink, things like that…and my work
> just suffered after that
> Ron

Ron is in a difficult position because it was clear in the interview that he is desperate

to get back to work, but his income from benefits is relatively high as he has two

disabled sons, which qualifies him for extra money. It is because of this situation

that he has focused in on self-employment as a best chance for future employment.

> Its been a year and two month now I've been on the dole again, but I'm
> getting trapped, because the money I get is…I've got two children, and I've
> got two disabled sons, so the money I actually get on benefit is quite good, its
> enough to keep me, but it makes finding a job even harder, because I've got
> to get a higher paid job to justify getting a job sort o' thing…that's one of ma
> pitfalls, so I'm gearing towards self-employment actually, 'cos there's no
> jobs in the market to employ me that pays high enough
> Ron

Instead of expressing bitterness about the difficulties in his previous position of sub-

contracting, Ron felt he had gained invaluable experience which he can use to

improve his future plans. He wants to continue to work in the same area, but sees the

more secure route in the short term to be working as a sole trader, rather than sub-

contracting with a group of employees.

> Niamh: Is that what you'd like to get back into as self-employed?
> [Groundwork]
> Ron: Definitely, yeah, but not contracting and that, I want to go into the
> private sector as a sole trader, advertisin my skills sort of thing, because its
> what I know, I've done it for twenty years//
> There's risks involved in self-employment, but I'm more wary now, I know
> more about it, I'm more prepared.

The notable thing about the stories of Billy and Ron is that even amongst the group

most likely to be cynical about self-employment there are two respondents who, both

against considerable odds, are determined to try self-employment again. These are

hardly the words or actions of demotivated people content to stay on benefits.

Ironically, one of Ron's initial setbacks in his business plans was due to financial

problems at his local 'enterprise' agency where he was doing a business preparation course.

> Ron: I've done similar courses in business management, but they'd no funding, they couldnae give me anything, so you set up all these big action plans, and you get to the end of it and they go 'sorry, we've no funding for you', back to square one [rueful laugh]. The whole point you're there is 'cos you've got no money, because you're unemployed.
>
> Niamh:Where was that?
>
> Ron: That was eh…Enterprise Action Trust down in 'X', I done their, I cannae mind what it was called, but it was for self-employed people to set up their own business, eh, they'd run out of funding, but we done the full course before they said that…initially I think you were give a thousand pounds at the end of the course, but eh, the time I was there they'd no money at all, so they couldnae help me with my driving license or anything so…

Ron persevered in his plans and found out about other suitable courses. He is currently attending the course at 'Work Connect', who are funding his driving lessons and future driving test and license. Ron's previous attempt at self-employment, active participation in various business preparation courses and plans for future self-employment paint a picture that is a stark contrast to the picture of passivity and dependency painted by political discourse.

Respondents who are currently running their own businesses further challenge this picture of passivity and dependency amongst claimants. All four respondents who are currently running businesses are making little, if any, money from these endeavours, hence their need to remain on benefits. Craig, quoted in table 4.1, has recently begun his consultancy business, having previously done a number of feasibility studies for various 'social economy' organisations. Duncan, also quoted above, runs a ghost tours company with another actor, and makes occasional money from this. Malcolm described some work he does as freelance photography, but was imprecise about any earnings he makes from this work and Larry makes 'the odd £100' from repairing cars. These respondents are using the benefits system as a kind of 'unofficial' Enterprise Allowance Scheme; their benefits provide the equivalent of the forty pounds a week safety net EAS candidates receive while their business

develops. They display what could be described as an inventive and imaginative approach to income maximisation.

Those respondents most optimistic about self-employment as a potential employment route are those currently developing plans for future businesses. This is not to say, however, that these respondents are generally naïve in their expectations of the benefits of self-employment. Respondents showed an eagerness to prepare plans thoroughly and receive advice from local 'enterprise' organisations. An awareness of local market conditions was also evident, as was a degree of realism regarding the potential success of small businesses. The following vignette expands the story of Keith, quoted in table 4.1, a story that belies the stereotype of the 'dependent' unemployed.

Vignette 4.1 Trapped in a dependency culture? Keith's story

- Keith has been unemployed for five years, he is in his late fifties, and describes himself as "sort of semi-retired being on benefits".

- He worked abroad for most of his life, in Africa and the United States where he gained his qualification in welding which has since expired.

- He is sceptical about his job prospects, seeing his age, lack of qualifications and lack of suitable jobs in the area as the main barriers to employment.

- He is scathing about the quality of 'job seeking skills' courses for the unemployed, and expressed anger at their uselessness.

- He has found unemployment very stressful and damaging to his mental health, he became depressed and his doctor has prescribed him Prozac and 'put him on the sick'.

- When I think back to the interview I recall someone very angry, demoralised and depressed. In the field notes I recorded immediately after the interview I wrote, "seemed down, semi-retired, given up. If dependency culture existed, he'd be member". And yet…

- Keith is developing plans to run his own business in the future. He says:

- "I'm deep in that at the moment actually…I'd like to do it 'cos I'd get a real buzz out of being self-employed, making your own decisions…I'd love to do it, and I think I could make a success of it". Despite a confrontation with the benefits system, and a failed appeal against them, he later says "but I'm not disheartened!"

This section has shown evidence of respondents' strong connections to the worlds of work, be it therapeutic, voluntary, caring, paid, undeclared or self-employment. Respondents combine benefits with work for a number of reasons, sometimes because they feel they have little choice (for example, those working in caring capacities), to actively maximise their incomes, keep connections to work or to make good use of extra spare time. None of the respondents made sufficient income from their connections to work to be able to survive without their benefits. The desire to work full time, in a position that would enable a move away from the benefits system was expressed by the majority of respondents. It is to respondents' expectations of their future prospects and their knowledge of the local labour market I now turn.

4.3   Future Prospects of Work and Knowledge of Labour Market

4.3.1 "Actively seeking work"

While the majority of respondents express the desire to get back into full-time employment, confidence that this is a likely prospect is less widespread. Respondents feel they know the local labour market well, and display detailed knowledge of both the history of the local labour market and its current characteristics. The decline of the local steel industry is often commented on, for example, and an awareness is shown of the pluses and minuses of current local employers. Respondents blame various factors for their difficulty in getting full time employment, including employer's prejudices about age, or mental or physical health problems; transport problems and the lack of jobs in general in the area.

Nonetheless, as discussed above, subscription to dominant values about work is evident, as is the genuine motivation to 'actively seek work'. Indeed, in the case of one particular respondent this motivation led him to taking over job seeking tasks that are the responsibility of the benefits office, as the following vignette explains.

Vignette 4.2 'Actively seeking work'? Ian's Story

- Ian previously ran his own business.

- He is currently doing voluntary work and occasional casual driving work. He wants to get more driving work and is aiming to complete his Class 1 and Class 2 driving licenses, which will enable him to drive heavy goods vehicles.

- He regularly visits the Job Centre where he applies for an average of three jobs a week.

- When he learned about the subsidies employers could earn under the New Deal reforms he decided to go around various firms himself to broadcast this news, even though, at the time, he was not on the New Deal.

- He explains: "There's a form out…if you've been unemployed long enough…so I was going around to employers with this form and asking to see their Personnel Manager, and showing them the form and presenting myself and saying that, if you give me a job, you'll get 60% of the wages that you've to pay me, so that's a big saving on your wage bill for a year, plus any National Insurance you pay for me in that year you'll get refunded.// I was doing that myself 'cos the broo couldnae do it! And I'd to go back to ask for more of they forms, 'cos I was going around all these big firms to let them know about this system, to see if it would help".

No matter how active their job search is, though, respondents report major barriers to employment.

4.3.2 Barriers to employment

It was common for men to perceive employer's age discrimination as a barrier to their future employment. Even men in their early forties were concerned at being considered 'past it' by employers. Kevin, a participant in the Work Connect employment course, is exasperated at what he perceives as the staff's naivety in their assurances that age is not a factor, as the following excerpt shows.

Excerpt 4.1 Kevin: Perceptions of age discrimination

Being on the bru, at my age, I mean…I mean you sit in and they [staff] talk to you and gi'e you all this crap about this, that and the next thing, you know, and I'm like that, I'm saying 'look, I'm 42', I'm saying, 'who is wantin to employ me? How many folk are on the bru?' And they say *'oh, but they dinnae discriminate'*. I say a load of shite, of course they discriminate.

I says, there's 25 of us that go for an interview for a job, and they fill in an application form and the personnel department gets it and somebody sitting at a desk, and there's a list wi' 25 names on it of people goin for this job, I says what do they do? They certainly don't go and read them all! I says they dinnae! The person's that sittin in the office has got a sheet of paper next to them wi' the criteria, you know, maximum age 25, colour white, you know, and they go through it and if you dinnae fit in with their idea you'd be in the bucket!

I says, mebbie they've got 25 or 26 applicants, or 125 or 126, I says they look at five of them, they certainly don't look at them all. And they're [staff] like *'oh, they've got to!'* I says, 'how sad are yis! Use your heid! Companies like that never ever…they get a hundred odd application forms, they get folk comin in, they get folk writing in for a job an all that, and they get things from the broo and that, and they get the applications and they're like that [gestures action of crossing names off a list]: there's the over forties, there's the under forties, there's the twenty-five's to thirties we want, there's eight of them…they look at the eight and see who's got the right qualifications and they're left wi' three, and they've got to pick one of the three, they've not got to pick one oot o' 126.

And they're [staff] like this, *'oh that disnae happen, that disnae happen'*. That does so happen, it certainly does, you know, I've sent away, I've did things for jobs for the broo and that, *'oh you can apply for that, you can apply for this'*; fair enough, I've sent them away, I've never heard word back from any of the places, you know, like I say, if they've got a list and the company goes through it, they mebbie give three or four of them a second interview to see if there's anybody wi' any common sense, and the other two that didnae get the job or whatever gets the letter 'sorry, you didnae get the job'. So they're sending oot letters to mebbie three folk, and the other hundred and twenty went in the bucket!
Kevin

The problems of low self-esteem associated with long term unemployment (Strandh, 2001) are understandable given the sense of rejection expressed by Kevin. At 42 he is hardly near retirement age, yet feels he is consistently overlooked by employers

because of his age. He does not even receive the standard 'rejection letter', instead it appears that his applications are ignored, he 'never hears a word back'. Kevin is not alone in this experience of sending off job applications to no response:

> Recently I've sent away about half a dozen application forms for different jobs, they haven't even bothered to reply! This is application forms! I mean I used to send a fair amount of spec letters[22] as well and I didn't really expect half of them to reply but you would think that firms would at least reply to their own application forms, wouldn't you? Anything! But recently out of a half a dozen letters I sent out I haven't had a reply of any description!
> Malcolm

However, in a way that echoes Keith's story recounted earlier, Kevin maintains a determination to find work, and is using the Work Connect course to pay for a fork-lift driving course, which he hopes will improve his chances of finding warehouse work. He is keeping further options open (and improving his 'employability') by keeping an eye on current developments in the training and registering of 'bouncers', or security people at clubs and pubs. Kevin has much experience in this area, and sees in the onset of stricter regulations and requirements for stewards an opportunity for him to gain the necessary certificates and do more work in this area. Malcolm is in his late fifties, and concurs with Kevin's concerns about employer's age discriminatory practices, yet he also share's Kevin's determination to overcome these by developing his skills in photography and computing and get a job.

> The laws of logic say I'm getting older, and employers are still prejudiced about older people, so as a result…I think it makes sense from my point of view to concentrate on something specialist…from an employer's point of view, as long as they see I've done all the modules and all the basic stuff right, I think I'll be able to convince them with my portfolio and other bits and pieces.
> Malcolm

These sentiments add to the weight of evidence that claimants' express a strong desire to return to work, and that even in the wake of numerous setbacks, refuse to give up all hope and become demotivated and 'detached' from the labour market. In

fact, in the cases described above the opposite is true; these respondents have developed more inventive and enterprising ways to seek work in the face of these (perceived or actual) barriers to employment, from personally informing potential employers about the benefits of the New Deal to attending courses where funding is available for training.

The New Deal is also concerned with people with disabilities, and improving their 'employability'. Yet respondents who claim DLA or Incapacity Benefit find employer's prejudice and ignorance persisting as barriers to future employment. The argument from Government circles that people with disabilities, and indeed claimants in general, remain unaware of opportunities open to them is patronising and often inaccurate. The experience of Noel, quoted below, shows that claimants can have more awareness of opportunities and regulations than employers. The Labour Government has been curiously silent on the issue of *employer's* duties and responsibilities, considering their loudness on the issue of claimant's responsibilities.

> Probably I am in a more difficult position, because I think a lot of employers take it as a stigma if you've been medically retired. If you apply for a job and you put that down, em, the chances of you getting an interview are nil, and even employers who say they have a disability policy and whatever, its, even that can be a waste of time.
>
> Just yesterday I received a letter from the Council, I'd applied for a school technician job…and they have an equal opportunities policy where on the front page of the application you can ask for a guaranteed interview if you've got a disability, which I ticked, but the letter came in yesterday saying that I hadn't been short listed, so I phoned them up and asked them 'did I not tick the box?', and they checked the application, *'oh yes, the box is ticked there, the headmaster didn't know what it means'*. 'Well what does it say there?' *'It says 'do you want to partake in the guaranteed interview scheme?'* I says 'what did he not understand? The word 'guarantee'?' I says 'its for people who have a disability, they're guaranteed an interview', *'but this form doesn't say anything about disability on it'*. 'That's exactly the point, it doesn't say anything about disabilities' [because its an equal opportunities form]. *'Oh well, we can give you an interview'*. I says 'don't worry, I'd be wasting my time and wasting your time coming'.

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[22] Speculative letters; often written as part of a 'Job Club' type course to various employers enquiring about potential vacancies.

I mean the council supposedly respected…they have a charter mark, 'disability friendly', and it means nothing if the people in the chain don't understand what it means, I mean for somebody that's looking at application forms and saying 'well I didn't know what it means'…surely if they didn't know what it meant they should have phoned up the Education Services to find out exactly what it meant, rather that saying 'oh it doesn't matter'
Noel

Noel is heavily involved in voluntary work for a number of community organisations, but is finding it difficult to get into paid work. He says "it's fine to do things voluntary, because it's not costing anybody, and it doesn't matter how much you prove you can do voluntary, it's if you can do it when somebody's putting their hand in their pocket to give you your wages at the end of the week, its whether or not they want to take that chance, and I think the problem is a lot of firms are not prepared to take that chance. They're prepared to put it down on paper that they're equal opportunity, but in reality I don't think it means an awful lot". Noel's medical status was recently reassessed and, partly due to the voluntary work, his Incapacity Benefit has been removed. Another respondent, Peter, is currently receiving Incapacity Benefit, and it is his fear of precisely this situation that discourages him from seeking a job. Peter has been claiming benefits for ten years following an accident which caused severe back problems. He expresses resentment at being one of the 'forgotten' on Incapacity Benefit, and graphically, and spatially, describes the restrictions he feels have been forced upon him.

Because I'm on Incapacity Benefit, 'you're forgotten aboot pal, you're pigeonholed, you're history…but you dare do anything outside this wee circle we allow you to do, we'll take it off you [Incapacity Benefit] and then you'll become somebody else's problem, I end up at the Job Centre
Peter

Peter sees the benefits system itself as one of his main barriers to employment. One day he did end up at the Job Centre, and saw a job he wanted to apply for.

I saw this job, I thought, right…and then I went up and said 'I want to apply for this job', *'no problem'*, they started filling it oot, *'yes you can apply for this, right what is it?'*, and I told them, I says 'well at the moment', I says, 'I'm on Incapacity Benefit'. *'Oh'*. I says 'what's wrong?' He says *'that's social security, nothing to do with us, you'll need to go to social security'*. But why? If I get that job I tell them I'm working, they can keep their

Incapacity Benefit. *'Oh no, we're not taking that responsibility'*. You see, the employment service would not take that responsibility of letting me go for this

Peter frequently expressed the concern that his Incapacity Benefit may be removed should he be seen to be capable of any work, yet despite this he tries to apply for a job only to be told by the Employment Service that he cannot apply for it. Despite this setback he has voluntarily joined the Work Connect course and is tentatively hoping this might provide a realistic work opportunity. Even Peter, who has claimed benefits for ten continuous years, fails to fit the stereotype of the 'dependency culture' member, content to stay on benefits.

For respondents, it is not just employer prejudice that causes a barrier to employment, but the lack of jobs. As discussed in chapter two, the 'employability' perspective understates this factor by concentrating solely on unemployed people and their 'opportunities' and responsibilities, rather than areas of high unemployment and their lack of jobs. The crucial point is that unemployment is not simply a problem of unemployed people and their characteristics, but a problem of labour markets and their characteristics. As Kleinman concludes , "the likelihood of finding work among the most disadvantaged households and in the most deprived communities is directly connected with the strength or weakness of the national and regional economies" (1999: 189). In a comment on 'back to work' courses for the unemployed, Keith phrases the same sentiment more directly:

> You get so fed up in the end, I mean all these games…at the end of the day if there's no job, you could be the best games player in the world and at the end of the day there's no job! You could have the best interview technique in the world, end of the day there's no job! What's the point?
> Keith

An awareness of this problem of labour demand demonstrates interviewees' general knowledge of their local labour market. As explained in chapter one, interview data was coded directionally and pairs of codes were used to categorise opinions, feelings and experiences of various themes, for example a pair of codes on work is 'enjoys work' and 'dislikes work'. I developed a pair of codes to categorise respondents' varying knowledge of the local labour market situation: 'knowledge of labour

market' and 'lack of knowledge of labour market'. On completion of coding, the 'lack of knowledge of labour market' report contained only one quote from Betty, a lone parent who is currently raising her grandchild:

> I met my ex man, I got married and I had bairns of my ain, and I never worked fae then. I dinnae ken how to go look for a job now (laughter). If somebody told me to go and get a job I wouldnae ken what to do!.
> Betty

In contrast, the report 'knowledge of labour market' is sixteen pages long, indicating that contrary to government rhetoric, benefit claimants' possess a great deal of information and knowledge about the state of their local labour market. There is a range of responses to the question "do you think is hard to find work around here?", from those who think its easier now than it was in the past, to others who remember days when you could leave one job and walk straight into another the following day, and contrast that with the difficulty of getting jobs today. This range is displayed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 "Do you think it's hard to find work around here?"

NO	Well, I wouldnae say so, if you've no got an illness, physical or mental (Darren) I think basically its probably, for a normal person, they can walk down to the Job Centre and get a very basic sort of job, you know, like a driving job, or working in a shop or something. (Gary) Oh aye, very, well there is, there's jobs but, you could walk out and get a job washing dishes today if you really wanted to (Michael)
YES	It must be really hard now, cos...especially young people, they're even going for the like o' shop assistants jobs, there's chance they won't even get that, where at one time, when I was younger in fact, you could leave one job and just walk into another. (Cathy) It is pretty hard to find work around here 'cos most of the places are all shut doon now, there's nothing really much. (Andy) YEAH, it is, its very very difficult. (Freda)

For those who think it is not that difficult to find work in the area there is a common theme to the responses: it is only a *certain* type of job that is easily available. Shop work, bar work, cleaning and security are all mentioned as jobs that are relatively easy to get. Respondents are quick to point out the numerous drawbacks of these types of jobs, that they are often poorly paid, part-time, short-term and with poor work conditions and benefits. Michael, for example, who comments that you could 'get a job washing dishes today', continues with:

> Its all minimum wage now that people want to pay oot, so its all right if you're still living with your parents, it'd be ok, but when you're oot on your ain two feet you cannae just take any job, I mean its gotta be something decent.

Another respondent, Gaynor, shows a sensitivity to the effect of gender, geography and insecurity of tenure that is sometimes missing from government accounts of the causes of unemployment.

> Niamh: Do you think it's hard to find work around here?
> Gaynor: Oh aye, 'X' is bad for trying to…you know it's ok for the likesay caterin' or hotels or something like that, but if you've got qualifications in something else its quite difficult, especially for men I think, I think it's a lot more difficult for men than it is for women, at the moment.
> Niamh: How's that?
> Gaynor: There's no really a lot o' men's jobs as such, like labourers or tar-men or builders, you know they're building the big supermarket, but its limited, you know they're only in work for so long and then they end up losing their job, I think it's a limited thing, whereas women can go into shops or cleanin' and different things, waitressing and things like that…you see men doin some o' that but no very much…I think there's a lot more limitations to a man than there is to a woman…I think it all depends on where you're actually situated, in Glasgow there'd be a lot mair work for a man, but in the likesay this area, it's no…cos there's no all that many jobs goin aboot for men. You know they're building that supermarket at the moment, but that's no a permanent thing, that only gi'es them employment for nine month, a year and then they're back on the dole again, whereas the women that is going for cashiers or whatever, there's going to be some men that get the job but the biggest majority is goin to be women, but that's going to be permanent, if they want it, ken.
> Niamh: Is that the big one up the back?
> Gaynor: Yep, men are ok for building it, but to keep it going it needs the women (laughter).

Gaynor is obviously not unaware of job opportunities in her area, on the contrary she displays knowledge of current and future opportunities, and who these opportunities will suit. However, despite past experiences and what respondents know about their local labour market, respondents generally remain determined in their job searches. The problem is that what respondents know about their local labour market is that if there is demand, it is mostly for poorly paid and insecure jobs (what is euphemistically termed the 'flexible labour market').

4.4   'Flexible Labour'

'Flexible labour' has become a popular descriptive phrase for changes in labour patterns. 'Flexible labour' is often used in descriptions and explanations of the 'top' end of the labour market, where the dominant image is of executives changing job regularly, developing their human capital and selling their skills to the highest bidder. 'Flexible labour', in this scenario, benefits the worker.

'Flexible labour' however, means something very different to the majority of people. At the bottom end of the labour market 'flexible labour' means short term temporary contracts, part time work, poor in-work conditions, no pensions and low pay. This combination of poor conditions and low pay can make it very difficult for claimants to find an entry-level job that generates an income greater than benefits-in other words, it can lead to a 'poverty trap'. Ian, for example, discusses a number of the problems facing claimants at the lower end of the labour market in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 4.2   Ian: Dealing with the 'Flexible Labour Market'

Niamh: So what kind of work do you think is available around here?

Ian: Em, there's part-time, there's quite a lot of part-time bar work, part-time cleaning jobs, part-time driving jobs, taxiing, that's mare or less the only

things that's there, there's nothing you could say you could get in there and that'd be your job for life, 'cos there's nay security

Niamh: How is there no security?

Ian: Even if it was a full time job they don't gi'e you a full contract now, you only get thirteen weeks and then you sign on again, do another thirteen weeks…

Niamh: Why do they do that?

Ian: Well, they wouldn't need to pay your redundancy 'cos you've got to be doing that for two years and then they've got to take you on, so normally they wait until your two years is just about up and then they would pay you off, and then mebbie start you a week or two later, and make you go back around your same cycle of thirteen weeks at a time , and then they've no extra money to fork out…as long as they keep breaking the cycle up…

Niamh: Then they don't have to pay/

Ian: /Any redundancy or pensions for you later on, that's the way they work

Niamh: I've heard other people saying that

Ian: Well the council does that here!

Niamh: Even the council?

Ian: Yeah, yeah

Niamh: For what kind of workers?

Ian: Right across the board, joiners, painters, everything. If they need more its just a thirteen week contract at a time, and that way they don't keep you any longer than they have to. If you were there constantly all the time before your two years was up they would definitely say '*right, there's no enough work for you*' and pay you off, and then they would get you back on the phone mebbie two weeks later, and that's you back in, but your service is broken!"

Ian needs a full time job, but sees mainly part time employment available. He is one of many respondents who describe one of the ways employers exploit the lower end of the labour market, by letting employees go only to rehire them at a later date, to ensure that employees fail to build up eligibility for redundancy or pension

payments. In this type of 'flexible labour' market it is the employer who benefits, not the employee. It would be refreshing to see government put as much emphasis on *employer* responsibilities as they do claimant responsibilities. The problem of part time and temporary contracts is repeated by other respondents, as are concerns about poor conditions, poor prospects, lack of severance pay, unsociable hours and low pay, as described in table 4.3.

Table 4.3 'Flexible labour'

Lack of severance pay.	"I was there [at last job] four year, but every Christmas…they paid you off…you'd be guaranteed to get paid off for three, four weeks and then they sent for you again, just to make sure they werenae givin you your redundancy". (Andy)
Unsociable, long hours.	"I was a security guard. It's not very well paid, I was comin oot wi' about 200 pound a week, I was working from half four at night till nine the next morning…on a Friday I worked from half three till Monday morning at nine without sleepin. They expected me to do that. I admit it I slept, but the first couple o months I was on the site I stayed awake chased people off the land an that, till I thought it was reasonable ok, I could get ma head doon for a few hours." (Billy)
Short term/temporary.	"I have over the last while been a bit disillusioned by the way employment is going because more and more work is becoming very short term, short term contracts, you get a lot more work put onto you then you really ought to have, and I think people are just taking advantage of the situation at the moment by asking people to do more than anyone should be asked to do." (Craig)
Part-time	"If you go into shops and stuff its usually part-time that they want, which is not always good for you but is better for them obviously…because we don't have the same rights as the full time employees, we don't have the same holiday, sick pay…it's just better for them in the long run". (Freda)
Poor prospects	"All these training facilities, how to do CVs, interview techniques…and at the end of the day *'oh Wicks are opening a new store! Get down there, you might get a job!'* Need all this to go get a job at Wicks? You need all this to get a proper job, a long lasting job, a career type job, not to…stack shelves in Tescos." (Keith)
Low Pay	"I'm no wantin to work as a security guard for 80 hours a week for 140 pound, its just not on" (Kevin).

The common theme in this catalogue of problems with flexible labour at the lower end of the market is exploitation; respondents recall times they felt exploited by

employers in the past and declare their resistance to volunteer themselves for more exploitation in the future. The Labour Government has made positive changes to try to improve working conditions for workers at this end of the labour market, for example, by making it more difficult for employers to hire, let go and re-hire staff on a cyclical basis to avoid redundancy pay outs. The government has also acknowledged the poverty trap that can result from the low levels of pay available at the lower end of the labour market. Their policy attempts to deal with this problem include the minimum wage and the Working Families Tax Credit. On the one hand, such measures should be welcomed as attempts to deal with the realities of extreme low levels of pay. Policies under this general theme of 'making work pay' are certainly preferable to constructions of 'dependency' which collapse such problems as poverty traps into notions of a diminished work ethic and other unsustained psychological/moral deficiencies.

However, on the other hand, there are signs that policies such as the WFTC are not so much helping benefit claimants into paid work as helping low income families *already* in work (Webster, 2001). As with early studies on the NDYP (Sunley et al, 2001) it seems that 'making work pay' policies work best in relatively buoyant labour markets and worst in the areas where help is most needed: the spaces that bear the brunt of uneven geographies of economic and welfare restructuring. These uneven geographies sustain seemingly intractable problems that are difficult for governments to deal with, however, constructing problems in limited ways that downplay these geographies is not going to be helpful. 'Making work pay' is certainly addressing the problems of working poverty amongst families, but it does not address the problems claimants face when there is little or no paying work available.

To conclude, in describing their attitudes to work, connections to worlds of work, hope for future prospects of work and knowledge of local labour markets interviewees contest their depiction in dependency discourses as work-shy, work-detached and ignorant of opportunities around them. In the following chapter, interviewees contest the narrow construction of enterprise by showing how enterprise

and benefit claiming are not the mutually exclusive spheres depicted in political discourse.

Chapter Five   Benefits

Chapter five focuses on claimants' experiences of, opinions about and interactions with the benefits system. A diverse range of opinion about the benefits system is expressed, further displaying the heterogeneous nature of the sample of benefit claimants and questioning the existence of a distinct dependency culture. In chapter four I presented evidence that challenges some of the dominant constructions of long-term benefit claimants and their relationship to work, specifically such notions as work-detached and work-shy. Similarly, in chapter five, I present evidence that challenges dominant constructions of long-term benefit claimants and their relationship to benefits, especially the notion that "too generous" benefits induce a life of comfortable passivity and dependency. However, whereas in chapter four there was a relatively high degree of convergence in opinion around themes such as positive attitudes towards work, in this chapter the views expressed on benefits are more diverse, ambiguous and contradictory. The enterprise needed to survive on the low level of income provided by benefits is stressed. In conclusion, I approach the question of benefit claimants and their feelings of entitlement and/or responsibility, a question to the fore of Labour government policy.

Chapter four focussed on long-term benefit claimants and work; this chapter focuses on long-term benefit claimants and benefits. As the general theme of chapter four was to dispel the notion of the work-detached claimant, so the aim of chapter five is to undermine the construction of the "feather-bed nanny state" of benefits.

Structure of the chapter

The chapter is divided into four sections. Section one, headed **refusing claimant stereotypes**, addresses respondents' experiences of the benefits system, as mediated through their dealings with Employment Service and Benefits Agency staff. This section includes respondents' comments on the increasing element of training in the benefits system and their experience and beliefs about the efficacy or otherwise of

these attempts to increase their "employability". In their desire for an enabling service and quality training in an environment of mutual respect respondents contest the stereotypes of benefit scroungers content to stay on the dole.

The aim of section two is to **contest elements of dependency discourses,** specifically that over generous social security benefits mean that benefit claiming is a comfortable lifestyle, and that the lives of claimants is one of passive dependency. Section three, **contesting narrow enterprise discourses,** focuses first on the range of imaginative ways of getting by discussed by respondents. The section goes on to discuss the problem of security for people at the edges of formal labour markets. Between the increasing casualisation of the lower end of the labour market on one hand (see chapter four) and the "residualisation" (Pierson, 1994) of the welfare state on the other, benefit claimants are bearing the brunt of income insecurity. Finally, section four queries (and contains respondents' queries of) the basis of the Government's preoccupation with "**rights and responsibilities**", especially in the policy context of increased targeting and means testing and the erosion of the social insurance principle.

5.1   Refusing claimant stereotypes: respondents' experiences of the benefit system

5.1.1 Encounters with 'street level bureaucrats'[23]: the wish for an enabling service
There is an even spread of opinion about the helpfulness or otherwise of the benefits system across the sample of individual interviewees. Of the thirty respondents interviewed individually, eleven have no complaints in general about the system, six express mixed feelings and twelve are unhappy with their experiences of the system.[24] I was surprised at the extent of happiness with the system expressed, and think this may be in part to do with the pervasiveness of the image of bitter demotivated claimants, angry and resentful of the system. This construct is subscribed to in part by some respondents themselves, such as Larry, who is very

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[23] From Lipsky (1976)
[24] The question did not arise in one interview.

happy with the system, but wonders aloud if he may be unusual in this: "I've had nothing but help from them [benefits staff], they've been very, very good. I don't know if that's contrary to what other people say". A crucial factor in people's happiness or otherwise with the system is their experiences with individual staff members of Job Centres or DSS offices. Respondents often expressed general satisfaction if they feel they have been treated with respect and helped by staff, even if the system itself, in terms of, for example, bureaucracy and paperwork, has been a source of dissatisfaction. Larry continues:

> I've found nothing but help, and I've found the benefits system, not easy to understand, but I've certainly not had any trouble in people willing to sit down and explain things to me.
> Larry

Another respondent expresses her satisfaction with the system through her appreciation of help from an individual staff member.

> I didnae ken how to fill forms in right, I tried my best, and I went up to her and I asked her, I says to her 'I've never filled these forms in before', right, and I says 'I usually get help wi' it', and she says *'oh, you should have telt me and I would have sat and helped you wi' it',* and she started and finished the whole rest of it for me. And eh, the money that was due to me, she got it all sorted for me, that wife.
> Betty

Conversely, those with negative feelings about the system describe particular individuals who they believe treated them without sufficient respect. Those respondents who express mixed feelings about the helpfulness of the system tend to have had good experiences with some members of staff, but not others, "some of the assistants are a lot more helpful than others" (Freda). This finding is consistent with Dean and Taylor-Gooby's 1992 study of benefit claimants where they conclude that "the levels of dissatisfaction with the service are…high and tend to stem less from claimants' expectations with regard to benefit levels than from their expectation about the way in which they ought to be treated" (1992: 105).

A recurring complaint about some staff members is that they do not spend sufficient time with a claimant when they go to sign on or ask for advice. Respondents report feeling that staff want them 'in an out' as quickly as possible.

> Oh, some of them are all right, and some of them its just 'in and oot', you went in and signed on and it was '*right, away you go, that's it*'.
> Andy

> Some of the assistants are a lot more helpful than others and they look down to see, they look at the list of things that you're interested in, and they'll check on their computer to see if they can find anything in your area, some of them will do that and some of them just can't be bothered, they're just there to do their job and they're not really bothered aboot, you know, what they can do for you, they just get you in and get you out again.
> Freda

> I think they quicker they can get you in, the quicker they can get you oot.
> Gaynor

> But at first, what they call your client adviser, for the first year, two year it was like a half hour meeting, and now when I go in for a client adviser meeting, [it takes] five minutes, oot the door.
> Jim

> Nick: I've only been brought in now and again for a sort of progress interview...
> Niamh: And what are the progress interviews like?
> Nick: A joke...they usually last about three minutes.

If claimants really are content to stay on benefits, or even resigned to being on benefits for the foreseeable future, it would seem more likely that they would be pleased that signing on is quick and staff just want them in and out quickly. The respondents above, though, are critical of the lack of time available to them, and express the desire for more time with benefits staff in which their options could be discussed. A related criticism often made is that staff fail to volunteer information about benefits a claimant may be entitled to, but has not claimed. This is suspected to be a deliberate policy on behalf of Employment Service staff to discourage claimants from becoming 'too comfortable' on benefits.

> Benefits wise, I mean I find...if you ask they will tell you, if you don't ask they won't tell you, that's the impression I ever got benefits wise. I mean

I've had people [friends] say '*you're entitled to this, you're entitled to that*' and you go and ask them [Employment Service staff] and then they tell you, but they won't tell you off their own bat what you're entitled to, I've found anyway.

You could be entitled to a lot of things, and they keep on saying there's a lot of unclaimed benefits, I think that's down to a lot, not every Job Centre, but I mean some of the Job Centres won't tell you, unless you ask about benefits they won't say anything to you. So you ask about benefits, they say '*oh yes, you can get blah, blah, blah*'.

'Cos they want you off the broo, they think they're giving you something, and what they think is you're after as many benefits as you can get, you might not want to come off benefits then, it makes you want to stay and just not want to go back to full time employment, which is just totally not true. Jim

It is clear that Jim is aware of the stereotype of the 'scrounger' "after as many benefits as you can get", but tries to refuse it saying that "it is totally not true" that 'too many' benefits leads to a desire to avoid full time employment. Another respondent, Noel, describes similar problems with the lack of information volunteered by staff, and he feels he has proof that this is an explicit official policy with regards to claimants.

Noel: I know one of the girls that is actually, or was on the enquiry desk, because I know her husband, I used to work beside him, and they [staff] are informed that they do not give out information unless it is asked, so they will not tell you that you could be entitled to this, that and the other…that's their policy, that's what they are told.

Niamh: And did you bring this up at this forum? [users forum respondent was invited to sit on]

Noel: Yes
Niamh: And what was the response?

Noel: 'Government policy'…and then you see in the papers and on the TV there's so many millions and billions of unclaimed benefits, but they don't want you to claim. If you look at the forms that they have, the forms don't encourage people to claim because it takes at least an hour to complete most of their forms.

The interesting point about this claim is less whether or not it is true, but more the perception held by some respondents of the adversarial nature of the state. Despite

being labelled *clients* of the Employment *Service*, these respondents report a 'them and us' culture, where it is policy for staff to answer only those questions asked, discourage claims for extra benefits and fail to volunteer information a claimant may be lacking. The principle criticism held by respondents in general of Employment Service or DSS staff is that they assume claimants do not want to work. Secondly, respondents talk about being made to feel as if they are begging with staff acting as if the money is 'coming out of their own pocket'. These two complaints reflect two general stereotypes of benefits claimants: the 'work-shy' and the 'scrounger'. An illustrative sample of quotes expressing these two complaints is shown in the following tables.

Table 5.1 Claimant stereotypes in practice: the 'work-shy'

Some of them says, *do you want a job? Do you ever try for a job? Did you have a look at the board or anything like that?* (Andy).

Some of the people in the Job Centre are quite nice, others can be very off hand, they think *'unemployed...obviously lazy'* (Ian)

They seem to think, *'oh he's no got a job, he's obviously not wantin to work!'* (Kevin).

I think I got the impression from the guy who interviewed me that I was just some lazy bum who just didn't want to work (Freda).

Table 5.2 Claimant stereotypes in practice: the 'scrounger'

You're made to feel like you're begging// you phone them up, and they're arguing with you, as if it was comin' oot of their pockets sort o' thing. (Cathy)

Wi' the way they spoke to you an' that, you felt like you were askin' for it oot o' their wage packet!// It made you feel as if it was getting to a personal stage where you were actually askin for money oot o their pocket. (Gaynor)

For a long time I was having to go every month for a sick note, and that was actually very//its quite...psychologically its actually quite difficult to go and sort of beg a sick note every month, you feel sort of bad about it. (Gary)

Although the previous chapter contained evidence against this construct of the 'lazy' 'work-shy' unemployed, it is clear that respondents feel that the 'faces' of the system (Lipsky's (1976) 'street-level bureaucrats') perceive them as this. There are, of course, individual claimants who may be 'un-cooperative' with staff (just as there are individual workers who are 'un-cooperative' in their workplace), but respondents report feeling that "everybody's tarred with the same brush" (Rose). This is in contrast to respondents themselves, who repeatedly point out that some staff are helpful, whereas others are judgemental and unhelpful (see Table 5.1 above).

This feeling of all being lumped together as lazy unemployed who resist work is related to a further criticism amongst respondents about the impersonal nature of their dealings with staff. Gladys asks "please speak to me as if I am a person, not a blank wall, that's what I feel", and Noel complains "that you're just a number, you're not a person, there's no personal contact as such". Other respondents, however, such as Betty quoted above, report warm feelings about staff they have dealt with. Gary too tells me about one particular staff member he has dealt with, whom he feels treats him with respect:

> I mean the woman I deal with…luckily actually I think she is…the other ones I've spoken to have been a bit clipped or something…maybe its different, I mean she knows me and we've talked a lot, so there is maybe more of a relationship built up, but I do feel that she's got like some sort of warmth, and sort of interest, and I always ask for her.
> Gary

To an extent, respondents tend not to generalise about staff they have dealt with, but tend to feel that they are generalised about as members of the benefit claiming population who allegedly share some attributes, most notably an aversion to work. The problem is that benefit claimants do not form a distinct sub culture, but instead are a heterogeneous group of people with a variety of circumstances and needs, and who, for a variety of reasons, claim benefits.

5.1.2 Teaching enterprise and employability? Experiences of back-to-work training schemes

The lack of appreciation and attention given to the different circumstances of individual claimants can mean that the 'back-to-work' training offered/enforced by the Employment Service is less effective than it might be. Malcolm, for example, recalls when he was made redundant and the lack of personalised guidance he received:

> When I was first made unemployed I thought, right, what I need to do is go to the broo and say 'can you give me someone who can assess me as an individual to tell me the best route forward'…now that didn't happen, so as a result what I've ended up doing is going fae course to course.
> Malcolm

Given that British governments over the last twenty years, be they left or right, have tended to blame unemployment mainly on unemployed people, it is unsurprising that 'training' has been a principle plank of unemployment policy for many years. The respondents recruited through 'Work Connect' have had most experience of government and private/public training schemes, and the bulk of the data in this section comes from these thirteen interviews. The weight of opinion about training tends to be negative, with eight of the thirteen regarding their experiences of training as largely a 'waste of time' (Jim) and 'waste of space' (Noel). There are, however, tentative signs of hope that things are improving with the development of third sector, not-for-profit companies; a couple of respondents, for example, say that, through this course, they are beginning to see a 'light at the end of the tunnel' (Ian and Peter).

Malcolm expands on his criticism of the lack of appreciation paid to differing individual circumstances: "each time these courses come along they tend to take no…no recognition of your own circumstances, what happens is you are hauled out of the broo, lets say, for instance, for a restart interview, and they say we need twelve people for these two courses this week, and you can't give us any good reasons why you shouldn't go on them." The suspicion is that training is more to do with lowering the claimant count ('hauling you off the broo') than assessing an individual's skills deficit and tackling it with well funded training opportunities.

This is a frequently made charge against government training schemes, especially those instigated by the Conservative Governments of the 1980s and 1990s. Training and Enterprise Councils, for example, are described as symbolic of the failure of British government training schemes by Will Hutton who says: "the lion's share of TEC budgets is eaten up by the programmes offered for the unemployed, which are generally poorly funded mechanisms for keeping them off the official register" (Hutton, 1996:189).

Another respondent, Keith, is disparaging of his time spent on a Job Club course some years ago:

> Oh I've had blazing rows with the people that run these courses, blazing. We were in there, and I was trying to put over this point that they've got all these different people, all walks of life, more or less, mostly lower end of the walks of life (laughs), and they're all round this table. *'And now we're going to do CVs'. //*
>
> I said, I tried to put over the point that all these people around the table were all different, all needed different help in a different way. I said, 'this guy over here can't even read or write, and now we're going to be doing spec letters!' You know what I mean? 'This guy over here wants to start up his own business, he's nearly there! What's he going to do spec letters for?' // 'That guy can't even read or write! Don't you think he needs special help? So how's he getting on with his spec letter?' What a waste of time, eh? Keith

Other respondents are similarly dismissive of Job Clubs, and with their endless concentration on drafting and re-drafting CVs and speculative letters to employers, it is difficult to disagree with Jim when he describes them as a 'total waste of space, a total waste if time'. Jim is one of the five respondents who feel the Work Connect course they are currently on is an improvement on their previous experiences of 'training'. He was concerned when the Job Centre initially mentioned the Work Connect course, fearing it might be more of the same: "I said, 'right fair enough, I'll give it a go', but I thought it's just gonna be a Job club thing again, that was an absolute waste of space." His fears were unfounded, to some extent at least. He says about his current course: "I mean sometimes you're sittin doin' nothing, mebbie just lookin' at job things and makin the odd phone call, but at least you're...you feel as if

you're getting somewhere, I think you are". This tentative hope that training courses are getting better is based on three things; the strong connections Work Connect holds with local employers, the trust between claimants and the staff of Work Connect and the relatively high level of funding at the disposal of Work Connect. Work Connect operates as a kind of brokering service between claimants and local employers. They have good relationships with local employers and pro-actively go around various employers, checking available vacancies and 'selling' course attendees.

> When I first came to this place I thought 'oh-oh', I thought, 'this is going to be the same as the Job Club', but they explained, they just kept saying *'you get to tell us what you would like to do, there'll be a person who's your co-ordinator, and what that person's job is, they've got all the business contacts, and they go around and look, and they get you what they call placements, and they can put you into a placement for two days a week for thirteen weeks, or, if you want, if they want to take you on full-time straight away they probably could, they have to arrange everything for you, they take all your details and take them to an employer who they think may be looking for somebody.*
> Jim

These face-to-face contacts between claimants, Work Connect staff and local employers have already resulted in previous course attendees successfully gaining full-time employment, and other respondents are hopeful it will be similarly successful for them.

Peter is one of the most despondent interviewees, he has claimed benefits for ten years and repeatedly refers to himself throughout the interview as 'one of the forgotten'. He is somewhat bitter at his experiences of the benefits system, especially certain changes introduced by the Conservative government: "they changed the name of invalidity benefit, they changed it to Incapacity Benefit, so you got filed into Incapacity Benefit and you were no longer one of the jobless, it was the government juggling figures, that's all it was, and we got filed into Incapacity Benefit and forgotten aboot, that was it, I mean you were forgotten aboot ". Peter is quoted in chapter four as feeling that the bureaucracy of the system itself prevents him from gaining employment. His particular circumstances are described in vignette 5.1.

Vignette 5.1 Negotiating work, training and benefits: Peter's Story

- Peter previously worked as a gamekeeper, landscape gardener and a bus driver before injuring his back in an accident.

- He suffers from severe back problems and has a pain-relieving device attached to his body for the constant delivery of painkillers.

- He has been claiming benefits for over ten years.

- On the last 'back-to-work' course he attended it was suggested he should train to be a secretary, despite having no typing or computing skills or experience, nor desire to work as a secretary.

- He currently expresses the desire to work, but fears that if he appears to be 'too' capable he will lose his eligibility for Incapacity Benefit.

- Even walking his dog regularly has led to him being followed by DSS fraud investigators and accused of illegally working on the side in a local park.

- The charges were dropped after he produced a letter from his doctor stating the need for Peter to exercise regularly as part of his pain-management regime.

- Peter regards the current 'Work Connect' course as his 'last chance'.

As the vignette explains, Peter's previous experience of back-to-work training is not good, and he is understandably anxious about appearing too capable of work, given the reaction to his daily dog-walking. (This story is expanded on in chapter seven). He says "basically your hands are tied, you cannae go out and actively seek employment because if you actively seek employment you're no longer incapable, so therefore you're off benefits". The fact that Peter can attend the Work Connect course and explore possible options with the full knowledge of the DSS and without the fear of losing his benefits has led to him gaining a more hopeful outlook. He feels less anxious in this environment, and seems to have developed a more trusting relationship with the staff at Work Connect than he has had with DSS staff.

Well its been the first course of its type that's come up that allows me to keep my benefit and apply for work // So hopefully something'll come out of it, hopefully…we'll see…we'll just keep working away at it // I've got something to look forward to now, I've got, you know, talking to John [staff member] last week, and he was like *'oh maybe there's different avenues opening up'*…there's mebbie a wee bit of light at the end of the tunnel I suppose, something to look forward to.
Peter

The Work Connect course is better funded than many other training schemes, and this seems to be appreciated by some respondents who are being funded through specific courses, such as their driving test or fork-lift driving test. Ron, for example, is quoted in chapter four because his previous plans to become self-employed were thwarted by the 'enterprise' agency he was working with running out of funding. He seems to feel this Work Connect course is better resourced, and is feeling more confident about his business plans again. However, while this availability of funding is certainly a factor, the nature of the relationships between course attendees and staff is a distinct advantage of this kind of organisation. There is a degree of honesty and realism reported in the Work Connect staff and their dealings with the course attendees which, it is felt, is sometimes lacking in Employment Service staff. The respondents who attend this course get one-to-one meetings with the course co-ordinator, so their individual circumstances and needs are addressed. The staff have nothing to do with the benefits agency or the DSS, so there is no threat of 'benefits being affected' or taken away. Overall, the development of such 'intermediate' not-for-profit agencies seems to be a promising one, and New Labour's enthusiasm for such projects is encouraging.

However, not all respondents are uncritical of the outside third sector Work Connect agency. The company was hired to deliver the New Deal in the area, and two respondents are working on the Environmental Task Force 'option' through the company. As predicted by Jamie Peck (1999a), the Environmental Task Force option of the New Deal is the least popular option amongst claimants, with one respondent complaining "I don't think it should be bloody legal to exploit us like this" (Michael). Michael further believes that the Environmental option he is taking part of is displacing jobs in the local council.

They put us on this for 13 weeks, its five days a week with one half-day job search. We are contracted by the council, and the council's one of the biggest employer's in the region, so we're doing all the council's work so nobody's getting employed, and then somebody leaves the council and they are not replacing them because they've got us doing their jobs anyway.[25]
Michael

Another concern of respondents is that, despite assurances from staff that this course is different and designed around each individual's needs and wants, the real objective of the course is to get people off benefits and into *any* job. This concern is compounded by the discovery that staff are paid bonuses when a course attendee successfully gains employment, as Noel explains:

I think they should be looking at the personal needs of the individual, rather than, as I believe, they're paid on a daily basis per person and they also get paid a bonus if somebody finds work, so is there the incentive there to find quality work, or is it just there to find work?
Noel

This concern echoes the complaint quoted earlier from Keith that 'all this training' is unnecessary for the type of unskilled low paid employment ("stacking shelves in Tesco's") that is available. Respondents want, as Noel puts it, quality work. Phil, another respondent on this course expresses his exasperation at the lack of quality work available with "I don't need trained, I just need a flipping job".

To sum up, there are mixed feelings and experiences of the benefits system and of training reported by respondents. Respondents refuse the stereotype of the work-shy scrounger by expressing their wish for an enabling service. The general conclusion seems to be that if training is of high quality, sufficiently resourced and conducted in an environment of mutual respect between claimants and training providers, then the training is much more likely to be viewed positively and to be of potential benefit to the claimant. Those respondents, however, who are *obliged* to attend 'training' courses, such as the New Deal environmental taskforce option, are resentful of being

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[25] Government advisers, including Richard Layard, argue the displacement effects of active labour market policies such as the New Deal are negligible, although other authors disagree, and the perception of Michael is that such displacement is marked, at least in his local labour market.

forced to do what they describe as "slave labour" (both Michael and Matt used this phrase), and scornful of the notion that such courses will improve their chances of finding gainful employment.

5.2   Contesting elements of dependency discourses: the myths of generosity and passivity

5.2.1 The myth of generosity

When welfare systems become more generous they tend to promote the very behaviour they are designed to alleviate.

If welfare is given to people more generously where there is no father, then women respond to the incentives by being more likely to choose to bring children up on their own.
Geoff Mulgan, 1997:227

That Government ministers and representatives put the words "generous" and "benefits" together is incredible[26]. Benefit levels in Britain are notably lower in comparison to most other European countries (Jones and Novak, 1999), while the cost of living is higher. Linked with the myth of generosity, is the myth of the comfortable life on benefits. It is the allegedly over-generous benefits that have created this feather bed of comfort that discourages claimants from seeking work. This view was more prominent during the Charles Murray-inspired debates of the 1990s (Murray, 1990, 1994), but there is little doubt that a large element of what Levitas (1998) calls the "moral underclass discourse" (MUD) lives on in New Labour language and thinking. The image of a comfortable life on benefits is in stark contrast to Cathy's description of the "generosity" of benefits:

> There was a time a few years ago when I was really quite…this is quite sad when I look back, and there's bound to be other families the same…I didn't have DLA at the time, it was just surviving on what we had and eh…I was ill, so I wasn't eating very much…and don't cry (laughter)…I wasn't eating very much…but do you know what went through my mind at the time? I'm really glad I can't feel hungry because I wouldn't be able to afford the food.

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[26] Ironically, one of the definitions of "generous" in the OED is "unprejudiced", the exact antithesis of what this thesis argues is the construction of the poor by the recent governments.

So the kids would be fed, but if I'd have been hungry there wouldn't have been enough to satisfy me and that's dreadful for anybody to have! Now I can't be the only person sitting here thinking that way, so yeah…I think its quite sad, they definitely don't give you enough.
Cathy

The following long excerpt from the interview with Peter further rubbishes the notion of benefits as generous and the life they permit as comfortable.

Excerpt 5.1   Peter: The myth of 'generosity'

[Talking about unemployment]

Niamh: You mentioned earlier it's soul-destroying.

Peter: Very much so…stir-crazy…I mean I was once close to a nervous breakdown, especially this time of the year[27] // when I stopped work ten years ago, trying for Christmas, and the debt you get yourself into just to try and get your kids something, it really is unbelievable. And it is a trap, it is a trap, because you're on Incapacity Benefit and such like, you cannae get loans through normal channels, you cannae go to the bank cos the back want nothing to do wi you, so you end up going to these companies charging way high interest…

Niamh: Like the Provi or somewhere?

Peter: Oh, there's worse than the Provi! But you've got to go to these people to get your kids…I mean that's me this year, I've got six grandkids, eh, I've just become a great uncle again for the second time, my youngest grandkid is one month and two days old, and Christmas is an expensive time, and its got to the point now that's the way I look at Christmas, you know, everyone's coming in going *'oh, you should have decorations'*, and the last thing I want to see is flippin' decorations because its taken on a different meaning.

When I was working, driving the buses, Christmas was a great thing, but its just got so bad, so bad, because there's nothing I can do. If I want to do something special for them it will cost money, where do I get my money? I don't have it which means I've got to go and borrow it, which means I've got to pay it back, which is just this knock-on effect…

Niamh: Did you get into a lot of debt?

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[27] The interview took place near the end of December.

Peter: Oh yes, oh yes, very much so…its…I mean you know, my family helped me a lot, my mother did, my mother's now retired, she cannae help. My brother's working, he's getting married next year, so there's only so much they can help you out with…I mean my telephone, its cut off, finished with that cos I owed so much to that…things like that //

Its no the fact that it affects me, it's the knock-on effect through the family, it does effect everybody and I know my wife feels it bad as well because when the grandkids come in and their other grandparents have got them things, and they give them 50 pound each, and I'd love to be able to gi'e them fifty pound between the three o them! Do you know what I mean? If I can manage to spend a tenner on each o them I'm laughin and she's [other grandmother] giving them fifty pound each!

And she feels as bad [wife]…and it makes you feel so bloody useless and worthless, I mean really, your self-esteem takes a tumble, you just…I mean for a long time I was crawling out of ma bed at twelve o'clock in the afternoon, I wasnae washin, I wasnae shaving, comin doon the stairs, cup o tea, cigarette, back up the stairs and back to ma bed again, because it just wasnae worth getting up…[gone very quiet]…and it was just, eh…eventually my wife was going nuts, and my mother came in and slapped me about, '*get out of bed!*'…I mean its hard, you just have to pull yourself together…its like coming here [work connect company], [I] forced myself to come here, it's as simple as that
Peter[28]

5.2.2 The myth of 'passivity'

In chapter two, I show how benefit claimants are repeatedly imagined as 'passive', both in political discourse of the passive welfare recipient, and in critical academic discourse of the 'victim' of economic restructuring. Those who are dependent on the labour market for their income, on the other hand, are imagined as 'active'. As chapters two and three argue, a dichotomy is reproduced in political discourse where benefits are associated with dependency and passivity, while work is associated with enterprise and activeness. In this section I argue that this dichotomous construction is inaccurate, and substantiate this argument with evidence of 'active' benefit claiming as reported by respondents. The desire to turn 'popular truths', or received

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[28] Peter features strongly in this chapter. This interview was an intense and moving one, and, without wanting to sound mawkish, I still find it difficult to read his transcript without crying with empathic frustration at his story. He embodies and articulates so many of the themes of the thesis, including

wisdoms, on their head is a running theme in this thesis, and the aim here is to debunk the myth of the passive claimant 'sitting at home' on benefits.

Table 5.3 highlights much of the argument made in this section. The left side of the table is full of the language and images about benefit claiming discussed in chapter two. The picture evoked is this: claimants are never 'actively' claiming, but always 'on' benefits; they are never up and about but always sitting down; they spend all day at home (being passive), so special Action Teams have been created to visit them sitting down at home to persuade them out to work; they aren't enjoying an active life but are 'chained to passive dependency'. The selection of quotes on the right side of the table illustrate that claimants are aware of this stereotype that all they do is sit at home and watch television. They also show how removed from this stereotype is the reality of their everyday lives.

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dependency, struggle and subscription to mainstream values of work and family. His story reappears in chapter seven on social capital.

Table 5.3 Political constructions of 'passivity' versus respondent reports of 'activity'.

Constructions of 'passivity'	Examples of 'activity'
•"We expect everyone who can work to go to work and not sit at home on benefits." (Gordon Brown, 2000c)	•"I'm a community councillor, I'm on the sports council management committee, I coach for the council in schools, and I'm doing an Open University degree as well, just to keep going, rather than sitting around doing nothing." (Noel)
•"[We will] take action to visit, telephone and coach long term unemployed men and women back into the jobs on offer." (Brown, 2000c)	•"I've been in that Job Centre today again, I go in regular anyway and I've applied for at least mebbie three jobs a week." (Ian)
•"[The welfare system] chains people to passive dependency instead of helping them to realise their full potential." (DSS, 1998:9)	•"I need new challenges, I have usually got more than one thing going at a time, so you don't get rusty." (Malcolm)
•"The public will not support a social security system that appears to tell people they can sit in bed all day watching television and drawing benefit."[29]	•"I'm not sitting at home all day watching the TV, I'm doing things, fixing Land Rovers or signing on or doing courses." (Larry)

There are three main ways respondents show their 'activeness'. Firstly, respondents are active in their numerous connections to work, as discussed in the previous chapter. To repeat, twenty nine out of the forty people interviewed in total are currently working, some, like Noel quoted in table 5.3, doing more than one job. Noel describes two voluntary positions and one paid position he is currently committed to, as well as undertaking an Open University degree course. Secondly, respondents are active in term of their connections to education and training. Only four of the thirty respondents interviewed individually have had no experience of training,[30] and of the twenty-six respondents who have had experience of training,

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[29] Unnamed cabinet minister quoted in Powell, 2000, p45

[30] Of course the fact that thirteen of the respondents were recruited through a third sector training company skews this number, however, it is still notable that thirteen of the seventeen respondents

twenty-three have been on more than one course. Indeed one particular respondent, Billy, chooses to do more than one training course, despite obstacles caused by the rules of the benefits system which state he may only do one course at a time.

> Niamh:So you can't do more than one course now?
> Billy: No, I think you can only do one, it would affect my benefit. But I put two courses on my benefit book; if I get a letter through the door I'll just say I'll pay the twenty-four pound.
> Billy

In terms of what political discourse associates with 'activeness', (work and training), it is evident that respondents are very active indeed.

The third way respondents showed evidence of 'activeness' marks a departure from politically accepted notions of what is considered 'active': there is evidence of respondents *actively managing the benefits system.* As discussed previously, respondents talk about realistically assessing their local labour markets: both the scarcity of jobs and the low level of income attainable from those entry-level jobs that are available. Many respondents come to the conclusion that the benefits system is currently their best option in terms of maximising their income for themselves and, if relevant, their families. The concern for these respondents, then, is to manage their relationship with the benefits system in order to protect their benefits. There are various ways respondents attempt to manage this relationship, revolving around respondents managing their performances of their selves as benefit claimants. Respondents discuss this management as variously 'learning the rules', 'playing the game' and keeping the Employment Service staff happy. This might be one potential reason, therefore, for the high incidence of respondents attending (multiple) training courses. An analysis of the motives of the attendees of the Work Connect course illustrates this point.

Only two of the thirteen respondents recruited through the training company are obliged, under the New Deal, to attend their course on a regular basis. The other

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recruited outwith this training company either had previously or are currently attending a training course.

eleven respondents are participating in a European Social Fund initiative, attendance to which is not obligatory. For those respondents who report generally positive impressions of the course, such as Peter and Jim, it is easy to understand why they regularly attend. What is perhaps less understandable is why respondents who express doubts about the usefulness of the course bother attending. Keith offers one explanation, that respondents are protecting their benefits:

> Noel: People get fed up, all these guys you speak to will all be peed off. But why do we come? Why do we come on these things?
>
> Niamh: Why do you?
>
> Noel: Why? Think about it. We're all on benefits; we're protecting our benefits, aren't we? Of course there's not going to be a job at the end of it, one or two people might get lucky, but during the normal course of life one or two get lucky (laughs).
>
> Niamh: Is it compulsory?
>
> Noel: More or less, they say it's not, but it is more or less. Oh yeah, you've got a choice whether to come or not [raises eyebrows in sceptical manner]. It's learning the game innit?

Noel is effectively policing his own behaviour, and doing what he thinks is expected of him by the Employment Service, thereby (in his eyes) safeguarding his benefits. He feels he is 'learning the game' of how to manage one's relationship with the Employment Service, appear to be doing all the right things, and avoid anything which may adversely affect his benefits income. Attendance on the course is not compulsory, and yet for Noel it effectively is; if he refused to attend he could bring unwanted attention to himself from Employment Service staff, and potentially jeopardise his income from benefits.

Noel is actively performing a certain ideal of the 'good' benefit claimant. This management of performance of self is a commonly used strategy for safeguarding benefits. Duncan, the respondent discussed earlier who is working 'on the side', finds it effective to perform the role of the 'ideal' of the quiet, passive claimant:

I find the best policy is to be as polite and courteous and quiet and unassuming as you can possibly be. I find that gets better results than losing your temper.
Duncan

He gives an example of how this approach has worked for him in the past:

This woman [Employment Service staff member] said to me, *'well you don't get the money for the Sunday'*. And I said 'no, I think you'll find that Sunday is recognised as a day of work'// So she said *'oh I didn't know about that'*, and one of her supervisors came over and said 'yeah, yeah', so I could get my claim from the Sunday// It was a bit crafty, but I wasn't aggressive about it, I said, 'no, I think you'll find that's not the case'.
Duncan

As Duncan says, he feels he 'gets better results' by politely pointing out errors rather than aggressively complaining. There is a perception that other claimants fail to treat staff politely, as Gladys describes:

Niamh: Do you think the staff are helpful?
Gladys:　　I think its how you are with them, it isn't their fault, therefore I'm going to negotiate something to help me and they have to deliver the quality of service. But then perhaps not every client, or whatever it is you call human beings these days, would perhaps see it quite like that, they'd go there and demand and swear and shout and what have you. I mean I have to swallow humble pie and negotiate in a different way, and it's…that's what I have to do.

Gladys feels that she has to 'negotiate' her way through the system to maintain her income from benefits, yet other respondents use very different approaches to maintaining their income. Gaynor, for example, describes a time when demanding loudly worked in terms of sorting out a delay in benefit payments.

When one of ma girls was born they kept me going 9 weeks and never gave me a penny, and at the beginning they says it was going to be backdated, and I says, well I got in touch wi' them and says 'what's happening?' *'Oh, you're no getting any payment'*. I says 'what do you mean I'm no getting any payment?' I says 'I've got a kid! She's only about a month old, you'll need to give me something!' *'Em, no'*. My son come up to the office, oh there was a big barney in the office about it, and eventually, I think it was basically about four days later I did get my money, and I go it backdated, and an apology.

Different respondents use different strategies to ensure their income from benefits, from attending courses to deflect attention from Employment Service staff, to performing the role of the quiet, unassuming claimant, to enlisting family help to cause 'a big barney' in the DSS office. What these strategies have in common is that they could be viewed as *active* ways in which respondents are managing their relationship with the benefits system and safeguarding their income from benefits.

Other respondents actively manage their job search. As reported in Vignette 4.2 in the previous chapter Ian is taking on the responsibilities of the Employment Service by physically calling on local companies to advertise the benefits to their company of taking him on under the New Deal. Larry keeps a full record of every stage of his job search every month:

> I have a file and an A4 binder with the months of the year from January through to December, and each month I do it myself on my typewriter, I've got the jobs I applied for, I've either got photocopies or originals of the letters, whether I have got an interview or not…It's the only way I'm comfortable doing it… It means if anyone [Employment Service staff] asks me a question its not really an awkward question. If I've not got the answer I can go and look up this ring binder I have.
> Larry

Keeping a record of jobs applied for is a condition of receiving benefits, and Larry does that and more with his file. Duncan has a (literally) more inventive way of fulfilling this condition:

> When I go in and they go *'so what have you been going for?'* And when I show them my job application card with what I auditioned for…which is fabricated on the Tuesday before I go and sign on…I'm sittin in the bath, havin a fag, thinking 'what did I do last week?'
> Duncan

Again, different respondents are using different strategies to manage their relationship with the Employment Service, to play by the rules or at least to appear to be playing by the rules. What all these various strategies have in common is that they do not fit easily with the political construction of benefit claiming and benefit claimants as passive. 'Passive' does not describe any of the forty long-term benefit claimants I interviewed. The respondents are active in terms of connections to work,

connections to training, and in their management of harnessing scarce resources in a struggle to get by.

5.3   Contesting narrow 'enterprise' discourses

5.3.1 Displaying enterprise: getting by on limited resources

Respondents reported a myriad of 'getting by strategies'. These strategies fall into three groups: supplementing the income received from benefits [for example, from savings, redundancy money or occasional cash-in-hand work]; making the small income from benefits stretch further [for example by shopping at auctions, charity shops, discount food stores or using the LETS] and accessing some form of credit [principally from families, but also from catalogues, credit unions, the Provident and 'money lenders']. Tables 5.4a-c give examples from respondents of all these various strategies.

Table 5.4a 'Getting by' with extra income

Cash in hand work	"I've done millions of different jobs, on the side like". (Michael)
Savings	"I still had some dosh in the bank". (Larry)
Retirement money	"We're basically spending what there is of the lump sum". (Craig)

Table 5.4b 'Getting by' by stretching benefits

Shopping at auctions	"[I] went to an auction and bought a computer for £200". (Duncan)
Saving stamps	"Everything we do pay, we put back a bit every week, for the electric, everything, by stamps at the Post Office". (Keith)
Discount shopping	"We go to Tesco's and Asda…the one in – has this thing at 9pm over the tannoy, 'x amount of brands are now cut by 50%'. (Jim)
Classifieds	"There's an ad in the paper…woman selling a bed…she's spent £595 on it, [it cost me] £100!" (Phil)
'Informal Economy'	"Well I get my tobacco cheap, off this guy". (Darren)
LETS	"I got a car and trailer out o' the LETS, [its] done me 3, 4 months." (Ian)
Charity (Shops)	"The one [jumper] I'm wearing today, it was £3.50 from one of those charity shops up the road".

Table 5.4c 'Getting by' on credit

Credit Union	"Anything that comes up, bills, tv license, you can just go to the Credit Union and draw it oot. You never miss two pounds a week". (Andy)
Family	"I borrow of my sister, Shona, ma big sister". (Betty)
Provident	"If I wanted to buy clothes or…what I tend to do is use the Provident…in fact I think it's the only place that you can actually pay everything off when you're unemployed". (Cathy)
Catalogues	"I'm paying Kay's Catalogue, I got a few things, I got a rug, I got a toaster…so I'm paying that off". (Billy)
Money lenders	"You cannae get loans through normal channels, you cannae go to the bank 'cos the bank want nothing to do wi' you, so you end up going to these companies that are charging way high interest". (Peter)

These tables highlight the wide range of strategies adopted by respondents to try to get by on low incomes. This maximisation of income would, in any other environment, be considered the epitome of enterprise. The examples in these tables correspond with the 'dictionary definition' of enterprise given in chapter three: resourcefulness and imagination.

Rose graphically described the resourcefulness she needed when at her lowest ebb:

> Since the row with my husband, when I was left with just minimum benefits, and I'd also taken on debt to the income I'd had before he left, I was at the

point where I had an eviction notice on the house, Sherriff's office warrant on my furniture and was lifting money on my visa to feed the dog, the dog got priority by the way, I was a size sixteen in January, I'm an eight now. /// That is the worst I've ever experienced in my life. I was going between soup kitchens in mental health places where it was free, friends, without saying, were taking me out to lunch, and my next door neighbour, I will never ever forget would take fifty pence a night to Safeway and get me a loaf, maybe a cold bit of meat or something, that kept me going. /// [In Safeways] I was taking the reduced stickers off the things that were reduced and putting them on the things I needed before I got to the cash desk, that is how low I had to go. It wasnae exactly stealing, but I had to do that…the reduced stickers at 6, 10, 16 pence and I put them on the milk which I needed as an essential. So I've been there, done that, got the t-shirt, and I ain't going back for nobody, its no worth it.
Rose

The enterprise, resilience and inventiveness of Rose is evident in her description of how she managed to cope, but it is also clear that she remembers this time as the 'worst ' in her life. I am not trying to deny the hardship endured by people trying to get by on fifty pounds a week, nor romanticise the inventiveness necessary to eke out a living on this level of income. What I think is important, though, is to highlight the incongruity of the dominant images of benefit claimants as people who lack initiative, enterprise, 'get up and go'.

None of this is to suggest that respondents find getting by easy. Respondents repeatedly stress that benefit levels are 'just enough to survive'. Cathy says "you're only actually given enough to survive", while Gaynor says "you're just surviving from one day to the next". Freda claims "it's just obviously what they think you can survive on, fifty pounds a week". Just surviving requires the inventiveness and resourcefulness described above. Two other respondents feel that they fail to manage 'getting by'; when I asked Kevin how he manages to get by he replied "struggling badly", to the same question Phil replied "I can't, I owe people money". And yet Peter, in some way, sums up the general feelings expressed by respondents in reply to this question on getting by when he says "well this is the problem, you've just got to get by".

5.3.2 The social (in)security system?

Having said this, there is some evidence from a number of respondents that they (or their partners) find the benefits system a *relatively* more secure form of income than that from the majority of entry-level jobs available. The Government promotes "work for those who can, security for those who cannot", with work constructed as the best route to security: "for both individuals and families, paid work is the most secure means of averting poverty and dependence"(DSS, 1998:23).

Yet for some respondents, it is their benefit that provides them and their families with security of income.

> It's the security of knowing, I'll say to my wife 'look if you just take it easy, go to Tesco's on this day, you know this is the day my broo money gets paid in'…The security is knowing that if we can just hold back and keep it tight I'll get that 200 pound and that'll pay Peter, and we'll pay Paul the following week.
> Duncan

Another respondent, Ron, has had previous experience of self-employment which ended badly after six months. He says his wife is anxious about his current plans to try self-employment again:

> Niamh:Do you think there's any security in benefits?
>
> Ron: There is aye, definitely. I mean my wife, she's afraid of me getting a job, like I said, because she ends up worse off and there's nothing she can do about it, because you sittin on the benefit, you know you're getting the money every week. It's enough to live on, don't get me wrong, it is enough to live on and no do much else…but I'd definitely say she's more comfortable wi' me on benefit than she is wi' me working because there's less risk for her, she knows the money's coming in no matter what.

Starting your own business is a risky pursuit (McDonald, 1991, 1994, 1996). Ron and his family have experience of the financial difficulties that ensue when a small business folds, so it perhaps understandable that income from benefits is viewed by his wife as the least risky option. However, this issue of the security or insecurity of income from benefits is more complex. Other respondents talk about their fear of

their claiming routine being broken. In some cases it took considerable time and effort for benefits to be sorted out[31], and there is a concern amongst some respondents to avoid anything that may 'rock the boat' and potentially lose them their benefits. Keith speaks of the 'terror' caused by letters from the Employment Service warning that benefits may be affected if a certain course of action is not taken:

> This thing about *'affecting your benefits', 'if you don't do this it will affect your benefits'*…the thought of anything affecting your benefits [pulls horrified face]…it's terror, terror, it is real terror, you feel it inside you. Start looking at railway bridges, eh? (laughs rueful laugh).

For Keith, benefits are not a secure form of income, but one that is under constant threat of removal. Keith is 59, sceptical of his chances of finding gainful employment and anxious to the point of ill health that his source of income is insecure. Gaynor describes the adversarial nature of her dealings with the Employment Service in her explanation of why she finds no security in benefits:

> Niamh: Do you think they [benefits] provide security in any way?
>
> Gaynor: No, no, no, never, na, there's no way they can offer me any kind of security…its ridiculous what lengths you've got to go to for to try and get through to them and their answer is all the time *'there's always somebody worse off than you', 'there's somebody in the line before you, and you'll have to wait', 'there's nothing we can do about it'*".

Insecurity is a common characteristic of both the entry level labour market and the benefits system. Duncan and Ron, above, comment on the security of benefits, but only in relation to the insecurity they have both experienced in the job market. In both interviews they comment on the pressures they feel from the Employment Service to get off benefits. These respondents, and others, do not describe their experiences of work as "the most secure means of averting poverty" as the Green Paper claims, but neither do they find security in the benefits system. Instead

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[31] One respondent, for example, has a complex arrangement where he gets most of his benefits from Sweden (because he worked there for a long period) and the rest of his benefits from Britain.

insecurity prevails, in the entitlement to benefits, in the jobs previously done, in currently available jobs, in levels of income and in future guarantees of income.

5.4   Rights and responsibilities in the changing welfare state

The themes of entitlement and responsibility in benefit claiming, so popular in New Labour discourse, were difficult themes to broach with respondents. When I asked respondents "do you feel entitled to benefits?" I felt awkward, as if I was implying that they should not feel entitled. Why should benefit claimants, by definition entitled to the benefits they receive, not feel entitled to those benefits? Questions about the responsibilities benefit claiming entail were even less well received or grasped[32]. Nonetheless, some common themes did emerge in the discussions around benefit, entitlement and responsibility. The most common reaction amongst those respondents who say they do feel entitled to their benefits is their linking of their current entitlement to their previous work done and tax paid. These respondents do not feel they get "something for nothing" from the welfare state, but "something for the years I paid tax".

Niamh: What do you think about if you're entitled to claim?
Anthony: Well I worked all my days, and I think I'm entitled to something back.

Niamh: Do you feel entitled to it?
Freda: Yeah, I do, I think so, although I haven't, you know, been working constantly since I left school, I have worked throughout university, so yeah, I do feel entitled to it.

Glenda: I don't feel that, because I'm unemployed at the moment that I owe anybody or the government any sort of real favour, I contributed towards that government as soon as I left school.

Niamh: Do you feel entitled to it?

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[32] In retrospect, I should have tried to access these questions in a more subtle way, perhaps without using the word 'responsibility'.

Jim: The benefit? Well, yeah, as I say, I mean I worked most of my life, I've paid my dues, so I feel I've earned it in a way, I don't want to be on it all my working life, I'd rather be off it and into full time, if I can get it.

Contribution-based unemployment benefit has been systematically reduced since 1979. Contribution based job seeker's allowance (as it has been called since October 1996) is payable only for six months. None of the respondents is claiming a contribution-based benefit. Means testing is now the norm, and means testing removes the link between contributions and entitlement. Nonetheless, respondents continue to make the link in their heads and justify their current claiming by referring to their previous work, to the 'dues' the have paid.

However, there are respondents who seem not to feel entirely entitled to their benefits. Gary, the respondent referred to earlier whose benefits come from Sweden and Britain, reports feelings of guilt about the benefits he gets:

Niamh:Do you feel entitled to claim?

Gary: Yeah, I mean…em…I have sometimes thought about that…I do have guilt about it, because in one sense we do have some savings and I've sometimes thought that it's immoral to be claiming when we do have enough to live on…it's a sort of a struggle that I have.

Yet Gary too attempts to assuage these feelings of guilt by appealing to the work he did in Sweden, and the taxes he paid to the pension scheme there:

But then again in Sweden I paid huge amounts of money to this pension scheme or whatever, so, ok so I've probably been paid back by the system more than I paid in, but, yeah it does trouble me, but I always try to think well, hopefully one day I'll be back into the system and I'll be paying back into it again.

Gary thinks about entitlement in terms of contributions to 'the system', both previous taxes he has paid and future taxes he hopes to pay. Even though he expresses concerns and doubts about his entitlement, he clearly links the issue of entitlement with contribution. However, these linkages are being eroded as the welfare system

moves further away from insurance based principles towards greater targeting and means testing.

To summarise, while the opinions attitudes and experiences around work expressed in the previous chapter were generally in a similar (positive) direction, the accounts of the benefits system in this chapter are more ambivalent. For some, benefits represent their entitlement after previous years of tax-paying work, even though their benefits are means-tested and not related to national insurance contributions. For some, social security benefits represent a more secure form of income than is available from the increasingly casualised lower end of the 'flexible' labour market. For others, there is little or no sense of security gained from their benefits income. However, there are common themes amongst this ambivalence. Respondents contest the narrow economistic construction of dominant enterprise discourses by using a wide range of imaginative ways of getting by on low incomes. They also contest elements of dependency discourses. Their experience of living on benefits is not one of comfortable passivity. Benefits are not over-generous and getting by on benefits (notwithstanding the enterprise this requires) is difficult and has led to debt problems for some respondents. Neither do respondents' accounts of protecting their income from benefits fit with political constructions of claimants' passivity. Respondents further refuse their stereotype in their wish for an enabling service, where quality training options are available and conducted in an environment of mutual respect.

Constructions of a dependency culture of passive work-shy claimants, detached from work and enterprise, do not hold up when the lived experiences of benefit claiming are examined. The danger is that such constructions might exacerbate problems faced by some claimants including feelings of insecurity or lack of confidence or low status. Claimants, as experts of their own lives, are only too aware of their position in popular culture as 'idle scroungers'. It should be the responsibility of government to counteract such negative stereotypes of its citizens, or at least to not contribute to their strength by appealing to them as justifications for 'targeting' public spending.

The move towards ever more targeting has been interpreted as part of the continuing *individualisation* of social policy (Clasen and Erskine, 1998). Indeed, the overall direction of both enterprise and dependency discourses is towards the individualisation of policy problems. Constructing the policy problem as one of benefit dependency limits the policy solution to supply-side individualising active labour market policies. Notwithstanding the relatively small amount of debate on 'social enterprise', enterprise discourses are also predominantly individualising discourses, where the point of the project is to 'redeem the self' through education and business appreciation. However, as respondents refuse the dichotomous binary between dependency and enterprise, so they contest the individualising thrust of these discourses. The next two chapters on LETS and social capital focus on the (potential) creation of social spaces that refuse to conform to these individualising and mutually exclusive ways of thinking. In contrast to their portrayal in political discourse, the spaces of benefits and work, of enterprise and dependency in their broadest sense, are intermingling and mutually pervious, not separate and mutually exclusive. LETS can be located within this in-between space, and are the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter Six   Local Exchange Trading Systems

Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS) are membership-based organisations where members buy goods and services from each other using a local currency. Although local currencies have a long history, their particular manifestation in the form of LETS is around twenty years old, and has been present in the UK for the last decade. This chapter is based on the subset of respondents who are members of their local LETS. The aim of the chapter is to explore LETS as a space between dependency and enterprise, partly to continue the project of undermining the dependency/enterprise dichotomy, but also to highlight alternative discourses of mutuality and interdependency. It is argued that, while by no means a panacea for problems of poor people and poor places, LETS members actively create a space where potentially inclusive (and broadly conceived) social and economic networks can be accessed, contributed to and reproduced.

LETS are the lens which bring the themes of this study into sharper focus and make visible different themes that have so far been lurking in the background. The previous four chapters have been broadly concerned with the discourses of dependency, enterprise, work and benefits as constructed by the government through policy. The aim has been to deconstruct these discourses and contest them using narratives from those labelled un-enterprising, dependent, non-working benefit claimants. In this chapter, I argue that LETS are examples of spaces that deny the dichotomous binaries of work or benefits, enterprise or dependency. Instead, LETS demonstrate the intermingling of these worlds, their mutual perviousness. In this way, perhaps LETS represent a 'third space' where broader knowledges of the nature of 'work' and its 'value' are produced.

Structure of the chapter

The chapter is organised around five sections. The first section **introduces LETS** and explains the choice of LETS as a lens for the study. The rest of the chapter aims

to muddy the discursive waters of the dependency/enterprise dichotomy. Section two focuses on the relationship between **LETS and work**. Respondents discuss using LETS as a route to 'formal' paid employment and as a way of maintaining skills. At the same time, though, respondents challenge narrow economistic conceptions of (the value of) work in their LETS involvement. Section three focuses on the relationship between **LETS and benefits**, highlighting the gap between 'official' and 'effective' policy responses to such enterprises. The notion of LETS as a space between dependency and enterprise is explored in section four, which draws on respondents' accounts of the **interdependency and inclusiveness** of LETS. Finally, section five concentrates on **(self) confidence**, a theme high on the agendas of respondents. This section returns to the notion of an expanded discourse of work, which includes and celebrates work's non-economistic elements.

6.1   LETS: what are they and why research them?

Local exchange trading systems are community organisations where members trade goods and services using an 'invented' local currency. The currency is given a name with some local significance (for example bobbins in Manchester, reekies in Edinburgh), thus signifying the local geography of the system at the outset[33] (Lee, 1996). A directory is printed every few months which lists the members names, telephone numbers and 'wants and offers' of goods and services. In a simple transaction the buyer of a good or service finds a seller in the directory, contacts them, negotiates a price, writes a cheque for that amount which subsequently gets sent to a central administrator who credits the seller's account and debits the buyer's account on the system computer.

Michael Linton is credited with starting the first LETS in the early 1980s in the Comox Valley, British Columbia, following the closure of a large local employer and subsequent economic downturn. In 1985 Linton spoke at 'The Other Economic Summit' (TOES) in Britain, a summit that explores new 'alternative' economics that

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[33] For this reason, the LETS currency is anonymised in this chapter as 'credits'.

was initiated as a response to the annual G8 summits (Linton, 1986). The first LETS in Britain was established that year in Norwich, although the LETS 'phenomenon' did not spread throughout the country until the early 1990s. In 1996, there was estimated to be over four hundred LETS in Britain (Lee, 1996).

The spread of LETS around the country prompted much media and academic interest. Newspapers and magazines carried stories of LETS members exchanging babysitting for gardening services; special editions of academic journals were published examining various aspects of LETS (Environment and Planning, A, 1996, volume 28). The academic interest in LETS has focussed on a number of issues, most commonly the potential of LETS to help 'combat' unemployment and 'social exclusion' (Williams, 1996 a, b), LETS as a response to 'globalisation' (Pacione, 1997a, b) and LETS as 'community development' tools (Williams, 1996c-e, 1997; Seyfang, 1997). Other commentators have focussed on the politics of LETS. Peter North argues that LETS represent 'resistant' spaces where members use multiple alternative notions of money and exchange (North, 1999). Roger Lee has examined LETS as examples of the social construction of local economic geographies, with particular interest in their role in facilitating alternative constructions of 'value', and the implications of this for the formation of particular moral economic geographies (Lee, 1996, 1999).

Lee (1996) argues that the very fact that there was such a sudden intensive media interest in LETS shows the dominance of the construction of the current monetary systems as *the* economy (1996). Lee's concern with the constructed nature of 'the economic' and economic geographies echoes Gibson-Grahams' (1996) argument about the construction of 'Capitalism' as all-powerful and inevitable. Expanding on the argument of social construction, Lee writes that economic geographies:

> ...are not self-generated; they cannot be naturalised. Rather, they grow simultaneously out of and into a much wider set of processes: the formation of identity, of communication, of what Elias (1978) refers to as 'figurations'- webs of dynamic interdependence between people, stemming from the inseparability of individuals from society, of workable and acceptable (by

force if necessary) systems of rationality and evaluation from social reproduction.
Lee, 1996:1381-2

LETS, as socially constructed local economic geographies, are spaces where these 'webs of dynamic interdependence between people' are weaved. LETS offer the opportunity to study dependency and enterprise in a different setting. Members *depend* on each other in a LETS; LETS are examples of social *enterprises*; LETS members *work* to earn credits, and the members I interviewed are all long term *benefit* claimants. The topics of the previous four chapters are together in microcosm in a LETS, and a case study of LETS assists in the tasks of examining dominant and exploring alternative discourses.

6.2 LETS and work

6.2.1 LETS as a practice of 'proper work' and route to 'formal' paid employment

The LETS members interviewed all do various types of work on the LETS; thus voluntarily maintaining connections to worlds of work. That these members do such work, to the most part with pleasure, troubles the common notion that long term benefit claiming leads to an erosion of 'work-readiness' or employability (see chapter four). In fact, LETS members report benefits from their LETS activities including skills maintenance and increased routes to paid employment, issues both high on the government's welfare to work agenda. Skilled manual LETS members talk of the opportunities available on the scheme to maintain their skills:

> I worked the LETS and eh…we cleaned the building, put cement in the cracks, maintaining the building and doing wee jobs here and there, so I earned a couple more credits doing that.
> Billy

> Niamh: So what kind of trading have you done?
> Ian: Eh…oh I've done quite a lot, I've done some brickwork for Megan, built a big brick wall for them, eh…done fencing, eh…wee bit o general labouring, slating, done a lot of slating up here on the roof [of LETS building], and decorating of course.

A graduate member of the LETS has also had the recent opportunity to use skills learnt on a college course:

> At the moment they're starting up a new (…) it's a furniture kind of thing, where they do up furniture, you know, with stencilling and stuff like that, and it's a new sort of venture that LETS have gotten into, and I studied graphic design when I left school. I did that for a couple of years, so I have to design a logo for them (…) I've got an interview with the guy next week, he wants to see some sort of ideas that I've come up with, so that's one thing I'm involved in at the moment.
> Freda

The language used by these respondents suggests that they think of the work they do on the LETS in a serious way in contrast to the 'middle class hobby' label occasionally attached to these systems. Billy speaks about 'earning' for the work done; Ian, who is a big consumer on the LETS in terms of goods bought, tells me first about the work he has done when I ask him about trading and Freda, who has been commissioned to design a logo for a new off-shoot of the LETS, speaks about an up-coming 'interview' about the job. These members do not conceive of the LETS as a trivial past time, but as a site of 'proper' work and consumption.

Another member, who has experienced mental health problems speaks about work he has done for the LETS:

> Well, I've got to know people by going into the office and volunteering, and answering the phone, and I started slowly to make contact with people, em…I'm getting more involved with it, I mean, I was…[name of area] Enterprise had this conference in Dundee, it was 'Global Change, Local Challenge' or something, so I went to that, kind of representing LETS
> Gary

Gary has a slightly different conception of the work he does on the LETS: he talks about 'volunteering' in the office, even though he receives LETS credits for this work. However, this is not to suggest a denigration of the importance of the work as Gary elsewhere in the interview talks about the value of volunteering and the 'job-satisfaction' he has gained through volunteer work (see quotes from Gary in chapters four and five). Further, Gary's participation in a local enterprise company's

conference on behalf of LETS is testament to the intermingling of the spaces of volunteering, work and enterprise.

Other members talked about LETS as routes to paid employment. I asked Craig about his interest in LETS, and he says "I joined recently (...) because I had become interested in it (...) plus it looked good on my CV when I was applying for jobs". Gary, again, talks about using LETS as a way to build up references for future employers. He criticises the strict rules of the Benefits Agency on permissible levels of voluntary work, as he feels unable to build up references through voluntary work opportunities. Gary has spent most of his working life in Sweden, and is concerned that potential employers will seek references from Britain, yet his opportunities for securing these references are lessened by the bureaucracy of the system itself:

> I just feel you have to bend the rules a bit if you are going to get back into working life, just to build up references and things like that. I mean if I get an application form I have to put these people in Sweden down, you know, as references, you know, who's going to phone up Sweden? And I have to start to get some sort of references if I'm going to get back into the working life here in this country, but they [BA] make it so difficult for you, and I think this LETS system is one way out of that, you know, you can start to ease yourself back into working life and taking responsibility for things
> Gary

Gary feels limited in his benefit claiming, and frustrated in his attempts to do much voluntary work, but in LETS he sees a potentially liberating space, one where there is a 'way out' of the situation he finds himself in. Gary also invokes a very 'New Labour' discursive connection between work and responsibility. At the same time, though, respondents evoke a broader conception of 'work' and its benefits through their LETS involvement.

6.2.2 Challenging narrow conceptions of 'work as paid employment'
While respondents discuss their LETS involvement as a route to 'formal' paid employment, they also imagine their LETS work in broader senses. This broader construction of work may be facilitated by the 'non-cash' nature of most LETS work.

Craig, for example, describes how he sometimes feels differently about work he does on the LETS compared to 'formal' work:

> Niamh:Do you feel differently about work you've done for credits and work you've done for cash?
>
> Craig: Yeah, I do, I do. I feel I've got more of a duty to follow things up than if I was just paid in cash. In a sort of formal basis you think at the end of the thing, the contract, that it's…you don't need to bother about it whereas you still might want to find out what's happened after the event with someone that you've worked for for credits, 'cos you've had contact with them, you know that they're in a similar economic position perhaps to you, or have had similar life challenges as yourself, and you feel a bit of empathy with them

Cathy also evokes this sense of LETS allowing a space for the re-valuing of work.

> You know, instead of using money as such, and an awful lot of people these days do not have money, so the principle of LETS is absolutely brilliant, because if I need somebody to come and dig my garden, and I might do a bit of babysitting for somebody else, and there's no money changed hands, which is really good...
>
> Whereas, just out of curiosity, I got someone to come and have a wee look at my front garden...which isn't much, there's not very much there...to ask how much it would cost to do the garden, and they quoted something like between eighty and a hundred pounds, just to do that wee patch of garden! Yet through the LETS somebody can come, maybe work for a couple of hours doing it, and I'll maybe work for a couple of hours for somebody else, you know, and that's it! So it's the way you go, so in that respect it's a great thing
> Cathy

The notion that a positive aspect of LETS work is that 'no money changed hands' is almost the opposite of conventional economic constructions of work and value. Further, Craig suggests LETS work is more open to the incorporation of personal and social attributes such as empathy than work done for cash. This notion that LETS members create a space where conventional (limited) constructions of work are 'recast' has also been suggested by other studies of LETS (Aldridge et al, 2001). This theme is expanded in section 6.4 below.

6.3   LETS and benefits

6.3.1 'Official' policy responses

The area of LETS work and credits and how these affect a claimant's benefits is an ambiguous one. The government response to LETS has been mixed, with some departments welcoming LETS as social initiatives in their policy documents, but other departments making more sceptical noises. During his brief reign Frank Field, for example, expressed the concern that LETS may provide ways in which claimant's lives are made more 'comfortable', thus reducing the incentive to find 'work' and prolonging the length of time on benefits. Strictly speaking, LETS earnings in the form of credits should be declared to the relevant authority, be it the Employment Service or Benefits Agency. In a letter to Keith Raffan MSP, following a request for clarification on the matter of LETS and benefits, the Department of Social Security reply:

> Participation in LETS is…regarded as work for the purposes of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and other income-related benefits, such as Income Support, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. Participants are treated as self-employed earners and credits obtained are treated as payment for the goods or services provided.
>
> Any credits received as a result of LETS-related activity will be treated as earnings (or capital, depending of the circumstances of each case).

This response reinforces the argument of chapter three that it is a very narrow conception of enterprise that government promotes and constructs. While the government line on LETS is softening, it is telling that the initial response was sceptical. It is difficult to imagine such inventiveness and initiative in the private sector being anything other than warmly welcomed by the government. To a certain extent, though, respondents are more affected by what can be called the 'effective policy response'.

6.3.2 'Effective' policy response

As Lipsky's (1976) theory of 'street-level bureaucracy' foregrounds, the 'official policy' from a government department is not necessarily the 'effective policy' as

carried out by front line policy implementation staff. Gary seems to believe that the Benefits Agency pay little attention to LETS work, compared to their reaction when sterling is involved:

> When you're on benefits, as soon as you start trading or doing something with real money, of course the benefits officer, you know, would jump on you like a tonne of bricks, it's [LETS] a sort of soft way of getting back into it.
> Gary

Other LETS members tell similar stories of how their LETS 'savings' are joked about at the DSS office:

> [LETS has] just been great, and I've still got credits to spare, well I make credits in the café everyday anyway, so I build up all the time. That's what I says to the social security once, they says, *'have you any savings?'*, I says 'aye'. They says, *'What, what savings have you got?'* I says, 'I can gie you plenty o credits' (laughs). I says 'I've got a chequebook!' The fella just laughed, he looked at it and says *'What's that?'* I says, 'It's LETS', I says, 'that's my chequebook, for to spend ma credits!' (laughs).
> Gaynor

The member of staff who dealt with Gaynor was not familiar with LETS, and was not concerned with the possibility that Gaynor's benefits should be affected by her LETS participation. However, it is not just ignorance of LETS that influences the 'effective policy' line. The *discretion* of certain members of staff is important in this area of whether or not benefits are 'affected' (meaning reduced) by LETS earnings. It is commonly believed that the local benefits office manager is aware of, and supportive of, LETS and thus has decided to 'turn a blind eye' to the LETS earnings of benefit claimants. A LETS development worker I interviewed expanded on this point:

> We are, in the X area, we are quite fortunate in that the local, the manager of the local benefits office is…I don't know whether she's pro-LETS, but she does understand how getting involved in various activities that LETS can lead you to build up your confidence and increase your work experience, and so she thinks it's a good idea for people who aren't working to get involved in…

em…she's also aware that anything you do, you're meant to declare it and all the rest of it, but she knows that LETS is happening, but she's kind of officially turning a blind eye to it, she doesn't see anything to be gained by hassling people who are earning credits through the LETS system, so she's prepared to let it go. She knows that we're here, we know that they're there and eh, I mean there's local, there's different policies for different local areas, we're fortunate in that respect.
Alex

Social Security policy in the UK is a 'reserved matter', an area of policy that is controlled from Westminster rather than devolved to the Scottish Parliament. When Alex talks about 'different policies for different local areas', he is referring to what I call above the 'effective policy' line. It is Alex's belief, substantiated by the experiences of claimant respondents, that the effective policy in that area is decided by the local manager, not Westminster.

Having said all this, what is perhaps most surprising about the LETS member respondents is how little concerned they seem to be about the potential effect their LETS participation may have on their benefits. Respondents frequently discussed LETS and work, but seldom LETS and benefits. It is possible that most thought, like Gary, that the authorities would not be interested in such activities. Alex has done extensive work developing LETS in low-income areas, and he too expresses his surprise at the infrequency of questions on this subject:

> I was surprised…the small number of people who ask questions about LETS and benefits. There were far less people who brought up the subject than I thought would, it was mostly professionals and mostly workers who raised the subject of LETS and benefits, there weren't many punters that brought it up.
> Alex

Alex himself did not pro-actively bring up the issue with members, it was his job to encourage people to join LETS and he did not wish to discourage those he thought might gain most from LETS membership by suggesting their benefit may be at risk. He says he "was just letting a sleeping dog lie". He explains his reluctance to approach the local benefits office and clarify the 'official position' as follows:

If you're going to raise the subject of LETS with the local office, you could pick the wrong time to raise the subject with them. They may have been handed instructions from on high to cut the number of people who are signing on, concentrate on cutting the number of people who are claiming jobseekers allowance for a couple of months, em, and as such the local office may see LETS, being involved in LETS as an opportunity to harass them off the books.

On the other hand you could be lucky and approach them at a time when they don't have any kind of pressures on them and they might say, *'Oh, aye, it's a good idea, it does increase people's social contacts and all the rest of it, and yeah, its pretty complicated for us to work out how to value what people do to earn a credit does in terms of their benefit, so yeah, we don't want to know'.* It can go either way.
Alex

This is a perception of street level bureaucracy creating different 'effective policy' depending on the differing pressures they may be under at any one time. But as Alex himself point out, this concern with the reaction of benefits staff to LETS trading is largely the preserve of professional welfare rights workers and other LETS development workers. Respondents who are claimants and LETS members tend not to express such concerns. A possible explanation for this is that respondents viewed the work done on the LETS as labour, but did not seriously view the credits earned for the labour as income, at least, not as income that would jeopardise their benefits.

6.4   LETS as a space of interdependency and inclusiveness

Of course, LETS are much more than vehicles for respondents to perform social practices that are complicit with dominant values of work. This section contains evidence of the production of alternative discourses and the construction of local economic geographies through the various processes of LETS membership. Peter North has written about "the extent to which advocates of LETS as a resistant space have developed a micropolitical tool that enables the realisation of resistant conceptions of money and exchange, of livelihood, community and cooperation" (1999: 69). The particular advocates of LETS North writes about are self-professed

anarchist members, and the question arises whether these resistant conceptions are also created by LETS members who would not fit this bill.

In this section I am less concerned with 'self-consciously' resistant/alternative/anti-capitalist discourses such as those described by Peter North; more with what arises through members going about their everyday business. That is, I am not so interested in the self-professed anarchist choosing to join LETS as an expression of their politicised selves, not least because none of the respondents described their LETS involvement in these terms. Also, the seeming mundanity or ordinariness of respondents' LETS involvement highlights the ubiquity of the construction of alternative discourses and economic geographies (Gibson-Graham, 1996). Imagining and enacting non-capitalist economic transactions is not only the preserve of avowed anti-capitalists. 'Ordinary' 'punters', as Alex calls the respondents above, comprise and construct a vibrant local economic geography within which the values of mutuality, reciprocity, participation and inclusiveness among others, are promoted.

6.4.1 Interdependency

Respondents report a different atmosphere around their LETS transactions that at first seems somewhat elusive and difficult to pin down. Members talk about a warm 'feel-good' factor that arises from their LETS participation.[34]

> I've made a lot o friends through the LETS. I could actually go down the town and there will be somebody there I know, and it's a nice feeling, ken, it's a nice feeling.
> Billy

> They have em…social events, and that brings quite a few of the LETS people together, you're not just talking to someone on the other end of the phone and you don't know what they look like or anything like that. Like the trade fairs, they have them quite regularly, and people can maybe look up the people they've actually spoken to on the phone, at the trade fair. Or they have ceilidhs, really big social nights, and they're wonderful, really great, they

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[34] This 'feel-good' feeling has been remarked upon in other LETS studies, see Seyfang (1997).

always have a live band and everybody has a great time at the ceilidhs. The whole system to me, I think it's wonderful.
Cathy

These 'nice feelings' that are about 'more than an exchange of trades' are, on closer inspection, commonly attributed to the importance of the 'human' aspect of the system. Respondents repeatedly stress the prime importance of *people* to the system, which is perhaps less obvious than it first seems if we contrast it to that which is of prime importance to other economic geographies, such as money to the finance industry (Leyshon and Thrift, 1995, 1996; Martin, 1999). Gladys, for example, stresses the importance of the diverse group of people that comprise the LETS:

Gladys: The whole concept of LETS is brilliant…[it] takes away any stigma that's attached, or could be attached to being employed or unemployed because it attracts a multi, diverse sort of group of people, you know, there's employed people, unemployed people, there's professionals, unprofessionals, there's a whole mixture, a whole bag of people go there and I think that's a lovely human thing, and that's just my opinion.

Niamh:So that mixture of people is one of the things you like about the LETS?

Gladys: Mixture of people, yeah…of human beings…and…there's no feeling of class structure there, people are just being people, they're being human beings basically, and I'm ok with that. I feel its em…an appropriate step towards what the government would call community care, it's what would have happened in our mother's mother's time, if you know what I mean…people just looking out for each other…em…and that doesn't always happen in society at the moment, not now, unless you live in some obscure village and then you have it the other way, you know, it's too much…but I think eh…I think fundamentally it allows people to be people.

In this extract Gladys mentions 'humans' three times and 'people' ten times and it is clear that she regards LETS as some kind of non-hierarchical, emancipatory and caring space that is about much more than non-cash economic transactions[35]. The notion of 'people just looking out for each other' is part of this discourse of *mutuality and interdependency* that is echoed by other respondents. Darren, an extremely

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[35] Gladys alludes to a 'mixture of people' delivering the government policy of community care, but this is not without problems. Williams (1997), for example, has warned that LETS might potential be used by governments as a justification of reduced public spending on vital services-see also Lee (1999).

nervous and agitated respondent with mental health problems, explains why he thinks LETS are a good idea "cos…it's like people doing things for other people, and them doing things…you can get help and you can help people". People, and their interdependency, are the crucial key to the system. Duncan describes this reciprocity as "everybody getting together, and I can do something for you and you do something for me". Other researchers of LETS concur with these findings, with Larry Thorne arguing that "LETS participants were inspired by the desire for social integration concretised through trading. Interdependence (not to one another but to several others) is reaffirmed with each transaction" (1996: 1374). Similarly, Roger Lee suggests LETS "offer an opportunity to move away from valuing people's time and labour only in conventional (global) monetary terms, and to build community relationships within a *system based on mutual respect and reciprocity*" (1999: 220, my emphasis).

Dependency is pathologised as unhealthy and character destroying in modern political discourse. The discourse of mutuality deployed by the above respondents consists, in part, of the acknowledgement of the ubiquity, necessity and benefits of (inter)dependency. These respondents acknowledge that people are social beings that depend on each other economically and socially, and that this dependency can be fruitful and beneficial. The discourses common in what is constructed as 'the' economy, such as competitiveness and 'survival of the fittest', have little currency in the economic geography of the LETS. (Although Thorne (1996) warns of the potential hazard to LETS of failing to affirm the 'principle of abundance' by valuing certain types of work or workers over others, thus leading to a situation of scarcity- "where trust becomes 'regulated' by the desire to mimic sterling values for skilled work (as a knowledge-power nexus) there is a potential for scarcity to emerge and abundance to become subjugated" (1996: 1368)). In capitalist economic circles, where such discourses of competitiveness abound, 'dependency' is commonly considered 'a bad thing'. And yet, as quoted in the introduction, economic geographies arise out of 'webs of dynamic interdependence' between people, and it is this dynamic interdependence that is illustrated in the above quotes.

Having said I am not as interested in self-proclaimed dissenters, there are a couple of respondents who describe their LETS membership as part of their broader social philosophy. One of these, Craig, talks of the interdependent connections established between people, and describes in detail his view of the social construction of the economic geography of his LETS.

> To me there's a certain element of establishing some sort of community again, cos I feel that modern society has lost the links that develop between people because we've become a very home-centred society, and everything revolves around entertainment within the home, like the television and so on, we tend not to interact as much with people around us.
>
> So I think the LETS system, and the social economy in general, is a movement to establish more of a connection between people again, and that's just as important as giving people something to do. The other thing is, when you do LETS transactions you meet and talk to people and its not like you're selling a service as you would if you were doing it for cash, there's more of an obligation to be friendly to that person, and I have actually developed friendships through the small number of transactions that I've already made. I feel that these people that I've been working for, or that have done things for me, that they're not just someone who's done that cos they're getting paid in credits, but they're doing it because they're part of a kind of community and they actually have an interest in helping.
> Craig

It is clear from Craig's description that LETS are constructing economic geographies, he talks about the 'social economy', about 'transactions', 'working for people' and 'getting paid'. These themes, with the exception of the 'social economy', are also common themes in more conventional economic geographies of work. It is also clear that Ian regards his LETS activities in terms of work done rather that hobbies enjoyed. Not one respondent said they take LETS work less seriously than they do other forms of work, be they voluntary, therapeutic or cash-paid. This is not to say, though, that respondents see no difference between the economic geography of the LETS and other economic geographies. Ian, above, also talks about establishing 'connections between people', about an 'obligation to be friendly', 'friendship', 'community' and 'interest in helping'. These themes are less common in more conventional economic geographies of, for example, capitalist

economic relations. LETS do contribute to the creation of a space where alternative discourses of the economic and work can circulate.

To repeat Ian's explanation of how he feels differently about work done for LETS credits than work done for cash, he says:

> I think that's why LETS systems build communities, because it puts people in touch with each other who already have suffered in lots of different ways (laughs)…and you feel empathy towards these other people who are in a similar position.

There are two things to point out from what Ian says here: first, that his conception of LETS is somewhat different to that of Gladys quoted above, who stressed the diversity of the LETS membership as one of the strengths of LETS. From observing this particular LETS over the eighteen month course of fieldwork I would concur with Gladys that its membership comprised a diverse range of people from all classes and walks of life. I think Ian is alluding in this quote to the significant number of people with mental health problems who are members of the LETS (see chapter one). Ian himself has suffered mental health difficulties in the past, and his reference to feelings of empathy with other LETS members is testament in part to the commitment to inclusiveness held by the co-ordinators and members of the LETS. Second, it is of course possible to empathise with people in other economic geographies, we may have feelings of empathy with people we do cash transactions with, for example. However, Ian's concern with empathy, considered with the other issues of connection, friendship, community, helping and so on, suggest that LETS are arenas where alternative systems of value are constructed by members.

6.4.2 Inclusiveness

The final alternative discourse considered in this section is that of inclusiveness. In particular, I focus on those respondents with histories of mental health problems ranging from depression to schizophrenia. Of the twelve LETS members interviewed, seven told me of previous mental health problems, much of them severe. These members are long-term claimants of certain 'sickness' benefits including Incapacity Benefit and Disability Living Allowance. Claimants of these

benefits are traditionally regarded as even less 'employable' and further removed from the world of work that those who claim unemployment benefit or jobseekers allowance. It is not overstating it to say that each of these respondents considers their LETS involvement to have transformed their lives. These respondent's personal geographies, in terms of how they use and move through space, have changed dramatically since joining LETS. One member, who has been diagnosed with agoraphobia, amongst other mental health difficulties, explains how LETS have changed her life for the better:

> The events got me out o the house. I never went myself, you know, there was always somebody with me, but there's even people in the system that offer lifts as well, so you don't need to be stuck for a lift. I think there's something for everybody actually.
> Cathy

This 'something for everybody' quality echoes the importance placed on connections between people by both Ian and Gladys. The power of LETS to transform and open up an individual's life-space or personal geography is highlighted in the following excerpt from Gaynor.

Excerpt 6.1   Gaynor: The Transformative Power of LETS

> Niamh: We can move onto LETS now if you like. You're a LETS member?
>
> Gaynor: Yeah
>
> Niamh: When did you first hear about it?
>
> Gaynor: Eh, when I took my nervous breakdown last year I was in ***[36], and somebody happened to mention that they were going to meet the occupational therapist...I didnae know what they were goin on aboot, and she tried to explain it and with me bein no well, I just wasnae takin it all in. And she says, *'I think mebbie it would help if you came oot a wee while and met people'*. Because [for] a year previous to that I hadnae been outside my house...I only lived between the bedroom and the bathroom.

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[36] Name of psychiatric ward in local hospital

So they brought me up here [LETS building] em…I had a cup of coffee and a chat…well I didnae chat very much but I met two or three o them [other members]. I went away and never thought nae more of it. And they kept sayin on ***, *'would you go back to that?'* The week before I was leaving hospital they brought me back up, and my CPN managed to coax me to fill in the wee form for membership and that, so I done that…never thought nae mare of it…

I went back into the same routine, stayin in and no goin oot, and em…I knew masel I'd to pull masel together, cos I was gonna end up back in hospital again, so I plucked up the courage to come up here…em…met Malcolm and that, and I came every Thursday, I didnae come during the week at that time, just came on the Thursday, and then Malcolm said to me, *'do you no fancy doing a wee bit of baking or something in the café?'* I went 'no', he says, *'I'll show you how to do it'*.

And it started off one day…two days…now I'm here every day, cannae get rid of me! It's the only thing that keeps me going. I can go hame tonight and say, 'well, [its] not so bad, I've got LETS tomorrow'. I've got something to get up for. Thing is, I'd got to the stage I wasnae getting out of bed, I was just saying, 'what's there to get up for?' 'I'll just take another three sleeping tablets and go back to sleep for another six hoors', and that's the way my life was revolving. Noo, I dinnae think aboot going to sleep, I just say to masel, 'well, I'm goin to LETS, and that's me until four or five o'clock, head home, if it's a special function or whatever, I'll stay on till eight, nine, ten, whatever'. And it's great! Got me out!
Gaynor

This excerpt demonstrates clearly the remarkable effect LETS can have on an individual's life and geography. Gaynor evokes the extremely limiting and, in current policy-speak, exclusionary effects of mental ill-health when she talks about the time when she lived only between her bedroom and bathroom, using sleeping pills to avoid time spent awake. Gaynor's time-space geography, that is the times she spent awake and the spaces she inhabited during those times, were exceedingly restricted in the year before she was hospitalised. When in hospital she visits the building that houses much of the LETS activities, for a cup of coffee and brief chat with some other LETS members. In these sentences she describes her initial reluctance to get involved and her tentative first steps towards joining the LETS. What is afforded to Gaynor during this difficult rehabilitation phase is all the time and space she needs to work her way slowly back into the social and economic geography of the LETS. She mentions being 'coaxed' to join by her CPN (also a

LETS member), not coerced, and describes being encouraged by Morgan to work in the café, not compelled. Gaynor has the physical space of the LETS building to go to, but she was also granted the psychological space to join the LETS on her own terms, and begin work at her own pace. The transformation of her 'time-space geography' is remarkable; now she does not 'think aboot going to sleep' and she leaves her house every weekday for most of the day, and on occasion, the evening. She attributes this transformation to her LETS involvement.

The aspect of inclusion that has preoccupied other LETS researchers is the extent to which LETS attract members from 'socially excluded' people who live in areas of multiple deprivation. The general conclusion in many papers is that LETS are not as inclusive, in these terms, as they might be. There is evidence that those unemployed members of some LETS in England are mainly graduate unemployed; in Williams terms the 'disenfranchised middle classes' (Williams, 1996). Other reviews point out the dearth of Canterbury LETS members hailing from a nearby area of deprivation (Lee, 1996). Williams, in a comparison with unemployed graduate LETS members, says there are:

> far more socially excluded people who have not joined LETS and who for a whole range of reasons (including lack of involvement in the relevant networks, through demoralisation with their situation, lack of social skills and self-confidence and a feeling that LETS is for people other than themselves) cannot bring themselves to join (Williams, 1996a:1412).

The membership of the particular LETS of this study is drawn from a range of areas and social classes. The hub of much of the LETS activity, the building described above, is situated in an area characterised by urban deprivation, and many members live in this particular area. However, the co-ordinators have been concerned that a nearby area of multiple deprivation is under-represented in terms of LETS members, an issue that lends weight to the concern expressed by other researchers that LETS sometimes fail to be as inclusive as they could be. The co-ordinators of the LETS responded to this situation by recruiting a development worker, funded by money granted by the local authority, to encourage people living in this particular area to join the LETS (see chapter one). This approach has proved to be successful,

according to the objectives of the LETS co-ordinators, in that there has been an increase in the number of LETS traders and LETS activity in the area and LETS are firmly on the local government agenda under the heading of social inclusion. These developments are to be welcomed for a variety of reasons, not least that cash-poor individuals may be able to use their LETS membership to get goods or services in the local currency, thus sparing some of their already pressured cash income.

To summarise, discourses of mutuality, reciprocity, interdependency and inclusion are deployed and produced by LETS members interviewed. The sterility of the dichotomous dependency/enterprise discourse is highlighted by members who acknowledge the necessity of dependency, and celebrate its benefits. The following section focuses on confidence and trust as issues high on the agenda of LETS in general and those LETS members interviewed.

6.5   LETS and (self) confidence

There is much evidence of the debilitating effects long periods of unemployment can have on an individual's self-esteem and self-confidence (Strandh, 2000). Of course, this relationship between unemployment and low self-confidence is a complex one, with, for example, many respondents reporting job losses as a result of initial psychological problems including low self-esteem. Respondents quoted above, such as Gary, talk about LETS as an enabling space where steps towards increasing self-confidence can be made, thus, in government language, increasing 'employability'. Cathy attributes her improvements in psychological well-being in part to her LETS involvement:

> LETS actually did a lot for me, in building confidence, because I hadn't been well for such a long time, which meant I wasn't mixing with other people for a while and I was stuck in the house and I wasn't even confident enough even to do this [the interview]. So I felt that...I'll give it a try, and I was very surprised at how much I actually enjoyed it and it did build my confidence quite a bit, so LETS has actually helped me build my confidence...its quite a confidence building thing.
> Cathy

Cathy's description of her previously limited geography ('I was stuck in the house'), echoes Gaynor's description of her mental health problems. It seems that widening out this geography and interacting with a broader mix of people is a common feature in these respondent's descriptions of their bettering mental well-being.

> Niamh: You were saying earlier it [LETS] helps to build people's confidence. How do you think it does that?
>
> Cathy: Em…well, I can only just go by again, myself, how it built my confidence, and that was very, very, very low and it built mine up so(…) I started to mix more with other people when I got involved and I think, you know, you start mixing, just with a wee group at first and em…then maybe you go up and have a wee giggle with the people there and it slowly builds your confidence.

The other common theme that emerges from Cathy and Gaynor's accounts is the lengthy time needed for the slow process of healing, a theme expanded on by Evelyn:

> I would just say it's [LETS] made me totally different in that ma confidence has built up so much, because goin back the years I wouldnae talk to naybody, I would just lie in ma bed all the time and not bother aboot anybody. And its [LETS] gave me a…how can I put it…its gave me a future, maybe, because I know, maybe in time and that, I will be able to do other things, and hopefully that one day I mebbie come into something that I mebbie be able to get a wee job out of it, even if its just em, teaching people how to do craft work…or mebbie going around different areas, trying to set up different LETS. Its really made me a totally different person, aye…aye…definitely.
> Evelyn

It is difficult to imagine many jobs in the conventional labour market (especially the lower end of the market) that would grant an individual the time and space necessary to deal with ongoing mental health problems. Community organisations such as LETS can be crucial clusters of economic and social help in a strong civic society. Evelyn's involvement with her local LETS has facilitated her transition from extreme isolation to her current position as one of the principal driving forces of the LETS. From a place and time where getting a job would have been unthinkable Evelyn now looks forward to various job possibilities. It would be ironic if the political tendency

to attack the alleged character faults of claimants further compounded these problems of low self-confidence. The increase in confidence enjoyed now by Cathy have had a snowball effect on others due to her role as a telephone contact for people contemplating joining the LETS:

> Well, it built my confidence, again, I'd say people used to phone me up quite a lot and there was a wee bit of confidence building there for them. Because I'd already been through what they were talking about I could say something to them and I could point out all the good things that they have to offer because before they were phoning they were maybe down, or embarrassed about phoning or things like that, and they'd say:
>
> *'I heard about this, but I can't offer anything'* [or] (…) *'oh, but I don't have anything to offer, and I can't take anything from somebody else if I haven't anything to offer'*.
>
> And you find, during the course of the conversation, I might be on the phone about half an hour or something to somebody, and they've just said 'I don't have anything to offer' but within that half an hour they've discussed, just in conversation, all the different things that they do like, eh, somebody maybe does a lot of knitting and they sit and tell you,
>
> *'oh, I spend all my time knitting, I can't really do anything'*
> or:
>
> *'so and so's grandchildren are coming and I've got to look after them for about four hours',*
> and:
> *'oh, by the way, when I was younger I was an artist',*
>
> and things like that, and they've told you umpteen things that they can do, that they aren't really aware of it, or thought it wasn't important enough to offer into the system. In actual fact, there are so many people looking for all these things, skills that people actually have, so its been quite good that way, and once they've joined they've been able to use these skills, em, but at the start they have no idea what…they're not aware of their own skills, they don't see them as important. So in that respect, a lot of them have joined and used their skills and built their confidences up something great".
> Cathy

It is the under-recognition of skills that can make some people hesitant about taking part in certain organisations, and what the construction of the 'dependent benefit claimant' does is under-recognise skills, enterprise and eagerness to work on a national scale. There is a 'catch 22' situation where some individual claimants' lack

of confidence makes them less attractive to employers which may, in turn have damaging effects on their self-confidence. Government policy should, at the least, aim not to exacerbate this situation, but that is exactly what it does, through the construction of the 'dependency culture' and the exclusive focus on the supply side of the unemployment issue. In the world of business it is government policy to highlight innovation and creativity and applaud it, to encourage enterprise by lowering corporation tax. In the world of benefits, innovation and creativity are regarded suspiciously, enterprise in the form of LETS are thought of, by some, as devious means to avoid getting a 'real job'.[37] The world of benefits policy is moving more towards work-fare and coercion, but in LETS, as Evelyn explains below, it is the lack of coercion that has helped her take on more work:

> Niamh: So how do you think the LETS has changed you?
>
> Evelyn: Probably because Lorna [co-ordinator] has got me to do talks about LETS and that [to other organisations], and she's actually found that I'm capable o doin it, so I've no been pushed to do it, but I've had support to do it and in my life I've never had anybody that felt that I was capable of doin things, and I think if somebody finds someone that's capable of doing things and gives them a bit o support, that's you on the road.

This section has concentrated mainly on those LETS member respondents with mental health problems, partly because they are the most vocal about the problems associated with low confidence and also because they articulate the relationship between their increased levels of confidence and their LETS membership. However, these issues do have relevance outside this particular sub-group of respondents, and their comments regarding the time, space, encouragement and support they find in LETS help illuminate the wider debate on benefit claiming and self confidence.

> LETS and other forms of local currencies may be part of a larger strategy to rebuild and assume a measure of self-determination in local and regional economies, of finding ways in which wealth generated in an area can be kept within it, and of providing an informally and locally determined space within which personal self-confidence may be re-established.
> Lee, 1999:222

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[37] Although there is some evidence from the Social Exclusion Unit that social enterprise in poorer

LETS, as examples of complex 'webs of dynamic interdependence' represent a site where the ongoing individualisation of political discourse and practice is resisted. Writing on the erosion of the social insurance principle in Britain, Clasen and Erskine (1998: 1) comment "it seems that the collective spirit which inspired and informed British social policy in the early part of this century and after World War II is gradually being substituted with a social policy of the individual" (1998: 1). LETS demonstrate the inextricability of the *social* in human life and economic geography.

What all these accounts of growing self confidence suggest is that LETS members actively create a space where 'work' is constructed in a broad way, and its 'value' acknowledged in ways other than its economic productivity. Work is not just about entrepreneurial activity in 'the' economy, but can be about a wide range of inclusions and involvements. Not least, LETS are evidence of enterprise amongst those usually defined as dependent. In this way perhaps LETS can be seen as a space between and beyond enterprise and dependency: a 'third space' (Soja, 1996) that disrupts the mutually exclusive binary of political discourse. Involvement in LETS certainly has had life-changing affects on people interviewed.

Of course, as other studies of LETS show (Aldridge et al, 2001), none of this is to suggest that LETS are a panacea for the problems of poor people or poor places. While they may help to stretch limited cash resources, the amount of trading done on LETS is generally small scale, and certainly no substitute for a decent guaranteed income. Further, there is a danger that LETS might be subsumed into more powerful economic geographies, for example if their use is skewed towards members using the LETS as a customer base for their cash business. As Lee (2000: 446) warns, LETS are "more than capable of subversion by exploitation or by the power of the surrounding formal economic geographies". This echoes Laclau and Mouffe's caution (1985: 152, see chapter one) that just because resistance is everywhere does not mean it is everywhere (or anywhere) strong or capable of damaging hegemonic and unequal power relations. Further, there is a danger of LETS being subsumed into dominant political practices of welfare in ways that sustain rather than resist

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communities being highlighted and praised as way forward (SEU, 2001).

unequal power relations. Williams (1997: 6) for example, suggests that in Australia, government promotion of LETS might be "seen as a means by which the state is seeking to informalise some of its responsibilities in order to reduce social costs".

However, accepting these cautionary words, the fact remains that LETS exist and that they are examples of non-capitalist economic geographies. The very fact that LETS exist lends weight to Gibson-Graham's (1996) critique of the construction of (big 'C') 'Capitalism' as *the* economic, with all other economic, political and social relations defined in relation to it. Further, LETS show the benefits that accrue from 'work' (in its broad sense) which lends weight to the earlier critique of the narrow construction of work as paid work and the reduction of people's lives to their capacity for economic productivity.

There are signs that the 'social' is being rehabilitated in political discourse as worthy of attention. Notions of trust, confidence and networks between people are to the fore of recent academic and political debates around the concept of 'social capital'. The potential of this debate to continue this project of broadening out narrow economistic constructions of 'work' and its 'value', and to recognise and harness the enterprise of those usually imagined as dependent, is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Seven   Social Capital

'Social capital' is an increasingly popular concept in contemporary social science. The concept has been applied widely, theoretically and empirically, but most versions share a concern with associations, trust and networks and how these are created and accessed by groups for their mutual benefit. A common theme in the literature is that poorer areas frequently suffer a deficit in social capital. This theme is already challenged by the experience of LETS members documented in the previous chapter. The aim of this chapter is to critique this claim further using a wider range evidence from the data collected. A secondary aim is to question the conceptual direction of 'social capital' and argue against its incorporation into dominant economistic discourses.

So far, the thesis has argued that political discourse increasingly individualizes the causes of policy problems. The roots of unemployment are located in the unemployed; explanations for poverty and benefit claiming are sought in the character of claimants. These problems of unemployment and benefit claiming are constructed as problems of dependency, the solution for which is deemed to be enterprise. In contrast to this, the accounts produced by the long-term benefit claimants interviewed reveal enterprise where 'dependency' is discursively located, attachment to work where work detachment is usually ascribed. Further, those respondents who are members of their LETS talk of creating a space where 'work' and 'value' mean more than their narrow political meaning of economic productivity. Rather than the social serving the needs of the economy (as discussed in chapters one and two), LETS are local economic geographies where the social is privileged as primary, perhaps geographies where the economic serves the social.

In recent years, a second site where the social is ostensibly primary has emerged, that is the academic and political debate around the role and importance of 'social capital'. Social capital is an elusive and ambiguous notion; its meaning shifts across

its different use by different analysts. In general, though, it is used to describe social relations of trust and connectedness and their role in economic development. So might 'social capital' represent another space between dependency and enterprise? Perhaps one more politically acceptable than LETS? Could 'social capital' bring 'the' economic down to size and contribute to a re-evaluation of both 'value' and 'work'? Might debates around 'social capital' herald a re-assessment of the 'problems' of poor people and poor places: one which recognises their worth, enterprise and potential? This chapter addresses these questions.

Structure of the chapter

The chapter is structured around five sections. First, the **development of the concept of social capital** is traced, and its pertinence to the wider concerns of the thesis outlined. The next three sections represent an attempt to appraise the concept of social capital 'on its own terms', that is through an examination of the thesis that poor places suffer a deficit of social capital. Three features are commonly described as central to the development of social capital: associational activity, trust and networks between people (Putnam, 1993, 1995, 2000). The second section examines the levels of **associational activity** reported by respondents, which are higher than conventional readings of the social capital thesis might suggest. Third, the question of **trust** is addressed with respondent's accounts of their feelings (or lack) of trust for those around them. Fourth, I discuss the **networks** dimension of the social capital thesis by addressing the question of what has been termed the 'decline of good neighborliness' (Putnam, 1995). Finally, I assess the potential of the concept of 'social capital' to rehabilitate 'the social' as more than that which serves 'the economic' (in its narrow construction). This assessment is not optimistic, and I argue that 'social capital' is potentially **an(other) economistic discourse**.

In general, I am sceptical of the way the concept of social capital has developed so far. There are signs that 'social capital' is being incorporated into the very dominant political discourses this thesis tries to undermine. In the previous chapter, the danger that LETS might be subsumed by more powerful economic geographies and political discourses of welfare was mentioned. In this chapter, I suggest this danger is much

more likely with the concept of 'social capital', if, indeed, it has not already happened.

7.1. Social Capital-The Development of an Intellectual Fashion

7.1.1 The development of the social capital thesis

The concept of 'social capital' has been variously defined, as the table below shows.

Table 7.1 What is 'Social Capital'?

Social Capital…is embodied in the relations among persons…a group whose members manifest trustworthiness and place extensive trust in one another will be able to accomplish more than a comparable group lacking that trustworthiness and trust.
Coleman, 1990:304.

Social Capital…refers to features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions.
Putnam, 1993:167.

The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition.
Bourdieu, 1985: 248, cited in Portes: 1998: 3.

Social capital flows from the endowment of mutually respecting and trusting relationships which enable a group to pursue their shared goals more effectively than would otherwise be possible.
Szreter, 1999:32.

It is clear from these definitions that 'social capital' is about relations and networks between people, and especially the benefits that arise from shared trust. Three social scientists are frequently cited as the 'founders' of the concept of social capital: Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam (Portes, 1998; Baron, Field and Schuller, 2000). Although Portes regards the analysis of social capital by Bourdieu as one of the more theoretically sophisticated of the many versions, other authors

have stressed the relatively underdeveloped theorisation of social capital compared to his other writings on 'cultural capital' (Baron, Field and Schuller, 2000).

James Coleman wrote about social capital in the context of education, using the concept to account for differences in performance between pupils at state and Catholic schools in the US, with pupils at Catholic schools generally achieving higher grades in most subjects. Coleman was critical of the over-use of human capital as the explanatory factor in such educational differences, stressing that "social capital is the set of resources that inhere in family relations and in community social organization and that are useful for the cognitive or social development of a child or young person" (1994:300).

It is the work of Robert Putnam, however, that has attracted the most attention, both in academic and government circles. Putnam published *Making Democracy Work* in 1993, in which he accounted for regional differences in institutional performance in Italy by his explanation of the regional differences in civic life and social capital. Democracy is stronger ('works better') Putnam argues, in regions high in social capital, defined as "features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (1993:167). Regions in the north of Italy are characterised by well developed "networks of civic engagement", associational activity that strengthens "horizontal civic bonds (1993:173; 181) (examples of such networks given by Putnam include "neighbourhood associations, choral societies, cooperatives, sports clubs, mass-based parties" (1993:173)). Such horizontal networks are said to foster trust through better communication between individuals and norms of generalised (as opposed to specific) reciprocity. Specific reciprocity occurs as simultaneous exchange, whereas generalised reciprocity is an ongoing relationship of exchange where one gives now trusting to be repaid at some time in the future (as happens in the LETS of the previous chapter). Putnam described this 'norm of generalised reciprocity' as a "highly productive component of social capital" (1993:172), and one which is fostered by networks of civic engagement.

In contrast, regions in the south of Italy are characterised by vertical networks "linking unequal agents in asymmetric relations of hierarchy and dependence" (1993:173). Such networks are said to foster mistrust and lack of cooperation which weakens civic society and operates as a vicious circle, whereas social capital is said to operate as a 'virtuous circle', "self-reinforcing and cumulative" (1993:177). Thus, Putnam argues, the poorer regions in the south of Italy lack social capital, have consequently weak democratic institutions, which in turn lower social capital, 'dooming' such societies to "self-perpetuating backwardness" (1993:177).

In the evocatively entitled 'Bowling Alone' Putnam turns his attention to 'America's declining social capital' (1995). Putnam concentrates on the decline in associational activity in the US, citing various evidence of a decline in voter turnout, attendance at public meetings, trust in Washington, religious engagement, labour union membership, parent-teacher association (PTA) membership, women's club membership, Boy Scouts volunteer numbers, Red Cross volunteer numbers, volunteering in general, number of fraternal organizations and, finally, bowling leagues. Countertrends of increased membership in environmental and feminist organizations fail to console Putnam, as he regards this associational activity as qualitatively different to that which has declined in that such new interest group activity fails to stimulate the social connectedness vital for the creation of social capital. In his words, "few ever attend meetings of such organizations, and most are unlikely ever (knowingly) to encounter any other member" (1995:71). Neither are non-profit organizations nor self-help groups deemed to be potential substitutes for the decline in associational activity.

Putnam finds further evidence of America's declining social capital in the falling levels of "good neighborliness and social trust" (1995:73). The issue of trust has been a primary feature of Putnam's social capital since *Making Democracy Work*, and the importance of good social connectedness amongst neighbours was stressed in a Channel Four news interview with Putnam in March 2001, when he said that speaking to your neighbours (or not) is as big a factor in early death as smoking. It is largely in these three ways-associational activity, social trust and social

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connectedness ('good neighborliness'), that the concept of social capital has been operationalised. I discuss each of these issues in relation to the data collected in the next three sections of this chapter.

7.1.2 *Déjà vu? Social Capital and its import to Britain*

Social capital has followed the familiar path of a concept developed in the US, grown popular in the White House, imported to British journals and newspapers and flirted with by Downing Street (think of precedents such as 'underclass', 'workfare/welfare-to-work', 'communitarianism'). Indeed, the criticism is sometimes made that social capital is nothing new (compare with Hirst and Thompson's (1996) work on 'globalisation'). Social relationships, networks, norms and trust have been central concerns of sociology since the beginning of the discipline. Although Szreter argues "social capital is not…a mere journalistic novelty or this year's intellectual fad" (1999:32) the upsurge in research and publications using the specific concept of "social capital" is reminiscent of other swings in popularity of sociological phrases (notably the "underclass" debate discussed in chapter one). Portes claims "the set of processes encompassed by the concept are not new" and that "calling them social capital is, to a large extent, just a means of presenting them in a more appealing conceptual garb" (1998:21). However, if the concept helps to re-focus attention on *social* issues, and away from overly economistic, individualistic explanations of life, then perhaps this is not one of the biggest concerns about social capital. The question is to what extent this is occurring.

One of the first academic investigations into social capital in Britain was that by Peter Hall (1997) who concludes that the purported erosion in social capital in the US is not replicated in the UK. Hall shows evidence of high levels of associational activity, a strong voluntary sector and high levels of 'informal sociability', which, it is argued, show that social capital remains high in the UK. Proposed explanations of the maintenance of relatively high social capital levels include educational reform, the post-war expansion of the middle class (the middle class, it is argued, possessing higher levels of social capital than the working class) and the government policy of developing social welfare systems in conjunction with the voluntary sector.

However, it is not an entirely positive picture that is painted by Hall: social capital, he argues, is unevenly distributed in Britain, being largely the preserve of the middle-aged middle classes. While the lack of social capital amongst the young does not overly worry Hall, as he assumes they will grow more civically minded as they grow older, the alleged low levels of social capital amongst the working class is cause for greater concern: "the trajectory facing the working class looks considerably worse" (1997:456). Although Hall urges caution in over-generalising about declining social capital amongst the working class he does suggest that there is something in the types of (limited) social networks and types of associational activity engaged in by the working class that leaves them at a disadvantage in the social capital stakes. Other academic research by Williams and Windebank (2001) shows evidence of a lack of mutual aid between poor people living in low-income areas. The authors situate this work in the growing field of social capital empirical studies, and it seems to show more evidence of the relative dearth of social capital in poor areas.

The British Labour government have also shown an increased interest in social capital, with Robert Putnam invited to discuss his thesis with Gordon Brown in Downing Street in March 2001. Previous to this Tony Blair has professed his high regard for the communitarianism of Etzioni and others (1994, 1995). Theories of communitarianism and social capital seem to be influencing the government's policies on 'neighbourhood renewal', with again, concern expressed that poorer neighbourhoods lack social capital: "the level of community activity in deprived areas is often lower than in more prosperous ones" (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001:116). Simon Szreter urges the government to appreciate the importance and potential of social capital in providing a practical way of delivering their 'Third Way' philosophy. He claims "New Labour knows that 'the market' is a fact of life which any new politics of the left must learn to love, not simply reject" (1999:31), but that governments play a crucial way in mediating the operation of markets for the benefit of all in society.

To sum up, as with the concept of 'social enterprise' discussed in chapter three, there are signs of interest stirring in government circles around the concept of 'social

capital'. As the quote above from the Social Exclusion Unit suggests, the direction of thinking seems to be that 'social capital' (like 'enterprise') is lacking in 'poor places', and this lack represents part of their problem. Perhaps this interest represents a welcome move away from individualising constructions of problems that locate causes in individual character. Perhaps, though, there should be caution exercised against a rush to identify 'poor places' as social capital deficient. The experiences and opinions of respondents discussed in the following three sections seems to offer conflicting evidence against this "poor place=low social capital" thesis. The evidence of these sections suggests governments might do better to recognise, praise and harness that which is there (despite barriers of material deprivation) rather than finding new ways to condemn that which is allegedly not.

7.2 Associational Activity

One of the principle indicators of high levels of social capital in an area, according to the Putnam school, is the level of associational activity. Putnam (1993: 89-90) describes associations as "social structures of cooperation" and he argues that it is the way associations facilitate such participation and cooperation that makes them necessary for strong civic and prosperous society:

> Participation in civic organizations inculcates skills of cooperation as well as a sense of shared responsibility for collective endeavors.

It is not difficult to see why such an approach appeals to the British New Labour government, with their mantra of "rights and responsibilities". Following Putnam, there has been a plethora of empirical studies that use the level of associational activity in various areas as a proxy for social capital by examining census data on membership of associations and voluntary organisations. No doubt there is an element in all this of what Mohan and Mohan (forthcoming) call "operational opportunism". Nevertheless, it does seem plausible that places where associational activity is high might also display strong sense of community spirit, for example. The general consensus of the social capital literature is that areas that are economically deprived are frequently lacking in social capital, therefore it might be expected that associational activity in such areas would be low. The picture that

emerges from the data, however, is more complex, with the majority of respondents reporting membership of at least one association and some respondents reporting vibrant associational and voluntary activity in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland.

7.2.1 Evidence of associational activity: "Oh, we're in everything!"

Table 7.2 The range of associations belonged to by respondents.

Boys Brigade	Bowling Club	Church of Scotland
Sports Council	Bingo Club	Welfare Rights Advice Group
Community Council	Transport Committee	Labour Party
LETS	Neighbourhood Watch	School Sports Team
Credit Union	Community Enterprise	Swimming Club
Craft Group	'Humaid'	Mental Health Peer Support Gp
Community Café	Tenants Association	Riding School for Disabled
PTA	Men's Health Group	Community Safety Initiative
Youth Club		

The purpose of this table is to highlight the wide range of organisations local to the fieldwork area (low income) and participated in by respondents (all long term benefit claimants). Also, the *type* of groups listed above is different to those of the social capital literature, the frequently mentioned bird watching groups and choral societies are absent (Putnam, 1993, Szreter, 1999, Maloney et al, 2000). This suggests that there maybe some class bias in the types of associations regarded as sources or evidence of social capital.

Some respondents seem to be very active in a variety of local community associations. I asked Andy, for example, if he is a member of the local credit union and he replied by telling me:

Oh we're in everything…Neighbourhood Watch, Community Councillors, Transport Committee, River side Cleaners…Community Enterprise.

Andy's wife is on the management committee of the local credit union and she describes how it has developed in the area:

Well it was…we never really done a lot of advertising, its just word of mouth, you know. I mean we're still getting people coming in, new people coming in yet. We have a lot of kids as well. The membership's about 360.

I comment to Andy about their strength of involvement in the local area:

Niamh: you seem to belong to a lot of local organisations…
Andy: Oh aye, I run the bingo for the old folks, the bingo on a Monday night, Wednesday night and a Sunday night…I take the old folk up to the bingo up there as well.

Andy and his wife help sustain a variety of financial, social and community organisations used by people of all ages in a way that would seem entirely commensurate with the development of social capital.

There is also evidence of a strong civic sense in some associational activity engaged in by respondents. Maloney et al (2000) stress the interdependence of types of governance and associational activity in the UK and Noel provides a good example of this:

Noel: I'm a community councillor…

Niamh: Tell me about that.

Noel: It's just a local area, every area in X…I think there's only three that don't have a community council, which is a sort of lower tier of the X council and it's the views of the actual local communities and putting them to the council, rather than an individual phoning up saying 'I'm complaining about this', the community council holds an awful lot more clout than an individual and we can approach the likesay police directly with parking problems and things like that.

The community council does more than just complain, though, as Noel continues:

> They [the council] see it as more devolved and they have an awful lot of meetings where…they have a X forum where anybody can go, any member of the public can go, it's once a month and you can air your views and things do happen as a consequence of that and the planning system for houses and that, the community council get all the applications for planning so if there's something detrimental to the area…or on the other hand there might be something that's beneficial to the area that we can actually endorse and say 'well this is a good thing'.

Again, community councils appear to represent exactly the type of associational activity that encourages the strong civic participation advocated by Putnam. This particular associational activity engaged in by Noel (one of many) is one where he feels he has a stake in the important decisions made that will affect his area. Indeed, there is an entry in the record of field notes taken of this time where I recorded my impression of the plethora of voluntary associations in the main 'deprived areas' where fieldwork took place. Very poor areas are the target of supranational (European), national and local regeneration schemes, and this public money from a variety of sources is frequently channelled into a variety of voluntary agencies to deliver 'social inclusion', or whatever it may be. Others have argued of the importance of types of government and governance for the well being of the voluntary sector (Hall, 1999, Maloney et al, 2000). As well as the associations listed above there are mother and toddler groups, youth groups, men's health groups, women's health group, and so on, in the area. I did not recognise the concern expressed by the Social Exclusion Unit above of the relative lack of 'community activity' in deprived areas compared to more prosperous ones.

7.2.2 Counter-evidence of lack of interest in associational activity
Of course I am not trying to pretend that life in very poor housing schemes in Scotland is an associational activity rich bed of roses. There are serious problems in the areas studied, those spoken of most commonly by respondents being poverty, unemployment and drug abuse. With respect to associations, some respondents reported no interest in involvement in community groups.

> Niamh: Are there community groups in the area?
>
> Keith: I think so yeah, we don't belong to any of them, we've got neighbourhood watch, but we don't belong to any.

Larry: We're not really involved in the community as such, although we're active in the church and all that.

Noel: A lot of people view the community council as a waste of time…
Niamh:People that live here?
Noel: No, it's a lot of people don't think they have a lot of influence over the [city] council.

Keith and Larry both reported a lack of interest in joining community associations in their area and Noel talks of a degree of cynicism held by some (although not by those of the area) about the efficacy of the community council. Another respondent, Rose, describes her impression of the apathy of her neighbours:

Somebody who has just done the same course [as Rose did previously] in the same centre, one of the trainees, was sent back to my area yesterday to represent and promote recruitment in it [the course] and she actually came back and said *what is wrong with these people? We have a wonderful community centre, they're pumping on the classes for adult education, they're putting on crèches…*[but people are not attending]…I don't know if it's apathetic or if it's just the fact that they don't know any other way of life, they think that's all there is.

Even on nights where tutors haven't turned up, but the crèche is paid for, I said 'come up to ma hoose', [the other course attendees replied] *'cannae, we need to go home'*…very, very closed people, closed to others, I don't know what it is but when it comes to the education…

I mean it was nice to hear from somebody completely neutral and unbiased, who has come fae an area like that, got the chance and is beginning to appreciate the benefits she could have, passing the same remarks about them: 'what do they want? Do they know? Do they know what the options are? Do they know there's life outside Blackpool? Two weeks in Spain with English pubs? I mean really…it's your life expectations I suppose, the quality you expect. They don't know anything else and so they're content with it.
Rose

Rose has a definite impression that people who live in her area are difficult to motivate and relatively uninterested in associational activity. Nevertheless, at another stage in the interview she describes the same people in a different way:

> The people here are earthy, no-nonsense, they're direct, straightforward, pull
> no punches.
> Rose

Further, and in regard to associational activity, the people Rose talks about *are*
attending local courses at the community centre, although perhaps not as
enthusiastically as she would like. While there are other respondents who refrain
from community activity, preferring to 'keep themselves to themselves' (see section
on networks below) the general trend of the stories from respondents is much more
one of involvement in associational activity. Peter, for example, works with the
Boys Brigade, and describes a time when he met a previous member of the brigade
whom he had helped attain his 'Queen's badge', and who has subsequently gone on
to join the Police force:

> Peter: I was in 'X', a pal of ma wife's got a hoose down in 'X' and it was her
> 70th birthday and we turned up, the Scottish brigade, kilts on, the works, for
> this party and standing outside was this policeman…and we'd been a bit
> rowdy and this policeman walked up to me and stood in front of me and
> saluted me! And I looked at him and went '*you swine! Seven years ago you
> went through your Queen's badge wi' the 11th brigade!*' …and he joined the
> police down there, I didnae know who he was until in his uniform he
> appeared in front of me and saluted me and laughed…I was thinking 'I'm
> gonna get arrested here! What have I been doing?'
>
> Niamh: So how did that make you feel?
>
> Peter: Oh terrific…I mean everybody standing roundabout me wi this
> policeman and I started slapping him about the place, everybody knew him,
> he was a local bobby…and I made him what he was. Every Queen's boy,
> every Queen's man that ever got their Queen's badge gives you a puffed up
> feeling inside…it's a special feeling, it's a great feeling that they've stuck
> [with it]...
> …
> Its mebbie not a lot by other people's standards, I don't really care, by my
> standards it's…I've done something positive, I've helped somebody achieve
> something, which in a way is an achievement for me, you know, which is
> terrific, there's no feeling like it.

To sum up, there is little evidence of a lack of associational activity amongst
respondents, although its level relative to other areas is unknown. If associational
activity is a proxy for social capital, then there is more social capital in these poorer

areas than previous studies of the distribution of social capital might lead us to expect.

7.3 Trust

Trust is a second commonly discussed attribute/consequence of social capital. Again, trust has long been of interest to social scientists, but the current interest in trust lies in part with the work of Francis Fukuyama (1995), and his controversial claims of 'the end of history'. The essence of Fukuyama's argument is that with the collapse of political versions of communism, capitalism has 'won out' as the only viable political system, and the single phenomenon that now differentiates successful nations is that of trust: "a nation's well-being, as well as its ability to compete, is conditioned by a single, pervasive, cultural characteristic: the level of trust inherent in the society" (1995:7). Fukuyama's work has been extensively criticised, for example for its "ahistorical and distorted view of the relation between social capital and economic development" (Fevre, 2000), but its role in reviving the elusive concept of trust cannot be denied.

However, Fukuyama's work follows the trend of linking high levels of trust with high levels of social capital and high levels of economic development. Thus, it is argued, poor areas (with low levels of economic development) lack trust. There is survey evidence that poor people in Britain (those who are economically insecure) display lower levels of social trust than well-off people (Hall, 1997). Hall notes that "the one indicator for social capital that has fallen over the post-war years is that measuring the generalised trust people express in others" (1997:443). A plausible explanation offered by Hall is the rising unemployment of the 1970s and 1980s:

> In 1981 and 1990 general economic confidence was much lower [than in 1959] and the young, who were now the ones expressing low levels of social trust, were especially hard hit by unemployment. It is at least plausible that the personal experience of economic insecurity and/or national 'confidence effects' arising from broader perceptions of the economy may have an impact on levels of social trust (1997: 445).

It does seem plausible that high levels of economic security can lead to lower levels of generalised trust, although how this relationship might operate is seldom addressed.

The evidence from the data presented in the first part of this section does not generally support the thesis that unemployed people are less likely to trust others. The majority of respondents replied that they either 'trust people around' or 'know who to trust and who not to'. Four respondents replied that they found it difficult to trust people, but related this to personal issues of, for example, poor mental health rather than unemployment (although, of course, their poor mental health and current states of unemployment are strongly linked). Only one respondent reported feeling no trust whatsoever for the people in his area.

In the second part of this section the issue of trust between respondents and institutions is addressed. A bleaker picture of low trust between these individuals and institutions such as the Employment Service and Benefits Agency emerges (see also chapter five). This situation is analysed in the context of benefit claiming and a general culture of suspicion of 'benefit fraud' prevalent in benefit delivery agencies. It is further argued that the question of trust is thrown into sharp relief in poor areas because it is related to the possibility of loss of earnings by some as others take advantage of the financial incentives offered by the government in their 'spotlight on benefit cheats' campaigns.

7.3.1   *Trust between individuals living in low-income areas*

Most respondents, when asked if they trust people in their area, replied affirmatively.

> Niamh: Would you say you could trust the people around here?
> Andy: Oh aye.

> Niamh: Would you say you can trust people around here?
> Cathy: I'd say roundabout this particular part where I stay, yeah, yeah, I'd be able to trust most people.

> Niamh: Can you trust the people around in your area?
> Gaynor: Em, I can trust the people that's roundabout me.

Niamh: Can you trust the people around?
Keith: Trust them? Yeah, most of them anyway.

Niamh: Do you feel you can trust the people in your area?
Ron: Uhum, yeah.

These responses would seem to contest the image of the insular mistrustful poor neighbourhood. There are other respondents, though, who responded with comments that seem to fit with the 'poor and distrustful' scenario:

Niamh: Do you get on with your neighbours?

Kevin: Say hello to them when I pass, I just keep masel to masel, you know, my business is my business. They're all a bunch o nosy bastards really…I just do what I want to do…

(later in interview)
Niamh: Do you think you can trust the people around?

Kevin: Do I think I can trust them? Probably not, no…like I say, I suppose it's like any other housing scheme, you know, I dinnae talk to them or anything, you know, if I'm in the hoose I'm in the hoose, if I'm oot I'm oot, you know, its not as if I'm oot and digging the garden and socialising, going for a picnic on a Sunday afternoon or having a barbeque on a Sunday night! I talk to the old woman next door, if I'm oot in the garden and she's oot we usually have a wee blether an that, and I say hello if I pass people, I dinnae really go in and sit wi them and have a cup of tea and talk about everybody, you know, that's what they do…that's no me like…
Kevin.

Kevin feels he cannot trust his neighbours because they are 'nosy', and he likes his privacy. Further, he imagines this to be a feature of 'any other housing scheme', lending weight to the proposition that poorer areas (as housing schemes in Scotland generally are) have lower levels of social trust. However, Kevin then describes his impression of trust as some kind of sociability between neighbours (informal sociability being another indicator of social capital- Hall, 1997), concluding that that type of spontaneous sociability "isn't him", despite his descriptions of his chats with his elderly neighbour. In other words, Kevin moves from criticising other's nosiness to describing his personal preference for relative anonymity. Other respondents replied to the question on trust in a similar way-by describing their difficulty with

issues of trust, but ascribing those difficulties to themselves rather than some inherent feature of their neighbourhoods.

Gary, for example, is one of the respondents who has had a history of mental health problems, and in his discussion of trust he relates his ambivalent feelings about trust to feelings of betrayal in his life:

> Gary: I have difficulty in sort of going out and meeting people...I also found in my life that the more relationships you get involved in, the more complex and the more sort of tensions and problems start arising. I envy people who can have sort of huge networks of friends and things and manage and really enjoy it and find it supportive, I sometimes find it goes the other way for me, that my problems start increasing more...so I feel I have to...with relationships, you know, I have to really trust very much before I choose to...I'm not really able to have superficial relationships with lots of people...
>
> Niamh: You mentioned trust there; do you think you can trust the people in your area?
>
> Gary: Yeah...I just don't know them well enough to sort of say...I certainly couldn't talk to my neighbours about my problems or anything like that...I am very wary, I think I have sort of, in a way been betrayed quite a few times in my life, cos I think I'm naturally quite an uninhibited sort of person, I tend to talk and regret it later (...) Obviously I do have a need for friendships and for human contacts and the community, but at the same time in a funny sort of way I want to remain sort of anonymous.

While Gary appreciates the benefits that may arise through 'huge networks of friends' he explains his personal difficulty with generating these networks due to a conflicting desire to remain anonymous. This excerpt also illuminates the nebulousness of the concept of trust. Gary interprets the question of trust as one of whether or not he could trust a neighbour with a confidence, for example, about his mental health problems. Mental (ill) health is an extremely personal issue and it would presumably be rare to find those who are comfortable discussing such issues with neighbours, but it is this issue that Gary feels is an issue of trust, as opposed to say, trusting a neighbour to mind a key for his flat.[38] Despite this elusiveness however, there is something in common between Kevin and Gary and their

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[38] I use this example because it is mentioned by a number of respondents as something either they do for their neighbour or their neighbour does for them.

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discussions of their feelings of difficulty with trust: they both internalise this difficulty (Gary more so than Keith) rather than blaming some inherent untrustworthiness of their area (or its people). Gladys also internalises her feelings of trust in the people of her area:

> Niamh: Do you think you can trust the people around?
> Gladys: Trust the people around? Em…the people I trust know I trust them…I can be selective in who I would trust, but I would still respect [others], but I would be selective in who I could trust, but that again is an individual thing.

Other respondents reported feelings of generalised social trust for those in their area, except for known 'anti-social' or 'problem' neighbours. Betty, for example, responds initially by saying she does trust her neighbours, but qualifies this by specifying one particular family who she (and most) consider untrustworthy:

> Niamh: Would you say you trust the people around here?
> Betty: Aye, aye. Some of them, not all of them. I ken who to trust and who not to trust. I ken my oots and in aboot the yins around this area. I ken everybody around here (…) even in the town I ken who to trust and who not to trust. You get to ken your oots and ins.

> Niamh: Who wouldn't you trust then?
> Betty: Em…the McDonalds, the McDonalds[39], I wouldnae trust them! (laughs).
> Niamh: Are they still around?
> Betty: Oh aye, they're up in 'X' Street. Cos my brother used to stay up in the flats in 'X' Street and I was going up to see my brother and I walked in the close, there's tablets and everything lying about the floor in the close. I picked them up, I was afeared for the wee bairns in case they swallowed them and I took them up to Fred and I says to him 'Fred, what's they?' *'Sleepers'*, that's what he says to me, sleepers. I says any wee bairn can get a hold o them(…) Another time in the close I saw a syringe! I ken all the McDonalds, I was reared up wi' the McDonalds cos they used to stay up the road. Tell you, the big man, he's a gem, he is a gem. That old man never bothered nae cunts, but see his family [grimaces]. The family from hell!

Ian also discusses his mistrust for certain neighbours:

> Niamh: Can you trust the people around where you live?

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[39] The 'McDonalds' (pseudonym) are an infamous 'anti-social' family who have been in the press on occasion in the past, dubbed, as Betty dubs them in this quote, 'the family from hell'.

Ian: Oh yes you can trust everybody. Apart fae, as I say, that young couple that's next door, I wouldnae trust them, he's a house breaker as well, so you have to make sure your house is well locked before you come oot".

In one way, these concerns lay weight to the Putnam thesis that social capital, as measured through trust, is on the decline and that this is a consequence (and possible cause) of the crimes discussed by Betty and Ian, namely drug abuse and house breaking. However, both initially express generalised trust in their neighbours, which again, paints a different picture to that of other writings. In fact, only one respondent reported a complete lack of generalised trust in his neighbours.

Michael grew up in residential care and has spent time in prison in the past. He is the only respondent who expresses a complete lack of trust for almost anyone:

> Niamh: Do you think you can trust the people in your area?
>
> Michael: Who can you trust…no…you cannae really trust anybody these days…it's even hard to trust your own family, anybody would stab you in the back these days…a community used to like stick with each other, help each other oot an that, there's none of that now. If you went to your neighbour's door and chapped their door and asked for a bowl of sugar they'd tell you to fuck off! *'Away to the shop and get your own sugar!'* People have got an attitude now, they're not as nice and friendly as they used to be where you could leave your doors open and that…

Michael's response epitomises the image of the distrustful ('non') working classes and can be seen as supporting evidence for the proposal the social capital in Britain is in decline in poor areas. He seems, though, to have a romanticised notion of the friendliness of his area in the past. Another respondent, Andy, recalls running battles and violent gang fights in the same area in the 1960s, and he comments on how much improved the area is. Nevertheless, Michael thoroughly lacks generalised social trust for both other individuals in his area and institutions that serve his area:

> Michael: But you cannae trust people at all…I mean you cannae even go to bloody social workers and priests…they're all bloody molesters! You cannae trust the police, they're the biggest criminal organisation in the world!
>
> Niamh: What makes you say that?
>
> Michael: They're the most crookedest people in the world, they're supposed to be peacekeepers and me, I was standing at the bus station waiting to go

home, I got lifted, I got beaten up in the cell by half a dozen policemen, I got the shit kicked out of me but nobody would believe the word of me because I've been in a lot of bother and that…seemingly two guys had given this guy hassle in the town and they were similar dressed to what I was and I got lifted and got a tanking for it(…)

There's plenty of guys like myself that have had tankings and you just take it…there's nothing you can do, except hope that you bump into them at night in the dark and give them a tanking themselves, but you're never that lucky.

Michael evidently trusts neither individuals nor institutions in his area.

7.3.2 Trust between institutions and individuals

Whereas the evidence above describes generally high levels of trust between respondents and their neighbours, the level of trust between institutions and individual respondents seems depleted. In particular, the mistrust evident between benefit delivery agencies and claimants is understandable in the context of the ever-increasing central government emphasis on benefit fraud. The New Labour government is highly concerned with benefit fraud, raising targets for fraud investigators, shining the 'spotlight on benefit cheats' and most recently, running advertisements on television encouraging people to report any suspicions of fraud. Less advertised are the financial incentives offered for the reporting of such fraud and the evidence that fraud investigators 'turn a blind eye' to those benefit fraudsters who supply information about other fraudulent claimants. Further, the amount of money spent on 'tackling benefit fraud' is out of all proportion to any monies saved (Jones and Novak, 1999).

It is clear from the interview data that one of the results of this expensive programme against benefit fraud is the fostering of suspicion in some neighbourhoods that there are certain untrustworthy people who will happily 'shop you to the social' for their own benefit. In other words, the principal direction of mistrust is from institutions to individuals and one of the two principle sources of mistrust between individuals is the government campaign against benefit fraud (the other being reputation for criminal activity, see above). In Excerpt 7.1 Peter describes 'mis-trust' in action in his account of a benefit fraud investigation into his daily walks to his local bowling

green. His account is also a vivid exposition of how the benefits system operates as a state surveillance apparatus of social control.

Excerpt 7.1 Peter   Bowling Alone? Who mistrusts whom?

Just say I go to my mothers, and she's 70 year old, and she's struggling away doin something, so I get pitched in and I start helping her oot, you know, and then I'm always looking aboot to see if there's somebody watchin, see if there's somebody gonna pick up the phone and say *'guess what? He's workin''*.

That's happened before, I've been followed, I've been hauled in for questioning, because they said I was working…somebody definitely phoned them, oh yes, and I'm fairly sure I know who, but that's beside the point…

I mean I was told, I'd been off [sick] a couple of years, and my doctor says, *'look, you need to walk, you need to get oot that hoose, you need to go'*…and I've always had a dog, so I had the dog, and I was a member of the bowling club, so from ma house to the bowling club is about a mile and a half, lovely day, brilliant, I used to go in and sit and talk to the green keeper, he was cutting the grass, and I'd have a wee bowl at the side for the dog, he'd have a drink, I'd have a smoke, and then I'd leave and come home, three mile walk, great! Dog loved it, I was…I had to do it, and then the following day I done it, and then I done it,

and then eventually I came out one morning…I always left about ten o'clock, same time every day, just became a routine, not for any particular reason, I always knew that about that time the green keeper would be there, he started about ten o'clock, so I left, and I became aware of a car sittin in a car park next to the house, these two fellas were in it, and I saw them.

If they had sat where they were I wouldnae have bothered, but the fact that they turned away gets you, you see, so I walked around, and I took a different route, and I walked round the flats, and I came back up, and the car was sittin, and there's a foot bridge over the railway, so I went over the footbridge, and I saw the car drivin away, fine, over into the school walked through the school, came out the far end, there was the car at the bottom of the road, so I walked up and they were following me, and every time I turned around the car was there, so I went onto the main road, and they couldnae follow me up there, cos that's too busy a road, but every time I got to the next road I was crossing I looked up and there was the blue car…

so I got to the bowling green and I spoke to the green keeper, and I told him, and he said *'no sign o them'*…so I went away…

Following day, I went for my walk, car followed me, got to the bowling green, he says [green keeper], *'you were just through that gate and the car came round the back there, two fellas came oot and asked me how much you were earning, they*

asked me how much you earned looking after the bowling green, I told them I was the green keeper', he says *'you better watch yourself'* …

I've done nothing, but I get the letter through the door telling me [to come for an interview at the DSS], and I went up and there was a panel of four sittin there, and *'you were seen on such and such a day goin to your work'*, I said…and I had already been to ma doctor, and told him, I says *'you told me to go oot and walk, do you want to put it in writing'*, and I had it, and you have to be sittin there with all this information, and I put in down in front of them and I said, 'that is all I did'…*'oh, no, no'*…I just hadn't a clue what was goin on, and…you know, there are people that don't care…'sod it, they probably willnae take ma benefit off me, I'd be as well workin', but I cannae afford to do that, and I've never put a foot wrong, and yet, I feel so bloody guilty, I think its probably just me, I don't know, but I just feel so bloody guilty, and I just wish I didnae…its just big brother.

 you just get the feeling that…its not just you, if you think about it, all these anonymous phone calls that can go in, these people don't need proof to do that, they can do it just out of pure maliciousness, pure badness, pick the phone up *'so and so's working'*, and before you know where you are, there's somebody…[investigating you for fraud].

all right I'm no working, but I reckon fairly shortly, I'm gonna get a letter from them because I'm attendin this place [Work Connect]…or I would think by now they've already had the phone call, cos I know the person that would do it…and its just out o pure badness, and yet the person that would do it is actually working on the fly himself…you see…and I just cannae go in for tit-for-tat, pick up the phone and say 'guess what', but I know people that have, and not a thing's been done about him…

Niamh: He gets away with it?

Peter: Well he gets away wi it, because, well, the reasoning everybody has, whether its right or wrong, I don't know, but because he's shoppin everybody else, they go *'just you carry on, good boy, go for it…you just keep us [informed], and we'll catch the rest of them, and leave you alone'*. Whether that's true or not I don't know, but I just wish he would stop it…but I haven't done a thing, and I've never done anything to him personally, but that's just the way some people are I suppose, but I just feel, I mean I just wish I didnae have to be on benefit, its as simple as that, really, I don't want to be on benefit, but unfortunately things have turned out this way, and I am…I mean, I've got to wear this machine for the rest of my life, it's a painkiller, it pushes electricity between four pads on ma body, so as that I don't feel the constant pain in ma back…its either that or tablets, which is a bad thing, I mean I've been on handfuls of painkillers and other such things, which doesnae do you any good, plus the fact that I've got to pay for the damn things, which is very expensive…I'm on three types of tablet, so that's over 20 pound a month…

Of course there are those who commit benefit fraud, including four respondents at the time of interviews. The most frequently targeted are those who do undeclared cash-in-hand work while claiming benefits. One could argue that this is the type of selfish behaviour that is both evidence of the decline in social capital (in the sense of norms subscribed to by groups) and that depletes social capital by fostering mistrust between individuals and between institutions and individuals. If people did not commit benefit fraud then there would be no need for it to be curbed through such high profile polices. There is, however, evidence that benefit fraud is significantly overstated, in part to meet the ever-increasing targets for fraud detection (Jones and Novak, 1999). Certainly Peter's experience sounds like an overly enthusiastic investigation into a non-existent case of fraud. In this instance, Peter's level of generalised social trust, in terms of his trusting of neighbours and the Benefits Agency, has been significantly eroded.

While it is possible to interpret the probably overstated level of benefit fraud as evidence and cause of declining social capital, one could also interpret fraud as evidence of the subscription to societal norms of the value of work (see chapter four). Respondents who have done undeclared cash-in-hand work while claiming benefits justify this fraud by appealing to their need to gain extra money for their families, to pay household bills and because they feel a duty to work. The extent to which such work can be viewed as evidence of enterprise has been commented on by other studies of benefit fraud (Leonard, 1998, see also chapter four). Dean and Melrose, in a study of benefit fraud and depleted notions of citizenship, comment on the justification of the desire to work: "it is ironic that this represents the appropriation of a dominant ideological discourse to justify an activity which is condemned within the dominant ideology" (1996:10).

To sum up, contrary to what the picture of working class areas bereft of social capital evokes, trust remains generally high between respondents and their neighbours. While there are some indications, especially from Michael, of lack of generalised social trust, the overwhelming picture is of social trust between individuals. There are some signs of the erosion of trust between institutions and individuals, notably in the field of benefit fraud investigation. Nevertheless, as with associational activity,

the evidence does not point to the whole scale decline in generalised social trust in poorer areas.

7.4 Networks

Social capital is said to derive not only from formal associative activity, but also from informal networks of friends, neighbours and acquaintances. According to Peter Hall in his examination of social capital in Britain: "the networks of face-to-face contact on which much social capital is based can be constructed or maintained via regular interaction with others in less formal settings, such as those that involve socializing with friends, conversation with neighbours, and informally-organized but regular activities undertaken with others" (1997: 427). Unfortunately, Hall writes, it is difficult to measure this type of informal sociability, though he remarks that the well-known British vehicle for informal sociability, the "public house", remains as well patronised today as in the past. Putnam (1995) cites data from the US General Social Survey which shows that socialising with neighbours is decreasing. This decrease in informal social connectedness is interpreted as further evidence of the declining stocks of social capital in the US. With these concerns in mind, respondents were asked about their relations with their neighbours. The overwhelming nature of response is positive: respondents in general enjoy good friendly relationships with neighbours.

The decline of 'good neighborliness'?
Only four of the thirty individual interviewees feel more negatively than positively about their neighbours. As Table 7.2 illustrates, the direction of comment on this question is significantly positive.

Table 7.3 The decline of 'good neighbourliness'?

Niamh: Are there people you can rely on around?
Andy: Oh aye, well we all help each other, likesay doing the garden. If ma lawnmower breaks down I can go next door and get his lawnmower. The fella downstairs, he says to me, '*can I get ma shears back?*' and they're mine! (laughs). And I go around to him and go 'can I get ma hedge clippers' and they're his! (laughs). There's an old man lives across the road there and everybody goes and helps out, goes to the shop for him. He'll catch me in the morning, or he'll catch Kath going up for the papers, '*will you bring ma papers doon, a pint of milk, twenty fags*', and that's cos he can hardly walk, can he?

Niamh: What are your neighbours like?
Betty: Och they're good neighbours here. The lassie 'n laddie, the man and wife down the stair, Josie and Nick, I ken them well cos I was reared up with them, right. They're away to Spain just now and they asked me to listen oot to see if there's anybody prowling aboot or that, that's what I do at night for them. And the wife next door, she's really nice too. I'm friendly wi' everybody aboot here.

Niamh: Do you get on well with your neighbours?
Glenda: Yes, uhuh. Well the people that live roundabout here they're quite nice, there's still some of the older ones here, just in this little bit [gestures out the window], and they're fine.

Niamh: Do you have friends about where you live?
Ian: Oh yeah, uhuh, two doors away on the other side, [I'm] quite friendly with them, eh, the boy across the road, aye, there's maybe about a dozen people I know that I've known for years and years and get on great in that one area.

Niamh: moving on to the area that you live in, do you like it?
Jim: Oh yeah! (…) I've been there for eleven years this November, thoroughly enjoy it, there's been good neighbours, that's the one thing I've always found, any house I've moved to, started at 'X', then moved to 'Y', any place we've been the neighbours have always been [good]…that's half the battle if you've got good neighbours.

These respondents do not seem to recognise a 'decline in good neighbourliness' in their areas. On the contrary, they talk of being friends with their neighbours, sharing equipment, watching out for elderly neighbours and each other's houses. Interestingly, the respondent who expressed the least feeling of 'community' in his area is also the only respondent who describes his residential area as 'middle class':

> Niamh: The final bit's on community…do you feel there's a good community where you live?
> Craig: No, there's no community where I live. It's a middle class estate, I know the people sort of two or three doors either side of me, but that's the extent of my knowledge of who lives in our community, so I don't really have any contact with people, and people don't want to have contact with you, other than to exchange a few words.

This sentiment suggests governments should exercise caution before assuming that middle class areas are naturally more neighbourly than working class areas. Indeed, on all three counts, associational activity, trust and neighbourliness, the data suggests the picture is more complicated than one of poor places suffering low social capital. Perhaps governments need to be alert to the positive aspects of 'poor places', and harness the expertise of those that live there, even privilege that expertise over traditionally accepted sources of information such as local government. Malcolm describes a typical 'community development' meeting he attended once, and the jostling for attention that went on between the usual 'stakeholders' that get invited to such meetings:

> When I was in on the meetings what I heard was each of them in competition to get the most Brownie points, and the people who weren't at the meetings who should have been at the meetings were the people from the area…so as a result what they were doing was, they were tackling the problem but they were only tackling it from an outside perspective, in the sense that everyone who was in that room with me didn't actually live in the area, or let me say some of them actually worked in the area, there was one local Jesuit group and then of course you had your Council officers and your local church hall [people], community hall [people] and the next big presence was the police. Malcolm.

It seems remarkable (but it isn't of course-that is the problem) that in a meeting about community development in a particular 'deprived community' the police were represented but not one resident of the community was there. When Malcolm talks

about his concern that "they were tackling the problem, but they were only tackling it from an outside perspective" he could be talking about the government's entire approach to welfare reform. Trusting claimants as experts in their own lives, and residents of 'poor places' as experts in the nature of that place's problems, might result in more effective policies.

Other geographers advocate this 'centering' of traditionally marginalized knowledges as a potentially progressive route for policy makers. Smith (2001), for example, describes a study she was involved in of child accidents in a poor area of Glasgow. At the time of the study, the dominant policy way of tackling the problem of child accidents was health education, on the premise that lack of awareness of hazards was a primary causative factor. In contrast the research conducted by Smith and her colleagues concluded that it was the knowledge of parents who resided in the area that prevented even more accidents from occurring. In Smith's words, "rather than viewing parents as the source of the problem, policy-makers would do better to regard them as part of the solution" (2001: 26). A conclusion of this study is that policy-makers would also do better to recognise claimants and other residents of 'poor places' as part of the solution. This sentiment is expanded on in the next chapter.

7.5 'Social Capital': An(other) economistic discourse?

The previous three sections have critically appraised the Putnam school concept of 'social capital' *on its own terms*, using the notions of associational activity, trust and neighbourliness. In this final section, some deeper questions are asked of the direction of the 'social capital' thesis.

In empirical studies that use social capital as a conceptual tool, places that have been described as lacking in social capital include poor US inner cities, underdeveloped countries of the 'third world' and poorer neighbourhoods in Britain (Mohan and Mohan, forthcoming). The implication of such studies is that poor areas are low in

social capital, and this lack is the cause, in part at least, of their poverty. Political economy approaches to poverty that use Marxian understanding of class based structural inequalities have little place in social capital discussions[40]. Mohan and Mohan describe the effect of this partial approach to political economy as one where "the problem lies with the 'victims' of poverty and not the wider political economy"[41] (forthcoming: 21). They further express concern "about the ways in which social capital has come to be privileged over material inequalities (between people and places) in a way which may be both analytically weak and practically disabling" (forthcoming: 23).

Although geographers have been reticent in taking up the concept of social capital, early indications from Mohan and Mohan are that a healthy scepticism is being adopted. My concern, is that social capital is used as another way of locating the cause of problems of poverty in their outcomes. In this sense, 'social capital' will become the 'social' parallel of the construction of 'dependency' in individual claimants. Perhaps 'social capital' appeals to governments if they think that good economic returns can be made from cheap investment in 'trust' rather than, for example, higher benefit levels. A related concern is that, rather than providing a space for the rehabilitation of the social, social capital will be/is being incorporated into dominant discourses of the primacy of 'the' economic, with social capital the elusive missing factor in explanations of why some places are more 'developed' than others.

Why, for example, social *capital*? In 'missing link' analyses, social capital completes the set of capitals (the rest being physical, financial, human and cultural) ostensibly enabling a fuller understanding of the processes of economic development. The World Bank has enthusiastically taken up the concept of 'social capital' and uses it in precisely this 'missing link' way. The following definition of social capital is offered on the World Bank's web site:

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[40] Although Wilkinson (1996) argues that socio-economic inequalities erode social capital.

[41] While I agree with Mohan and Mohan here I would not choose the phrase 'victims', (see chapter one), although perhaps their use of scare quotes shows their own wariness of the phrase.

> Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions. Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable.

Unlike LETS, which create a space where wider notions of work and value are promoted, social capital is understood in an instrumental way as a factor in economic growth, a factor that enables societies to 'prosper economically'. In other words, 'social capital' is in danger of being subsumed into economistic discourses. The 'economics' of most academic economics departments, for example, is overwhelmingly orthodox economics. Post-structural concerns about the constructedness of capitalist economic systems as *the* economic (Gibson-Graham, 1996, McDowell, 1997b, Lee, 1996) do not seem to impinge much on the discipline of economics itself. Further, orthodox economics is becoming increasingly econometric and concerned with mathematical measuring, modelling and the elusive task of forecasting (Fine and Green, 2000). The social context (let alone construction) of economies is not a principle concern of such orthodox economics, as such economics is predicated on theories of aggregated individual utility maximisation:

> [E]conomics has for the most part proceeded with a particular version of methodological individualism, one in which preferences are given 'exogenously'-that is, taken as given and neither explained nor situated historically or socially-and motivation is confined to 'utility maximisation', whereby behaviour is explained in terms of attainment of the highest feasible level of satisfaction of the exogenous preferences.
> Fine and Green, 2000:80

The concern and critique of Fine and Green is less that social capital may provide a point of entry for the 'social' into mainstream economics (they are sceptical of the chances of that), more that mainstream economics and its methods seem to be increasingly dominant in the social sciences; that issues long the concern of sociologists, geographers and political scientists are undergoing re-theorisation and re-conceptualisation in the terms of orthodox economics and its concern with capital and quantification. For example, studies of social capital are characterised by empirical examinations of that which is measurable-the available statistics and data-

hence the plethora of studies on associational activity and newspaper readership. In reviewing the social capital and health inequalities literature Mohan and Mohan highlight "the suspicion…that operational opportunism has led scholars to use whatever data happens to be available…and correlate it with mortality data" (forthcoming:15). Further, Fine and Green argue, even if mainstream economics does have space for conceptualising the social, it is most likely to be in the guise of explaining informational market imperfections. As they imagine economists saying to other social scientists:

> Tell us what non-economic factors you think are important to the economy and how they reflect or create market imperfections. We will then model them on the basis of our own methodology and return them to you as a contribution to your own discipline.
> Fine and Green, 2000:85

Fine and Green (2000) think it is inevitable that 'social capital' will continue to address the economic, and be incorporated into orthodox economic 'missing link' explanations of the causes of 'poor places'. At present, it is difficult to see any sign of an expansive understanding of social capital being used in academic study. There is little evidence of, for example, broad conceptualisations of 'work' or 'value' within social capital theses. Instead there are signs that social capital is understood in narrow, instrumental ways subservient to the primacy of 'the' economic. In short, the danger is that social capital is an(other) economistic discourse.

To conclude, I have expressed doubts about the increasingly popular concept of 'social capital' on two levels. First, evidence from respondents conflicts with the dominant "poor place=low social capital" thesis, which suggests there are grounds to question some of the premises of the social capital thesis. At the least, governments should exercise caution before assuming working class areas have weak associations, mis-trustful residents and low levels of 'neighbourliness'. On a second level, I offer some deeper questions on the conceptual direction of 'social capital'. Current signs do not suggest social capital is or will be a site for the rehabilitation of the 'social', but instead is becoming subsumed into the more powerful 'economic'. Some

perhaps more optimistic possibilities for future conceptual and policy development are suggested in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight   Conclusion

Dependency and enterprise are increasing in importance as framing concepts for welfare reform and economic policy in Britain. The picture that is painted by these constructs has been challenged in this thesis. In the spirit of contesting the construction of these welfare reform policies as necessary and inevitable, other policy avenues are suggested in this final chapter, including Basic Income and Job Guarantee schemes. Further, I advocate an economic geography that engages more, empirically, methodologically and theoretically, with those who suffer the brunt of uneven development. There is space in economic geography for more research on the geographies of unemployment and welfare. Finally, it is argued that it is vital to keep to the front of our minds the truth that there are always alternatives: alternatives to the political economic systems that mean social welfare systems are so necessary, and alternatives to the reforms of those welfare systems in ways that better attack the poverty endemic in most nation states. By imagining these alternatives we constantly create, in David Harvey's words, spaces of hope (Harvey, 2000).

Structure of the chapter

This final chapter begins with a **summary** of the arguments of the preceding chapters. Section two outlines potential **policy opportunities** in the field of welfare reform, opportunities that are not generally considered by neo-liberal states and the orthodoxy of the "workfare offensive" (Peck and Theodore, 2001). The policy avenues discussed are i) increasing benefit levels, ii) Basic Income, iii) Job Guarantee schemes and iv) inclusive policy development. By inclusive policy development I mean including representatives of the unemployed and low-incomed in policy making debates and designs. The final section of **concluding thoughts** is a reminder of the ubiquity of alternatives.

8.1   Summary

Council in crisis talks with industry minister after rural Haddington loses a major employer

New deal debuts on 'big, big day'

Glitzy launch for programme to provide skills training for jobless young people

Shocked workers in tears after TV plant closes and 500 jobs go

**Figure 8.1 Geographies of labour supply and demand:
The Scotsman 7th April 1998**

The above juxtaposition of stories in the Scotsman newspaper captures much of the argument of this thesis. The success of government unemployment policies that focus only on labour supply (as the New Deal does) will always be limited by the uneven geographies of labour demand. In chapters two and three it was argued that political discourses of welfare reform in Britain have revolved around a remarkably stable construction of a dichotomy between dependency and enterprise. Dependency is consistently and closely associated with benefits while enterprise in constructed in relation to the worlds of business and paid work. These discourses of dependency and enterprise are constructed through a variety of media including policy documents such as Green Papers and political speeches inside and outside Parliament.

In terms of methodology, these chapters highlight the usefulness of discourse analysis in geographical research. Such analysis can be used in a way that addresses the critique that 'postmodern' social research tends towards the esoteric and

irrelevant. The discourses of dependency and enterprise are analysed at the beginning of this thesis in order to highlight what is actually done, policy-wise, in the name of preventing dependency or promoting enterprise. In short, this analysis concluded that social security benefits are cut in the name of preventing dependency while business and personal taxes are cut in the name of promoting enterprise. Such policies have been partly responsible for the worsening income inequality evident in Britain during the first term of Labour government. A central belief behind the production of this thesis is that such inequality is wrong, harmful for individuals and society and a relevant and important topic of academic study.

Of course, there are limits to a focus on discourse in any particular study. In practical terms, much political manoeuvring and decision making goes on 'behind closed doors', for example, at Cabinet meetings which do not produce a publicly accessible record. Thus, attempting to analyse traces of discourse as they are produced in written texts is not always possible in the fullest way. Further, as Fairclough (2001: 19) writes, "not all social phenomena are linguistic". The whole of social life is not discourse, although, "even those [phenomena] that are not just linguistic (economic production for instance) typically have a substantial, and often underestimated, language element" (ibid). Having said this, there are clearly a range of processes that affect and create social and economic life in a range of uneven ways, and a focus on discourse will not always be the appropriate lens to use in examining these processes. My only claim is that it is an appropriate lens for this study, and happily geography is a multi-vocal discipline within which geographers adopt a broad range of theoretical and methodological approaches to a broad range of substantive topics.

Theoretically, chapters two and three argue that dependency and enterprise are profoundly individualising constructs. The post-war construction of the welfare state and the sharing of risk through the insurance principal have been transformed to an individual's problematic dependency on the state. Enterprise has changed from a broad concept that included resourcefulness and inventiveness to a synonym for entrepreneurialism. Subsequent chapters advocate a move away from such

individualising constructs to concepts that recognise people's need for other people such as interdependency and social enterprise. Not only do such concepts avoid the stigmatising effects of individualised constructs ("my benefit claiming is the cause of my dependency on the state which robs me of my self-reliance and enterprise"), but they fit more closely with the evidence of what goes on in benefit claimant's lives as presented in the chapters on LETS and social capital. The notions of interdependency and social enterprise further muddy the false distinction between the dependent and the enterprising: people are not either dependent or enterprising but *both* dependent and enterprising to varying degrees at different times of their lives.

The theoretical approaches of (now not so) 'new' economic geography (Lee and Wills, 1997) have cleared a discursive space for the proliferation of analyses that are sensitive to the concepts of social construction, discourse and subjectivities. Such concerns about the plurality and social construction of economic geographies highlight the distance between economic geography (with other social sciences) and economics, but it remains economics which seems to have most influence over public policy in all fields, including social security. Economists, not geographers, in the words of a recent commentary "have the ear of the minister" (Peck, 2000).

This influence makes critical economic geographic analyses all the more crucial. Where government policy is influenced only by orthodox economic analyses the policy alternatives are limited under the over-arching government goal of maintaining a nation's economic 'competitiveness'. This policy in the field of welfare reform is also largely aspatial and detached from locally experienced inequalities, in other words, it ignores the extent to which geography matters. Constructions of 'globalisation' and 'competitiveness' profoundly limit the choices deemed available to policy makers to address poverty and inequality. They may even limit the inclusion of poverty and inequality on the political agenda (as happened during the Thatcher years of the 1980s). An understanding of the economic as constructed enables the type of analysis of this thesis where dependency and enterprise are understood, not as given attributes, but as social constructions produced in/for particular places at particular times and in particular discursive ways

(which can be analysed) and for particular political ends (which can be criticised). Questions are addressed about what particular meanings are attached to particular words, how this happens and, of course, why: to what ends.

To take the substantive issue of dependency, it is argued that dependency is attached to benefit claimants, but not to companies who depend on public subsidies, (a recent British example being Railtrack), nor branch plant economies where local areas are dependent on multinational companies for the majority of their employment. Public money spent on social security is alleged to create dependency, while public money spent on attracting companies to locate in Scotland, for example, is called promoting enterprise. The Scottish Executive spends £130 million a year on grants to attract companies who will create or preserve jobs. Regional Selective Assistance (RSA) is given to firms, often in grants of over one million pounds, to lure them to locate in Scotland providing job boosts in certain areas. Numerous companies have received such grants, including Compaq, OKI and Motorola, only to subsequently announce job losses and even branch closure in the case of Motorola with the loss of 3,000 jobs. There was large scale, localised unemployment caused by the closure of the Motorola plant in Bathgate. The irony is that those who are claiming benefits six months after losing their jobs at Motorola will be deemed, in the dominant policy discourse, to be suffering from dependency. In the United States, the dependency of private business on public subsidy has been termed "corporate welfare". The example of the Motorola plant closure is a microcosm of all the questions around dependency: the dependency of a region on a multi-national branch plant, the dependency of the company on public subsidy, the dependency of the redundant workers on benefits.

Concomitantly, the dominant construction of enterprise is turned on its head by the evidence in chapters four and five. If enterprise is displayed by work then the long-term benefit claimants interviewed, most of whom currently work, are enterprising individuals. The myth that claimants belong to a parallel world where the work ethic is absent is debunked by the evidence of overwhelmingly positive attitudes to work. There is further evidence of enterprise as self-employment and business start-ups,

with respondents reporting past, present and future involvement with such endeavours. Respondents are enterprising in the ways they protect their benefits. Tactics include strategic presentation of selves as polite or ignorant, 'jumping through hoops' to keep Employment Service staff happy and selective disclosure of information that might affect benefits. Enterprising ways around regressive indirect taxation are found, for example, through buying duty free smuggled tobacco from the pub. Enterprising economies are created through membership of credit unions and LETS. Enterprise, in its broad sense, is thriving amongst the respondents interviewed.

Simultaneously, the respondents are financially dependent on benefits for most of their income. Some have depended on benefits for over ten years, others may depend on benefits for years to come. But to demonise dependency per se makes little sense, as all individuals depend on others and on the state to greater or lesser degrees at different points of their lives.

Just as chapters two and three argued that dependency is synonymous with benefits and enterprise with work in political discourse, so chapters four and five addressed the topics of work and benefits from the perspective of the subjects of discourse: long term benefit claimants. Experiential accounts of living on the edges of the formal labour market bear little relation to the picture of the work detached dependency culture of political discourse. There are, of course, individual respondents who, in the words of the labour force survey, are 'discouraged' in their job searching. There is one respondent who describes himself as 'semi-retired' on benefits and at least a further two respondents who are sceptical that they will get jobs in the future. These accounts are unusual, though, in terms of the overall direction of opinion amongst all respondents. These accounts are also internally contradictory, with Keith, for example, describing himself as semi-retired only to later discuss his plans to start his own business. In contrast to the political orthodoxy, respondents reported positive feelings about work, multiple and various connections to worlds of work and in depth knowledges of the vagaries of local labour markets and the reality of the flexible opportunities therein. Concomitantly,

and in contrast to the picture of freeloading claimants comfortably sitting around all day on benefits, chapter five contains accounts of the difficulties of getting by on extremely low incomes and the poverty and insecurity experienced by some respondents. While there are respondents who consider the level of benefits they receive to be adequate, for example Billy who is entitled to high rate DLA, the more common response is that benefits do not provide sufficient income, contesting the orthodox view that life on benefits has become too comfortable and that this is part explanation of the continuing unemployment in these relatively economically buoyant times. The general conclusion of chapters four and five is that the work detachment perspective is more a reflection of prevailing economic ideology than a helpful explanation of life on the margins of the formal labour market.

As argued above, the prevailing economic ideology is an individualising one where the spaces and ties between people, or networks of interdependency, are under acknowledged. In the light of this, the final two chapters, six and seven, focus on discourses that centre on the links between individuals: local exchange trading systems and social capital. Chapter six argues that LETS muddy the dependency/enterprise distinction, with 'dependent' benefit claimants using local currency systems as both means to spare cash and develop skills and job contacts. Unlike previous LETS studies which centre on the construction of resistant anti-capitalist discourses, what is striking about respondents accounts of their LETS involvement is its ordinariness, highlighting the ubiquity of the construction of alternative economic geographies. Gibson-Graham (1996) argue exactly this: that non-capitalist economies and economic transactions are ubiquitous. In this light they ask what does it mean to live in a (singular) "capitalist economy" or even "capitalist society", when for example, more hours of work are done in non-capitalist arenas including the household economy and self-employment. In this context, LETS are a highly stylised (and immediately obviously) non-capitalist arena, which perhaps explains the initial flurry of academic interest in LETS in Britain. Further, LETS are examples of Elias' 'web of dynamic interdependence' and it is argued that ordinary people comprise and construct a vibrant local economic geography within which the

values of mutuality, reciprocity, participation and inclusiveness, amongst others, are promoted.

The final chapter of the body of the thesis-chapter seven-examines developing discourse of networks in a different setting, that of academic and political practice. The renewed focus on interrelationships between people that is part of the 'social capital' thesis may initially seem encouraging as institutions such as the World Bank and the British government seem to be refocusing some energy away from the cult of the individual. However, there is also the concern that such 'new' conceptions follow the deficit model of much other orthodox development studies by seeking to explain lack of economic development in countries or cities by virtue of features intrinsic to those poorer places, thus negating the relations and structures which produce inequalities.

8.2   Policy Opportunities

It has been argued above, and in chapters one and two, that certain scripts of 'globalisation' and 'competitiveness' shape what is to be known on a certain issue and limit what is thought can be done. Part of the ideological power of such discursive constructions is their seeming 'naturalness' and 'common-sense-ness'. It appears inevitable that the world will grow ever more 'globalised' and obvious that governments can no longer afford extensive expensive welfare states. Of course, there *are* alternatives, and in the spirit of contesting the direction of 'welfare to work' this section outlines what some of these alternatives might be.

8.2.1   Benefit Levels

According to Stephen Nickel, member of the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee (and influential economist and propounder of the 'NAIRU' school) benefit levels in the UK are "miserly".[42] This will not be news to the people interviewed, as shown in chapter five. It is disingenuous to say, as Gordon Brown

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[42] Interview in *The Guardian*, 26th January 2002.

did in his 1998 budget speech that "there is no case for a one-parent benefit and we shall not return to that". Indeed, it was a Conservative government that introduced the lone parent premium in 1986 in recognition of the extra financial pressures faced by one-parent families, although later Conservative governments back-tracked on this proposal and it was legislation initiated by Conservative Social Security Secretary Peter Lilley that was pushed through by the New Labour government in its early days in power.[43] It is clear that the New Labour government have no intention of increasing benefit levels by any substantial amount (see chapter two). It is also clear from evidence reported in chapter five that claimants do not find their benefit levels sufficient, let alone generous. The dismissal of using benefit levels as an anti-poverty policy tool prompted a group of fifty-four professors of Social Policy in the UK to write a letter to the Financial Times[44] criticising this policy development which, it was argued, would lead to the government attempting "to tackle social exclusion with one arm tied behind its back". There *is* a case for one parent benefit, the same case there is for across the board benefit increases: benefits are not high enough to prevent poverty. It is, however, extremely unlikely that the current British government will grasp this particular policy opportunity, as it goes against everything they believe about the problem of dependency.

8.2.2   Basic Income

Given the systemic residualisation of welfare states in the industrialised west, and the erosion of the social insurance principle in Britain, a (largely political science based) debate has emerged regarding radical changes to policy approaches to income maintenance to include a *basic income* (BI) for all citizens (Van Parijs, 1992, 1995; Robertson, 1996; Fitzpatrick, 1999; Jordan et al, 2000). Although, as Fitzpatrick warns, "the character, significance and effects of a BI would depend substantially

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[43] Andrew Rawnsley's interpretation of the insistence on the lone parents benefit cut, despite its widespread unpopularity within and without the party, is that it was largely to do with Tony Blair and Gordon Brown and their need to appear tough and in control as Philip Gould's famous focus groups were reporting worrying signs of an impression of indecision and aimlessness being made by the Labour leadership (Rawnsley, 2001). The excuse of the manifesto promise to remain within Tory spending plans was weakened by Brown's November announcements of £300 million for after school clubs and £400 million of extra help for pensioner's winter fuel costs (the amount saved by the cut in the lone parent premium being £60 million). Pushing through the cut had become a "virility test" (Rawnsley, 2001: 113). Apparently, "later Brown's aides admitted it had all been needless panic born of inexperience in the early days" (Toynbee and Walker, 2001: 19).

upon the nature of the ideological social environment within which it was implemented" (1999: 5), most versions of a BI envisage such an income to be *unconditional* of employment status, socio-economic status, gender or marital status. A principle argument for this basic income is that it would remove the unemployment and poverty traps described in chapter four. Means testing worsens the problems of high marginal tax rates caused by the rapid withdrawal of benefit income as earnings income increases (Field, 1995, 1996; Parker, 1995l; Atkinson, 1996; Kitson, Martin and Wilkinson, 2000). The basic income, it is argued, would overcome the problem of high marginal tax rates because the income would not be withdrawn as the employment earnings increased.

> The job which paid £100 per week *would* now be worth taking because BI is a benefit which is *added* to earnings rather than something which is paid out temporarily during periods of non-employment.
>
> Effective marginal tax rates of 80 per cent plus would be reduced to anywhere between 35 per cent and 50 per cent, depending upon the level of the BI which was being funded.
> Fitzpatrick, 1999: 56

Further, because the basic income would be paid universally based on citizenship this should avoid the problem of the stigmatising effects of means tested benefits and the associated problem of low take-up (Atkinson, 1996, see also chapter five).

Of course, none of this debate is without substantial opposition and critique of the notion of unconditional income for citizens. Atkinson argues that, rather than an unconditional basic income, there is a case for a "participation income", based not necessarily on participation in the labour market, but on some kind of "social contribution" which may be paid employment, but could also be voluntary work, education or various types of caring work (1996: 68). Atkinson's vision of a participation income is complementary to a strengthened social insurance system.

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[44] Hence their nickname, the "FT54".

> The means-tested route followed by the present Government[45] cannot offer an effective solution to the reform of the welfare state. For all the rhetoric about targeting, means testing has not worked, and a major aim of policy in Britain should be reduced dependence on means-tested benefits. The route to providing an effective national minimum for Britain is a participation income, complementing improved social insurance.
> Atkinson, 1996: 70

Opposition from further right on the political spectrum is more sceptical of the benefits of any type of universal income. It is not difficult to see the potential for objections to severing the link between income and work, or as Fitzpatrick words it, "from a radical right perspective, a BI appears to subsidize the indolent workshy underclass that they despise so much, rather than reintegrating the welfare dependent back into normal society" (1999: 87).

Nevertheless, the debate around the BI (or citizen's income as it is sometimes labelled) continues through organisations such as the Basic Income European Network founded in 1988 and the London-based Basic Income Research Group. It is, however, difficult to see any potential for enthusiasm on this policy opportunity from the New Labour government in Britain. Frank Field's mission to think the unthinkable on welfare reform proved short-lived when he revealed the £8 billion estimated cost of his plans for a compulsory universal contributions system. Further, despite present minister Alistair Darling's avowed wish not to be "remembered as another Secretary of State who tinkered with the system-who patched and mended before handing it on to someone else to do the same" (DSS, 1999b PN), the direction of welfare reform policy remains firmly in the direction of greater targeting[46]: in other words, more means tests.

8.2.3 Job Guarantee Schemes

A third policy opportunity route stems from recent macro-economic debates around monetarism, inflation and unemployment (Mitchell, 1998, 2001; Wilkinson, 2000). Gordon Brown has said he follows a "post-monetarist" path on inflation and

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[45] At the time the 'present Government' was a Conservative government, although it is equally true that the New Labour Government(s) continue to follow a means-tested route.

[46] Accompanied by "active labour market" policies such as the New Deal.

unemployment policy (2000c), criticising the slavish following of Phillips Law[47] which was used to legitimise high levels of unemployment as a necessary evil for maintaining low inflation.[48] As noted in chapter two, it is economist Richard Layard who has influenced the direction of Treasury economic thinking, with the current fixation on the NAIRU, or non accelerating inflation rate of unemployment (Layard, Nickell and Jackman, 1991). The implication of this focus on the NAIRU, is that unemployment is considered to be only approachable, in policy terms, through supply side approaches such as welfare-to-work. As Wilkinson argues:

> The argument has been that the equilibrium rate of unemployment (the natural rate or the NAIRU depending on the school) has shifted for variety of demand and supply-side reasons. Unemployment is therefore 'voluntary' and/or 'structural', not amenable to macroeconomic stimulus and only reducible by additional supply side measures.
> Wilkinson, 2000: 649

Within economics, though, there remains considerable critical debate about the NAIRU, not least from the economist who introduced the notion, Modigliani:

> Unemployment is primarily due to *lack of aggregate demand*. This is mainly the outcome of erroneous macroeconomic policies, inspired by an obsessive fear of inflation coupled with a benign neglect for unemployment which have resulted in systematically over tight monetary policy decisions, apparently based on an objectionable use of the so-called NAIRU approach.
> Modigliani, 2000: 3, emphasis in original, as quoted in Mitchell, 2001: 2

William Mitchell argues from the same perspective, with the exasperated claim that "the unemployed cannot find jobs that are not there!" (2001: 2). In other words, there are economists who are arguing for the rehabilitation of demand side approaches to unemployment. Mitchell has developed a full employment scheme, which he terms the "Buffer Stock Employment Model" (1998), in which the government acts as the 'employer of last resort' and absorbs those not employed in the private sector. This model has been expanded on in a number of articles (Mitchell, 1998, 2001). The point is that following the NAIRU is not the only policy opportunity for Gordon Brown, and that other economists are constantly working on

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[47] Which states there is an inverse relationship between unemployment and inflation.
[48] Although Eddie George of the Monetary Policy Committee, to which Gordon Brown has passed responsibility for interest rate policy, has intimated in comments that he regards unemployment in the north of England to be a price worth paying for low inflation.

alternative routes to full employment. Perhaps we should be less concerned that it is economists rather than geographers who have "the ear of the minister" (Peck, 2000) and more concerned about which economists those ears belong to.

8.2.4 'Nothing About Us Without Us'

'Nothing about us without us' is a campaigning slogan of the disability movement in the UK. It is a direct and immediate way of getting the message across that policies that affect people with disabilities should only be developed in consultation with those people, the people who will be affected by policy change. The Scottish Executive is currently reviewing services for people with learning disabilities in Scotland.[49] At each stage of this review there are people with learning difficulties involved on consultation groups, implementation committees, advisory meetings and so on. This is despite the evident problems of making necessarily involved and complicated policy changes accessible to those with varying degrees of cognitive ability. It would be considered unacceptable in this political climate to develop policy changes *without* the engagement of representative groups.[50]

This is all in direct contrast to the situation of general welfare reform and specific changes in the operation of certain benefits such as Incapacity Benefit. There remains virtually no consultation with representatives of low-income groups on these issues which have crucial impacts on their financial well-being. One could argue that this reflects the lack of political organisation amongst unemployed or low-income groups (Bagguley, 1991). Perhaps, then, this represents an opportunity for government to encourage the formation of representative organisations, with whom changes could be made in partnership. Partnership is, after all, a New Labour keyword and, ostensibly, their preferred way of doing things. The case for increased consultation and participation of people on low incomes in policy-making that will effect their lives is growing (Commission on Poverty, Participation and Power,

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[49] The review is called "The same as you?" and has been developed in close association with learning difficulty self-advocacy organisations such as People First (Scotland). While the general denial of basic human rights to people with learning difficulties remains shocking, there is a concerted effort to improve services, for example, all long stay hospitals in Scotland have to be closed by 2005.

2000). Ruth Lister calls for "the more general involvement of those experiencing poverty in the politics of poverty" (2001: 70). This represents a fourth policy opportunity for New Labour. The current direction of welfare reform policy: increased residualisation and targeting accompanied by active labour market policies, is evidently not the only policy opportunity open to governments.

8.3 Concluding Thoughts

Writing on qualitative research, Smith (2001: 25) advocates " a strategy that aims to place non-dominant, neglected knowledges at the heart of the research agenda". This thesis suggests that a theoretical approach that centres on the discursive construction of knowledge and the resistant knowledges of subjects of particular discourses, is one way of doing this. Economic geographers are increasingly engaging in this approach. J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996), for example, advance a feminist critique of political economy and the construction of "Capitalism" as dominant, all-powerful and inevitable. Gibson-Graham argue that the *representation* of capitalism as hegemonic is constitutive of capitalism's seeming inevitability; that non-capitalist and anti-capitalist projects remain largely hidden and silent because of the way capitalism is constructed. They criticise "discourses of capitalist hegemony", and attempt to:

> clear a discursive space for the emergence and development of hitherto suppressed discourses of economic diversity, in the hope of contributing to an anti-capitalist politics of economic invention.
> Gibson-Graham, 1996: xi).

This insight is applicable to the construction of political policy on welfare reform, which too appeals to notions of the inevitability (and, unlike political economy approaches, desirability) of "Capitalism". Specifically, it is a certain 'globalisation' script that is accepted/promoted as the limits of that which can be known, with the

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[50] One could argue that this engagement is little more than lip service to proper consultation, nonetheless, this consultation represents significant progress from times when such a requirement to consult with people with learning difficulties themselves would have been inconceivable.

imperative of 'competitiveness' limiting that which can be done. These 'effects of veridiction' and 'effects of jurisdiction' have profoundly limiting effects on policy choices in the field of social welfare. These choices are limited to supply side measures, or 'active labour market' policies and creating the 'right environment' for business, or business tax cuts. However, as made clear above, these are not the only options.

To return to the Gibson-Graham quote in chapter one:

> Often though not always, the elements of society are articulated, 'sutured' as moments in a 'hegemonic' relational structure, but this articulation is always ever incomplete and temporary.
> Gibson-Graham, 1995: 270

This is the reason why there is always room for spaces of hope about the future. If such hegemonic moments of articulation are temporary then there is always the potential for their disarticulation.

The New Labour government have been accused of "doing good by stealth" (Lister, 2001, also Toynbee and Walker, 2001). The commitment to abolish child poverty in twenty years is a welcome and remarkable one, which has been backed with financial increases in child benefit and income support for under 11 year olds, largely negating the effect of the lone parent benefit cut. Child poverty is notably worse in Britain than in other European countries, with a shocking one in three children living in families whose income is below half the average income level (Piachaud and Sutherland, 2001). Social policy aimed at abolishing this poverty is long overdue. Yet, the Government seem shy about promoting their redistributive attempts for fear of upsetting 'middle England'. With the historic second landslide won by Labour in 2001, there is space for further agitation and campaigning against poverty and widening inequality in Britain. There is also space for geographers to be part of this.

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Are you unemployed and receiving any state benefits?

Would you like to chat about it?

My name is Niamh O'Connor, and I am doing a research project on unemployment, benefits and "getting by". I am looking for unemployed people to interview over the next couple of months. All meetings will be informal and friendly, and last about an hour. All meetings will be **completely confidential**, and can take place at a time and place convenient for you.

Participants will receive £5 expenses for the hour. (LETS members will receive £5 and 5 'X' for the hour)

Interested?

If you are at all interested please leave your name and contact number/address in the attached envelope, and I will get in touch. If you want to ask any questions, please get in touch with me: Niamh O'Connor, Department of Geography, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh EH8 9XP. Tel. 0131 650 2532

Thank You!

Appendix 1b Letter

Niamh O'Connor
Department of Geography
University of Edinburgh
Drummond Street
Edinburgh EH8 9XP

XXXX

XXXX

Dear XXXX,

I am writing to you further to my meeting with XXXX on Thursday 11th November. I am doing a PhD on unemployment policy in Britain and am currently interviewing unemployed people on state benefits in the XXXX area. I have already interviewed around twenty people, and would like to chat to some of the unemployed people involved with 'Work Connect'.

The interviews last about an hour, and are informal chats which I tape record and which are **completely confidential**. The three main areas covered in the interviews are people's experience and opinions about work, benefits and the community in which they live. I want to stress that the interviews are completely confidential, I never use interviewees real names, nor need I mention the name XXX, if you would prefer me not to.

If you would like to know anything more about the project please don't hesitate to call me at home on 0131 556 5167. I have previously done some community development work in the XXXX area with XXXX, who has said he would provide a reference, should you want some reassurance.

I would like to interview around fifteen people, possibly three a day for five days, in the next few weeks. I hope this sounds okay to you, please get in touch if you would like anything clarified.

Thanks in advance,
Looking forward to hearing from you,
Niamh O'Connor

Appendix 2   Interview Schedule

1. RELATIONSHIP WITH FORMAL ECONOMY AND "ENTERPRISE"

To start off with I just want to chat generally about what you think of work and jobs.
What do you think the pluses and minuses of paid work are? Do you think paid work
is good for you? Why/why not?
Is it hard to find work around here?
If yes, why do you think that is? If no, what kind of work do you think is available
around here?

Tell me a bit about your history of working, or any jobs you have had.

Tell me about the last job you had.

      Where was it?

      How long did it last?

      Was it permanent/temporary; full-time/part-time?

      Did you enjoy it?

      Was it well paid?

      How did it end?

Do you want to find a job now?

(If yes) Why do you want to find a job? Do you think you'd be better off in work?

      What do you do to look for work?

(If no, I don't want to find a job)　　Why not?

      (If relevant) Does your household situation come into account? How do you

      think it would affect your household income if you got a job?

      Does your partner work? /not work?

      Does this affect your choice not to work?/look for a job?

      Do you see this changing in the future? Do you think you might work at

      some point in the future?

Have you ever thought of starting your own business?

(probably no) => why not? What would stop you? Would you like to?

> Do you know anyone who started their own business?

> What do you think the problems/barriers are to setting up a business?

(If yes) Tell me about it.

2. RELATIONSHIP WITH STATE AND "DEPENDENCY"

I'd like to ask you a bit about benefits now.

What kind of experience have you had dealing with state agencies like the Benefits Agency, or the Job Centre?

> Were the staff helpful when initially claiming?

> Are they helpful in the search for a job?

> Do you trust the people working there?

> What kind of things do they suggest you should do? Jobs/training courses

> Tell me about good/bad experiences

Are you on any of the New Deal programmes? What do you think of them?

Training Courses? Opinion of them?

I know you receive some benefits. Can you tell which ones?
> Do you/your household receive any additional benefits?

What do you think of the amount you receive on benefits?

> Is it enough?   How do you get by?

> Do you manage to save at all?

> Do you find it easy to get into debt? Can you get help from anywhere if this happens?

How do you feel about claiming benefit?

> Do you feel entitled to the benefits?

> Do you feel it carries any responsibilities?

> Do you think benefits provide security in any way?

> Is there anything you don't like about claiming?

> How do you feel about other people who claim in general?

3. RELATIONSHIP WITH INFORMAL ECONOMY AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

(If LETS member) I know you are a member of the LETS. Tell me about it.

How did you first hear about it?

Why did you join? What did you expect from it?

What kind of things in the directory appeal to you? What do you want to buy?

What kind of trading have you done?

Have you made any friends through it?

How has LETS affected or changed your life?

Do you think there are any problems in the LETS?

What would you do to improve it?

(If non member) Have you heard of the LETS in the area? If no-?

(If yes) What do you think its about?

Have you though about joining?

Why haven't you joined?

What do you think of the informal economy?

Do you use it in any way? Buy things under the counter?

Do you think working and signing on is common?

Why do you think people do it?

Do you think it is wrong?

What do you think of the community here?

Do you feel you are part of a community?

Do you get on well with your neighbours?

Do you have many friends or relatives near where you live? Are there people you can rely on around?

Would you say you trust most the people around here?

(If yes) why is that? How would you trust them?

(If no) Why? Do you think its something particular to this area? Have you had experiences in the past of trusting someone, but to be let down?

Do people often shop people to the social for working on the side?

(If yes) Why do you think they do this?

Do you belong to any local organisations or groups?

Are you aware of community groups in your area?

Would you move if you could?

Appendix 3: Coding Framework

WORK CODES

Work plus money/pay (WOPLMON)	Work minus money/pay (WOMINMON)
Work plus family (WOPLFAM)	Work plus self (WOPLSELF)
Work plus other (WOPLOTH)	Work minus other (WOMINOTH)
Harmful effects unemployment (HARMUE)	Harmful effects employment (HARMEMPL)
Experience of work on side (EXPWOSID)	No experience work on side (NOTWOSID)
Working at present any kind (DOWONOW)	Not working at present (NOWONOW)
Barriers to employment (BARREMPL)	Poverty Trap (POVTRAP)
Experience of own business (EXPOBUS)	No experience own business (NOEXPOBUS)
Enjoys work (ENJOYSWO)	Doesn't want job/Can't work (CANTWORK)
Hard to find work in area (HARDWORA)	Future opportunities of work (JOBOPPS)
Actively seeking work (ACTSEEWO)	
Knowledge of labour market (KNOWLABM)	Lack knowledge of labour market (LACKKNLA)

BENEFIT CODES

Benefit system helpful (BENSHELP)	Benefit system unhelpful (BENSUNHE)
Benefits staff judgemental (BENSTJUD)	Claiming feelings stigma (CLFESTIG)
Active management system (ACTMANSY)	Passive part of system (PASSPASY)
Indepth knowledge system (INDKNOSY)	Lack knowledge system (LACKKNSY)
Benefits give security (BENSEC)	Benefits don't give security (BENNOSEC)
Routine of claiming (ROUCLAIM)	Fear if routine broken (FEARROBR)
Training courses helpful (COURHELP)	Training courses unhelpful (COURUNHE)
Getting by manageable (GETBYDIF)	Getting by difficult (GETBYMAN)
Hard to save (HARDSAVE)	
Don't get into debt (DONTDEBT)	Easy to get into debt (EASYDEBT)
Unconventional ways getting by (UNCWGETB)	Conventional ways getting by (CONWAYGB)
Benefits and entitlement (BENENTL)	Benefits and responsibility (BENRESP)

LETS CODES

LETS and work (LETSWORK)	LETS and benefits (LETSBENE)
LETS trading examples (LETSTRAD)	LETS social aspect (LETSSOC)
Cash not involved plus (LETSCAPL)	Cash not involved minus (LETSCAMI)
LETS plus other (LETSPLOT)	Problems with LETS (LETSPROB)
Diverse group of people plus (LETSDIVP)	Similar group of people plus (LETSSAMP)
LETS and confidence (LETSCONF)	LETS 'feel good factor' (LETSFEGO)
Not LETS member (NOTLETSM)	

SOCIAL CAPITAL CODES

Like area I live in (LIKEAREA)	Dislike area (DISLAREA)
Get on with neighbours (GETONNEI)	Don't get on with neighbours (DONTNEIG)
Have friends/relatives near (FRELAREA)	Don't have friends/relatives near (DONTFRAR)
Aware/involved community groups (AWARECOM)	Unaware of community groups (NOTAWCOM)
Trust people in general (TRUSPEOP)	Don't trust people in general (DONTTRUS)
Know who to trust and who not to (KNOWTRUS)	
Feel safe in area (FEELSAFE)	Don't feel safe in area (DONTSAFE)
Role of Council in area (COUNROLE)	Young people problem (YOUNPROB)
Shopping folk bad (SHOPBAD)	Shopping folk understandable (SHOPUND)