Poverty in the 'age of affluence': A governmental approach

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Thesis submitted for the Doctor of Philosophy
Discipline of Politics
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February, 2010

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the growing tendency to treat poverty in Australia as an individualised problem. Analysis is situated in relation to the restructuring of welfare in western liberal states in the post-war period, highlighting the way that the welfare state 'crisis' appears to correspond with a new 'consensus' on poverty as individualised. Examining the way that poverty is formulated in recent welfare policy and governmental texts it is shown that this positioning of poverty comes increasingly to be premised upon the idea that a state of 'affluence' has been achieved. Importantly this trend in understanding poverty as an individualised problem is argued to occur across the ideological spectrum. It is demonstrated that, through reference to a 'paradigm of affluence', contemporary representative authors from both the right and the left constitute poverty today as 'residual' and thus as primarily individualised and behavioural.

Applying tools of analysis from post-structuralism and governmentality studies it is argued that both poverty and affluence constitute historic 'events' – interventions in the way social life is thought and organised – and not simply demographic phenomena. Therefore, in contrast to existing writing on affluence, within which affluence is seen to have replaced poverty as an evolutionary stage of development, the argument advanced in this thesis is that the relevance of poverty and affluence to particular rationalities of government is not premised upon their level of incidence. Instead it is argued that both poverty and affluence have functioned as 'problematics' of government – sites through which the project of government is made meaningful. In this way an emergent govern*mentality* of affluence is posited.

In its premise of a governmental rationality of affluence the thesis provides a framework for analysing the on-going restructuring of the Australian welfare state, and liberal states more broadly. Treating conceptions of poverty and of affluence not simply as 'natural' phenomena, but as interpretative events and motifs of government, the thesis also provides a counter-point through which to resist individualised conceptions of poverty and the punitive policies to which they often lead.

Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis has benefited above all from the insight, care, and diligence provided by Professor Carol Bacchi, who as my primary supervisor has shown unwavering faith in my ability to complete this project. Even when there were continuous interruptions and progress was repeatedly delayed by recurring 'forces beyond the students control', Carol never gave the impression of having any expectation but that it would ultimately be completed. This confidence may well be one of the key reasons why the project *has* been completed.

Associate Professor Peter Mayer, as co-supervisor of the thesis, has been a source of encouragement throughout. I thank him for his willingness to listen and to exchange ideas, for his unfailing warmth and for his all too apparent commitment both to academic endeavour and to promoting social justice.

Thanks and acknowledgment are also owed to Dr Vicki Spencer, who served as temporary supervisor in the early stages, for her support of the thesis in its initial development, and for her provocative comments in our discussions.

The wonderful Anne Wilson proofread the thesis and I owe her thanks for her thoughtful editorial suggestions and for her kind words of encouragement in the final stages of the project.

Special thanks are owed to Professor Carol Johnson and Associate Professor Paul Corcoran who, in their capacities as postgraduate coordinators for the Department, have been sources of constant support and encouragement. I would like, in particular, to thank Paul and Carol, as well as Associate Professor Chris Beasley and Dr Clement Macintyre, for their unfailing intellectual generosity, their eagerness to engage with postgraduate students and to constructively challenge arguments presented at Postgraduate Seminars. Your work improves ours.

Greta Larsen, Christine McElhinney, and Mel Pearson, as the human face(s) of the Department, are owed considerable thanks for their patience, their support and for their always good advice when negotiating for particular physical requirements necessary for completing the thesis.

Finally thanks are due to Chris Beasley, Nadia Postiglione, Jonathon Louth, Hayley Stevenson and Ben Revi, for long chats in narrow corridors. These opportune corridor meetings, and the long and meandering (thus, sometimes guilt-inducing,) conversations that they facilitated, have been a key source of comfort and motivation during periods of difficulty throughout the project. I will always value them.

Introduction

Poverty in the 'age of affluence': A governmental approach

A reconfiguration has occurred in the way poverty is conceptualised in public discussion in Australia. While newspapers continue to pronounce rising rates of 'mortgage stress' and metaphors of 'belt squeezing' abound (Khadem 2007; Furler 2007; Creagh 2008; Le May 2008), more familiar terms such as poverty and (in)equality appear less frequently. It is not that these terms are altogether absent. Occasionally there are reports on the so-called 'forgotten poor'; indeed this seems a popular phrase with sub-editors of Australian newspapers (McGuire 2004; Smith and Turley 2007; *The Age* Editorial 2004; Peatling 2009; Colebatch 2007). This language, in focusing on 'the poor', is consistent however with the observation that *poverty,* as a social and political issue, is less and less a feature of public discussion – where poverty is addressed it is treated largely as an individualised problem. Poverty, in the contemporary context, thus is represented in a particular manner which focuses on the alleged problems of 'the poor' rather than on questions of relations across society or the redistribution of resources. This focus on individuals rather than on social factors frequently proves to be the case even in accounts sympathetic to the plight of the 'forgotten poor'.

This limited purview in discussions of poverty becomes more curious when considered against the claims of poverty researchers that poverty continues to be a troubling and enduring feature of Australian society (Harding, Lloyd and Greenwell 2001; Wicks 2005; Saunders and Sutherland *et al* 2006). In several important reports and papers published since 2001, poverty researchers found rates of poverty and inequality to be at best constant and at worst growing (Harding, Lloyd and Greenwell 2001; Wicks 2005; Saunders and Sutherland *et al*, 2006). Furthermore, this period corresponds with the undertaking of the second of only two major government inquiries into poverty ever commissioned in Australian history. Unlike the 1975 inquiry into poverty, however, the findings and recommendations of the 2003 Senate inquiry into poverty were heavily disputed –

by members of Government,[1] by members of the research community,[2] and by members of the Australian media.[3] It therefore very much appears to be the case that, despite findings that poverty and inequality continue to be issues in Australian society, there is a growing sense in which poverty is no longer accepted to be a relevant *social* or *political* issue in Australia. This thesis explores this trend, which might be termed the 'political demise' of poverty, and attempts to account for the reconfiguration of poverty as a 'residual' and individualised problem.[4]

The implications of the reconfiguration of poverty are considerable, most notably for those designated poor and disadvantaged in the present context. A salient point is the Australian Government's announcement in November 2009 to introduce 'compulsory income management' as a discretionary policy applicable to all individuals on welfare (Macklin 2009).[5] Compulsory income management, or the 'quarantining' of welfare payments, is a policy which 'manages' the income of welfare recipients through a card system. Instead of having their entitlements paid directly into their bank account, welfare recipients receive 50% of their income as credit which can be utilised only in particular grocery or variety stores or towards rent. The rationale behind this move is that, 'quarantined' in this way, welfare income will be spent on essentials such as food and clothing (Macklin 2009). The underlying presumption is that, currently, welfare income is *not* being spent on 'essentials' and is instead squandered on drugs, alcohol and gambling (for example see Macklin 2009; *The Australian* Editorial 2009). Implicit in this construction of poverty as resulting from the irresponsible behaviour of welfare recipients are ideas of 'welfare dependency' and 'welfare behaviourism' (Stoesz 1997:68-69), terms which appear in public discussion and as policy concerns in several liberal countries, including Australia, England and the US.

'Welfare behaviorism' is a phrase which, according to David Stoesz (1997:68-69), encapsulates politically conservative approaches to welfare. In these accounts poverty is seen to result from the behaviours of 'the poor'. Subsequently it is affirmed that 'solving' poverty requires little more than changing the problematic behaviours in which the poor are alleged to engage. 'Welfare dependency', almost taken for granted as a synonym for poverty in public discussion today, expresses the idea that the status of the poor as *dependent upon* welfare is itself problematic and in need of redress. Though this widely-used term is contested, underlying the

[1] For example Vanstone (2001); Knowles and Humphries (2004); Australian Commonwealth Government (2005:1-2).

[2] For example Saunders (2004). Arguments raised by Saunders in response to the Senate report reiterate earlier criticism of mainstream poverty researchers raised by Saunders and colleagues at the Centre for Independent Studies, (for example Saunders 2002; Saunders and Tsumori 2002; Tsumori, Saunders and Hughes 2002).

[3] For example Duffy (2004); Duffy (2004b); Price (2004).

[4] The language and analytical framework implicit here in certain ways parallel William Walters' (1996) governmentality studies analysis of unemployment. Walters questions whether it is possible to speak of the 'demise' of unemployment as a category of government. Governmentality studies scholarship such as Walters is addressed in Chapter 1 for the way it informs and directs the thesis.

[5] Though the focus of analysis in this thesis is Australia, the developments addressed have relevance in other locales, and reference to England and the US is made where appropriate.

concept of 'welfare dependency' is the idea that receipt of welfare itself causes, or contributes to, poverty, by eroding the autonomy and work ethic, in some accounts the self esteem, of the unemployed. Dependence on welfare is counterpoised to independence and autonomy (Fraser and Gordon 1994:4-5). In this regard, and despite the contestation over its meaning, 'welfare dependency' is often constructed as the key failing of the post World War II welfare system (Stoesz 1997:68-69; Moffitt 1990:1327-1329; for example Fraser and Gordon 1994:19-21; Murray 1984:180-181; Pearson 2009).

These two ideas – that poverty is caused by the behaviours of the poor, and that dependency upon welfare erodes autonomy – precipitate compulsory income management as a policy proposal. In the policy, the representation of poverty as arising from the problem behaviours of welfare recipients (welfare behaviourism) is evident in the rationale underlying the card system: insisting income is spent on 'the essentials'. The premise of a lack of autonomy (welfare dependency) is evident in the compulsory nature of the scheme, which clearly constructs individuals on welfare as unable to manage their meagre incomes in an appropriate manner. Indeed Jenny Macklin (2009), Federal Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs in the Rudd Labor Government, makes these conceptual connections abundantly clear in her endorsement of the policy:

> Income management helps people to order their lives and provide for their children. It operates at the day-to-day level of people's lives, giving them access to the basics of life by reducing the amount of welfare funds available for substance abuse and other risky behaviours. This in turn provides a pathway for their participation in the broader economy and society. (Minister's Second Reading Speech 2009)

'Compulsory Income Management' was first introduced as policy in Australia in 2007 as part of what is known as the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), or the Northern Territory 'Intervention', which targeted particular Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory. Initiated by the Liberal/National Coalition Government, headed by then Prime Minister John Howard, the NTER was positioned as a response to the 'Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle: Little Children are Sacred' Report (Wild and Anderson 2007) and allegations of widespread sexual abuse of children in Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory. In this context compulsory income management was represented by Government as a positive measure in promoting the health and wellbeing of dependent children. Not only did the NTER involve the quarantining of welfare income; it also involved a multitude of additional legislative measures including: an increase in the policing of targeted communities, in some cases through the deployment of military personnel (Hinkson 2007:1-2); enforced health checks for all children under 16; unilateral revision of land agreements which in some instances involved Aboriginal land being reclaimed by government; and the banning of pornography (Altman 2007:11; Hinkson 2007:1-2; Bacchi 2009:116). In some communities receipt of welfare was made contingent upon additional conditions such as enforced school attendance for school-aged children (Hinkson

2007:1).[6] The Northern Territory Intervention attracted significant, and justifiable, controversy and attention, both locally[7] and internationally.[8] On his recent visit to Australia UN Special Rapporteur James Anaya (2009) criticised the NTER for its failure to comply with fundamental UN conventions. One of the key issues of concern raised by the Rapporteur was the quarantining of welfare income (Anaya 2009).

The living, health and economic conditions of Aboriginal communities in Australia have long been subjects of controversy. Indigenous Australians continue to suffer social, economic and health outcomes that are far below those of non-Indigenous Australians (Ring and Brown 2002; Australian Human Rights Commission 2008; Gray 1999). Prior to the NTER no Australian Government had made improving these conditions and the inequality they reveal a key priority. There was some cynicism, therefore, amongst those evaluating the intentions of the Howard Government's sudden and dramatic move to do so (Behrendt 2007:15; for example Thompson and Hil 2009:50; Altman 2007:13). One of the prominent critiques of the Intervention by Aboriginal activists and other concerned commentators was that the NTER and the move to quarantine welfare payments of Northern Territory Aboriginal communities was racist (for example Altman 2007:8; Anaya 2009; Newhouse in Dunkerley 2009; Thompson and Hil 2009:50; Bacchi 2009:119). In a certain sense the policy was, beyond dispute, racist. In order for the NTER Act to be passed, Government first needed to suspend the Racial Discrimination Act: individuals targeted for income quarantining and other special measures were targeted on the basis of their identity as Indigenous Australians (Altman 2007:8; Thompson and Hil 2009:54; Bacchi 2009:119). Despite calls to end the NTER,

[6] This move is consistent with 'Shared Responsibility Agreements' which the Howard Government had first introduced in 2005 as a governmental strategy in dealing with Aboriginal communities. 'Shared Responsibility Agreements' are contracts negotiated between specific Aboriginal communities and the state through which the state agrees to provide certain resources in exchange for the specific community agreeing to perform certain acts. The first Shared Responsibility Agreement was negotiated in Mulan, an Aboriginal community in Western Australia. Under the terms of the agreement community members were required to wash their faces twice a day, shower once a day, and reduce rubbish in the community environment. These activities were supposedly connected to a plan to reduce the incidence of trachoma in the community (Kristiansen and Cox 2005:8). In return, government provided 'infrastructure for the storage and distribution of fuel': a petrol bowser (Kristiansen and Cox 2005:8; see also Cooper 2005). The items bargained over in these 'Shared Responsibility Agreements' are indicative of the profound neglect by government of Indigenous communities. Larissa Behrendt (2007:16-17), in reflecting on the particular strategies of the NTER, highlights the issue of government neglect and an inadequacy of basic infrastructure.

[7] An extensive local literature on the NTER has been produced. For an overview of critical responses the 2007 collection of essays *Coercive Recollection: Stabilise, Normalise, Exit Aboriginal Australia* (Altman and Hinkson 2007) is useful. Additionally, the 'Intervention Rollback Action Group' (IRAG) maintains a website which provides updates on developments in particular Northern Territory communities and responses to government action (IRAG <http://rollbacktheintervention.wordpress.com/irag/>). The 'Working Group for Aboriginal Rights website' also provides updates, press releases and critical comments from concerned commentators and local community members (WGAR <http://wgar.info/140109-northern-territory-intervention-peace-walk-convergence-on-canberra/>).

[8] For example Anaya (2009); Newhouse (2008); Al Jazeera.Net (2007; 2009); Johnston (2007); Pilger (2008).

including the racially-based quarantining of welfare income, the incumbent Labor Government, led by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, has continued the Intervention initiated by Howard with only minor revisions.[9] Indeed, it appears that the Rudd Government's only genuine concession to the charge of racism is its move to extend the policy of welfare quarantining to non-Indigenous Australians. In the process the Rudd Government has re-enacted the Racial Discrimination Act (Macklin 2009).

In November 2009 the Australian media reported on Federal Minister Macklin's decision to widen the ambit of 'compulsory income management' (for example Lunn 2008; Lower 2009; *The Australian* Editorial 2009; Franklin 2009).[10] The reporting of the issue highlights the way that poverty and disadvantage are, in this context, regarded as 'residual' problems which justify targeting specific populations. *The Australian,* for example, stated that the Minister was 'widening her discretion to declare any locality in the country an area of extreme disadvantage where welfare recipients could have their payments managed by the government' (Lunn 2009). This focus on 'locations' and the individuals who reside within them, constructs the problem of poverty as specific to (individual members of) particular regions or groups. The implication is that the problems these individuals face do not exist in the wider society and are therefore not the product of social relations but of issues specific to the groups themselves. Solving poverty thus involves solving the 'problems' inherent to these particular targeted groups. Thus any area designated a zone of 'locational disadvantage', in the language of poverty researchers (Saunders 2005:38), is a potential target for discretionary implementation of compulsory income management. While focusing on regions and localities saves the Government from allegations of racism, I consider this development to be profoundly problematic for Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities alike. Indeed this move by Government to extend the policy grossly misinterprets what it is that critics find problematic about its application. Ultimately, compulsory income management is problematic not because it is applied differentially to Indigenous Australians; it is problematic because it undermines the civil rights of individuals.

While welfare quarantining has been examined in terms of its implication for the government and policing of Indigenous communities (for example Altman 2007; Altman and Hinkson 2007; Thompson and Hil 2009; Watson 2009), it has received less attention in regard to what it reveals of the underlying rationale in the government of welfare and poverty. In raising this point the argument is not that it is of no consequence to whom the policy is applied. Nor is it claimed that the politics of the NTER can be *reduced to* the quarantining of welfare payments. Indeed there are specific historical and cultural issues in regard to the relationship between Aboriginal communities and Australian governments – as is evident in land rights concerns, for example, or the implicit representation of Aboriginal men

[9] As Thompson and Hil (2009:52) note, even the Rudd Government's 2008 NTER review committee recommended that quarantining be abandoned as a policy.

[10] The policy is to be extended in two stages – first by making it applicable to all welfare recipients in the Northern Territory and then to welfare recipients in all other states.

as sexual predators – that are an integral part of the NTER policy (for discussion see Watson 2009; Dodson 2007; Thompson and Hil 2009:50-53). My more circumspect claim regarding the quarantining of welfare that the NTER facilitated is that, in order to mitigate its effects, to contest its application in *any* instance, it is necessary to subject to scrutiny the underlying governmental rationales upon which such welfare policies are premised (Foucault 1991; Lemke 2001:191; Rose and Miller 1992:174). Despite the targeting of particular racial/ethnic communities as problematic on the basis of their cultural or *group* identity, this policy of quarantining turns on a highly *individualistic* understanding of poverty. Indeed, it is this individualistic premise which allows it to be extended in the manner that the Rudd Government proposes. This individualistic and individualising conception of poverty is the subject of this thesis.

In examining the individualised conception of poverty dominant in discussion today the argument advanced in this thesis is that a shift has occurred in the motifs of government, from poverty to affluence. More precisely, it is argued that the 'demise' of the politics of poverty corresponds with the emergence of a politics of affluence which effectively displaces poverty as a motif or rationale of government. Where affluence comes to be taken for granted as a norm, poverty, by extension, comes to be treated as 'residual'. What follows from this is not the denial of poverty *per se*. Rather, poverty is rendered in individualised terms which implicitly construct the kinds of targeting of 'disadvantaged communities' that Minister Macklin (2009) has in mind as common-sense and necessary methods for combating this 'residual' problem. Once this rationale is established as 'natural' the implicit – and interpretative – understanding of poverty as behavioural which underlies it is obfuscated: this is not *a* view on poverty, it is simply 'the truth'. Moreover, where this rationale is established as a precept of government it becomes increasingly difficult to draw critical attention to the politically problematic effects of this conceptualisation of poverty and the exceedingly undemocratic policies to which it leads.

This transformation from a social understanding of poverty to an individualistic one is addressed in existing literature. In particular, two accounts, which I describe as the 'ideological argument' and the 'empirical argument' are commonly advanced in accounting for the individualised understanding of poverty. In contrast to these accounts the analysis provided in this thesis constitutes a 'governmental' approach. These distinctions will now be elaborated. The empirical account treats the individualised understanding of poverty as simply an apt reflection of a demographic shift from mass poverty to mass affluence in the post World War II period. The ideological argument, in common with the argument developed in this thesis, takes a more critical view. In the 'ideological' account it is argued that the individualistic premises of neo-liberalism, dominant the past two decades, are responsible for the individualised conception of poverty prevalent

today.[11] To elucidate my governmental account and the specific claim of a shift in governing motifs from poverty to affluence, it is necessary to consider further these other arguments. The contention is that, while there is much that is credible in these two existing accounts, upon further investigation each account is shown to have certain limitations.

Investigating the ideological argument in Chapter 2 I note that certain tenets central to the individualised conception of poverty are not exclusive to neo-liberalism. In particular I note that ideas of 'welfare dependency', seen to be central to neo-liberal ideological reforms of welfare, are also present in writing on welfare by New Left revisionists,[12] communitarians,[13] and mainstream poverty researchers,[14] whose politics are generally regarded as mapping on to a social democratic position. Hence, the argument in Chapter 2 is that it is not possible to attribute the contemporary understanding of poverty to neo-liberalism or to any other single ideological position. Rather, from the 1960s through to the 1990s there is a confluence of arguments from multiple ideological viewpoints which problematise post-war welfare and contribute to the perception of 'welfare dependency' as an individualised problem in need of redress.

There is further significance to this confluence of ideological positions on poverty that the 'ideological' argument is unable to accommodate. In so far as the ideological argument positions neo-liberalism as *causing* the individualised conception of poverty, it implicitly suggests that ideological viewpoints opposed to neo-liberalism do *not* understand poverty in this way. This reasoning risks establishing a simplistic dichotomy between, on the one hand, neo-liberal ideologues as 'the bad guys' who have effectively banished poverty from the political agenda and, on the other hand, the ideological left, who are tacitly positioned as the 'good guys'. Where this dichotomy is relied upon in explanations of the individualised view of poverty, there is a failure to take into account the way that ideologically left arguments have also had a role in precipitating the individualised understanding of poverty. Ultimately, therefore, these arguments risk *perpetuating* this individualised representation of poverty instead of challenging it.

In advancing a contrasting 'governmental' approach in this thesis the 'ideological' argument is, however, not rejected wholesale. There are important nuances that ideological arguments provide in highlighting the contestation and hybridity in understandings of poverty and affluence as particular kinds of problems. I therefore rely on designations such as 'liberal', 'libertarian', 'neo-liberal', 'post-materialist' and 'social democrat' in order to signal similarities and distinctions in

[11] Though I consider the empirical argument and the ideological arguments as distinct, on the basis that they rely on separate premises, there is overlap in the way they appear in existing literature. Some authors who adopt an 'ideological' account of poverty also invest in the 'empirical' argument (see discussion of Hamilton 2002 in Chapter 4).

[12] For discussion see Fraser and Gordon (1994:20); Geoffrey Smith (1976); Jewel Bellush (1979).

[13] For example Etzioni (1993; 1996); Glendon (1991).

[14] For example McClelland (2002); Cass (1988:129-135).

the kinds of arguments on poverty and affluence that appear in the existing literature. The contention however is that, to understand the political demise of poverty and the prevalence of the individualised account of poverty, an *additional* level of analysis is required. This additional level of analysis, which I identify in governmentality studies literature, enables an account of the way in which certain issues or problems move into and out of 'zones' of government. I will illustrate what is intended by this claim.

As noted above, there are a range of ideological positions that concur that 'welfare dependency' is a 'problem'. These disparate ideological views contain different ways of understanding welfare dependency and thus, competing approaches to solving it. What they share however is the perception that welfare dependency *is* a problem which requires governmental intervention of some kind or another. It can therefore be said that welfare dependency exists within the zone of government.[15] Attending to the ideological arguments on what to do *about* welfare dependency will not furnish an account of *how* welfare dependency has come to be constituted as a problem in need of attention. The governmental approach to poverty advocated in this thesis thus maps on to ideological arguments in some respects. However, unlike the ideological arguments the analysis pursued in this thesis is not limited to addressing the competing understandings of poverty. Instead it aims to trace out *how* – through what processes of displacement and disjunction – poverty is displaced as a governmental problem. Taking a governmental approach I argue that poverty has been displaced as a governmental motif by affluence. To further clarify this conceptualisation of 'motifs' of government, I now turn to consider the 'empirical' argument in more detail.

A brief sketch was provided above of the way that the 'ideological' argument, in seeking to account for current conceptions of poverty as individualised, establishes a simplistic dichotomy between ideologically 'good' (those to the left), and ideologically suspect (neo-liberal), understandings of poverty. This dichotomy was argued to be the main limitation of the 'ideological' argument. By contrast, the main limitation that inheres in the 'empirical' argument is its complete failure to recognise or accommodate competing conceptualisations of poverty. In the empirical argument it is simply taken to be the case that economic growth in the post World War II period has so transformed living conditions that poverty, where it exists at all in affluent liberal states, *is* a residual problem. This representation of poverty as a residual problem is inherently individualistic – it suggests that poverty is not caused by social forces but rather by characteristics or traits specific to individuals or particular groups. By inference, on this account, the high incidence of Indigenous poverty, for example, can be explained in terms of particular localised issues without taking into account wider social structures or historical issues, such as territorial dispossession or racist practices. In Chapter 3, through examination of one particular exemplar of its rationale, that evident in writing by

[15] The full implications of these terms 'governing' and 'government' are elaborated in Chapter 1 where governmentality studies are directly addressed as in part informing the theory and methodology applied in the thesis.

Peter Saunders (for example Saunders 2002; 2003; 2004; 2008; Saunders and Tsumori 2002; 2003) of the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS), the 'empirical' argument on poverty is more fully explicated. Through careful analysis of Saunders' (2003:48) claim that poverty has today been replaced by widespread affluence I seek to show that the empirical argument is not simply a neutral and descriptive account of poverty in 'affluent' societies, but takes for granted a particular *interpretative* definition of poverty and, at least in the particular example examined, promotes a partisan approach to welfare reform.

In contrast to the 'empirical' argument where affluence and poverty are problems of degree, this thesis applies a post-structuralist analysis which intentionally disrupts the logic of such 'descriptive' claims (Bacchi 1999:9-13; Chia 1996:37). The contention is that poverty and affluence are not merely empirical phenomena; they are constructed *ideas.* Claims about their incidence are therefore not merely descriptive, they are *constitutive*. In treating poverty and affluence as historical concepts the aim of the thesis is to demonstrate that their role in the government of societies like Australia can be mapped, and that doing so reveals the political demise of poverty and the emergence of a motif of affluence. It is argued that this emergent motif of affluence is not reducible to a question of empirical change or ideological influence but constitutes a new governmental rationality. Affluence, it is argued, is not an end-state of economic wealth achieved through stages of development; it is a 'motif' for thinking through the project of government. It is this governmental rationality – eclipsing poverty and installing affluence as motif and norm – which, I argue, accounts for the individualised conception of poverty prevalent today.

Taking this governmental approach, the thesis offers close readings of key 'governmental' texts – that is normative texts which furnish proposals for how governing ought to take place. In this regard I understand 'governmental texts' broadly, incorporating both policy texts and texts which function as normative essays on government (Rose 2007:4). The range of texts I analyse include: welfare policy documents (Chapter 2), papers and monographs from the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS) – a libertarian think-tank at the centre of debates on definitions of poverty, subsequently dubbed the 'poverty wars' (Chapter 3) –, prevailing arguments on affluence by the post-materialist left in Australia (Chapter 4), as well as key post-war sociological and economic texts on affluence and post-materialism (Chapters 4 and 5). While the primary focus of the thesis is developments within Australia, many of the themes raised have important international parallels. These are highlighted throughout the thesis. Key governmental texts on affluence analysed in Chapters 4 and 5 include writing by Australian intellectuals Clive Hamilton, Richard Denniss, Richard Eckersley and David McKnight. Popular literature from Australia and the US on 'affluenza' is also addressed as constituting governmental texts. Exploring the historical and sociological origins of the writing on affluence the contributions of US economist John Kenneth Galbraith and US political scientist Ronald Inglehart are also closely examined as instructive in understanding the governmental rationales upon which the affluence literature is predicated. A detailed analysis of all of this carefully

considered literature is relied upon to demonstrate the demise of poverty (Chapters 2 and 3) and the emergence of affluence as a motif of government (Chapters 4 and 5).

To reiterate, the argument in this thesis is that the significance of affluence is its emergence, not as an empirical fact, or as a reflection of demographic shifts, but as a novel motif and intervention in the terms in which states such as Australia imagine and govern themselves. I therefore argue that shifts away from earlier issues associated with the (admittedly idealised) post World War II welfare state of universal entitlement are connected to this displacement of poverty by affluence as a motif of government. What such shifts enact, as I elaborate in Chapter 6, is a move from a politics of welfare to a politics of wellbeing. As affluence *displaces* poverty as a motif of government, poverty comes to be constructed in particular ways, as a 'residual' and individualised 'problem'. This argument is developed in the following way. Chapter 1 details the theoretical and methodological frameworks informing the thesis. Post-structuralism and governmentality studies are explicated in turn for the specific ways they shape and direct the arguments presented throughout. As Chapter 1 furnishes an account of the conceptual and methodological tools through which analysis proceeds, Chapter 2 constitutes the first application of these tools. In particular a governmentality studies approach is applied in examining recent reforms to welfare and establishing two key premises of the thesis. One of the key premises established in Chapter 2 is that there has been a shift from a social understanding of poverty in the post World War II period, where rights to welfare were universal, to a narrow and individualised understanding of poverty today where welfare rights are contingent. The second crucial premise established in Chapter 2 is that the 'ideological' argument, in concentrating exclusively on the role of neo-liberalism, is limited in accounting for this shift in understanding poverty evident in welfare policy.

In Chapter 3 analysis moves from welfare policy to the debates about poverty that currently beleaguer researchers when they claim that poverty is a continuing feature of Australian society. This move from welfare government to debates over conceptions of poverty corresponds with a subtle theoretical shift: the arguments in Chapter 3, though commensurate with a governmentality studies analysis, are more clearly reflective of a post-structuralist thematic. There the poverty debate and the empirical argument are interrogated for the ways they are constitutive and interpretative and not simply neutral and descriptive as their advocates affirm. The arguments advanced in Chapter 3 therefore continue to trace the political demise of poverty whilst also highlighting the limitations of the 'empirical' argument. This is achieved by demonstrating that, though the poverty debate *appears* to be about the *measurement* of poverty, underlying the arguments on the measurement of poverty are competing *definitions* of poverty that implicitly recommend competing governmental solutions to the 'problem' (Bacchi 1999:11-13; 2009:ix-xxi).

Where Chapters 2 and 3 trace the political demise of poverty and the limits of the 'ideological' and 'empirical' arguments in accounting for this development, in

Chapter 4 attention moves to mapping the emergence of affluence as a motif of government. This aspect of the thesis is developed in two stages. Firstly, an analysis of representative arguments on affluence is provided. Here it is argued that this contemporary writing amounts to an 'affluence thesis' which connects the moral and ethical wellbeing of individuals in affluent societies to the government of affluence. In Chapter 4 the focus is on demonstrating that this affluence thesis has a direct bearing on the poverty debates and contributes to the individualised understanding of poverty. The second part of the argument on affluence is developed in Chapter 5 where the affluence thesis and its post-materialist premises are more critically interrogated for the way they implicitly and necessarily construct poverty as a residual and individualised problem. Across Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I map the continuities, the repeated presuppositions in accounts of affluence, arguing that what is at stake in this literature is more than incidental similarities of view. The recurrences signify a cogency, a distinct parameter which marks the affluence thesis as functionally bounded – a 'motif' of government or way of thinking though political problems – not just an interpretative commentary on wealth.

Analysis of the affluence thesis and the argument regarding its role in the political demise of poverty culminates in Chapter 6. Chapter 6 draws together the theory and analysis in previous chapters. It revisits Mitchell Dean's (1992) account of poverty in the nineteenth century, first mentioned in Chapter 1, and shows how a similar account of affluence is needed today. It also draws attention to the way in which a motif of affluence is implicit in a significant range of political debates about personal values, community life and the environment. The analysis emphasises these themes as informing and underwriting contemporary debates on the 'normal frame of life' (Dean 2006:32) that in earlier contexts were framed around issues of poverty and welfare. Governing through a frame of affluence, it is argued, constructs issues of personal values, community and the environment in terms of individual ethics, an ethics of the self. In so far as this is so, the government of affluence can be seen to constitute a new politics of wellbeing which implicitly constructs the politics of poverty and welfare as redundant and 'residual'.

In concluding the thesis I suggest that the political demise of poverty – its displacement by affluence as a motif of government – has wide-ranging implications for contemporary politics, including the issues of personal values, environmental politics, and government through community (touched on in Chapter 6). However, the particular question that I wish to emphasise regards the political and ethical implications of constructing subjects as the social 'residuum'. I remain deeply concerned by assertions that the percentage of the Australian population who experience poverty today constitutes a political minority, a minority moreover whose best interests reside in having the basic decisions of life made for them. I am disturbed by the way the arguments on affluence fix the 'difference' they attribute to this minority – the 'residually poor' – in 'temporal' terms, constructing them as historical anachronisms (Helliwell and Hindess 2005). Given the colonial tone of such approaches to difference (Helliwell and Hindess

2005:415; Hindess 2001:93-95; 2004:28-30), it is even more troubling that these constructions of poverty are mobilised as interventions targeting Indigenous communities. I conclude the thesis, therefore, reflecting on what the emergence of 'affluence' means for the politics of equality and justice.

Chapter 1

Conceptualising poverty: On theory and methodology

> 'An entire historical tradition (theological or rationalistic) aims at dissolving the singular event into an ideal continuity – as a teleological movement or a natural process. 'Effective' history, however, deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations. An event, consequently, is not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, but the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked 'other'. The forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms, but respond to haphazard conflicts. They do not manifest the successive forms of a primordial intention and their attraction is not that of a conclusion, for they always appear through the singular randomness of events.'
>
> Michel Foucault (1977) 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', p.154-155.

This thesis examines the way that poverty has come to be conceptualised in narrow, individualising terms in Australian public policy, discussion, and debate. The argument advanced in surveying these trends is that, in the contemporary context, poverty is conceptualised in this individualised way through reference to the idea that a period of affluence has been achieved. In the period of affluence remaining poverty is rendered 'residual', the result of individual inadequacies or bad luck, not social structures. In making this argument I implicitly treat poverty and affluence as constituting 'events' in the specific terms in which Foucault describes events in the quotation above. Thus, in contrast to claims that affluence has simply replaced poverty as a common experience, and that remaining poverty is therefore the result of individual personal failings, the thesis presented here is that the emergence of affluence impacts understandings of poverty in particular ways and that it does so because both affluence and poverty function not merely as descriptive terms of empirical phenomena, but as politico-historic events. More precisely I argue that the emergence of affluence as a taken-for-granted ontological fact effectively displaces poverty as a political consideration and that it is this displacement that leads to the individualised understanding of poverty prevalent today. In this chapter I provide an account of the way that this thesis is informed by post-structuralism and governmentality studies. In doing so I elaborate what it means to treat affluence and poverty as 'events'.

Both post-structuralism and governmentality studies owe a considerable debt to the seminal work of Michel Foucault, though the two bodies of literature develop insights of his work in different directions. While post-structuralism, particularly in the work of feminist deconstructionists (for example Butler 1993:1-12; Reekie 1998:15-20), can be seen to resonate with Foucault's (1979; 1983; 1984) concern to reappraise the limits and objectives of critique, governmentality studies can be seen to arise from and to develop Foucault's (1991; 2003) concern to provide a (re)articulation of the emergence of the modern nation state, and what Foucault termed the 'governmentalization' of power. In so far as both post-structuralism and governmentality studies put into review certain of the key themes and approaches that are taken for granted in the fields they each address, they may be considered as interventions in the way political critique and political philosophy, respectively, are performed. One simple way of characterising the way that these two traditions of thought frame my thesis on poverty and affluence is to say that post-structuralism implicitly informs the theoretical lens of my analysis – leading me to treat poverty and affluence as events rather than addressing their (contested and contestable) empirical properties – and governmentality studies ground the methods employed in making the discussion, focusing my attention on governmental texts, the status of 'expert knowledge', and exploring shifts and transformations that are enacted in the presuppositions of governmentalities, a term expounded below. In this chapter I aim therefore to achieve the following three things: to give some background on post-structuralism and governmentality studies and how they shape the analysis given in the thesis; to comment on the connections between these two, quite distinct, theoretical approaches; and to attend specifically to the way that the argument developed across the following

chapters elaborates and/or is implicitly shaped by the theoretical frameworks introduced in this chapter.

Post-structuralism: a mode of inquiry

Three main points or themes may be identified in relation to which post-structuralism, as a mode of inquiry, underwrites the analysis given in the thesis. These three points are: the post-structuralist revision of critique, which I describe in positive terms as constituting a shared goal at the core of post-structuralism; the sceptical approach to 'truth claims'; and the critique of essentialism. Each of these themes is addressed in turn, with an explication of how I understand them to be relevant to post-structuralism as a mode of inquiry and a brief discussion of how these themes arise and intersect with the arguments developed in the thesis.

Characterisations of post-structuralism generally proceed firstly by locating it in historical terms, in order to focus on the political ethos of the Anglo and European post-war period in which post-structuralism arose as a mode of criticism (Flax 1990:3-8; Owens 1983:57-59). The purpose of doing so arises not merely out of a sense of convention but from the perception that post-structuralism is most effectively described in terms of an analytical and political goal shared by those who apply its tools and techniques. Taking this historical approach, existing characterisations locate post-structuralism in the context of particular developments in the fields of gender and sexuality, as well as with a generalised concern with what, in the shadow of World War II and its atrocities, was seen by some to suggest the limits of modernity and the modernist valorisation of rationality as the solution to all social ills (Flax 1990:7-9; Owens 1983:57-59). At this time too, the process of decolonisation was underway and new politics of 'race', ethnicity and multiculturalism were beginning to gain momentum as points from which to critique the modernist project both from inside and outside of academic institutions (Flax 1990:5; Hall 1996:441-444). In this post World War II period, therefore, the project of modernity was thus being questioned both from within and from without (Flax 1990:3-9; Foster 1983:xiii; Owens 1983:58).

If accounts of post-structuralism typically situate it in terms of this interweaving post-war socio-cultural politics, the shared goal they seek to identify is, put simply, a questioning of the established terms in which philosophical/political critique had been practiced (Flax 1990:188-190; Foster 1983:xi-xii). Significant here was the feeling amongst some critical theorists disillusioned by the role that advanced science – once seen as heralding in the age of reason – had played in the attempted genocide of the holocaust. This identification of advanced science with the holocaust led theorists such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (1972 first published 1944), amongst others, to question whether genocide marked the

necessary limit or excess of reason.[16] At the same time identity-based political activists were beginning to question whether 'inclusion' into the category of rational political actor was a sufficient means by which to achieve justice and equality.[17] Given that these kinds of questions have subsequently formed the terrain of post-structuralist analyses, it is perhaps no surprise that, despite never having described himself as a post-structuralist, in characterisations of post-structuralism Foucault is often identified as a founder of post-structuralist thought (for example Flax 1990:188; Foster 1983:x; Venn 2006:195). Not only was Foucault concerned to put into question the taken for granted terms in which criticism had come to be practiced, Foucault also proved to be particularly adept at articulating what such a move involved.

Revisiting and repudiating themes first addressed by Emmanuel Kant, Foucault in a 1984 lecture draws out the implications of his own critique, which he positions in contrast to that of Kant:

> This entails an obvious consequence: that criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying. In that sense, this criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making a metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method. Archaeological – and not transcendental – in the sense that it will not seek to identify the universal structures of all knowledge or of all possible moral action, but will seek to treat the instances of discourse that articulate what we think, say, and do as many historical events. And this critique will be genealogical in the sense that it will not deduce from the form of what we are what it is impossible for us to do and to know; but it will separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think. It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and as wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom. (Foucault 1984:45-46)

As described here Foucault does not regard the purpose of critique as involved in creating a synthesis of knowledge; its aim is not to categorise and generalise, but to articulate the confluence of disruptions and discontinuities – the historical

[16] Zygmunt Bauman's (1989) more recent book, *Modernity and the Holocaust,* also engages this issue. The relationship between modernity and the holocaust has, of course, been contested (for example see Rose 1997:15-40; Healy 1997).

[17] With regard to the feminist movement for example, Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist, historically-based, and psycho-analytic analyses of gender subordination (1972 first published in France 1949) is of a marked contrast to earlier work by feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1971 first published 1792) whose feminist treatises were premised on extending Enlightenment principles of human perfectibility and rationality to include women (Sabrosky 1980:21-37). A fuller critique of rationality and its role in creating gender inequities emerged as a theme in the writing of 'second wave' feminists (for example Lloyd 1984; see also Pateman 1989:17-32; Beasley 1999:8-10).

'events' that make the present appear as the natural and inevitable result of evolving historical forces. In so far as Foucault's critique can be seen to parallel or to articulate a post-structuralist critique, the goal at the core of post-structuralist inquiry can be described as: finding ways to contest the terms of contemporary existence in order to push the limits of contemporary (in)justice. As is evident in the quote above, this goal at the core of post-structuralism is positioned in opposition to philosophical approaches which deduce the norms of human being as if they were given. As a mode of analysis post-structuralism therefore remains critical of the basic epistemological premises of modernist critique, considering the premises and the practice of modernist criticism as centrally involved in the (re)creation of political injustice (Flax 1990:189-191; Owens 1993:58-59; Foster 1983:xi-xii). In line with this post-structuralist approach, in this thesis I do not address poverty with a view to synthesising existing knowledge and making a universalistic claim as to the status of poverty, (or of affluence for that matter). Instead, I address poverty in a more archaeological mode, questioning the current terms of the poverty debate and how they have come to be taken for granted as natural. In situating my analysis in this way my treatment of poverty differs from that found in orthodox approaches to the poverty debate and to welfare reform and I wish to address and clarify certain points of divergence between the approach taken here and that found in existing poverty research.

In Chapter 3 of the thesis I examine recent debates about poverty in Australia claimed to constitute the 'poverty wars' (Saunders 2005:1-11). The 'poverty wars' have largely occurred between members of the mainstream poverty research community on the one hand and, on the other, the libertarian think tank, the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS), an organisation that is both a part of the poverty research community and yet at the same time remains deeply antagonistic towards the claims of mainstream researchers. In the context of the 'poverty wars', the CIS has raised methodological and conceptual criticisms of poverty research practice which have resulted in what Peter Saunders of the Social Policy Research Centre (2005:11, 135; Saunders and Sutherland 2006:5-6), Australia's leading expert in poverty research and analysis, considers to constitute a crisis of credibility for the poverty research community.[18] In 2005 Saunders (SPRC) released *The Poverty Wars* in which he responded to criticisms of poverty research methods made by the CIS (and by the other Peter Saunders) and by members of the media, and then outlined what he considered to be an appropriate path for the poverty research community to take in order to regain its credibility with the Australian public. Saunders (2005:11; 2006:8) advocated that Australian poverty researchers undertake more extensive qualitative research to supplement their existing quantitative analyses and statistical findings. He argued (2005:133-135; Saunders and Sutherland 2006:2) that the Australian public, along

[18] In Australian poverty research the somewhat unfortunate situation arises of having two leading poverty researchers named Peter Saunders. What is particularly unfortunate about this situation is that the two are antagonists in the 'poverty wars'. For readers' ease, throughout the thesis I endeavour to make clear the distinction between the two Peter Saunders' by identifying them, where appropriate, with their respective organisations – the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS) and the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC).

with poverty research critics, would be more responsive to research of this kind as it would more fully furnish for them a picture of what life below the poverty line looks like in Australia today – a compelling *human* picture that, Saunders contended, critics would be unable to dismiss in the way they had dismissed the quantitative, statistical accounts. In defending this call for more research Saunders (2005:14) framed his position in terms of a claim about knowledge and its descriptive function:

> We do, however, need to be clear about what we mean when we talk about poverty for three reasons: first, because before we can tackle the problem of poverty we need a clear idea of what poverty means in a conceptual sense; second, because we need a clear understanding of the nature and causes of poverty before we can know what kinds of actions are needed to combat it; and finally, because we need measures that can communicate concern to the public and serve as a rallying call for action. …
>
> Without these crucial ingredients, demands for action will ring hollow because the powerful moral sentiments they arouse will lack the conviction that comes from knowing that there is a problem, that its dimensions have been documented, and that intervention will have observable effects.

Apparent from Saunders' recommendation of more research as the solution to the poverty debate is that he understands the 'problem' (Bacchi 1999:1-13; 2009:1-24) to be one of inadequate, or of inadequately descriptive, research. The implicit assumption here is that the problem is a lack of knowledge and that, moreover, the right *kind* of knowledge will lead to the right *kind* of approach to poverty alleviation – knowledge, given the right conditions, will speak for itself in a manner beyond contestation. It is precisely this kind of formulation on the relationship between things that exist in the world and the way we come to know those things that post-structuralism, as a mode of criticism, ardently rejects (Foucault 1984:45-47; Reekie 1994:458-459; Flax 1990:193-194; Owens 1983:58-59).

Taking a contrasting view to that presented in Saunders' writing, I do not consider the poverty debate to arise as an outcome of an inadequacy of knowledge on poverty. As I seek to show in Chapter 3, I consider the debate as occurring over *how to* conceptualise poverty; it is about *what counts as* knowledge. In other words the debates about poverty concern what *counts* as an appropriate and acceptable definition of poverty. In the analysis presented in this thesis, therefore, the poverty wars are seen to occur over the presuppositions that underlie conceptions of poverty and the way these conceptions and presuppositions come to be embedded in particular governmental practices. As argued more fully in Chapter 3, the poverty wars cannot, therefore, be resolved through an appeal to more 'transparent', or 'better', knowledge, as the disputes are effectively about the very conditions which must be met in order for a claim about poverty to count as legitimate. From this perspective, qualitative analysis which seeks to document and describe the lived realities of poverty, such as that which Saunders advocates, cannot constitute a 'solution' to this alleged crisis. On these grounds, while remaining sympathetic to Saunders' aim, a contrasting position on the credibility crisis poverty research faces is advanced in this thesis. The 'crisis of credibility' is

not seen to originate with CIS critiques of mainstream poverty research. Rather the critiques themselves are seen to emerge as subsequent to a broader shift in government. It is argued in this thesis that governmental questions once framed around poverty are increasingly being recast around the motif of affluence. In this way, poverty, I contend, is being displaced by affluence as a *governmental problematic* (a term I return to elaborate). This displacement has implications in terms of the way poverty is understood. It is in the context of this governmental shift from a focus on poverty to a focus on affluence that, I contend, the credibility crisis for poverty research should be understood.

To summarise then, where orthodox research might be said to be 'conciliatory' – seeking to bridge the space between the lived effects of poverty and conceptions/representations of poverty – the post-structuralist impulse is reflexive, focusing on the activity of representation as an object of analysis in itself (Reekie 1994:463-464). This distinctive goal which animates the post-structuralist mode of analysis does not, however, necessitate ontological doubt as to the *existence* of the realm of lived reality (Foucault 1983b) – poverty as a lived effect exists and is felt around the world – but it does imply an element of epistemological scepticism, which I return to discuss, in addressing *representations* of poverty and its causes.[19] Taking a post-structuralist approach requires committing to the idea that conceptions of poverty cannot be evaluated merely in terms of their ability to 'represent' the lived effects of poverty. In part this arises as a result of the way that post-structuralism puts in question the neutrality of representational activities, highlighting the way these are necessarily situated in one or another framework (Flax 200-201; Owens 1983:58-59). Of greater pertinence however is the way in which post-structuralist approaches regard representational activities as themselves *constitutive* (Bacchi 1999:9-13; Chia 1996:33, 37; Owens 1983:58-59; Reekie 1994:464-465). The point can be made on a more practical level. Representations of poverty, such as those that appear in government policies (Bacchi 1999:1-13; 2009:1-24), are not entirely separable from lived effects because these representations of poverty have very *real* effects on

[19] Of course, as writing in the area of post-positivist analysis (which incorporates post-structuralism) is diverse, it remains the case that some who write from this perspective *do* tend to make such ontological claims (for discussion see Rosenau 1992:91-95). My point is merely that it is possible to apply a post-structuralist analysis without making this move. On this issue I see my position as consistent with claims Foucault (1983b) is cited as making in transcriptions of a 1983 series of lectures on Parrhesia at the University of California, Berkeley: 'Some people have interpreted this type of analysis as a form of "historical idealism", but I think that such an analysis is completely different. For when I say I am studying the "problematization" of madness, crime, or sexuality, it is not a way of denying the reality of such phenomena. On the contrary, I have tried to show that it was precisely some real existent in the world which was the target of social regulation at a given moment. The question I raise is this one: how and why were very different things in the world gatherer [sic] together, characterized, analyzed, and treated as, for example, "mental illness"? What are the elements which are relevant for a given "problematization"? And even if I won't say that what is characterized as "schizophrenia" corresponds to something real in the world, this has nothing to do with idealism. For I think that there is a relation between the thing which is problematized and the process of problematization. The problematization is an "answer" to a concrete situation which is real.' (Foucault 1983b)

the lives of those constituted poor regardless of whether or not they are 'true' depictions.

Robert Chia (1996:32-33) has usefully characterised the distinction that I draw above between a focus on representing poverty and a focus on exploring representations of poverty for their effects, as that between 'an ontology of being' and 'an ontology of becoming'. Chia (1996:36-38) argues that an 'ontology of being' functions as the default presupposition of much academic writing and that, as a consequence, most academic writing reproduces what, borrowing philosopher Alfred Whitehead's phrase, he terms the 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness'. By this phrase Chia (1996:33-39) charges academic writing as all too often taking for granted the ontological status of that which it seeks to describe or for which it seeks to account. In forwarding this criticism Chia's (1996:32-34) aim is not to put into question the existence of things as such – in opposition to an ontology of being he does not forward an ontology of nothingness. Instead, Chia's argument is that the ontology of being presumes fixity, a static 'concreteness' that is misleading. For Chia (1996:32-34) phenomena are always in flux and their ontological status is not fixed but procedural and processual. In forwarding his ontology of becoming as an alternative to the ontology of being, Chia is thus arguing, much like Foucault in the citation above, that the object of analysis needs to be shifted from a universal/metaphysical focus on how things *are* to a post-structuralist questioning of how things *come to be*. [20]

To relate Chia's argument more specifically to the discussion on post-structuralism and poverty research, it can be said that where, in orthodox research, the objective is to represent 'poverty' in its concreteness, in the post-structuralist framework employed in this thesis the aim is to focus on how poverty – as a conceptual proposition – has come to be caught up in the kinds of debates in which it presently features. In this way, I am similarly concerned to shift from an analysis predicated on an 'ontology of being' – poverty as concrete existent that can be unproblematically represented – to an analysis predicated on an 'ontology of becoming', exploring poverty in terms of the conceptualisations and the problematisations – understood as the particular ways in which phenomena come to be constituted in discursive frameworks – which have constituted it as a particular kind of problem. Indeed, I understand this ontological shift, from fixity to 'becoming', to be the goal at the core of post-structuralist inquiry, serving to unify the varied analyses which fall within a post-structuralist thematic.

Post-structuralism, I have argued, recasts the objective of criticism, from deducing a metaphysics of being, to producing, what might be termed, a political-archaeology of contingency. I have sought to establish that the approach taken in the thesis, of treating poverty and (affluence) as 'events' and analysing the way they have come to be constituted in particular ways as specific kinds of problems, shares and is guided by this goal. In claiming that there is a complex and problematic relationship between problem *representations*, problematisations,

[20] In his paper Chia (1996) uses the term 'post-modern' rather than 'post-structuralist'; however, for the purpose of the present discussion the terms may be treated as synonymous.

and the realm of lived effects, I am *not* suggesting that lived effects are *merely* discursive, that our embodied, daily, realities are somehow not 'real'. Indeed, this is a position I am concerned to avoid, for, as will be shown in Chapter 3, this tendency to reduce phenomena to their linguistic frameworks and thus to dismiss them as irrelevant, is a tactic frequently used by the CIS who argue that poverty *only* exists in the frameworks of social democrats and poverty researchers (for example Tsumori, Saunders and Hughes 2002:2-4; Saunders and Tsumori 2002:32-33; Saunders 2002:7-10). In contrast to such arguments, post-structuralism – as I apply it in this thesis – does not disavow the existence of a realm of embodied experience in any absolute sense, as is the case with philosophical idealism, for example. Nor is it the case that the 'post' in 'post-*structuralism*' should be read to suggest that poverty is caused by individual agents rather than social structures. As Patricia Harris (2001:338), assessing the relationship between post-structuralist analysis and traditional social science methods, elucidates:

> [P]ost-structuralist analysis does not abandon the notion that advantage and disadvantage are grounded in the structural relations of society rather than individual characteristics. … What post-structuralism does take issue with is any claim that social relations can be subjected to systematic study according to a totalising set of propositions.

In its aim to avoid totalising propositions and totalising systems of ideas, post-structuralism draws attention to the way discursive attempts to 'represent' the real have effects, sometimes calling into existence things that did not exist previously. In so far as this is so, post-structuralism, as a mode of inquiry, avoids treating the realm of embodied existence as separable from the discourses which seek to define it. The difference I am drawing attention to between these two views on discourse and the real is subtle yet important. My position is not that discourse *enables* the existence of the real but that it *mediates* all of our attempts at 'representing' the real – thus, the real, while not denied, is always constituted in and through discourse. The post-structuralist argument, as described above, continues from this premise that, as discourse is never neutral and always situated, discursive acts are therefore not 'representational', they are *constitutive* (Chia 1996:37; Bacchi 1999:9-13; Flax 1990:200-201). Discussion of the way the real and the realm of discourse are understood in post-structuralism shifts attention to the epistemological foundations of post-structuralism, and to the post-structuralist critique of truth claims, as I now elucidate.

Knowledge and truth

The rejection of foundational truth claims can be made from several different perspectives. This fact is sometimes overlooked by critics eager to dismiss the post-structuralist critique of truth and of knowledge claims as tantamount to (the allegedly limited and circular logic of) epistemological relativism (for example Nussbaum 1997:107-109; Shrestha 1997:711). I do not, however, consider post-

structuralism to be tantamount to a relativist epistemological position and I want to make explicit how this is so.

In this thesis I take the post-structuralist critique of truth claims to be concerned with asking what implications arise when particular political issues are produced as problems through particular discourses, where 'discourse' is understood as a bounded form of knowledge and knowing.[21] In other words, I understand the post-structuralist critique of truth claims to be primarily concerned with *effects* of knowledge, in contrast to other critiques of the limits of knowledge which arise from a primarily philosophical concern with what can or cannot be 'proven' to be 'factual', such as the case with epistemological relativism. One way to express this distinction is as between a concern with the politics of knowledge and knowing on the one hand and philosophical epistemology on the other. While the post-structuralist critique of truth claims is made, in part, on the grounds that there is no neutral basis from which to adjudicate truth claims – a premise it has in common with relativism – the post-structuralist rejection of truth claims is not made *primarily* on these grounds. Unlike relativism, post-structuralism, as I understand it, is not simply or even primarily an epistemological argument. That is, post-structuralism is not an epistemological thesis on the limits of knowledge, but a 'toolbox' (Foucault 1975 in Eribon 1991:237) for examining, articulating and extending the political limits of our present ways of being.[22]

In this regard the origins of post-structuralism, previously noted as arising from political as well as from academic considerations, are of particular consequence as they indicate the politically-interested basis from which post-structuralist inquiry arises. In contrast, orthodox relativism designates an epistemological stance that is consistent with the modernist practice of criticism from which post-structuralism, as established above, seeks a critical distance. In orthodox relativism 'truth' is seen to be a relative proposition – something is true depending on the conditions and circumstances which produce it as true. Thus orthodox relativism is a critique of the *possibility* of truth as an *objective* proposition. Unlike orthodox relativism, the primary objection to truth claims, as I conceive it being made in post-structuralist analyses, is predicated upon a practical and political critique of reason (Owens 1983:58-59; Foster 1983:xi-xii). In particular I regard the post-structuralist rejection of truth claims to be premised on the view that, when analysis is focused on deducing what is universal from what exists as known – that is, when analysis is focused on claiming universal truths – such analysis takes for granted as necessary what is contingent in a way which limits political possibilities.

[21] Another way of phrasing this would be to say that analysis proceeds by asking how a particular problematisation or problem representation has come to be. For a discussion of the kinds of questions post-structuralist analysis can lead to see Bacchi (1999:12-13; 2009:1-24).

[22] Chia's (1996) argument on the distinction between an ontology of being and an ontology of becoming is again instructive here. Chia (1996:33) argues that what is specific to post-structuralist analysis is not simply an alternative *epistemological* position, but a contrasting *ontology* that is prior to epistemological principles. This definition of post-structuralism as an *ontology* further highlights the distinction between post-structuralism as a mode of inquiry and *epistemological* relativism.

To clarify this distinction in the context of arguments raised in the thesis, a debate is presently being had as to whether it is questions of poverty or questions of affluence that are most significant to contemporary social life and electoral politics. As I elaborate in the following chapters, it is argued that a shift from a paradigm of poverty to a paradigm of affluence has occurred (Hamilton 2003:ix-xvii; 2006:29-31; McKnight 2005:12-13; Saunders 2003:5-13). In this thesis I do not engage this affluence/poverty debate by attempting to judge on 'empirical' grounds which of these two phenomena is 'in fact' more prevalent, poverty or affluence. Instead, the approach taken in the thesis is to explore and attempt to articulate the discursive processes and practices through which affluence and poverty are, in this debate, constituted in particular ways which position them as being necessarily in competition. The analysis is directed in this way, however, not simply on account of the fact that poverty and affluence are viewed as contested concepts – implying a lack of neutral ground upon which to make 'truth claims' – but because as long as analysis focuses on the debate *as given* it treats the terms of the debate as being somehow necessarily, rather than contingently, in opposition. Thus, my interest in addressing the debates between poverty and affluence is predicated, not simply on a sense that poverty and affluence have been falsely treated as concrete; rather it is predicated on a concern with the *effects* of this debate for understanding poverty and for those constituted poor. Similarly I take the post-structuralist interest in the effects of knowledge as arising, not out of a commitment to epistemological relativism, but from commitment to 'the undefined work of freedom' (Foucault 1984:46).[23] The post-structuralist project then, as described above, is to trace out, *how it is* that, from a morass of historical contingency, particular meanings and particular practices emerge as necessary and taken for granted; and to examine how it is that these meanings and practices come to be embedded in particular social logics and circuits of power. In sum, the interest in contestation and contingency arises out of a post-structuralist concern with the effects of different ways of ordering the world upon those who reside in it (Owens 1983:58-59; Foster 1983:xi).

It may be concluded then that, as it informs this thesis, post-structuralism constitutes a sceptical rather than a relativist (or nihilistic) stance on knowledge claims.[24] The scepticism at play here can be thought of in loosely analogous terms

[23] This point tacitly signals a debate in the literature over whether Foucault, in adopting such a stance on freedom, was embracing liberalism. Though it is beyond the scope of the thesis to address this debate Golder (2009) provides a compelling account against readings which suggest Foucault embraced liberalism.

[24] The distinction drawn here in certain ways reflects the distinction Pauline Rosenau (1992:14-16) finds between what she terms 'skeptical' postmodernism, which is politically nihilistic, and 'affirmative' postmodernism which is not. I use the designation 'sceptical' in a different sense to Rosenau, however. As I further expound below I refer to an epistemological scepticism not a political scepticism in making this designation. Though this may reflect a potentially confusing use of terms I choose to retain the term 'sceptical' as I find it to be most effective for my purposes. Despite this divergent, and potentially confusing, use of terms therefore, my understanding of 'sceptical post-structuralism' may be seen to map on to Rosenau's conception of 'affirmative postmodernism'. Hal Foster (1983:ix-xvi) draws a similar distinction between what he terms 'a postmodernism of reaction' which he considers politically conservative, and a 'postmodernism of resistance', which Foster regards as being politically progressive in character.

to the claim made by Husserl, in his phenomenological methodology, that in order to proceed to analysis it becomes necessary for the phenomenonologist to put into 'brackets' the 'natural attitude' (Beyer 2007).[25] As applied in post-structuralism however this 'bracketing out' is not done in hope of revealing the essence of the world as it truly is, as was the objective in Husserl's phenomenological method (Beyer 2007). As established above, the essence of the world 'as it truly is' is not the object of post-structuralist inquiry. The objective in post-structuralist inquiry is articulating the way systems of thought work through the world, constituting the world in definite ways as they do so (Foucault 1984; Flax 1990:192-193, 200; Chia 1996:46-47).[26] What is being bracketed out in the post-structuralist approach as it is applied in this thesis is the empirical/sociological question: 'what is more prevalent, poverty or affluence?' In positioning the analysis in this way, as an articulation of a political conflict constructed between affluence and poverty as historical events, I regard the thesis as being shaped by post-structuralist theory.

It remains the case, however, that implicit 'truth claims' and evaluative judgements on the subject of poverty are made throughout the thesis. Given the very terms of the contemporary poverty debate, which as demonstrated in Chapter 3 is cast between those who wish to retain the term 'poverty' as signifying commitment to egalitarian politics and those who wish to jettison it in order to further a libertarian agenda, I find that it is not possible to address the poverty debates without signalling affinity with one view or the other. However, while implicit truth claims about poverty appear throughout the thesis and while I would, and do, defend those who seek to continue using the category, my doing so is not premised on an appeal to a metaphysical or universalistic conception of poverty but to a political and contingent one. To be clear, I do not believe that the category of 'the poor' has internal coherence, that it represents a shared psychology, or that its meaning is clear and consistent across space and time. Nonetheless, in so far as poverty has come to be a key signifier in political struggles towards 'the undefined work of freedom' (Foucault 1984:46), as my analysis in Chapters 2 and 3 reveals, I consider it to be neither useful nor appropriate to attempt to jettison 'poverty' as a signifier.[27] Moreover, I believe the attempt to do without the concept of poverty on the basis that any reference to it constitutes a truth claim would reproduce the metaphysical preoccupation with the limits and conditions of knowledge that post-structuralist inquiry, as I have argued above, rejects. This premise of contingency therefore recognises that

[25] Both Foucault (1991b:56) and Chia (1996:56) use 'bracket' in the sense discussed here, though neither, to my knowledge, reference Husserl on this point.

[26] Jane Flax (1990), where she discusses these themes, actually does so under the umbrella term of 'postmodern' philosophy. While there is significant contention over how the terms 'post-structuralist' and 'postmodernist' are properly applied in relation to each other (consider for example Peréz-Torres 1993-1994; Peters and Wain 2003:57-64), I do not engage this debate in the thesis.

[27] In the context of international government, where authors such as Arturo Escobar (1988; 1995), Christina Rojas (2004), and Maia Green (2006) argue that poverty facilitates undemocratic forms of government the reverse position might therefore be true.

'poverty', as a signifier, is not *always* useful politically and may at times become politically problematic.[28]

Nor is it the case that the epistemological scepticism underlying post-structuralist analyses leads to the idea that all conceptions of poverty are either arbitrary or somehow of equal value. Rather this move amounts to what Edward Said (1983:143) describes as: 'a relative scepticism, for one can prefer foxes to hedgehogs without also saying that all foxes are equal'.[29] Thus it is the case that we are faced with a need to find alternative, or at least additional, criteria against which to evaluate competing representational frameworks. In post-structuralist literature, the shift in analysis from exploring the way the real is *represented* to interrogating the way the real is *actively constituted* in competing representational frameworks or 'problematisations', thus corresponds with a shift from evaluating *concepts* for their ability to *represent the real* to evaluating *problematisations* for the *effects in the real* they may be shown to have (Foucault in Bacchi 2009:15; Flax 1990:195, 200-201; Bacchi 1999:39-41). This distinction, as it is made in the post-structuralist mode of analysis, not only affirms but admits as axiomatic the distinction drawn in the citation from Foucault (1984:45-46) between a metaphysics of being and an archaeology of the present. Importantly, and unlike the case with epistemological relativism, conceptions of poverty, though made relative in this way to the larger intellectual frameworks of which they are a part, are still made available to critique and evaluation. It is merely the case that such evaluation cannot be made through recourse to a neutral/metaphysical conception of the real, but instead relies on a politically-interested concern as to the effects of particular problematisations of poverty. Poverty is of interest at the conceptual level, therefore, because presuppositions that inhere in problematisations of poverty impact upon the lives of actual people, both those designated 'poor' and those designated 'not poor'. Questions of eligibility for welfare payments under a 'means tested' system have implications for the lives of actual people, for example, both in terms of whom they cover and in terms of whom they do not cover.

Implicit in the discussion of the category of poverty and an understanding of its meaning as contested and contingent, is the post-structuralist critique of essentialism. There are two ways in which the critique of essentialism intersects with the arguments of this thesis – in relation to my contingent investment in the

[28] Barbara Cruikshank (1994), for example, writing from the US, has examined the way that 'empowerment', as a technology of government, functions through 'poverty'. Cruikshank's work provides an account of the ways 'empowerment' is utilised as a technique through which the poor are induced to govern themselves. Alice O'Connor's (2001) work is also of note on this point. O'Connor (2001) argues compellingly that, in the US, social science research is deeply implicated in conservative reform to welfare undertaken in the 1990s. My point in referencing these works is that, while I consider poverty politically useful in the present Australian context, by no means do I consider it politically 'innocent'.

[29] The text in which Said (1983:143) makes this comment is one in which he also makes some disparaging comments on postmodern authors. Given that postmodernism is a very broad field and one that is open to interpretation I do not believe that my use of Said's remark in this context in any way alters his meaning or commits him to a position to which he would otherwise object.

category of poverty and in the move to denaturalise affluence discourse. Both are explicated below.

'Essential' truths of human being?

The post-structuralist critique of essentialism is exemplified in debates over the constitution of identity categories, most notably in feminist debates around gendered identity.[30] In these debates the critique of essentialism has two parts: firstly, it is argued that the content of gender categories has falsely been read as fixed and enduring. Against this fixed account it is argued that gender identity does not reflect a deep and enduring 'truth' of human being, but that gender is a 'performativity' – a product or effect of gender categorising or gender*ing* (Butler 1993:1-16; 1999:1-11; Bacchi 2001:111-112; Eveline and Bacchi 2005:502-503). Relatedly it is argued that, in so far as this essentialised view of gender persists, use of the category 'woman' will always lead to political exclusions (Butler 1999:7-8).

The implication of this argument is that the category 'woman', far from being simply descriptive of an innate biological reality, is constructed. As such, it is argued that, rather than reflecting the experiences of all women, use of the term in identity politics movements tends to reflect the experience and perspectives of a relatively privileged group of women, effectively marginalising the experiences of all women outside of this group (Butler 1999:7-8). The issues which thus come to be considered 'political issues relevant to women' are in actuality political issues relevant to white, heterosexual, middle-class women. It can be seen from this account that the first part of the critique of essentialism – putting in question the fixed nature of particular subject (identity) categories – has been implicit in the discussion of poverty above. On this very basis it was argued that 'poverty' continues to be a useful category, not because it is *descriptively* unproblematic, but because, in the present context, it is *politically* useful. Keeping in mind that much of the poverty debate occurs, as I demonstrate in Chapter 3, over definitions of poverty – when the term applies, and how it *ought* to be used – Alessandra Tanesini's (1994:207, my emphasis) theoretical reflection on the essentialist debate and her contribution that meaning claims, despite appearing to perform a *descriptive* function, are instead *normative proposals*, is especially pertinent:

> ...to make a claim about the meaning of a certain word is to make a claim about how the word *ought* to be used, it is not to describe how the word *is* used. Meaning claims, then, are normative claims. ... Meaning-claims then do not perform any explanatory role; their purpose in language is that of prescribing emendations or preservations of current practices. In particular, their function is not that of describing the inferential-justificatory role of any linguistic expression. That is, they do not explain the content of an

[30] For further reading in this area see for example Butler (1999); Spivak (1988); Bickford (1997); hooks (1991); Bacchi (1996:9-13).

> expression. Instead, meaning-claims are proposals about emendation or preservation of the roles of expressions…

In keeping with Tanesini's (1994:206-208) argument I consider use of the term 'poverty' to constitute a meaning claim, and the 'poverty wars' to be a debate over normative proposals for how the word *ought* to be used. Thus, along with Tanesini (1994:211-214; also Bacchi 1996:ix-xv, 1-14) I would argue that it is not adequate to attempt to avoid making meaning-claims, but vital that instead we engage in highlighting the way such normative claims are made, and to interrogate the proposals that they contain, so that it becomes possible to challenge and contest them on the basis of their effects.

There is a further way in which the post-structuralist critique of essentialism frames the arguments developed in this thesis and it arises in relation to the arguments on affluence. Where an essentialist view of poverty is resisted in this thesis the essentialist assumptions implicit in the arguments on affluence are even more forcefully rejected. A key difficulty in the arguments on affluence, I contend, arises specifically in the way that these arguments are involved in constituting an essentialised view, not only of a given subject (identity) category, but of human being itself. In Chapters 5 and 6 of the thesis I demonstrate that arguments which claim that a paradigm of poverty (deprivation) has been displaced by a paradigm of affluence, implicitly construct a developmental narrative of human being wherein affluence and poverty are constituted as distinct developmental stages. This teleological and universalistic account of human being is anathema to post-structuralist inquiry. The formulation of human existence as encompassing a natural developmental progression reproduces the transcendental and metaphysical elements of critique that post-structuralism, as I have explicated it above, is directed at displacing. Indeed the anti-essentialist stance of post-structuralism advances the contrasting view that identity categories, taken for granted as fixed, are in fact fluid: grounded in cultural and social, and thus political, contexts, not in innate biological qualities of the human subject.

This contextual approach to human being and identity formation does not deny that people experience themselves and each other as personalities that are consistent over time. Nor does it deny the intense inner life of individuals. Rather it is an argument which traces the consistency with which personal identity is experienced to the particular conceptual, cultural, social and geographic contexts from which we emerge as individual subjects and within which we live our lives. Post-structuralism thus rejects all narratives of universal human development which position individuals as somehow existing outside of or prior to the contextual spaces within which social identities are constructed. The thesis is therefore directed in part at furnishing a counter-point to the essentialised understanding of poverty (and human being more generally) evident in existing writing on affluence, arguing in contrast that poverty and affluence do not have fixed meanings that correspond to stages of development but, as described at the beginning of the chapter, constitute politico-historic events and sites of political conflict and struggle.

An account was provided above of the ways in which post-structuralism comes to inform the theoretical presuppositions adopted in addressing poverty in this thesis. Three main themes emerged: the critical goal at the core of post-structuralist inquiry, the sceptical approach to knowledge (truth) claims, and the critique of essentialism. I reflected on the ways that these three features of post-structuralism lead me in this thesis to examine poverty and affluence not as fixed phenomena but as historical events. Clarification was given on the way that this post-structuralist positioning did not necessitate commitment to the idea that wealth and deprivation are *merely* linguistic devices, but instead to put into brackets 'empirical' questions about poverty and affluence in order to explore the meaning claims and political projects that are advocated in their name. In so far as this constitutes the general theoretical orientation to the subject of poverty and the increasingly individualised way it is understood, I require a methodology in relation to which to structure analysis of these 'events'. The next section of the chapter therefore explores the way in which governmentality studies come to provide this methodological framework.

The discussion of the field of governmentality studies is organised in three parts. Firstly a brief background on governmentality studies is provided. Secondly, I highlight the way in which I regard governmentality studies amenable to a post-structuralist mode of inquiry. Further to this, key ideas and methods from the field of governmentality studies, and how they structure the analysis presented in the thesis, are addressed. On this third point therefore something of a literature review of existing governmentality writing and the way it treats poverty is offered. Due to space restrictions the review of the governmentality studies literature, as it appears in this chapter, is somewhat incomplete. Most notably an account of existing analyses of changes to welfare rationality, produced by governmentality scholars (for example Rose 2000:1406-140; 2007:253-273; Walters 2001; Dean 2006:32-34, 37-42), is not provided in this section of the thesis. Instead of appearing in this chapter, existing governmentality literature on welfare is more fully addressed in Chapter 2, where changes to welfare in liberal states – specifically Australia – are the object of analysis. The present discussion therefore is restricted to the way in which poverty, in governmentality writing, is seen as a part of the liberal mode of government and to providing an account of the way that the liberal mode is itself understood in governmentality writing. The section begins with an overview of 'governmentality' as a concept and of 'governmentality studies' as an analytics.

Governmentality studies: an analytics

O'Malley *et al* (1997:509) have argued that, in so far as it designates a field of research, governmentality studies do not constitute 'a philosophical theory, nor an empirical sociology of social relations' or government, but are instead best conceptualised as 'an analytics'. In this understanding governmentality studies constitute a particular approach to the study of power, or modes of rule.

Governmentality studies serve as a kind of analytical method for asking particular questions about power (Rose and Miller 1992:174; Rose 1993:297-298). To reprise a phrase by Colin Gordon (1991:3), the analytic task of governmentality studies thus involves questioning government as a practice by asking: 'who can govern; what governing is; what or who is governed'. In this regard, and as described below, governmentality studies is concerned with questions of the 'how' of government (Gordon 1991:2-3) – by which is meant that government is understood as a practice that proceeds from a given rationality.

Though he did not establish the field unaided (Gordon 1991:1), both the term 'governmentality', as well as this interest in exploring the 'how' of government that underlies the governmentality literature, arise from the work of historian and philosopher Michel Foucault (1991:103) and his genealogy of the formation, or in his own terms 'the governmentalization', of the modern state (Gordon 1991:1-4; Lemke 2001:191).[31] It was Foucault's (1991:103) view that ideologically-based analyses tended to over-value and to essentialise the state, that is, they took for granted the terms of its existence (Gordon 1991:4; Rose and Miller 1992:174-175). In contrast to this essentialist view of the state Foucault maintained that it was not possible to come to terms with a particular mode of power without first exploring the particular *rationality* intrinsic to it (Lemke 2001:191; Rose and Miller 1992:174). The neologism 'governmentality' is, in part, a short-hand for expressing this idea that forms of power possess and proceed from an intrinsic rationality – a *mentality* of *governing* (Gordon 1991:1-3; Lemke 2000; Rose 2007:18-19; Bacchi 2009:6).[32] Postulating power as a rationality of rule, Foucault (1991:99-104) argued further that rule had not always occurred as the practice of *government*. By historicising the state and the rationality of power intrinsic to it, Foucault (1991:99-104; Gordon 1991:4-5) sought to question how it was – through what processes of displacement – that power in the modern state had come to be conceptualised and practised as *government.*

In Foucault's (1991; Gordon 1991:2-3; Rose 1993:287) writing the theory of governmentality thus had two main purposes. Firstly, and as I will return to discuss, Foucault elaborated an account of the way rule, through a series of historic shifts and 'events', had come to take the form of 'government'. Secondly, and significantly for my own thesis, Foucault (1991:89) understood power within the state as functioning not simply in terms of ideologies but in terms of particular *rationalities* of government (Larner and Walters 2004:496; Gordon 1991:1-4). This

[31] Other important early contributors to the field of governmentality studies whose works are published in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Burchell, Gordon and Miller 1991), which is something of a compendium of early work in the area, include Giovanna Proccaci, Jacques Donzelot and Robert Castel, among others.

[32] As Thomas Lemke (2000:7) argues, use of the term 'rationality' in governmentality writing does not signal a metaphysics: 'In this perspective, rationality does not refer to a transcendental reason, but to historical practices; it does not imply a normative judgment, since it refers to social relations.' Colin Gordon (1991:3) similarly argues that: 'A rationality of government will thus mean a way or system of thinking about the nature of the practice of government (who can govern; what governing is; what or who is governed) capable of making some form of that activity thinkable and practicable to both its practitioners and those upon whom it was practised.'

dual approach to understanding what might in other approaches be termed 'state power' distinguishes governmentality studies as a form of analysis from 'ideological' approaches. Where in ideological approaches power is treated as something to be possessed or a force operating to conceal the reality of social relations, in the Foucaultian account power is understood as a relation and a rationalisation. To reiterate, Foucault (1991:103) argued that the modern state was distinctive as a mode of rule because it constituted a period wherein rule was rationalised as the practice of government. In doing so Foucault did not consider government to refer exclusively to explicitly political relationships; rather Foucault (1991:87, 91) used the term in an older sense as a verb – to conduct (Gordon 1991:2-3). Government, in the governmentality lexicon, thus becomes formulated as the ensembles of practices which are directed at shaping the conduct of others and of oneself – that is, government as the 'conduct of conduct' (Gordon 1991:2-3; Rose 2007:3; Dean 1994:160-161). It is in this sense that power is understood as 'relational'.

This understanding of government as concerned with the shaping or conducting of conduct also explains the interest in expertise that is evident in governmentality studies writing. Governmentality scholars, in addressing the question of contemporary rule, direct significant attention to the way that in contemporary liberal states 'expertise' has a central role in establishing modes of conduct and norms of behaviour (for example Rose 1993; Rose 2007:149; also Cruikshank 1994). In the governmentality studies perspective, this central role of expertise is a part of wider circuits of power (Rose and Miller 1992:187-188; Rose 2007:149). To be clear, the inference is not that individual experts are individuals possessed of power. Rather the idea expressed here is that it is in part through expertise that conduct is conducted in contemporary liberal societies. It is in this way that expertise and expert knowledge are seen to operate as a part of circuits of power (Rose and Miller 1992:187-189).

Similarly important in understanding 'power' as it is treated in governmentality writing is that, as described above, the operations of the state are not read exclusively in terms of competing ideologies. Rather they are conceived in terms of the historical shifts, the interplay of singular events – including relations of expertise – from which the modern state emerges as a particular ensemble of power relations (Foucault 1991). In characterising post-structuralist analyses above I argued that they held in common a unique goal, which, borrowing the phrase from Chia (1996:32-33), involves rejecting an ontology of being, in order to advance in its place an ontology of becoming. In other words, post-structuralism focuses on eschewing the view that objects can unproblematically be represented in their concreteness, in order to focus instead on providing an articulation of *how* phenomena have come to be. In rejecting existing accounts of the state on the basis that they take for granted its existence as given, Foucault's governmentality studies can be seen similarly to place at its centre an ontology of *becoming*, highlighting the extent to which a governmentality studies approach to the study of power is commensurate with a post-structuralist mode of inquiry. This

commensurability becomes apparent where I consider in greater detail Foucault's novel thesis on power below.

Foucault's (1991:87-92) unique approach to understanding power and exegesis on government is exemplified in his analysis of Machiavelli's text *The Prince*. In addressing the way Foucault understands Machiavelli's text I want firstly to comment on the way that normative essays on government, 'governmental texts', are conceptualised in governmentality scholarship. Where power is understood as working through a given rationale, or 'rationalisation', governmental texts come to constitute sites through which to identify continuities and nuances in the zones of government (Rose 2007:4). This involves exploring governmental texts in order to determine how government is conceptualised as a practice, what is to be governed, what ideas or presuppositions are relied upon in governmental texts to connect governor and governed, and related questions as set out above. As evident in the example I now turn to discuss, Foucault, therefore, appraises texts (by Machiavelli and later by La Perrière), for the way they articulate contrasting rationalities of government. Foucault (1991:88-92) argues that Machiavelli's text, and the debates surrounding it in the sixteenth century, are reflective of a pivotal moment in the history of the governmentalisation of the state. This text, along with several others on the same theme of governing, was of interest to Foucault, not so much in terms of the actual pronouncements on governing Machiavelli himself made, but for the way that debates surrounding the text contain early traces of a new govern*mentality* – a new way of rationalising the exercise of power – that is argued by Foucault (1991:100-103) to have more fully emerged by the eighteenth century. This new formulation of power, described above as directed at the 'conduct of conduct' (Gordon 1991:2-3; Rose 2007:3; Dean 1994:160-161), is seen by Foucault (1991:103) to be central to the emergence of the modern nation state.

Reviewing Machiavelli's text Foucault (1991:92-94) argues that there is a quantitative difference between a mode of rule that has as its end securing for the king a designated territory – a style of rule he signifies with the terms 'principality' and 'sovereignty' – and a mode of rule that has as its end the disposition of the things internal to that territory – which Foucault deems 'government'.[33] In more 'technical' terms, exploring the historical debates around Machiavelli's text, Foucault (1991:90) identifies the emergence of a displacement in the end-point, or the object, of rule – a shift from what might be termed *territorial sovereignty*: 'the ability to retain one's principality' – to what might be termed *government* as we understand it to be practised today: 'the art of governing' or 'governmentality' in Foucault's (1991:90) terms. Where, in the sovereign mode, the rationality of rule connected the king by divine will to a given territory, in the latter mode that Foucault (1991:90) deems 'art of government', the authority of the governor is, he contends, derived from a specifically secular knowledge of the 'right disposition of

[33] In drawing this distinction between principality and sovereignty on the one hand and government on the other I am, for the purpose of the discussion, to a degree simplifying Foucault's (1991:88-99) argument where sovereignty and principality are in fact treated as distinct.

things' (Foucault 1991:93; Rose and Miller 1992:174). Foucault (1991:93 my emphasis) argues:

> In this sense we can say that the territory is the fundamental element both in Machiavellian principality and in juridical sovereignty as defined by the theoreticians and philosophers of right. Obviously enough, these territories can be fertile or not, the population dense or sparse, the inhabitants rich or poor, active or lazy, but all these elements are mere variables by comparison with territory itself, which is the very foundation of principality and sovereignty. On the contrary, in La Perrière's text, you will notice that the definition of government in no way refers to territory. *One governs things*. But what does this mean? I do not think that it is a matter of opposing things to men [sic], but rather of showing that what government has to do with is not territory but rather a sort of complex composed of men and things. The things with which in this sense government is to be concerned are in fact men, but men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility, etc…

This notion of a complex (which I amend to 'relational complex') through which government functions is expanded upon below where I address governmentality writing on the liberal mode of rule. My present purpose however is to explicate Foucault's (1991:93) conceit of a qualitative difference between the ends of sovereign power and the ends of government. Sovereignty, on the one hand, concerns the securing of territory by appropriate means of force, whereas government, on the other hand, concerns the practice of disposing of those things that reside within that territory according to appropriate expert knowledges. As the ends of these forms of rule are distinct so too are the practices which realise them; sovereignty and government, in Foucault's terms, therefore constitute different *rationalities* of rule. Importantly Foucault's (1991:102) thesis here is not directed at arguing that government comes to *replace* sovereignty as a mode of rule. Instead, he is concerned to show that there is something emergent, something unique in the mode of rule that *is* government (Foucault 1991:99-103; Rose 2007:6-7). On Foucault's (1991:101-102) account, therefore, it is not a case of sovereignty being replaced by government, but rather that with the emergence of government, sovereignty is displaced, for as the ends of rule find a new rationality so too they involve the emergence of new practices, or, as in the governmentality lexicon, new 'technologies' of government (see also O'Malley 1992:255-256). More precisely still, these new technologies of government are seen to revolve around particular expert knowledges, and their deployment in 'guiding', that is – conducting – the behaviour of citizens. In other words, it is not that the emergence of government marks the end of sovereignty, but that something new is added to

the matrix of rule – government (Foucault 1991:101-102). As an analytics it is government as a practice of rule that governmentality studies make their object. [34]

Foucault's focus of attention in addressing the texts by Machiavelli and La Perrière is of further relevance to the present discussion as it demonstrates that Foucault did not direct his analysis upon the actual dictates of conduct Machiavelli considered appropriate of the prince as sovereign ruler. Similarly, in governmentality studies, analysis is not as interested in the actual acts of any governor or governing body, as it is with articulating the rationalities of government considered to enable such action. This approach to the study of power in terms of mentalities of rule forms the core of what is unique about governmentality studies (O'Malley *et al* 1997:502-503; Lemke 2000:7). In its development post Foucault's early formulations, governmentality studies have thus come to comprise a political analysis of power and the state that focuses upon the presuppositions intrinsic to particular governmental modes and logics and the ways that these presuppositions come to be enacted in particular practices. This perspective explains why much governmentality studies writing (including that authored by Foucault) functions as analyses of *approaches to*, or *modes of* governing (Rose 1993:288-289). Thus, as Nikolas Rose (1993:288) describes them, studies in governmentality:

> are not concerned to describe or explain 'how it really was'; their concern is with the ways in which, over the past two hundred years, authorities have repeatedly asked themselves questions which follow this sociological form: what is the condition of the people, the economy, the family; what accounts for the problems and what would lead to their improvement; what effects have our strategies produced in the past; what can and should be done, and by whom, in order to make things better?

Importantly, while studies in governmentality often proceed through a discussion of governmental texts, analysis is actually focused on the practices or the *technologies* of government that such texts facilitate (Rose and Miller 1992:174-175; Rose in Harris 2001:23). Articulating the way that particular rationalities of government install and facilitate practices of rule (which in turn function to shape, that is – to conduct –, individual subjects in particular ways) is thus paramount in governmentality studies. The active shaping of the individual is a central area of interest in governmentality studies and is sometimes referred to by the phrase 'subjectification effects' (Bacchi 2009:138-139; see Foucault 1983c:231; 1990:17-35). The implicit idea being that it is through particular forms of power that particular 'types' of subjects are produced. Individuals are not autonomous

[34] Some critics have argued that this move to focus analysis on government marks the limit of governmentality studies as an account of political power and that, in so far as this is so, governmentality studies are not equipped to deal with questions of sovereignty and state violence as they arise in the post September 11 geo-political context (for example Dutton 2009). While there is substance to this critique that governmentality studies are not equipped to illuminate the political problems arising from acts of sovereign violence, it was never their intended purpose to do so. In this context it is useful perhaps to recall that, as Dean (1999:47) has pointed out, 'government' does not exhaust the field of politics.

entities that exist *prior to* modes of rule but are instead produced *through* modes of rule.

On the issue of rule as embedded in particular practices there is something of a disjunction between post-structuralist approaches, which tend to focus on exploring concepts as they are discursively constructed in given texts, and the governmentality studies focus on *practices* of government (see Bacchi 2009:64-65). In this thesis this debate is resolved largely on the side of post-structuralism. This is evident in Chapter 3, for example, where analysis is focused upon the poverty debates as *conceptual* debates and the particular understanding of poverty and affluence as specific kinds of problems. My particular resolution of this theoretical conflict reflects more than an intellectual preference, as I believe it remiss of governmentality scholars, in exploring welfare reform as it has occurred in the twentieth century, to have overlooked the role of expert knowledge in shaping understandings of poverty and the way such understandings become enacted in particular policy practices.[35] However, where in Chapters 4 and 5 I explore liberal texts on welfare and literature from affluence theorists for the particular ways in which they constitute governmental rationalities, I am also performing a governmentality style analysis. Thus in forwarding the argument that in the present context approaches to poverty are conceptualised through a presupposition of affluence, my ultimate purpose is to draw attention to the way that affluence, as a presupposition of government, is connected to the proliferation of punitive welfare *practices*.

The field of governmentality studies has been introduced above in terms of its pivotal theoretical and methodological points – the unique focus on rationalities of government, and the study of governmental texts. Elucidating these points and their role in shaping a governmental analytics I have clarified the way I see governmentality studies as commensurate with a post-structuralist mode of analysis. These central methodological and conceptual points now need to be summarised in the context of the arguments developed in the thesis.

As described above, in governmentality studies analyses, power is studied in terms of its rationalities. These rationalities become leading points of inquiry because of the way they succeed in linking together discrete phenomena in ways which render practices or technologies of rule seemingly natural. Indeed, it could be said that in studying these rationalities the objective of governmental analyses is to bring into view the distinctive ways that rationalities of rule put in place relational complexes connecting governor and governed. The example given above is Foucault's (1991:92-93) comparison of Machiavelli's text with La Perrière's where he argues that the rationality of power apparent in La Perrière's text was distinct in that it displaced the centrality once afforded territory, positioning in its place the objects/subjects of territory. This displacement in the

[35] Cruikshank's (1994) work on empowerment is an important exception here. Empowerment strategies are seen to arise from 'progressive' resistance movements and the work of social researchers, highlighting a tendency in Cruikshank's (1994) work of examining the intersections between policy and poverty research in the government of poverty.

object of rule in turn enacted a new 'complex' or novel set of relations at the centre of power. More precisely, and in comparison to the sovereign mode of rule (as per Machiavelli), government – as a rationalisation of power – was imagined not as a right of birth to rule a territory but as those practices centrally involved in bringing about 'the right disposition of things' (Foucault 1991:93). A result of this new formulation of power, Foucault (1991:93-95) argues, is the displacement of sovereignty – the earlier mode of power connecting ruler to territory in an absolute way premised upon divine will – with a *govern*mentality that connects rule, understood as 'the disposing of things', to secular expertise.[36] Secondly, and in keeping with the first point, in governmentality studies, modes of rule can be read in terms of shifts and historic discontinuities in conceptions of the relational complex. In other words, there is historic disjunction in conceptualisations of that which is to be governed.

Generalising the field from the summary above, governmentality studies, as an 'analytics', is centrally concerned with analysing modes of rule and rationalities of government by identifying emergent features, key concepts and practices, and articulating ruptures, displacements and continuities within zones of government. Applying a governmentality studies approach in this thesis I trace arguments on poverty for the particular ways poverty comes to be positioned within broader rationalities of government. In exploring affluence and poverty as 'events' in this thesis I am concerned to identify the ways that, at particular historical moments, affluence and poverty have been brought into, and in the case of poverty arguably moved out of, the 'relational complex' or zone of government. In giving this analysis I note that, where once the individualised conception of poverty was positioned within an explicitly moral discourse, constructing poverty as caused by moral failings such as lack of thrift or excessive alcohol consumption, in the current setting it is increasingly the case that individualised accounts of poverty are premised on an appeal to the idea of an affluence paradigm. Through reference to the notion of an emergent 'age of affluence' it is argued that poverty is no longer a 'structural' feature of 'western' societies but a residual and individualised problem (for example Saunders 2003:45; Hamilton 2003:13; 2006:21). From an analysis of (governmental) texts on affluence it is proposed that affluence constitutes something new and emergent in the zone of government.

More precisely, I am concerned to trace out the way that, in the present context, the appearance of affluence in the zone of government seems to eclipse poverty as a governmental motif. Exploring shifts in welfare rationality (Chapter 2) and examining representative governmental texts (from the CIS in Chapter 3 and from affluence theorists in Chapter 4) I argue that this displacement of poverty by affluence sets in place particular meanings and understandings of poverty and its government, which render poverty an individualised problem in a manner that I contend is problematic. Developing these themes in Chapters 5 and 6, I ultimately conclude that a shift has occurred in the motif of government – and in the relational complex at its centre – a shift from a motif of poverty to a motif of

[36] Nikolas Rose in his 1993 article 'Expertise in Advanced Liberalism' provides one of the most thorough and useful accounts of the relationship between expertise and the modern state.

affluence. The argument advanced is that poverty as a governmental problematic is displaced by affluence and that, as an effect of this displacement, the practice of government is increasingly rationalised in terms of the (seemingly self-evident) problems of affluence not poverty.

There is an existing governmentality studies literature in the context of which my analysis of poverty and affluence is positioned. As mentioned previously some of this literature is reviewed in greater detail in Chapter 2 where I explore the individualised view of poverty in the context of welfare reform. In the remainder of this chapter I continue to attend to the way that governmentality studies analyses understand the practice of government to occur in contemporary liberal societies. The emergence of the liberal mode and its connection to understandings of poverty are two themes that are explored. As will be made clear throughout the discussion, these arguments on the historical emergence of poverty as a part of the liberal mode of government are significant for the development and location of my thesis on poverty and affluence.

On the liberal mode of government: conceptualising 'the social', freedom and poverty

In governmentality studies literature the relation between poverty and the liberal governmental project is conceptualised in one of two ways, both of which are introduced in turn below. In order to provide a summary of views on poverty, however, it becomes important firstly to give an account of the way that the mode of liberal government is itself understood in governmentality studies. In furnishing this account, liberal governmentality is explicated in contrast to the understanding of liberalism as a political philosophy or ideology (Hindess 2001:93-94; 2004:23-24; Rose 1993:283-287). In the course of the discussion I also signal thematic intersections between the analysis of poverty and affluence developed in this thesis and the existing governmentality literature on the liberal governing mode.

As a political philosophy or ideology liberalism is seen as being primarily concerned with issues of individual freedom. In this regard liberalism is generally considered as a political doctrine associated with the work of theorists such as Mill (1874 first published 1859) and Locke (2007 first published 1694) and focused upon securing, through a rights framework, the freedom of the autonomous individual from encroachments by the state (Hindess 2001:93; 2004:27-28; Dean 2006:24; for example see Hoffman and Graham 2006:38-54). For these reasons, liberalism, as a political philosophy predicated upon the preservation of individuals' liberties from interference by the state, is frequently defined in comparison to, for example, Marxism or social democracy which, as political doctrines, are seen as being more focused on social rights, promoting the state as a regulative and redistributive vehicle for bringing about greater equality (for example Hoffman and Graham 2006:80-100). In governmentality studies literature both of these premises about liberalism are challenged. As I illustrate below, governmentality scholars argue that, rather than being antithetical to forms of 'social' government, the liberal

mode of government is contingent upon 'the social' as a historical concept and event (Dean 1999:113; Rose 1993:284-285). It is also argued that, rather than being a style of rule that is centrally premised upon the preservation of individual freedom, the liberal mode of government has always governed through 'unfreedom' (Hindess 2001:100).

To properly characterise the way in which the liberal mode of government is seen, not as antithetical to social government but as premised upon the social, it is useful to return to the discussion above on the governmentalisation of power. In reviewing Foucault's (1991) genealogy of the state I argued that Foucault conceptualised power as predicated upon particular rationalities, rationalities which put in place, or presumed, a particular relational complex which implicitly connected objects of government with governor. 'The social', as I now turn to elaborate, can be seen to constitute one such relational complex. Importantly, 'the social' in governmentality writing is not treated as a sociological given but as a thought-space of government (Donzelot 1979:xxvi; Deleuze 1979:ix; Dean 1999:113; Rose 1999:100-101; Walters 2001:61-62). I return to this subject in Chapter 2 where, addressing recent welfare reform, I elucidate the way changes to welfare are read by governmentality scholars as 'transformations of the social' (Walters 2001:61-62). There are two main ways in which liberalism is seen to be connected to some nascent conception of the social by governmentality authors. Firstly, governmentality scholars appeal to the way that the liberal mantra against intervention is itself premised on the idea that both the economy and the social are inherently self-regulating spheres (Hindess 2001:96-98; Gordon 1991:14-16; Dean 1999:113-115; Rose 2007:101-103). The argument from governmentality scholars is that, in so far as the liberal argument constructs state intervention as problematic, on the basis that it (allegedly) undermines the natural regulating systems inherent in the economy and the social field, there is the tacit suggestion in these liberal arguments that the economy and the social are autonomous entities. Along these lines governmentality scholars thus argue that the social is not peripheral to liberal presuppositions of government, it is instead *central,* as the very justification for non-intervention takes for granted the existence of a social sphere (Dean 1999:113-114; Rose 2007:101-107). The second way in which governmentality scholars have come to position liberalism as a style of government implicitly connected to the social requires somewhat more detailed elaboration.

Partly due to its implicit tendency to take a historical/genealogical approach in its analysis, in governmentality writing liberalism is generally treated not as a set of ideas or as a conceptual abstraction, but as a historical occurrence and event (Rose 1993:297-298). Thus, in their accounts, governmentality studies scholars theorise liberalism as a mode of rule in the context of the political interventions that were being made in the nineteenth-century period – the period during which liberalism emerged as a mode of government. Reflecting on the popular political developments of the time, Dean (1999:125-126, emphasis in original) argues that, in concert with the emergence of liberal government as a mode of rule in the nineteenth century a new object of government emerged:

> This new object, society, is made up of the concrete exchanges of individuals, of the occupations, customs, habits, patterns of family life and modes of communication of the population, of the quest by the population for subsistence, and of the ensuing distribution of wealth. It is a domain of harmony and conflict, with its own historical forms of development, its own origins. Above all, civil society is the concrete thing that ultimately government must govern. It is subject to its own laws of population, production and so on and has, as it were, its own natural history. … Liberalism, then, already contains the possibility of a *social government*, of a government that is anchored in the contending forces of modern societies.

What is being argued, therefore, is that, as a governmentality, the liberal mode is premised on a particular understanding of the relational complex to be governed, and that the relational complex, in the liberal mode of government, is constituted, in part, as 'the social' (Walters 2001:62; Dean 1999:125-126).[37]

In a similar manner, Rose (1993:285, emphasis in original) argues that, where liberalism emerged as a mode of rule in the nineteenth century: 'Persons and activities were to be governed *through* society, through acting upon them in relation to a *social* norm, and constituting their experiences and evaluations in a *social* form'. The kinds of intervention alluded to here are interventions such as those carried out in the nineteenth century in the name of public hygiene, public health and sanitation, calls for clean cities, the regulation of housing and centrally organised state welfare. The interventions spoken of here also constitute the terrain of expertise which later becomes the foundation of what in the present day constitutes public health studies and the broader fields of social science inquiry (Rose 1993:291; 2007:101-107; see also Procacci 1989; 1991). In governmentality studies these interventions are seen to constitute the social as a space of action, thought and government.[38] It may be seen, therefore, that it is not simply the case that the social is *presumed* within the liberal governmental rationality, but that the social becomes the space through which liberal government is practised.

As established above, in the work of governmentality studies scholars the liberal mode of government is treated in somewhat different terms to conventional readings of liberalism. The liberal *governmentality* is conceptualised as a mode of governing that is premised upon the social as a relational complex and thought space of government (Rose 2007:69-70; Dean 1999:113-115). With regard to liberal government and the subject of freedom, governmentality scholars also argue a view contrary to those conventionally furnished. One example of this alternative approach to understanding liberalism and freedom can be found in Nikolas Rose's (2007) formulation of liberal government as 'powers of freedom' in his book of the

[37] Though it is beyond the scope of the thesis to consider it further, the other fundamental aspect of the relational complex at the centre of the liberal mode of government, as it is theorised in governmentality studies scholarship, is the economy.

[38] As I discuss in Chapter 2 'transformations of the social' that governmentality scholars theorise in the context of welfare reform, can thus be conceptualised as a series of shifts and discontinuities in terms of the relational complex at the centre of (neo)liberal government.

same title. Rose (2007:67) begins his discussion by arguing, in a slightly similar fashion to Isaiah Berlin (1969 first published 1958) before him, that there are two 'kinds' of freedom, or that freedom – in the service of historical political discourse – has two ends; one which limits the reach of state power and one which induces individuals to behave in particular ways so as to achieve particular goals. Here Rose (2007:65) departs from Berlin's thesis on liberty arguing that:

> [I]t is possible, therefore, to distinguish between a number of different formulae of freedom at work in our recent history. In particular, I think we can distinguish freedom as a formula of resistance from freedom as a formula of power. Or rather, to be more circumspect, between freedom as it is deployed in contestation and freedom as it is instantiated in government.

Rose (2007:65; see also Rose 1993:290-291) further contends that liberal government occurs through an investment in the freedom of the individual to govern, that is to regulate their own conduct – an example of freedom 'as it is instantiated in government'. For Rose (2007:61-62) therefore, the fundamental premise of liberalism as a style of rule is that it recognises the individual as inherently free. Consequently, Rose (2007:68) defines liberalism as an operation of power which works by inducing individuals – as free agents – to act upon, that is, to govern, themselves in particular ways. In Rose's (2007:254-259) account poverty, and those constituted poor and 'undesirable', come to mark the limits of freedom and the agency that freedom is seen to bestow upon individual subjects. Rose (2007:88-89, 254-259) thus argues that, as a consequence of this liberal power of freedom, the poor and the 'urban underclass' are discursively constructed as failed agents, and that, once constructed as such, it becomes possible to subject these groups to punitive interventions not otherwise amenable to the techniques of liberal rule.

From this understanding that Rose (2007:61-65) holds of freedom as the fundamental technology of rule in the liberal mode, Barry Hindess (2001:93-94; 2004:28-32) takes a contrasting view. Assessing liberalism as it has been deployed as a form of colonial rule, Hindess (2001:93-95) argues that, far from coercive force being something that occurs at the boundaries or the limits of liberal powers, such force is actually *intrinsic* to the rationality of liberalism. For Hindess (2001:94-101; 2004:28-32; also Helliwell and Hindess 2005:414-415), liberal conceptions of human agency are implicitly constructed in terms of a developmental or evolutionary narrative where 'stages' of universal human development are seen to correspond with capacity for agency and thus types of rule. As Hindess (2001:95; 2004:28-32; Helliwell and Hindess 2005:415) highlights, throughout most of its history, liberalism has treated a vast number of the world's people – liberalism's colonial subjects – as lacking the capacity for the proper exercise of agency. More to the point, Hindess (2004:29) argues that it is through recourse to this evolutionary 'historicist' narrative that, in the liberal governmental mode, peoples subjected to colonial rule have been constructed as developmentally inferior, their cultures represented as a part of a diffusionist tale, a living relic of a past long transcended by imperialist Anglo cultures (Helliwell and Hindess 2005:414-415). Hindess (2001:94; 2004:28-30) and Helliwell (Helliwell and Hindess 2005:415)

argue that it is therefore consistent with a liberal mode of government to apply coercive force to the government of subject populations that are constituted, in the liberal story, as inferior and, consequently, as constitutionally incapable (or, in keeping with the developmental narrative, not *yet* capable) of autonomy. Hindess (2001:100) terms this way of governing peoples made subject to colonial regimes, the liberal government of 'unfreedom'. For Hindess (2001:94), therefore, to characterise the liberal mode of rule as functioning primarily through a recognition of individual freedom, as Rose (2007) does, is to give it 'far too good a press' (see also Dean 2006:35-36).

In my own reading of liberal governing techniques I find complementarity between the positions argued by Rose (2007) and by Hindess (2001; 2004). In Chapter 2 where I discuss recent welfare reforms it becomes apparent that Rose's (2007:1-5, 268-269) insight into the way that liberal government functions as inducement to individuals to govern themselves in particular ways greatly contributes to an understanding of the way that reforms to welfare put in place new technologies of government. For example the focus on psychological and character evaluations directed at 'job seekers' seems very much to employ liberal governmental arts in the way Rose (2007:268-269; also Rose 2000:1407) formulates them – that is, they work to govern the unemployed by appealing to unemployed individuals to conceive of themselves as 'job seekers' and to conduct themselves accordingly. However, in Chapter 3 where I address the poverty wars and work to unpack the 'empirical' argument on the individualised view of poverty I find that Hindess' (2001:100-101) argument on the government of unfreedom is more useful in accounting for certain features of these (liberal) arguments on welfare.

It can be concluded from the above that powers of freedom and powers of unfreedom are two ways that contemporary welfare policies attempt to govern 'the poor'. There is a conceptual space however between the government of poverty and the government of 'the poor' and in this regard Dean's (1992) work is of particular importance.[39] In his genealogy of poverty, governmentality scholar Dean (1992:228-239) has argued that poverty itself only comes to be produced specifically as a problematisation – that is, as a thought-space to be governed – with the rise of the liberal mode of government. As I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 6 of the thesis, Dean's (1992:228-239) argument is that poverty is produced as a thought space of liberal government in the eighteenth century, a time during which poverty and scarcity come to be constructed as the basic ontological facts of human being in economic and early sociological texts. Indeed, Dean (1992:231-241) demonstrates that, at this time, poverty is conceptualised *as* the problem of scarcity – a necessary tension between limited natural resources and potentially unlimited human needs (and numbers). In making this argument

[39] Though in this thesis I focus on Dean's (1992) work, Gianna Procacci (1989; 1991) is a governmentality scholar who has also examined the relationship between poverty and the emergence of liberal government at the eighteenth and nineteenth century period. Her work in many ways intersects and reinforces Dean's (1992) argument and it is referenced in this regard where appropriate.

Dean (1992:219-234) is not claiming that poverty, as the lived experience of deprivation, did not exist prior to this period. Nor does he suggest that there were not governmental logics and strategies in place for the policing of the poor prior to this period. Rather the very specific claim that Dean (1992:219-234) makes in his genealogy of poverty is that poverty, as an ontological fact at the centre of social and economic theory, and thus as an intellectual problem-space to be thought through, is an outcome of a particular systematising of thought that historically occurs as a part of the liberal mode of government. Without dismissing the centrality of poverty to the proliferation of frames of life arising since the nineteenth century that Dean's (1992) work establishes, in my discussion of Dean's work I highlight the way that his argument also implicitly establishes that there is no *natural* relationship between poverty as an empirical fact and poverty as a governmental problem. The thesis builds upon this premise arguing that in the present context poverty is increasingly eclipsed by affluence as a governmental thematic. The emergent affluence motif is considered to be congruent with a revised social complex and a (neo)liberal governmentality which effectively displaces poverty. This then is what it means to treat poverty and affluence as 'events' – to explore the ways that the concepts are made meaningful in, and as part of, competing governmental rationalities.

Expanding on Dean's (1992:234; 1999:115-116) insight as to an implicit relationship between the mode of liberal government and the view of poverty-as-scarcity as the necessary fact of human being, in this thesis I ultimately argue that this relationship is presently being put into question as governmental texts increasingly invest in affluence as being a newly emerging ontological reality. I argue that the emergence of affluence as a new fundamental presupposition in social and economic texts effectively displaces the role of scarcity as the necessary fact of human being at the centre of social and economic theorising. This shift from scarcity to affluence is significant at the level of government as it affects a shift in governmental motifs. Thus the argument is advanced that individualised conceptions of poverty are increasingly predicated on this conception of affluence as the fundamental presupposition of contemporary western societies. As discussed in the Introduction to the thesis, in making this argument of an individualised conception of poverty based on affluence, I readily recognise the ways in which individualised and individualising approaches to poverty have long been embedded within the institutions and discourses of liberal states which pre-date the shifting approach to welfare policy addressed in Chapter 2. It is not my argument that the view of poverty as individualised constitutes a novel view of poverty *per se*. Rather; it is my argument that the *terms* through which this individualised view is constituted – by reference to the idea of an emergent affluence paradigm – is both novel and highly significant.

Thus, as I show in the thesis, the growing 'consensus' on poverty is one in which 'residual' poverty, where its existence is acknowledged at all, comes to be constituted narrowly in explicitly and implicitly individualised and individualising terms, signifying what I termed in the Introduction 'the political demise of poverty'. Indeed, the very formulation of affluence as a norm, which in turn

implies poverty as a 'residual' problem, presumes an individualistic account of the causes of poverty; if affluence has been achieved at the level of the nation, the implicit assumption is that those 'falling behind' are held to be responsible for failing to keep abreast of changing economic circumstances and opportunities. It is this precise reasoning which, in constructing poverty as 'residual', I argue, constitutes affluence as a govern*mentality.* Where this understanding of poverty as 'residual' is accepted, it comes to appear 'common sense' to shift the focus of interventions away from broad level *social* policy change and on to individuals and groups who either can be shown to have fallen behind, or can be shown to be 'at risk' of doing so. What these shifts in policy in effect signify is the devolution of responsibility for poverty from the management of the institutions of the state, as associated with the model of universal (social) welfare, to the conduct of the individual. Such a rationale becomes the basis for the rise of conditional welfare (Rose 2007:162-163, 268-269; Walters 2001:65-66). What is more, where framed as empirical/rational arguments deduced from the 'fact' of affluence, rather than in an explicitly moral register, these arguments on poverty prove ever more difficult to contest.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have introduced the two key theoretical approaches and methodologies, post-structuralism and governmentality studies, in the context of which the arguments developed in this thesis are situated. I have focused on the ways in which these two analytic positions are congruous in their aims and approaches, as well as attending to points of disjunction between them. The necessarily limited accounts of post-structuralism and governmentality studies that I have provided in the chapter are of course not intended as definitive or exhaustive. Throughout the thesis I return to develop, expand and extend the discussion I have initiated on the conceptual tools surveyed in this chapter. I begin this process in Chapter 2 where I consider recent reforms in welfare policy and the insights that existing governmentality analyses provide in accounting for these changes.

Chapter 2

Crisis and consensus: Recent shifts in welfare policy

> At the heart of contemporary transformations of government is not simply the economic concern, in which the production of a certain form of economic citizenship is necessary for economic security in a global economy. It is also a political one in which the diagnoses of disorder and pathology require the re-imposition of authority and the re-inscription of the poor within a hierarchy.
>
> Mitchell Dean (2006) 'Governmentality and powers of life and death', p.40

In the recent contemporary period, narrowly individualistic and behavioural accounts of poverty (in contrast, for example, to social models for understanding poverty) find increasing purchase (one might even say dominance) in scholarly, popular, and policy discussion. In existing literature one of two arguments is commonly referenced in accounting for this trend. In the Introduction to the thesis I termed these two arguments the 'empirical' argument and the 'ideological' argument and described the way an alternative 'governmental' view is advanced in this thesis. Thus, rather than attributing the individualised understanding of poverty to demographic changes (as is the case in the empirical argument) or to the influence of neo-liberalism as a prominent ideology (as the ideological argument asserts) in this thesis it is argued instead that a transformation has occurred whereby affluence has displaced poverty as a motif of government. Developing this argument in this chapter I address the ideological argument directly, highlighting its limitations and situating the governmental view in its context. In doing so I address recent transformations in welfare policy, as it is in regard to these transformations that the ideological argument is frequently put forward.

As previously noted, in the ideological argument the individualised understanding of poverty prominent today is attributed to neo-liberal ideology, dominant amongst governments of western states since the 1980s. In this account reforms to welfare implemented in the final decades of the twentieth century are implicitly positioned as central to understanding the way poverty is conceptualised today. This is because the reforms are seen to implicitly involve a rewriting of the underlying social contract upon which welfare is premised that promotes an understanding of poverty as individualised (for example Goodin 2001:189-192; Hamilton 2001:96-100; Tomlinson 2002:9-16). Examining welfare reform in this chapter I am concerned to demonstrate, in contrast to the ideological view, that the critique of the post World War II system of welfare associated with neo-liberalism is similarly evident in arguments from other ideological perspectives. More precisely I am concerned to show that the post World War II welfare system which neo-liberal ideologues such as Margaret Thatcher in the UK[40] explicitly addressed as being problematic was *also* considered to be problematic by communitarians, by New Left revisionist historians, by Third Way advocates and by poverty researchers whose political views are generally seen to map on to a social-democratic stance. What these divergent ideological views held in common was the idea that the post-war welfare system was problematic because it created 'welfare dependency'. Establishing that diverse ideological views represent 'welfare dependency' as a problem in need of redress highlights the limitation of the ideological argument, the contention being that it overlooks this ideological confluence and that, in so doing, it over-emphasises the role of neo-liberal ideology in its explanation of transformations to welfare and the individualistic understanding of poverty that they affect.

[40] Ronald Reagan, US President from 1981 to 1989, is, along with Thatcher, the other famous proponent of neo-liberal ideology. While in the chapter I do touch on welfare reform in the US I address events that occurred in the 1990s subsequent to Reagan's time in office.

The analysis provided in this chapter thus has a threefold purpose. Firstly, in providing an overview of twentieth century welfare policy, the chapter charts the shift from a social understanding of poverty associated with the post-war welfare state to the individualised understanding of poverty evident in approaches to welfare reform today. Secondly, in addressing the more recent changes to welfare the chapter aims to establish the limitations of the ideological argument in accounting for such transformation, demonstrating that post-war welfare was represented as problematic in ideologically diverse analyses. Thirdly and finally, in highlighting the limits of the ideological argument the chapter also illuminates the benefits of applying a governmentality studies approach in understanding transformations to welfare. The argument on this point is that it is necessary not only to investigate the different *ideological* accounts of welfare dependency but also to investigate how welfare dependency has come to be accepted as a problem. The chapter begins by clarifying the way that welfare is understood in governmentality studies.

Welfare as government: the view from governmentality studies

In Chapter 1 governmentality studies was explicated as an analytics concerned to articulate modes and mentalities of rule and the practices through which rule functions. Chapter 1 also explicated governmentality studies scholars' concern to analyse liberalism as a mode and mentality of rule. Surveying the unique way liberal government is understood by governmentality scholars in Chapter 1, the relationship between liberal government and the social was established (Dean 1999:52-53, 113; Rose 1993:284-285). To reiterate, the social is conceptualised as being, not a geographic space, but a thought-space through which liberal governmental techniques are made meaningful (Rose 2007:100-101). As described in Chapter 1 this space of the social is seen to be connected to the kinds of political claims, such as demands for public sanitation and clean cities, that were made in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century period when the liberal mode of government was emerging (Dean 1999:113; Rose 1993:284-285). In so far as this is so, in governmentality studies literature the social, and the tendency in liberal governmentality to govern through the social, is therefore seen as precipitating the centralised public provision of welfare, what in other accounts is termed 'the welfare state' (Dean 1999:125-126; Walters 2001:62; Rose 1993:291; 2007:101-107). The welfare state continues the liberal tendency to govern through 'the social' and in many ways institutionalises this form of government by providing, for example, public health services (Rose 1993:284-285). Rose (2007:98, my emphasis) makes explicit this connection between the field of the social and the welfare state by emphasising the way that, linguistically, the activities and services provided by the welfare state are explicitly signalled as social: '*Social* insurance, *social* security, the *social* services, *social* welfare, *social* work…' Up until the final decades of the twentieth century these terms described the welfare system as an enterprise. In governmentality studies analyses, therefore, welfare, as it was established in the twentieth century, is seen as a means by which liberal government functions (Rose 1993).

Late in the twentieth-century period a break occurred, however, both linguistically and more broadly, in this connection between welfare and the social (Rose 1993:285; Dean 1999:150-153; Walters 2001:62-64). As an example of this break and as I return to discuss in greater detail, in Australia in the 1990s 'Social Security', the department of government responsible for the provision of welfare benefits was rebranded 'Centrelink'. This linguistic rebranding signalled a corresponding shift in institutional framing from understandings of welfare as a social service towards a business model of exchange (Carney and Ramia 2002:277-278). During this same period newly introduced 'Work for the Dole' policies removed legislative provisions which prohibited government from making receipt of unemployment benefits contingent upon labour activities (Pixley 1997:27-29). Thus, *social* rights to welfare were increasingly made contingent upon recipients undertaking coerced labour activities.[41] This break that occurred in the late twentieth century in the way welfare is imagined and provided is commonly described as reflecting a 'welfare state crisis' (for example Habermas 1986:5-6; Esping-Andersen 2001). However, in governmentality studies, this break is read in different terms. As the welfare state itself is seen to be predicated on a liberal governmentality operating through the social, the late twentieth-century break is not seen to reflect a 'crisis', but rather a *transformation* in the way the government of the social is rationalised (Rose 2007:98-101; 1993:284-286; Walters 1996:210; 2001:61-64). After all the welfare state, as explicated above, is merely seen as one, historically contingent, way of governing the social (Dean 1999:55). Governmentality scholars thus refer to the reformulation of welfare in the late twentieth century as a 'transformation of the social' (for example Walters 2001:61-62).

The language of *transformation* rather than 'crisis' is important, for it attests to the way that in governmentality studies literature changes to welfare undertaken in the late twentieth century are not seen as constituting a radical departure from earlier forms of government, but rather as a refinement of particular techniques of rule and ways of governing (Dean 1999:164; Larner 2000:16). To be more precise, if welfare as a form of governing through the social is a product of a liberal governmentality, the transformations to the government of the social occurring in the late twentieth century are read as constitutive of an emergent neo-liberal or 'advanced liberal' (Rose 2007:140) governmentality (Rose 1993; 2007:137-166; also Dean 1999:149-175).[42] In Chapter 1 I demonstrated that governmentality studies scholars understand the liberal mode of government in terms quite different from political philosophy accounts of liberalism. So too the governmentality studies account of neo-liberal governmentality differs from the understanding of neo-liberalism as an ideology. Governmentality scholars argue that, while there is

[41] In Australia Work for the Dole policies were first applied in 1997 and were limited to unemployed young people. In 1998 the policy was extended, requiring all unemployed individuals to meet 'activity tests' in order to continue to be eligible for benefits.

[42] For this reason I continue to apply both the designation 'liberal' and 'neo-liberal' in this thesis seeing them as sharing an overarching approach to government but signifying contrasting technologies of rule.

continuity with the liberal mode, what is most significant about neo-liberal *governmentality* is its introduction of new technologies of rule such as 'reflexive' government (Dean 1999:149; see also Larner 2000:12-13). As an ideology,[43] on the other hand, neo-liberalism is largely defined by its privileging of individualism and free market economic principles (for example Clarke 2004:34-36; Hamilton 2003:62-65). The specific ways in which neo-liberalism as a mentality of government is understood in governmentality studies scholarship is addressed in greater detail below where transformations to welfare, exemplified in changing policy approaches, are examined. My purpose here is simply to clarify this distinction between treating neo-liberalism as a *governmentality* and treating neo-liberalism as an *ideology* held by political actors such as Thatcher. I do so by reference to a practical example – I elucidate two different ways of analysing welfare dependency as a political problem. It is therefore necessary to briefly review the welfare dependency argument.

The phrase 'welfare dependency' and its loaded political meaning were first elaborated in the thesis Introduction. The underlying idea behind welfare dependency is that the continued provision of welfare promotes and reinforces poverty. Poverty, in these arguments, is seen to be caused by welfare as receipt of welfare is seen to undermine the capacity of recipients to privately support themselves (for example Green 1999:vii; Saunders and Tsumori 2003:3). Implicit, and sometimes explicit, in this conception is the idea that, in 'passively' receiving welfare, recipients fail to develop the labour skills and/or moral character that it is presumed that they lack and further presumed would reincorporate them into the formal economy, ending their poverty (Stoesz 1997:68-69; O'Connor 2000:547-549; Dwyer 2004:268; O'Connor 2002:399-402; Gentchev 1995). This account of poverty as the problem of 'welfare dependency' clearly constitutes an individualistic and behavioural understanding of poverty and it is most frequently associated with the reforms to welfare initiated by the ideologically neo-liberal governments of Margaret Thatcher in the UK (and Ronald Reagan in the US) in the 1980s. Stoesz (1997:68-69), writing from the US context, proposes the term 'welfare behaviorism' as a useful way of characterising these kinds of argument on welfare and poverty. In his use of the phrase 'welfare behaviorism' Stoesz (1997:68-69) is particularly concerned to highlight the way that, for advocates of

[43] There are inherent difficulties in seeking a single definition of 'ideology' as the term is used in complex and contested ways. Considering the argument by Tanesini (1994:207) on meaning claims referenced in Chapter 1 this is perhaps not surprising. Though the term is generally associated with Marx and Marxist critiques there is no single or consistent way the term is used, this is so even within the Marxist literature (McLellan 1995:9). It is argued that in Marx's own writing the term was used to refer to the way ruling-class ideas (ruling class *ideology)* concealed power relations active in society (McLellan 1995:12). However this definition seems to be less apparent in present day writing with the term 'hegemony' better approximating this notion of a force or forces which conceal or legitimate existing relations of power (see Jackson Lears 1985:568-570). In other instances the term is used to connote a worldview with a corresponding political program of action so that there are competing ideologies (for example McEachern 2001; Clarke 2004:34-35; Hamilton 2001). In its most frequent usage the term appears to signify this latter meaning – with an ideology seen to be a worldview corresponding to a particular political program to be implemented in the running of the state – such as a 'neo-liberal ideology' or a 'social democratic ideology'. It is in this latter sense that I understand the term here.

this view, targeting 'welfare dependency' equates to a mandate to alter the behaviour of the poor.

Examining arguments of welfare dependency in this chapter I find that, contrary to Stoesz' suggestion, welfare dependency and welfare behaviourism are not always synonymous as concepts. Indeed welfare behaviourism is only one manifestation of the welfare dependency thesis. Unlike the idea of welfare behaviourism which seems limited to the arguments of moral conservatives,[44] the underlying ideas of 'welfare dependency' appear in critiques of welfare by neo-liberals, but also by New Left revisionist historians (Fraser and Gordon 1994:20-21), by communitarians (for example Etzioni 1996), by Third Way advocates (for example Blair 1994; Giddens 2000:5-6), activists such as Noel Pearson (for example 2000; 2009), and across the writing of a largely progressive and social democratic social-science and political-science industry (for example Maddison 2008:49-56; Hobbs 2001; Pech and McCoull 1998; Saunders 2005:36-37). Unlike the neo-liberal proponents of welfare behaviourism, of which Thatcher and Reagan constitute two noteworthy examples, for these other authors poverty is *not* seen to be caused by individual deficits, yet welfare dependency is *still* seen as a problem requiring remedy. In all such instances the idea of 'welfare dependency' is pivotal in articulating the limits of post-war welfare. Indeed, 'dependency' is constructed as the fatal flaw of the universal rights regime associated with the post-war system of welfare.

The shared focus on welfare dependency as a problem in need of redress establishes that, while a range of views and ideological arguments might be had on the *subject* of welfare dependency and what to do about it, it is nonetheless the case that opponents in the debate all address welfare dependency *as* a problem in need of redress: redress in the shape of better, different, more government. Thus, taking a governmentality studies approach the purpose of the chapter is to demonstrate that welfare dependency is not simply a concept that is installed by neo-liberal governments working in a top-down manner in their efforts to 'roll-back' the welfare state, but is a governmental problematic – one which exceeds the purview of any ideological persuasion signifying instead an emergent neo-liberal *governmentality.* The focus on the multiple frameworks which reiterate the welfare dependency argument associated with neo-liberal ideology elucidates neo-liberalism as both as an ideology – an explicit stance on the management and operation of the state – *and* as a governmentality – an ontological framework and mentality of government which is prior to any explicit ideological position.

[44] Here I refer to arguments which target, for example, young working-class women and their sexual practices in the belief that doing so prevents the 'problem' of single mothers on welfare. These arguments are morally conservative in that they represent the problem of welfare dependency to be primarily a problem of failed morals. Local examples of this sort of argument include Sullivan 2000; Arndt 2007; 2004. Examples of this targeting of young working-class women are endemic in the US and thus a critical literature on these arguments is more readily available (for example Cocca 2002; Kelly 2000). Gail Reekie (1998), an Australian historian, has produced genealogy of 'illegitimacy' which is also a noteworthy text on this subject.

As described in the previous chapter, the founding premise in Foucault's thesis on the governmentalisation of power was the idea that something existed that was conceptually prior to ideological views on state government. Arguing that, in the context of welfare reform, neo-liberalism constitutes a governmentality represents a similar theoretical move. Another way to formulate this distinction is to say that, as a governmentality, neo-liberalism needs to be addressed not just in terms of the *solutions* it proposes to the problems of government – but in terms of its *formulations* of those very problems (Bacchi 1999:1-13; 2009:1-24). As a governmentality neo-liberalism establishes what needs to be governed – welfare dependency in this example. How best to govern (or solve) welfare dependency then becomes the subject of an ideological debate.

In drawing this distinction between neo-liberalism as an ideology and neo-liberalism as a governmentality, the argument is not that ideology plays no role in welfare policy and understandings of poverty. There are, as elaborated above, different accounts of what is problematic about welfare dependency and these different accounts map on to particular ideological views such as communitarian, neo-liberal, social democratic. I continue to use these designations in the chapter and throughout the thesis to emphasise contestation in the way particular problematics of government are understood. However, my argument is that the limitation of the ideological approach is that it fails to provide an account of *how* welfare dependency came to be subject to this kind of ideological contestation. Instead, the ideological approach takes for granted the ontological status of 'welfare dependency' as a problem in need of redress and merely aims to contest the particular understanding of dependency as it is promoted in explicitly neo-liberal (ideological) arguments (Chia 1996:33-39). What a governmentality studies approach contributes, therefore, is the analytical framework necessary to explore *how* it is that 'welfare dependency' has come to exist at the centre of these ideological debates on welfare.

The argument detailed above (to be elaborated in the chapter) incorporates insights from existing governmentality scholarship (Cruikshank 1994:33; Larner 2000:11-12, 16-17; Dean 1999:153-155) that the punitive approaches to welfare evident today have not simply been imposed by governments, but also have traces in 'resistance' movements and discourses. This is a key point of difference between the ideological argument and the governmental argument advocated in this thesis. As discussed in the thesis Introduction, the ideological arguments, in focusing their critique on those who explicitly take a neo-liberal ideological position, effectively obfuscate the plethora of critiques directed at the post-war welfare state and their role in bringing about late twentieth-century welfare reform. In contrast, analysis of poverty and 'welfare dependency' developed in this chapter is focused on highlighting the shared perception across the welfare policy arena (representing divergent ideological views) that post-war welfare policy was problematic. What is shared amongst these various groups is not an understanding of which principles should govern provision of welfare: it is not an ideology of welfare that they hold in common. Instead, what is common to all of these critiques is the view that welfare dependency exists as a problem which

requires governmental intervention. I take this confluence of ideological views (communitarian, neo-liberal, social-democrat) to signify a governmental shift of which neo-liberal ideology is reflective, but not constitutive. I turn now to explore reforms to welfare, highlighting the way welfare dependency comes to be identified as the key failing of the post-war welfare system. I argue that, where dependency becomes the focus of welfare policy, the politics of poverty and inequality are eclipsed.

Australian welfare policy from the nineteenth century to the 1980s: an overview

In any survey of historical developments in western states occurring since the end of World War II, the reforms to the institutions of welfare and to the implicit 'social contract' upon which they have been based would undoubtedly rate mention as significant.[45] These developments are significant in that, as previously noted, they constitute what has been argued to be a realignment of the basic principles of the social contract of (post World War II) welfare away from universal entitlement to contingent rights, citizen responsibility and 'mutual obligation' (Rose 2007:253-259; Macintyre 1999:103-104; Goodin 2001:189-192; Johnson and Tonkiss 2002:9). As discussed above, in governmentality scholarship these recent changes to welfare are seen to correspond with a 'transformation of the social': a reformulation of the underlying complex through which government is rationalised and practised (Walters 2001:61-62). Following established governmentality literature in this area, in this chapter twentieth-century Australian welfare policy is defined in terms of three distinct periods or three 'welfare rationalities' (Harris 2001b:6-7). Harris (2001b:6-7) defines these periods as: first, an early period up until 1939 characterised by a punitive discourse of desert; second a post-war period where the focus was on universal eligibility and enabling universal social rights; and third, the contemporary period nascent in the late 1970s and firmly established in the 1990s with the introduction of 'mutual obligation' policies and a consolidated shift away from a discourse of universal rights. The first part of the discussion details an overview of the history of centralised public welfare in Australia, from the early twentieth century to the 1980s. It is in the context of this overview of changes to twentieth-century welfare that the analysis of welfare dependency discourse is located. In order to assess the current state of welfare, it becomes necessary to first provide an overview of the origins of public welfare in Australia.

Though the modern welfare state is commonly seen as arising in the period following the end of World War II, it has policy antecedents in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Harris 2001b:7; Kewley 1969:6-56; Macintyre 1999:108-

[45] As these changes are transnational in nature I supplement the focus on Australian welfare policy with reference to developments in the US and the UK where appropriate.

109; Conley 1982:285-290).[46] In the Australian context these early policy antecedents can be seen in legislative measures such as the introduction of a federal age pension scheme in 1910 (Bessant *et al* 2006:21), the maternity allowances introduced by the Commonwealth Government in 1912 (Kewley 1969:6), and even arguably in the Harvester Judgment of 1907 (Macintyre 1999:109-110), wherein the Court of Arbitration declared that minimum wages should be conceptualised as living wages. Despite the existence of a growing state approach to welfare provision during this early twentieth-century period, the period prior to the inter-war years is seen as remaining largely consistent with the nineteenth-century policy discourse on welfare defined by a punitive and moralistic stance towards providing assistance – or in the language of the time 'relief' (Harris 2001b:9; Conley 1982:282-283). This period is seen as being moralistic in its outlook in so far as a distinction was considered to exist between the 'deserving poor' and the 'undeserving poor' with the implication of this distinction being that relief ought to be granted only to the deserving poor – those for whom poverty was taken to be the result of causes falling outside of the influence of an individual's behaviour (Conley 1982:281-282; Kennedy 1982:53, 60). It was not uncommon, therefore, to encounter arguments which sought to deny aid on the basis of claims that impoverished individuals were only in need of aid due to lack of thrift, abuse of alcohol, and/or sexual licentiousness, which was taken to lead to excessive breeding, itself a perceived cause of poverty (for example Bosanquet 1911:4-8; for discussion see Kennedy 1982:53, 65-66; Reekie 1998:51-65; see also Reekie 1997:81-82). Encapsulating this perception of welfare as an act of private benevolence rather than public right, Patricia Harris (2001b:9), in her governmentality studies analysis of welfare, defines this early twentieth-century rationality of welfare as a rationality of 'relief'.

Very much in contrast to this punitive desert-based policy rationality, in post-World War II public and policy discourse welfare was formulated and defended as a key way of characterising a new egalitarian communality in liberal states (Harris 2001b:13). At this time, which Harris (2001b:11-14) locates from the 1940s through the 1970s, though most apparent in public discussion and policy debate directly following World War II, universal welfare becomes a way of articulating citizen expectations of the state. This understanding of welfare as paramount in reimagining the role of the nation was evident in the famous 'welfare not warfare' slogan popular in the UK following World War II (Bessant *et al* 2006:43-44; Berend 2003:18-19). After the loss of life occasioned by World War II the idea signified by universal welfare was that citizens whose lives could be sacrificed by the state had a reasonable expectation that a concomitant right to social security should be theirs to claim. Parallel with the UK discourse of the state as an engine of welfare and not warfare, Australian policy approaches to welfare that were developed during this period were similarly represented as pivotal in the federal government's mission of 'planning for peace' (Harris 2001b:11; also Macintyre

[46] Here I am addressing the development of welfare in terms of its *policy* rationality – I take for granted the analysis of governmentality scholars, summarised above, that these policy developments are themselves predicated upon the emergence of a liberal governmentality and its construction of the social as a thought-space of government.

1999:111). This project of recasting the social contract to facilitate a newly consolidated sense of fraternity[47] in the period directly following the war effort, was exemplified in the principles of 'social citizenship' as they were formulated by British sociologist Thomas Humphrey Marshall in 1949 (Macintyre 1999:113; 2001:88-89). Marshall's (1950:10-14, 46-48) rights-based concept of citizenship incorporated the idea of 'three generations' of rights: civil, political and social, with the welfare state, through its provision of universal 'social security', positioned as a (more or less) effective vehicle for securing this third category of rights: 'social rights'. Political reformers of the post-war period considered universally available welfare to be the legislative enactment of social rights, a necessary and potentially effective measure for bringing about greater equality of opportunity in post-war liberal societies (Macintyre 1999:113; 2001:88-89). Marshall's view of social citizenship is thus commonly seen as not only fundamental to the development of the post-war welfare state, but as the apotheosis of the implicit social contract on which post-war welfare was predicated (Berend 2003:19; Macintyre 1999:113; 2001:88-89).

Along these same historical lines Harris (2001b:11-14), in her work on the Australian welfare state, argues that the introduction of a 1945 Government White Paper, 'Full Employment in Australia', marked a definitive move away from the earlier policy rationality of relief where the objective was limited to 'relieving' the need of the poor, and where the focus was upon the government of individuals. Harris (2001b:11) terms the post-war welfare policy rationality as 'full employment', arguing that the government of *unemployment*, rather than the government of the unemployed, becomes the key objective. This reshaping of welfare (policy) rationality, from governing impoverished individuals to governing unemployment as a structural proposition and economic problem, renders the post-war period somewhat remarkable in the history of welfare (Harris 2001b:14). Unlike earlier policy approaches to the 'relief' of poverty, (and later reformulations of welfare which I discuss below), the 1940s welfare state signified an attempted rejection of punitive approaches to poverty that constructed poverty as being caused by a failure of morals. It did so in so far as it focused on governing structural causes of poverty, such as unemployment, rather than on governing the habits and behaviours of the unemployed.[48]

[47] My use of the term 'fraternity' is intended to reflect that this public sentiment took a default stance towards greater social equality for white, generally Anglo-Australian, men. Calls by Anglo-Australian women for equality following World War II were far more complex, and by far made more marginal in politics, though it is beyond the scope of the thesis to address this issue in detail. It is also the case that Aboriginal Australians, whose citizenship status was still problematic at this time, while included in some measures under the social security legislation, continued to face unique difficulties in realising their demands for equality.

[48] Asserting the post-war period as remarkable in the history of welfare is not tantamount to claiming that welfare practices in this period were not punitive or in other ways problematic. Quite specifically the position advanced is that, as a rationality, the focus was on governing unemployment rather than governing the unemployed and that this *mentality* of focusing primarily on unemployment was unprecedented. As this distinction between governing unemployment and governing the unemployed was not always apparent in specific welfare policies or practices it is important not to idealise the approach taken in the post-war period (see for example Cruikshank 1994).

While common narratives of welfare locate its formalisation as a centralised state provision of universal social security in the 1940s and early 1950s, they typically construct the 1960s and the early 1970s as the peak periods of its 'maturity' and 'expansion' (MacInnes in Esping-Andersen 2000:757; also Rose 2007:253-255; Macintyre 2001:84-85). This is a period generally characterised in terms of growing welfare services and relatively widespread public support for the welfare state. In Australia this historical period is also significant in terms of developments in poverty research. I want to attend to these developments briefly as this history of Australian poverty research is of implicit relevance to the transformations to welfare rationalities that I address in this chapter and of explicit relevance to the discussion of contested understandings of poverty developed in Chapter 3.

Lamenting the dearth of research on poverty in Australia in the late 1960s and early 1970s Australia's pioneer of modern poverty research, economist Ronald Henderson, began a survey of poverty in Melbourne (Henderson, Harcourt and Harper 1971). Henderson modelled his study on the earlier surveys of British social researcher and social reformer Seebohm Rowntree, who had published his extensive survey of poverty in York in 1901 (Bessant *et al* 2006:177; Saunders 1998:1). Henderson, it is claimed, came to regard it as his personal mission to create a body of knowledge similar to that which Rowntree had achieved for York, on the degree and implications of poverty in Australia (Saunders 1998:1). Modelling his approach after Rowntree's, Henderson measured poverty through a 'poverty line' – a level of income beneath which an individual is regarded to lack the income necessary to meet basic living standards. It has been argued that early researchers such as Rowntree utilised this metric of a quantifiable basic income in regard to which poverty could be 'scientifically' measured, in order to liberate scientific research of poverty from the moral discourse on poverty and welfare that had persisted since the nineteenth century (Travers and Richardson 1992:31-32). Rowntree, working in 1901, carried out his studies of poverty during the period in which punitive (policy) discourses on poverty and welfare, described above, were dominant. There is reason to believe that Henderson and the authors of the 1971 Report, in modelling their approach after Rowntree's, were also conscious of controversies over the definition of poverty. In Chapter 1 of the published Report it is asserted that:

> For our survey of income and needs in Melbourne in 1966, we have accepted as a state of poverty the situation of a man with a wife (not working) and two children whose total weekly income at that time was less than the basic wage plus child endowment. We set our poverty line at $33 for such a family. ... This is a definition of poverty so austere as, we believe, to make it unchallengeable. No one can seriously argue that those we define as poor are not so. (Downing 1971:1)

It remains to be seen whether the austerity that Henderson and his fellow researchers sought to apply in their conception of poverty succeeded in foreclosing the contestation over definitions of poverty in Australia in the 1970s. Competing conceptions of poverty certainly appear to have been present at the

time, as is evident in Henderson's (1971:xi) comment in the introduction to 'People in Poverty' that 'There are other kinds of poverty – cultural poverty, poverty due to mis-spending of income.' Nonetheless in 1972 Henderson was appointed Commissioner and Chairman of the Australian Government's newly established Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, and poverty – defined 'in terms of inadequate income' (Henderson 1971:xi) – appeared, at least for a time, to be regarded as an object of legitimate concern by government (Saunders 2006:5; Bessant *et al* 2006:177). Though it is beyond the scope of the discussion to address it in adequate detail, Henderson's research in the 1970s parallels a general interest in re-theorising poverty occurring in various geographic contexts at this time. In the UK for example British sociologist Peter Townsend (1979) was developing his analysis of poverty as relative deprivation, that is, as relative to community expectations of decent living standards.[49]

In the history of poverty research, the period of the 1960s and the 1970s thus comes to be characterised as a time when poverty researchers 'dramatically rediscovered' poverty (Rees 1998:172; Bessant *et al* 2006:177). This is a significant period in both the history of poverty research and welfare policy. Commenting on this period Amartya Sen (1983:153-154), a leading economist and specialist on global poverty, has noted that the seeming success of post-war welfare programs in liberal states had led some commentators to claim hastily that the problems of poverty had been 'solved' in these states. The work of researchers such as Townsend and Henderson during this time effectively put paid to the sanguine and self-congratulatory pronouncements that poverty was a thing of the past for western liberal states in the post-war period (Sen 1983:154). In his Report as Commissioner and Chairman of the Poverty Commission, Henderson (1975:6-7), for example, estimated that as high as 10.2% of the Australian population had incomes below the very austere poverty line he had devised and a further 7.8% were less than 20% above this line. Henderson's legacy in the Australian poverty research field, which continues to be dominated by economists and by statistical and quantitative analysis, is lasting. So too is the contestation over conceptions and definitions of poverty as will be examined further in Chapter 3.

While this 1960s-1970s period marks a renewed interest in poverty research and a renewed commitment by researchers and governments to alleviating hardship, it also sets the terms for later controversies on the subject of welfare. By the 1980s research on the on-going nature of poverty in liberal western states came to be referenced in arguments which declared that the enduring nature of poverty in these states demonstrated a failure of post-war welfare systems to bring about any significant reduction in rates of poverty and that welfare therefore needed to

[49] This period in the history of poverty research marks the entry of 'relative' conceptions of poverty as a core analytical category. The subject of relative conceptions of poverty is raised again in Chapter 3. Importantly, this period also coincides with the publication of anthropologist Oscar Lewis' (1959) book *Five Families: Mexican case studies in the culture of poverty* in which he first put forward his thesis that the sub-cultures of the poor prohibited their inculcation into mainstream society. Though it is beyond the scope of the chapter to pursue this issue, Lewis' work and the 'culture of poverty' thesis is highlight significant in US accounts of welfare behaviourism (for discussion see Rigdon 1988; Harvey and Reed 1996).

be disbanded, or at the very least, radically reconceptualised (for example Murray 1984:3-9; see also Mead 2004:672). Returning then, to the realm of welfare policy, while the 1960s and early 1970s are commonly seen to represent the widespread expansion of welfare programs, the late 1970s and the 1980s are considered to represent the first major 'crisis' of the welfare state. This crisis is generally theorised as predicated upon two issues: on the one hand the slowing of the post-war financial boom and the oil-shocks of the 1970s leading to the global depression of the 1980s, and on the other hand, the rise of the neo-liberal ideological critique of welfare (for example Krieger 1987:177; Macintyre 2001:85; Mead 1997:11-12; Glendon 1992:534). The latter is associated with the writings of economists Friedrich Hayek (1976 first published 1944) and Milton Friedman (1971 first published 1962) and the ideologically neo-liberal governments of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the US (Berend 2003:23). Though most notoriously associated with the governments of the UK the neo-liberal reforms to welfare are also significant in Australia during this period, as I return to discuss.

From the 1980s onwards the rationality of welfare policy has been characterised as marking a return to the punitive approach of the early twentieth century (Berns 2002). Discourse on welfare dominant since the 1980s presents an ongoing critique of welfare spending as excessive and welfare itself as self-perpetuating (for example Murray 1984:8-9; Sullivan 2000:36-37; Niskansen 1997).[50] Correspondingly, the welfare rationality of the present period is focused primarily on inculcating a sense of responsibility amongst welfare recipients, positioning individuals and communities, rather than the state, as responsible for the provision of welfare (Rose 2007:174-176; also Dean 1999:171; 2006:40-41). In so far as policy is focused on altering the behaviour of the poor it constructs individuals, not only as responsible for welfare, but also as responsible for their poverty (Stoesz 1997:68-69). As I elaborate below, this contemporary welfare rationality, with its focus on responsibility and self-reliance is most apparent in (though not limited to) the rubric of 'mutual obligation', a policy initiative implemented in many western states in the 1990s (Goodin 2001:190). Mutual obligation makes welfare for unemployed individuals contingent upon coerced labour activities, rendering welfare rights contingent rights not universal rights (Goodin 2001:189-192; Tomlinson 2002:9-16). This policy is seen to be so characteristic of contemporary welfare policy that Harris (2001b:19), in her genealogy of welfare policy in the twentieth century, designates contemporary welfare rationality a rationality of 'mutual obligation'.

[50] The critiques of welfare alluded to here are, to an extent, inclusive of neo-paternalist arguments on welfare, such as championed by Lawrence Mead (for example 1989; 1997). However, Mead's (for example 1989:161-166; 1997:14-20, 23-24) paternalist view explicitly claims the existence of an 'underclass' culture or psychology amongst welfare dependents which serves as a barrier to their absorption into 'mainstream' society that only coercive and deliberate action from government can correct. This psychological/internalised stance on welfare dependency, though sometimes implicit in other arguments is never so explicitly held outside of paternalist arguments on welfare. It is important therefore to note this distinction between critiques of welfare as, to an extent, the terms of the paternalist argument on welfare fall outside of the arguments alluded to above. For examples of paternalist arguments that welfare reform needs to incorporate a 'psychological' element see Shore (1997); Vaillant (1997).

In tracing the developments and modifications in policy approaches to welfare – from a punitive discourse in the early twentieth century, to a rights-based discourse in the post-war era, to the period of the 1980s where the 'right' to welfare is once again challenged – the intention has been to provide a broad characterisation of these three periods. Analysis explicated the shift from a punitive approach to poverty and welfare in the early twentieth century to a social approach to poverty and a universal approach to welfare 'rights' in the post-war period and then, at the end of the twentieth century another transformation with a new focus on contingent welfare rights and an individualised understanding of poverty. The aim thus far, in other words, has been to highlight the discontinuities in the rationality of welfare policy. In the analysis below the goal is to establish *continuity* as well as disjunction across these periods. The objective is to identify the multiple points of origin of the discourse of welfare dependency as emblematic of contemporary welfare policy rationality. In turning, therefore, to more closely address reforms to welfare associated with the rise of neo-liberal ideology since the 1980s, it is of note that, as Harris (2001b:17) attests, from as early as 1976 in Australia:

> a person over 18 years of age could be required to move in order to find work, skilled workers who had not found work could be required to accept unskilled work, people who became 'voluntarily' unemployed had to wait for six weeks before they could claim benefits, school leavers were no longer eligible for benefit in the long summer vacations after they left school, and fortnightly income statements had to be lodged in person with the Commonwealth Employment Service.

As I now argue, this early incidence of welfare as subject to activity and other eligibility tests is an indicator of the way welfare dependency is not only constructed as a problem by neo-liberal ideologues in the 1980s, but has multiple points of (ideological) origin.

Neo-liberal *governmentality* and the rise of 'welfare dependency' discourse

Earlier in the chapter I illustrated the distinction between treating neo-liberalism as an ideology and treating it as a governmentality. In examining reforms to welfare since the 1980s, and the rise of welfare dependency discourse in particular, I return now to further develop that analysis. As noted above, neo-liberalism is often regarded primarily as an economic doctrine and political ideology focused on 'the bottom line' of government spending (Larner 2001:6-9). Where addressed in this manner as an ideology, the neo-liberal critique of welfare arising in the 1980s is seen to be directed at curbing welfare spending, represented as having become excessive across the decades of the 1960s and 1970s (Larner 2001:6-9; for example Berend 2003:22-23; Williams 2009). In contrast to this view I argue in this chapter that the neo-liberal critique of welfare was equally concerned with what was represented to be the social or moral costs

of welfare (Dean 1999:161-163; see also O'Malley 1992:259). My position, in other words, is that the neo-liberal arguments on welfare dependency are premised not merely on economic concerns but on a wider critique of post-war welfare and the governmental *rationality* upon which it was predicated. In order to establish this argument it becomes necessary to firstly address in greater detail the ways in which neo-liberalism is understood as a governmentality in existing governmentality studies scholarship.

A growing corpus of governmentality studies literature theorises neo-liberalism as a particular rationality of government (for example Larner 2000; Rose 2007:137-139; Dean 1999:149-175; Lemke 2000:6-13). As elucidated above, in this literature the emergence of neo-liberal governmentality is seen to correspond with a transformation in the social complex through which government presently occurs (Rose 2007:184-187; Walters 1996:210; Dean 1999:149-153). Though it is beyond the scope of the discussion to review this literature in its entirety, it is possible to summarise certain basic presuppositions argued to constitute the neo-liberal governmentality. To begin with and as previously established, in governmentality studies writing the neo-liberal mode of rule is positioned as, in part, a continuation of the liberal project of government (Lemke 2000:11; Dean 1999:164). Instead of signifying a complete break with the earlier period of liberal government, neo-liberal governmentality is conceptualised as implementing distinct technologies of government (for example Rose 1993:294-295; Dean 1999:149-164; Lemke 2000:11). Writing on neo-liberalism as it constitutes a governmental rationality, Dean has argued that there are (at least) two pivotal nuances that it introduces: the turn to 'reflexive government' (1999:149, 193-197) and problematising 'the social', an idea introduced earlier in the chapter. Both of these nuances are relevant to the reformulation of welfare which has occurred since the 1980s. The two nuances are further elaborated in turn now.

Dean (1999:149) conceives neo-liberal governmentality as being principally concerned with what he calls 'reflexive government'. What Dean (1999:193-197) intends by this term is that the object of government in the neo-liberal rationality is government itself. In Dean's (1999:55-56, 194-195) analysis neo-liberal governmentality targets what it takes to be the inadequate or inefficient management of existing governing systems. Importantly government here is understood as a verb – and the neo-liberal objective is understood not in the context of seizing the institutions of the state, but in terms of implementing processes for better conducting the 'conduct of conduct' (Gordon 1991:2-3). Dean (1999:169) offers auditing as a practical example of what is intended by 'reflexive government'. Auditing, as a technology of government, is directed at governing – that is, it is directed at regulating, improving, subjecting to observation and record – existing apparatuses of expertise (that is apparatuses of *government*), in this way enacting a *reflexive* government (Dean 1999:169).[51] During this later twentieth-century period there is a proliferation of discourses on 'good governance' which enact divergent new techniques, often focused on the micro processes of

[51] Rose (1993:294-296; 2007:153-155) has also written on neo-liberal and 'advanced liberal' (Rose 2007:140) governmentality as facilitating new governmental techniques including auditing.

management, for governing those who govern – from bureaucratic departments to medical experts: these governmental processes are indicative of neo-liberalism as 'reflexive government' (Dean 1999:149; see also Jose 2004; 2007).[52] As will be seen in the discussion below the discourse of welfare dependency exemplifies this notion of 'reflexive' government (Dean 1999:149).

The second nuance that Dean (1999:150-164), along with other governmentality scholars (Rose 2007:98-101; 1993:284-286; Walters 2001:61-64), considers definitive in understanding neo-liberal governmentality is the problematisation or transformation of 'the social'. Having provided an overview of the idea of the social and the 'transformation of the social' above, in revisiting the theme here I attend to its practical implications. In particular I am concerned to highlight the way this transformation involves problematising the social as a thought space of government. The argument is that, where government in the post-war period was focused on 'social rights', and the underlying conception was of the state governing through the social, in the neo-liberal rationality, government is conceptualised as more properly implemented by communities, by individuals, and by business. In this way the activity of government is devolved from the 'social' state on to communities, individuals and business. A practical example of this rationality is evident in Margaret Thatcher's (in Dean 1999:151) infamous and often cited claim that 'there is no such thing as society'. As I now explicate, Thatcher's assertion is illuminating in both highlighting what is seen to be problematic about post-war welfare government, as well as in highlighting how neo-liberalism, as reflexive government, seeks to remedy this perceived problem.[53]

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[52] It is important here to distinguish 'govern*ance*' – as a tactic associated with neo-liberal and advanced liberal forms of rule from 'govern*ment*' and 'govern*mentality*' as they are theorised by Foucault and described in Chapter 1. Governmentality scholar Jim Jose (2005) makes a significant contribution in drawing out the ways in which, though sometimes conflated, 'governance' as it features in discourses on 'good governance', and 'government', as it is conceptualised in governmental studies, are conceptually and politically distinct. Governmental analyses, as produced in governmentality studies literature and described in Chapter 1, are concerned to articulate rationalities of rule. In contrast the 'good governance' discourses generally promote particular technologies of rule: they are *normative* approaches to government whereas governmentality studies are *analytic* approaches to government (Jose 2005).

[53] Thatcher's full statement, originally made in an interview with the *Sunday Times* and published 31 October 1987, is available at the Margaret Thatcher Foundation website: 'I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand "I have a problem, it is the Government's job to cope with it!" or "I have a problem, I will go and get a grant to cope with it!" "I am homeless, the Government must house me!" and so they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then also to help look after our neighbour and life is a reciprocal business and people have got the entitlements too much in mind without the obligations, because there is no such thing as an entitlement unless someone has first met an obligation and it is, I think, one of the tragedies in which many of the benefits we give, which were meant to reassure people that if they were sick or ill there was a safety net and there was help, that many of the benefits which were meant to help people who were unfortunate – "It is all right. We joined together and we have these insurance schemes to look after it". That was the objective, but somehow there are some people who have been manipulating the system and so some of those help and benefits that were meant to say to people:"All right, if you cannot get a

When in 1987 British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (in Dean 1999:151) infamously declared that there was 'no such thing as society' the implication of her claim was that the underlying conception of social relations upon which the 'social security' of the welfare state had been premised was faulty (Dean 1999:151-153; see also Rose 2007:98-101, 138-139). The 'corrective' to this 'faulty logic' of post-war welfare rationality to which Thatcher alludes (and in her welfare policies implemented) was to shift responsibility back on to individuals *as* individuals; on to individuals as *community* members who had obligations to each other; and also on to *business* as leaders in the community. In other words, the underlying rationality was to review the way the social was governed and to shift government from (the thought-space of) the social to the community, the individual and business. Thus, as well as highlighting the shift or 'transformation' from the social state to the individual, community and business, the example from Thatcher exemplifies the idea of neo-liberal governmentality as involved in 'refining' existing liberal government. In its function as a rationality of power neo-liberal governmentality is focused firstly upon representing liberal government as excessive – the social welfare state had taken over the responsibilities of individuals, community and business – and then positing itself as a corrective to the inadequacies it identifies in existing governmental regimes. The implicit inference in Thatcher's assertion is that earlier governments, by facilitating the dependency of welfare recipients, *governed too much* and themselves needed to be subject to sanction (Walters 1996:207; Rose 2007:137-139).[54] By cutting-back social welfare, neo-liberal (governmentality) was positioned as reviving the loosening bonds of responsibility of individuals over their welfare, of communities to their members, and of business to the community. In this way neo-liberal governmentality constitutes a 'reflexive' government (Dean 1999:149). Importantly, this is not simply an argument about the *responsibilities* of the state versus the *responsibilities* of the individual. More significantly, Thatcher's comment reflects an ontological assessment of how government can, and ought to, take place. The social is definitively *not* an appropriate field of government in this account. Thatcher's claim therefore is not merely a reflection of the neo-liberal *ideological* view of a minimal state – it is a *governmental affirmation* of what exists as an appropriate site of government.

The example can be analysed further. In her assertion Thatcher implies that what is (in her account) problematic in the logic of the post-war welfare state is not only that it is premised on this idea of 'society' which, in her view, does not exist, but

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job, you shall have a basic standard of living!" but when people come and say:"But what is the point of working? I can get as much on the dole!" You say:"Look" It is not from the dole. It is your neighbour who is supplying it and if you can earn your own living then really you have a duty to do it and you will feel very much better!" (Thatcher 1987)

[54] A key phrase expressing this idea in the early 1990s was that 'the state should not row, but steer' (Blair and Schroder in Giddens 2000:6). The phrase was popularised by David Osborne and Ted Gebler (1993:25-48) who promoted it as one of ten principles which they advocated as forming 'entrepreneurial government'. The term is associated, in particular, with UK Prime Minister Tony Blair. Blair and the reforms to welfare he oversaw in the 1990s are addressed in greater detail later in the chapter.

that, in positing this false entity, post-war welfare undermines rather than augments individual responsibility and resilience. The reasoning here, as intimated above, is that the conception of welfare as a 'social right' led individuals to disown their responsibilities to provide for themselves and their families, casting their responsibilities upon the welfare state instead (Thatcher 1987). This exact reasoning can be seen in arguments that charge the welfare state as responsible for rising rates of 'ex-nuptial births', single mothers 'dependent' on welfare and fatherless families (for example Sullivan 2000:38-45; Murray 1994; Rector and Fagan 1996). Clearly, these are not simply *economic* arguments but are motivated by ethical concerns – ethical in that they focus upon norms of personal conduct (self government).[55]

From this analysis of neo-liberal governmentality it can begin to be seen that the critiques of the welfare state that emerged in the 1980s did not only involve arguments over the role of the state in providing welfare. Nor were these simply economic arguments as is often suggested (O'Malley 1992:259; Larner 2000:5-9). Rather, the neo-liberal critique of welfare implicitly involved a sustained questioning of the ethical principles of social security and government provision as imagined by Marshall and his post-war contemporaries. Where Marshall and the architects of the post-war welfare state represented social security as contributing to the public good, in the 1980s 'social security' came to be represented as causing public harm. Where in the post-war period welfare and social rights were seen as vehicles for bringing about greater equality and strengthening social bonds, by the 1980s welfare was increasingly constructed as 'having gone too far' – fracturing the autonomy of individuals reliant on social provision and contributing to a new near-pathological condition whereby, as intimated in Thatcher's quote above, individuals projected their own responsibilities onto the 'social' state (Dean 1999:151-153; also Rose 2007:98-101, 138-139).

It may be concluded then that arguments on welfare dependency are not driven merely by economic concerns but encompass ethical arguments on the conduct of individuals on welfare (O'Malley 1992:259; Dean 2006:40-41). As explicated above, they are also arguments about the proper conduct of governments. Asserting this point in no way overlooks the extent to which these arguments on welfare were simultaneously directed at the punitive government of individuals. Rather it highlights that a more significant shift in understanding government was occurring at this time than that which the ideological argument allows. I now turn to explore more closely how this understanding of welfare dependency as the fatal flaw of the post-war welfare system is not limited to ideologically neo-liberal arguments.

[55] On the issues of welfare reform as taking the form of explicitly moral arguments see also O'Malley (1992:259).

Welfare dependency: a governmental problematic

Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon (1994:6-12) have discussed the way that the idea of 'dependence' is connected to particular understandings of social relations. In their genealogy of the concept they point out, for example, that to be classed as a 'dependent' was the typical state of affairs for most working people up until the eighteenth century and even into the nineteenth century in some cases (Fraser and Gordon 1994:8-9). As Gordon and Fraser (1994:7-10) discuss, the concept of 'dependency' has its origins in a feudal social system which subjugated working people, rendering them necessarily and unproblematically dependent upon the landed classes, both for their livelihoods and in a legal sense. It follows that it is only in the context of a particular understanding of social relations that 'dependency' is constructed as problematic. Fraser and Gordon (1994:12-16) make the case that it is only where 'independence' comes to be valorised as the taken for granted white-masculine norm of liberalism that 'welfare dependence', so frequently associated with African-American single mothers in the US context from which they write, comes to be constructed as a problem in need of redress.

Of pertinence to the present discussion is that, in their analysis of post World War II usage of the term, Fraser and Gordon (1994:19-21) identify the term 'dependency' as operating across multiple ideological perspectives. Thus, while addressing the way that the term is inflected with a moral/psychological register suggestive of a behavioural pathology in writing by moral conservatives, Fraser and Gordon (1994:19-20) also acknowledge that liberal social scientists, who frequently proclaim that 'dependency' has a neutral, descriptive, value in their work, are similarly committed to using the term. Furthermore, in their discussion Fraser and Gordon (1994:20) attend to the way that, in the 1960s and 1970s – the period identified above as the peak years of welfare state expansion – 'dependency' was a key word in a 'resistance' discourse which sought to problematise welfare as 'an apparatus of social control'. As summarised in their article:

> [D]uring the period in which NWRO [National Welfare Rights Organisation] activism was at its height, New Left revisionist historians developed an interpretation of the welfare state as an apparatus of social control. They argued that what apologists portrayed as helping practices were actually modes of domination that created enforced dependency. (Fraser and Gordon 1994:20)[56]

[56] Cruikshank (1994), a governmentality scholar who, as previously mentioned, also writes on US post-war welfare policies which targeted the poor takes an altogether different approach to the New Left revisionist historians and her analysis warrants mention for this reason. Though arguing that post-war policies such as community empowerment programs constituted technologies of power, unlike New Left revisionist historians Cruikshank does not see empowerment strategies as concealing the 'real interests' of the poor. Rather Cruikshank (1994:34-35) is concerned to examine the way empowerment, as a technology of government, enacts people in poverty as subjects who need to conduct themselves in particular ways towards specific ends. Cruikshank (1994:41) is concerned to question how it is that the category of 'the poor' achieved coherence given the heterogeneity it comprised: 'divided by region, gender, class … divisions such as urban/rural, to include Appalachian coal miners, black urban single-parent families, the working poor, juvenile

For Fraser and Gordon (1994:20-21) the take up of 'dependency' by New Left revisionist historians is a positive development in that it contests the moral and psychological register of dependency frequently present in contemporary debates on welfare.[57] As relates to the present discussion, however, this problematising of post-war welfare by New Left revisionist historians as 'enforcing dependency' (Fraser and Gordon 1994:20) has an altogether separate significance. In the context of the present discussion the significance is that in the 1960s-1970s period New Left revisionist historians represent welfare dependency to be a problem at all. With the example of the New Left revisionists it becomes evident that the view of welfare dependency as a problem in need of redress is not limited to those who hold ideologically neo-liberal views, but is also a part of 'resistance' discourses on welfare.[58]

The multiple ideological origins of dependency discourse are further evidenced in the writing of US communitarians who in the 1990s made the case that the post-war welfare state, consistent with the over-arching focus on rights and entitlement in US society, undermined the existence of 'authentic' communities and the civic-mindedness of individuals (for example Etzioni 1994:3-20; 1996:7; Glendon 1991:109-144; 1992:536-538). Amitai Etzioni (1996:7), for example, argued that authentic communities and autonomous individuals existed in what he termed a relationship of 'inverting symbiosis': in order for both to flourish a balance between rights and responsibilities needed to be struck. Thus the communitarian critique of welfare was that, where it had been positioned as universal entitlement, welfare had created an imbalance between the forces of autonomy and community, over-emphasising individual rights to the detriment of communal responsibilities (Etzioni 1996:7; Glendon 1991:ix-xiii).[59] These arguments by communitarians, while perhaps not as extreme as the New Left revisionist historians, cannot simply be reduced to neo-liberal ideology. Indeed the communitarians differ from neo-liberal ideologues on key points in the debate over welfare. While communitarians argue for a 'balance' of rights and responsibilities, unlike neo-liberal ideological reformers they still see a place for

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delinquents, alcoholics, and the elderly, among others'. Her analysis therefore is concerned with how the *category* 'the poor' opens up possibilities of (self) government (Cruikshank 1994:41).

[57] See also Jewel Bellush (1979) for an overview of claims by New Left revisionist historians regarding the post-war US welfare system. For example of New Left revisionist arguments on the post-war system of welfare see Michael Parenti (1974:63-68).

[58] As point of note, Foucault (1988:159-177) himself explicitly adopted the same view on post-war welfare as New Left revisionist historians. Reflecting on the French system of welfare he declared it problematic on the basis that it enforced 'dependency' (Foucault 1988:159-177). On this point I take a different view to Foucault, as elaborated throughout the chapter I consider such analysis of welfare as limited.

[59] For an effective and concise overview of the debates as authored from the communitarian perspective see Etzioni (1996).

state provision (Etzioni 1996; Bellah 1995:53).[60] Indeed communitarians see some state provision as necessary to achieving a wider ethic of community and compassion amongst the citizenry (Glendon 1992:536). At the same time, however, the communitarian conception of what was problematic about the post-war welfare state relies upon the idea of welfare *dependence* which, as established above, is a fundamental presupposition in the neo-liberal (ideological and governmental) critique of post-war welfare. Despite the fact that the communitarians remain critical, indeed are in certain measure *defined* by their criticism of what they regard as the extreme individualism of neo-liberal ideology (Etzioni 2004:1-3; Bellah 1995:51-53), in promoting a renewed focus on responsibility and mutuality the communitarian critique of welfare can nonetheless be seen to share certain points in common with the neo-liberal critique of welfare. It can therefore be seen that the critique of welfare associated with neo-liberal ideological reformers of the welfare state is by no means limited to a single ideological stance.

Furthermore, while it is communitarians who, in the US in the 1990s most vocally promoted the conception of a symbiotic relationship between rights and responsibilities as fundamental to successfully reforming welfare, the focus on balancing rights and responsibilities is by no means exclusively their purview. The idea of a balance between rights and responsibilities is so commonplace in contemporary welfare discourse it can be seen, for example, in responses by social policy researchers to the Australian Government's 2002 Welfare Review. Social policy researchers, generally regarded as aligned with a social democratic stance, can be seen to promote, tacitly and sometimes explicitly, the view that the post-war welfare period, in positioning welfare as a right, had not adequately balanced recipient rights with recipient responsibilities. Alison McClelland (2002:220), for example, while rejecting the way the 2002 Report established mutual obligation as a requisite tenet of welfare policy, nonetheless claimed that: 'there are legitimate criticisms that, in the past, a focus only on structural and institutional capacity building has denied sufficient attention to individual development.' The inference here is clearly that, in so far as the state has obligations to the citizen, these must not eclipse the corresponding obligations of the citizen. Indeed, since the early 1990s the thesis of an 'inverting symbiosis' (Etzioni 1996:7) of rights and responsibilities has served as a foundational premise in both dependency discourse and welfare reform.

The confluence of critiques directed at the post-war welfare system described above has further relevance to the Australian example. Though in Australia during the 1980s there was no single political figure that quite matched Thatcher in stature as anti welfare-state campaigner, a shift towards a neo-liberal approach to welfare is nonetheless evident throughout the period (Johnson and Tonkiss

[60] A further disjunction between communitarians and neo-liberals thus arises in the fact that communitarians such as Etzioni did not support reforms to the US system of welfare enacted in the 1990s under the 'Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act' (PRWORA), discussed later in the chapter. Etzioni (2002:13) openly rejected the legislation as 'morally unappealing'.

2002:8-10). Despite the fact that in Australia there was a Labor government in power from 1983 to 1996, the era of the Hawke/Keating Labor governments nonetheless saw a similar transformation in the rationality underpinning welfare from universal right to contingent right and a renewed focus on 'responsibilities' (Macintyre 1999:103-106; Harris 2001b:20-21). This in itself is indicative of the way reforms associated with neo-liberalism cannot be reduced to the actions and intentions of ideologically neo-liberal governments.

In relation to policy rationality, the move away from a post-war welfare rationality in Australia is most notable in a major review of the social security system commissioned by the Australian Government in 1987 (Harris 2001b:17-18). The inquiry resulted in the release of a 1988 Report on unemployment entitled 'Income Support for the Unemployed in Australia: Toward a More Active System' (Cass 1988). The Report argues for a shift towards an 'active' not 'passive' model of welfare (Cass 1988:275). As an emblem of changing approaches to welfare the 'active society' model is regarded as precursor to mutual obligation policy and the reforms of the 1990s (Harris 2001b:17; Dean 1994:162; Carney and Ramia 2002:278). In the 1988 Report it was claimed that, amongst other negative effects, life on welfare eroded self-esteem (Cass 1988:129-135). Increasing the activity that unemployed individuals were required to perform in order to remain eligible for welfare was offered as palliative to this apparent problem (Cass 1988:185-190). Importantly, the Report, commissioned by a Labor government, was not seen to be advancing a punitive approach in its recommendation that welfare benefits be subject to increased activity by the unemployed. Though it is the case that some critical analyses of the rise of mutual obligation include the Report by Cass (1988) as significant,[61] it is just as frequently the case that these early developments are overlooked in the literature which focuses instead on a later Report initiated in the 1990s by the Howard Government as the original source of the shift to conditional welfare.[62] Despite the tendency to associate mutual obligation and the associated critique of the welfare state exclusively with the Howard Liberal/Coalition Government, as early as 1975 in the 'Poverty in Australia: An Outline' (Henderson 1975:10, 15, 20) it was claimed that some of the service delivery approaches of welfare attracted stigma, deprived recipients of choice and were 'degrading'. This signals the way social scientists and progressive welfare reformers, just as much as neo-liberal ideologues, regarded post-war welfare as problematic, and the

[61] For example the authors noted above, Harris (2001b:17); Dean (1994:162); Carney and Ramia (2002:278), as well as Tomlinson (2002:5) and Eardley and Matheson (2000:182).

[62] For example Nguyen (2006); Wilson and Turnbull (2004); Edwards (2003); and Burgess *et al* (2000) who actually make mention of welfare reforms in the 1980s nonetheless yet fail to mention the Cass Report. Indeed even in the E-brief on Mutual Obligation prepared by the Australian Parliamentary Library, the 1988 Report by Cass does not appear in the timeline of mutual obligation and work for the dole policy (Yeend 2004).

autonomy and 'self-esteem' of unemployed individuals as legitimate concerns of government (Cruikshank 1994; 1993:327-346).[63]

The 1988 Report 'Income Support for the Unemployed in Australia: Towards a More Active System', is a clear example of the way that welfare dependency discourse was not merely imposed by neo-liberal ideology but affirmed in a variety of ideologically-diverse critiques of post-war welfare. From this example, and others given above, it is apparent that the perception of post-war welfare as undermining autonomy and creating dependency has a longer and more complex history than is commonly acknowledged. Consequently I contend that arguments which read contemporary changes to welfare as resulting exclusively from the imposition of neo-liberal ideology dominant amongst governments of western liberal states in the 1980s and the 1990s present a limited analysis of these historical changes in the rationality of welfare. As I now look to demonstrate, this limitation in ideological arguments helps to explain why it is that, when in the 1990s reform to welfare implemented under the authority of progressive governments in the US and UK continued in the direction of their neo-liberal predecessors, commentators began to claim that these apparently progressive governments had been co-opted by neo-liberal ideology (for example Hamilton 2001:99; O'Connor 2002:406-411).

From welfare dependency to mutual obligation: welfare reform in the 1990s

If the 1980s is the period in which the post-war welfare rationality was subject to 'refinement' by welfare-state reformers, in the 1990s the welfare state was thoroughly transformed. Authors who advance an 'ideological' argument in accounting for the individualised understanding of poverty that is today pervasive, often reference this period in the history of welfare reform as paramount to their claim. The 'ideological' argument is that the reforms to welfare by Third Way governments are evidence of the power of neo-liberal ideology in setting the welfare agenda (for example Hamilton 2006:13-16; McEachern 2001:67-74; Jessop 2003:1-5). In these 'ideological' accounts, Third Way governments are seen as sometimes ceding to the earlier success of neo-liberal welfare reform in their efforts to court a conservative electorate (for example O'Connor 2002:406-411; Hamilton 2001:93-100). In exploring welfare reform as it was realised by Third Way governments in the 1990s below it is argued that, while in certain measure these reforms were a concession to a neo-liberal ideological agenda, arguments which reduce Third Way welfare reform to neo-liberalism fail to take into account the extent to which post-war welfare was *genuinely* seen to be problematic by progressives as well as by neo-liberals.

[63] It should be noted however that the 1988 Report produced under the Labor Government nonetheless presented a much more moderate option to what was later advocated by the Liberal Party who won government in the 1990s. While ideology alone cannot account for the confluence and continuities in these approaches, this does not suggest that it bears no relevance in the explicit adoption of given policies.

In certain measure the New Labour/Third Way approaches to welfare policy *can* be seen to have served as a response to the earlier electoral politics set in place by the ascendancy of neo-liberalism as a political ideology and economic doctrine in the 1980s. As described above, questions regarding the costs, both financial and social/moral, of the welfare state had already been politicised by earlier governments. These were questions that New Labour/Third Way parties in the US and the UK explicitly engaged in their election campaigns in the 1990s.[64] Presidential candidate Bill Clinton, for example, made the pledge to 'end welfare as we know it' (cited in O'Connor 2002:407) a pivotal conceit of his 1992 campaign for the White House, indicating that welfare was already established as an electoral issue. Clinton effectively realised his claim in 1996 when, as President, he signed the Republican-authored 'Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act' (PRWORA). This highly controversial legislation is notorious for its devolution of welfare from a federal responsibility to assistance administered at the state level, and for its introduction of time restrictions capping social security entitlements to 'dependent families' so that they may not exceed a consecutive claim period of two years and a life-time total of five years of entitlement.[65] The PRWORA legislation is emblematic in the US of what is often termed the 'rolling back' of the welfare state (O'Connor 2000:547-548). In its very phrasing, the '*Personal Responsibility* and Work Opportunity Act' (my emphasis), highlights these welfare reforms as hinging on a highly individualised conception of poverty.

As acknowledged above, this period of welfare reform is generally considered representative of the way that the neo-liberal ideological attacks against welfare in the 1980s increasingly became absorbed in the 1990s into the policies of what were, ostensibly, left-leaning governments (for example Hamilton 2001:96-99; O'Connor 2002:406-411). In considering the PRWORA legislation and the role of Democrat and Republican parties in bringing about these dramatic reforms, it is important to note, as Brendon O'Connor (2002) has, that the original Bill tabled by Clinton was altered significantly in Congress before being passed as the PRWORA Act. Most significantly, the original Bill, heavily influenced by arguments first set out by social scientist David Ellwood (1989), who was recruited to the Clinton administration for a time, stipulated that once the nominated period of welfare entitlement had been exhausted, government was required to place unemployed individuals in state employment (O'Connor 2001:287-288; O'Connor 2002:404-406). In its original incarnation, Clinton's promise 'to end welfare as we knew it' was, amongst other things, a promise to limit the time any individual might be required to remain on welfare by making the state responsible for guaranteeing

[64] In Australia at this time Mark Latham (for example 1998:309-338; 2001) of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) was the most prominent political leader actively promoting the Third Way agenda. Latham was a Member of Parliament from 1994 to 2005 and served as opposition leader for the ALP from 2003 to 2005.

[65] These restrictions were to be implemented at the discretion of the states, a condition which allowed some room for leniency in the implementation of the time restrictions. However, as Stoesz (1997:76-77) discusses, the financing of the reforms acted as a strong incentive for state authorities to be more strict than lenient in applying the time restrictions and limiting entitlement.

employment and not, as the legislation that was ultimately passed by Congress, simply a means to limit the term of entitlement for single parents. In other words, the original Bill emerged out of a 'resistance' discourse on welfare dependency and found itself an unlikely ally in Republican proponents of the welfare dependency discourse.

Writing on these issues in her book *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy and the Poor in Twentieth-Century US History*, Alice O'Connor (2001:3-5) argues that there is an affinity between the (largely individualised) approach to the subject of poverty that twentieth-century US poverty researchers have taken and the 1990s welfare reforms. In this way O'Connor (2001:3-4, 284-285) argues that rather than being hijacked by conservatives, the arguments of social scientists *contributed* to the final shape of the PRWORA. One way of framing this turn of events is to say that both Republican reformers and progressive social scientists had made an investment in the idea of welfare dependency as a problem in need of governmental intervention. Progressives were then shocked to find that the final 'solution' settled upon was not their own. O'Connor's (2001:3-5) observation about the individualistic premises of contemporary social science research and its role in precipitating the PRWORA becomes even more forceful when keeping in mind that the passing of the PRWORA into legislation was highly controversial in the US and resulted in the public resignations of several high-profile US bureaucrats in protest at the legislation being passed (O'Connor 2001:3; O'Connor 2002:402-403).

The slippage between Democrat and Republican discourse on welfare in the US is paralleled in the Australian setting with the Labor government in the 1990s packaging its welfare reform under the rubric of 'reciprocal obligation' or 'reciprocal responsibility' and the opposing conservative Liberal party packaging its approach to welfare reform under the rubric of 'mutual obligation' (Macintyre 1999:107; Johnson and Tonkiss 2002:7-9). In both cases there is a shared sense of what the problem is (the post-war welfare system and its focus on universal rights as entitlements), though there are competing conceptions of what ought to be done to address the 'problem'. Before discussing welfare reform in Australia in the 1990s, however, I first address welfare reform in the 1990s as enacted in the UK under then Prime Minister Tony Blair. Arguably there has been no better spokesperson of the Third Way/New Labour method of welfare reform than Blair and it would be remiss not to include some brief mention of his contribution. It is also the case that Blair's New Labour was influenced by earlier Australian Labor Party policy (Macintyre 1999:103:107; Johnson and Tonkiss 2002:6). While it is beyond the scope of the chapter to address the genealogy of New Labour, the origins and circuits of transnational influence of political ideas can once again be seen to be complex.

Claiming the need for a 'second-generation welfare' system, Blair (cited in Macintyre 2001:91, my emphasis) sought to articulate a distinction between the 'old' post-war approach to welfare as universal entitlement, and his 'new' approach to welfare, claiming that his proposed 'second-generation' welfare

constituted a 'hand-up not a hand-out'.[66] This phrase has become such an enduring part of welfare reform vernacular that it featured in the title of the 2004 Report of the Australian Senate Inquiry into Poverty 'A Hand-Up not a Hand-Out: Renewing the Fight Against Poverty' *(*Australian Senate 2004), to be discussed in Chapter 3.[67] Thus, during roughly the same period that Clinton signed the PROWA Act in the US, in the UK Blair (1998:4) spoke of a new generation of welfare premised around the idea of 'mutual responsibility'. In practice the mutual obligation reforms made welfare receipt contingent upon designated activity agreements known in the UK as 'welfare-to-work' programs. In Australia, as noted above, similar agreements were described as 'Work for the Dole'. Welfare-to-work/Work for the Dole programs required unemployed individuals to perform coerced labour in order to remain eligible for their welfare benefits (Macintyre 2001:83; Dwyer 2004:266).[68]

The language used in Blair's (cited in Macintyre 2001:91) reforms – 'a hand *up* rather than a hand *out*' - is not incidental; it highlights the way that the changes to welfare undertaken in the 1990s tacitly referenced issues first raised in the welfare critiques of the 1980s. Where Blair used the term 'hand up' to characterise his approach to welfare, he was implicitly referencing the arguments first raised by Thatcher and her fellow welfare reformers in the 1980s that the universal provision of welfare created moral deficits in its recipients. Positioning welfare as a 'hand-up' rescued Blair's welfare programs from being represented as causing moral deficits amongst recipients – Blair's new welfare wouldn't allow individuals to linger in dependence on the state, but would instead help them to help themselves. This rationale is presumably one of the reasons that the Australian Senate chose the phrase as part of the title of their 2004 Report wherein they recommended (amongst other measures) greater funding to ensure stronger public services. Nonetheless, in making a distinction in types of welfare, 'hand up' focusing on activity, and 'hand out' implying 'passive' dependency, Blair's rhetoric reinforces the idea that post-war welfare actually did bring about moral and social deficits.[69] Clearly, the argument from Blair is not that welfare is a universal social right, as was the case in the post-war period, but that, in contrast to the claims of

[66] Blair's terminology signals a phrase attributed to US President John Kennedy and the 'War on Poverty' encouraging citizens to support welfare and to 'give a hand, not a handout' (in Murray 1984:22).

[67] Blair himself reiterated this language in 2002 when announcing G8 budgets for international aid were in large part to be directed to African countries. In a press conference announcing the G8 determinations Blair (in Dyer 2002) asserted: 'This isn't old fashioned aid. It's a genuine partnership for the renewal of Africa. We are going to help Africa help itself.' In 2002 the issue of aid had been closely watched by commentators and the agreement achieved by the G8 countries was profoundly disappointing to many, with Oxfam terming it 'repackaged peanuts' (in Hughes, 2002; see also Dyer 2002). My purpose in highlighting this event is to demonstrate that the view of welfare espoused by Blair in the 1990s is representative of a specific approach to welfare: solving poverty by increasing responsibility.

[68] The shift towards mutual obligation and conditionality as a principle of the revised welfare contract has seen the adoption of 'welfare-to-work' style programs in Australia, the US, across Europe (Goodin 2001:190) and in Canada (Shragge 1997; Swanson 1997).

[69] For a detailed discussion of the way in which Blair's Third Way discourse on welfare reform moves through registers of political meaning see Levitas (1998).

Thatcher, a reformed welfare system still has a public use: it can support citizens to better support themselves. Blair's repositioning of welfare can thus be seen as involved in representing post-war welfare as problematic, just as equally as it can be seen in repositioning welfare as a (potential) social good.

In the period since, the position taken on welfare by Blair and other Third Way advocates has been read, as noted earlier, as a betrayal of political principles in the name of electoral expediency (for example Hamilton 2001:93-100; 2006:13-16; O'Connor 2002:406-411). Reforms to welfare carried out by Blair's Government are often cited as evidence of the pervasiveness of neo-liberal ideology and its reach in directing the agendas of western governments (for example Clarke 2004:37-38, 41-44). While it would be foolhardy to suggest that there was a complete absence of media spin and electoral savvy involved in Blair's packaging of welfare reforms, in attributing Third Way reforms simply to questions of expedience such arguments overlook the extent to which post-war welfare had been represented as a genuine problem in progressive discourse and underplays the critiques by political progressives and social researchers of welfare as enforcing 'passive dependency'. As was established above these 'resistance' discourses on the perceived problems of welfare dependency pre-date and parallel the arguments raised by Thatcher and other ideological neo-liberals in the 1980s. To suggest that reforms made to welfare by Third Way governments in the 1990s are nothing other than a capitulation to the dominance of neo-liberal ideology is thus to overstate the influence of neo-liberal ideology on progressives and to understate the extent to which progressives had likewise represented post-war welfare as problematic. The example given above of Clinton and the push, originally led by Democrats and social researchers, to address post-war welfare as facilitating a problem of long-term 'dependency' further strengthens this point.

In arguing that Third-Way reforms to welfare are both similar to and distinct from reforms initiated in the 1980s by ideologically neo-liberal governments I am not arguing against the idea that a broad level governmental shift was occurring at this time. I am simply arguing against the idea that this shift can be attributed solely to the rise of neo-liberal ideology. As established above, I contend that these developments are not the result of shared ideology, or electoral expediency, but due instead to a shared sense that post-war welfare was problematic, primarily because it brought about 'welfare dependency', and that both the welfare state and welfare recipients therefore needed to be made subject to 'better' forms of government. In other words, my argument is that, in these reformulations of welfare policy, an underlying transformation in governmentality can be indentified and that it is at the level of *governmentality* that neo-liberalism is most usefully conceptualised. In concluding the discussion, I now reflect upon the implications of these 1990s welfare reforms for welfare politics and welfare recipients today.

Mutual obligation: reflecting on the state of welfare today

The break between the post-war period and the contemporary period brings about, what I contend to be, certain problematic effects. As the welfare dependency discourse reveals, in the contemporary period, arguments are focused on governing *welfare dependency* not poverty. In this way the *politics* of poverty and inequality associated with the post-war period are rendered obsolete. What is more, the centrality afforded 'mutual obligation' as the supposed key to successful welfare reform in the 1990s brought with it the implication that those in receipt of welfare, in accepting the 'hand-up' they were offered, became obliged to pull themselves 'up' and not linger in their 'dependency' upon the state. Writing on these shifts in the positioning of welfare in the UK, Rose (2000:1407) argues:

> These welfare-to-work programs presume that existing benefit and welfare systems demoralize their recipients; rob them of their pride, self-esteem, and self-reliance; mire them in financial and psychological dependency; and exacerbate their exclusion. Hence, the technologies of welfare-to-work deploy a mixture of remoralizing therapies, pedagogies for inculcating citizenship competencies, and punitive measures.

In so far as they do, they foreclose discussion of welfare as a means through which to address inequality, instead promoting the idea of welfare recipients as 'demoralised' and lacking autonomy.

In the context of Australian welfare reform this move to a focus on welfare dependency is all too apparent in the period following the election of the Howard Liberal/Coalition Government in 1996. In 1999 the incumbent Liberal/Coalition Government established a Welfare Reform Group, commissioned by then Senator and Minister for Family and Community Affairs, Jocelyn Newman (Henman and Perry 2002). The terms of reference of the Group were expressly cast as 'preventing and reducing welfare dependency' (Welfare Reform Reference Group 2000:62; Dawkins 2001:86). In 2000 the Reference Group on Welfare Reform, headed by Patrick McClure, delivered its final Report. Entitled 'Participation Support for a More Equitable Society' (Welfare Reform Reference Group 2000) its recommendations for welfare reform were premised around five features. It recommended as the principles of a new welfare system: 'Individualised service delivery, Simple and responsive income support structure, Incentives and financial assistance, Mutual obligations, and Social partnerships: Building community capacity' (Welfare Reform Reference Group 2000). Perhaps unsurprisingly given the Group's terms of reference, a general criticism of the Report at the time of its release was that it focused too narrowly on modifying the behaviour of the unemployed and 'welfare-dependent', and failed to take into account the role of the economy and the state in creating and mitigating unemployment (Saunders 2001:101; McClelland 2002:220).

Though it is beyond the scope of the chapter to provide a detailed analysis of the Report, upon any single reading it is apparent that 'building individual and community capacity' (Welfare Reform Reference Group 2000) is considered to be

a vital strategy in achieving the goals set out in its terms of reference. Of the fifty pages of the main body of the Report, reference to the 'capacity' of individuals or communities is made approximately seventy-six times. This notion of solving 'welfare dependency' by increasing individual and community 'capacity' is further evident in claims made by the Welfare Reform Group such as the following:

> Participation in paid employment is a major source of self-esteem. Without it people can fail to develop, or become disengaged from, employment, family and community networks. This can lead to physical and psychological ill health and reduce life opportunities for parents and their children. (Welfare Reform Reference Group 2000:3)

Clearly the focus here is not on the *financial* benefits that employment brings – the economic deprivation associated with poverty – but rather on the perceived *psycho-social* benefits of employment, supporting the argument that it is not poverty as a social or economic relation that is identified as needing redress but *welfare dependency*. In a manner reminiscent of UK welfare policy as described by Rose (2000:1407) above, a causal link is implied in the Report between the labour contract and individual psychology which marks those who are 'long term jobless' and thus 'dependent' on welfare as being at risk of psychological harm (Welfare Reform Reference Group 2000:3). In turn the presumption of a link between unemployment and the associated, allegedly negative, consequences of 'passive dependency' is relied upon as a foundational premise for the Report's recommendation of expanding the practice of 'mutual obligation'. In many regards the Report is shaped by presuppositions which underwrite neo-liberalism as a governmentality. Most notable is its focus on building the 'capacities' of individuals and of communities, as this suggests a shift in focus from dependence on the (social) state, to dependence upon, and strengthening of, communities, including the family unit (Edwards 2003:106-107). Further demonstrating this neo-liberal approach is the consistent inference in the Report that where implemented as universal entitlement, welfare erodes the autonomy and work ethic of welfare recipients. This is particularly clear in the recommendation of increased deployment of mutual obligation activities.

To complete the picture of welfare reform in Australia, in 1998, as a consequence of the Report's recommendation, mutual obligation was extended to all job seekers. So too at this time Centrelink replaced Social Security, the institution through which welfare benefits had previously been paid. As commented previously, and as indicated by the name change, this development marked a significant departure in institutional framing of welfare services (Carney and Ramia 2002:277-278). As a part of the Howard Government's reforms of welfare at this time the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) was disbanded and replaced by a system of private employment-assistance service providers. The rebranding of Social Security 'Centrelink' and the move to privatise employment services constitutes a shift from a model of social welfare to a managerial model of welfare premised on business principles (Carney and Ramia 2002:277-278). Despite some minor changes introduced to lessen some of the expectations on unemployed 'jobseekers' by the incumbent Labor Government in 2009,

Centrelink, private network providers, mutual obligation and the theme of 'activity' continue to comprise the terrain of welfare policy in Australia today.

The one significant development in approaches to welfare policy in Australia since the 1990s is compulsory income management, mentioned in the thesis Introduction. Compulsory income management, as a punitive policy which has to date exclusively targeted Aboriginal communities of 'locational disadvantage', was itself shown to be predicated on ideas of welfare dependency and welfare behaviourism. Compulsory income management, which has received bi-partisan political support in Australia, can therefore be seen to be consistent, albeit more heavily punitive, with 'mutual obligation' as a rationality of welfare. Initially established as a core tenet of welfare reform in the 1980s, 'welfare dependency' thus continues to feature prominently in present day welfare debates. What is more, it remains the case that welfare dependency discourse is not merely promulgated in discourses of government but also in the discourse of activists and social scientists. In Australia this use of welfare dependency as part of a 'resistance' discourse is arguably most apparent in arguments made by Noel Pearson (for example 2002; 2009). Pearson, a noted Aboriginal activist, has consistently raised the issue of welfare dependency amongst Indigenous communities of Australia as a problem in desperate need of redress. In this, Pearson is sometimes dismissed by progressives who disagree with his stance on welfare, as simply surrendering to a neo-liberal agenda (for example Hinkson 2008:7-9; Thompson and Hil 2009:51). While I very much disagree with Pearson's view of welfare as a negative influence on the autonomy of Aboriginal (or non-Aboriginal) communities, given the discussion above I regard it as inadequate to dismiss Pearson and commentators who share his view as having simply been co-opted by the ideology of neo-liberalism. Indeed, the purpose of the chapter has been to show that the narrow 'ideological' account of transformations in welfare policy underestimates and overlooks the way that, at stake in the arguments on welfare dependency, is a far more significant shift in the way that the practice of government, in the post-war period, has come to be rationalised.

Conclusion

Exploring the changes to the welfare state in this chapter I hope to have demonstrated that contemporary understandings of poverty, as exemplified in welfare policy, are individualised and behavioural. In doing so I also hope to have established that conceptions of poverty do matter to the way the government of welfare is rationalised and that once poverty is represented in an individualised way as the problem of 'welfare dependency' notions of poverty as a social relation and of welfare as a universal right are effectively displaced. Further to these points the aim of the chapter has been to provide an analysis of transformations in welfare policy and its underlying governmental rationality. In particular I have sought to furnish an analysis which locates these developments in a broad and far reaching governmental shift. In this way the argument developed in the chapter is that contemporary understandings of welfare and of poverty are not simply the

product of an imposed ideological agenda, but constitutive of a wider shift in the way western states come to understand, and subsequently govern, themselves. As this transformation has occurred, so too has responsibility for poverty (and much else besides) shifted from the state to the community and to the individual, in a manner which make 'equality', 'entitlement' and 'social rights', once cornerstone concepts in the formulation of the post-war welfare contract, today appear obsolete. It is in this political context that, as I now turn to discuss, claims by poverty researchers that poverty continues to be an enduring feature of Australian society are rendered by their critics *in*credible.

Chapter 3

A decade of debate: Poverty analysis in the wake of welfare reform

> Political practice does not have a thumaturgic creative role: it does not bring forth sciences out of nothing; it transforms the conditions of existence and systems of functioning of discourse. These changes are neither arbitrary nor 'free': they operate in a domain which has its own configuration and consequently does not offer unlimited possibilities of modification.
>
> Michel Foucault (1991b) 'Politics and the study of discourse', p.68

In Chapter 2 I addressed the 'ideological' argument, highlighting its limitations in accounting for the individualised view of poverty that is today pervasive. In this chapter the focus of analysis is the 'empirical' argument. By 'empirical argument' I refer to accounts which explicitly (or implicitly) treat the individualised understanding of poverty dominant in public discussion today as a reflection of post-war social and demographic transformations. Put simply, the 'empirical' argument is that poverty is, and/or ought to be, treated in individualised terms because today in western liberal states such as Australia poverty *is* individualised and residual rather than a common social problem.

In challenging the empirical argument I am not suggesting that changes in the social structures of western states have *not* occurred. Not only are such changes accepted, but in fact such changes were made the subject of the previous chapter where the shift from a post-war welfare rationality of universal right to a contemporary focus on 'mutual obligation' and personal responsibility was examined. The challenge to the empirical argument is mounted by questioning the assumed relationship between these changes and understandings of poverty. Analysis proceeds by identifying one emblematic example of the empirical argument – that made by Peter Saunders of the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS).[70] From an analysis of Saunders' thesis on poverty and welfare reform I work to 'unpack' the empirical argument, aiming to establish that it is not simply a *descriptive* account of changes to the structures of western societies, but an *interpretative* assessment of the causes of poverty and a partisan approach to welfare reform. Establishing the 'empirical' argument as interpretative and not simply descriptive establishes the limits of the empirical argument, the contention being that the 'empirical' argument does not simply 'deduce' the nature of poverty from the *fact* of transformed social structures, but that it relies upon and installs a particular *interpretation* of both transformed social structures and poverty.

The premise that Saunders' (CIS) argument is exemplar of the empirical argument is further substantiated in later chapters. Chapters 4 and 5 identify and examine the way in which the empirical argument on poverty as it appears in Saunders' writing exists in an intertextual relationship with writing by Clive Hamilton (for example Hamilton 2006:20-31; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:119). Hamilton, who is also a prominent figure in Australian intellectual life, is on most other points ideologically opposed to Saunders. The ideological dissonance between Hamilton and Saunders contributes to the significance of the intertextuality apparent in these authors' views on poverty and inequality. In Chapters 4 and 5 this intertextuality therefore comes to be treated as central to the overarching thesis that the present understanding of poverty as individualised is of greater significance than either the empirical argument or the ideological argument acknowledge.

[70] To reiterate: the two main antagonists in the poverty wars happen to share the name Peter Saunders. For readers' ease, throughout the chapter I endeavour to make clear the distinction between the two, identifying them, where appropriate, with their respective organisations – the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS) and the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC).

In examining the 'empirical' argument in this chapter two key arguments are put forward. Firstly, Saunders' (CIS) arguments on poverty are offered as exemplar of the 'empirical' argument. The aim on this point, as described above, is to demonstrate that while appearing to be simply a descriptive account of poverty, the claim present in Saunders' writing that the nature of poverty (and consequently welfare) has changed as a result of transformed social conditions, actually involves an interpretative account of poverty and a partisan approach to welfare reform. In this way the limits of the 'empirical' argument in accounting for the individualised conception of poverty dominant today are established. The second key argument advanced in the chapter is that the poverty wars and the impact they appear to have had on contemporary understandings of poverty are produced as a result of a wider governmental transformation in understanding poverty. It is argued that, in order to comprehend their efficacy, the poverty wars need to be considered in the context of the welfare reforms summarised in the previous chapter. In developing this second key point I am not only addressing the empirical argument as it appears in the work of Saunders (CIS), but offering an alternative reading of the poverty wars. To paraphrase Foucault (1991:68) in the above citation, I consider the reforms to welfare described in the previous chapter as constituting the 'political practices' which have transformed the functioning of poverty discourse. The poverty wars are therefore seen to result from this transformation in welfare policy/political practice. In putting forward this aspect of the argument I highlight the way the particular view of poverty evident in Saunders' writing reiterates the neo-liberal critique of welfare described in Chapter 2. Thus, the second key argument of the chapter is that the poverty wars and welfare reform are not separate phenomena but are linked together as constitutive of a shift from a governmental motif of poverty to a motif of affluence. Indeed the two developments 'set the scene' for the emergence of affluence as a governmental motif.

The 'poverty wars': an overview

As noted above, in analysing Saunders' (CIS) thesis on poverty in this chapter I explicitly address his claims in the context of the 'poverty wars' (Saunders 2005:1-11). I begin the chapter therefore, with an overview of the poverty wars in order to later explore their implications in greater depth. The poverty wars are debates initiated in 2001 and fought over the ways poverty is and ought to be conceptualised. They involve contestation over the way poverty is defined and measured by researchers, the extent of its prevalence, and the appropriate role of elected governments in its alleviation. On one side of the poverty wars is the Centre for Independent Studies (CIS), a policy think-tank influenced by liberal and libertarian political theory that has offices in Australia and New Zealand (CIS 2001). CIS authors argue that poverty rates – calculated at their own 'guesstimate' to be around 5-7% (Hughes 2001:16; Tsumori *et al* 2002:11; Saunders 2002:7) – are so low as to establish that poverty is politically insignificant in contemporary Australian society. The CIS pursue this view on poverty as a charge against what they regard to be faulty definitions and inflated figures wantonly utilised by

mainstream poverty researchers, whom the CIS derisively term 'the poverty lobby' (Tsumori *et al* 2002:11) or the 'welfare lobby' (Saunders 2002:1; 2004:1). On the other side of the 'poverty wars', therefore, are mainstream poverty researchers who argue that poverty continues to be a feature of Australian society.

Mainstream poverty researchers point to trends such as the growth in casualisation – facilitated by (ideological and governmental) neo-liberal reforms implemented in the 1990s – and to rising levels of inequality as underlying causes in their claim that poverty continues to be a relevant factor in contemporary Australian society (for example Saunders 2006:8-14; Serr 2006:1-7; McCallum 2005. For discussion see Porter and Trezise 2006). The argument associated with the mainstream poverty research community is that poverty is not simply caused by factors which individuals are able to affect. While sometimes treated as in part behavioural, poverty in these arguments is never seen as *completely* the fault of the individual. Instead, structural causes of poverty, such as economic trends and policies including those cited above, are considered to contribute to the existence of poverty. Consequently a view sometimes put forward in these arguments (and frequently associated with them) is that the Australian Government needs to take a more active role in alleviating poverty and disadvantage (for example Henderson 1975:6; Saunders 2005:10; Perkins and Angley 2003:iii-iv; St Vincent de Paul Society 2003:21-22). This is a view that CIS researchers very much oppose, arguing in contrast that the alleviation of poverty requires less rather than more government in the guise of labour policy deregulation and tax cuts (for example Saunders 2003:29-44; 2005; 2005b; Hughes 2001:17). Members of government and of the media have at various points also joined the poverty wars, supporting or protesting arguments put forward by representatives from one of the two perspectives (for example Duffy 2004a; Duffy 2004b; Price 2004; McCalman 2002; Sheehan 2002; *The Age* Editorial 2004; Vanstone 2001; Knowles and Humphries 2004; Australian Commonwealth Government 2005:1-2).

While my own position on how poverty 'ought' to be understood is more closely aligned with the poverty research community than it is with CIS arguments on poverty, my aim in this chapter is not to 'resolve' the poverty debate. Instead, taking a post-structuralist approach, my interest is to situate these debates about how poverty is presently understood within a wider historical and political context in order to better understand and evaluate their effects. Situating these debates in the context of welfare policy, (addressed in the previous chapter) I treat the shift in understanding poverty in which the poverty wars are implicated as resulting not from a causal relation between the authors of the debates and the ensuing public understanding of poverty, but in terms of a larger shift in the presuppositions of government – from a motif of poverty to a motif of affluence. In examining the poverty wars in this chapter I aim, therefore, to avoid reducing these debates to a simplistic conception of poverty researchers as the upholders of right and truth beleaguered by CIS critiques. However, unlike the case in Chapter 2, where the focus was on examining the underlying governmental rationales of welfare policy proposals (though these can be identified in the poverty wars and are mentioned below) this chapter is focused instead on n exploring and evaluating the poverty

wars. The purpose is to highlight the way that these debates, while seemingly concerned with 'empirical' and technical aspects of the *measurement* of poverty are in fact debates about the *definition* of poverty. The purpose is to demonstrate that it is not simply the case that the old problems of poverty have been 'solved', as CIS writers – representative of the 'empirical' argument – contend, but rather that, in arguments such as theirs, poverty is defined out of existence. Once this point is established, a more reflective critical analysis of the particular interpretation of poverty implicit in CIS arguments is undertaken.

The 'empirical' argument in the context of poverty research in Australia

Due in significant measure to the pioneering work of Ronald Henderson, mentioned in Chapter 2, in Australia research into poverty is carried out largely by technical analysts and specialist researchers employed by independent and university-based research centres. The provision of welfare payments, on the other hand, is administered by the Federal Government. Welfare services which fall outside of the provision of welfare payments are generally provided by third-sector agencies. The term 'third sector' refers to not-for-profit agencies whose organisational structure is premised on neither business nor government principles.[71] Though not all third sector organisations operate as community or welfare organisations, all community and welfare organisations operate as not-for-profit agencies, and thus are a part of the third sector. As a consequence of this division of labour between research into poverty and its 'relief', third sector organisations, as well as researchers, often perform an advocacy role in public discussion of poverty in Australia. That third sector organisations perform this role has pertinence in understanding CIS critiques of the 'welfare lobby' expounded below.

[71]As a result of legislative reforms directly affecting the third sector in Australia in the late 1990s, the on-going relevance of the distinction between the third sector and the private sector became a point of contention (Cox 2006; 2006b; Judd 2001). The Howard Government strongly encouraged partnerships between the third sector and the private sector as an alternative and preferred means for securing funding. It also introduced new systems of government funding attached to specific programs and projects rather than providing organisation and agency-wide grants. Both of these developments were regarded by some commentators as compromising the independence of third sector organisations as they were seen to have implications for the underlying organisational principles of the third sector (Cox 2006; 2006b; Judd 2001; see also Bagnall 2000). The Howard Government created controversy during its time in power not only by altering the conditions of funding for third-sector organisations, but also in its attempts to redefine charities. The proposal put forward at the time was that, for the purpose of tax law, not-for-profit organisations that 'engage in advocacy other than ancillary or incidental' to their main activities were no longer to be regarded as charities (Maddison *et al* 2004:vii). Such a move would have had a significant and detrimental impact on the third sector and its ability to represent its constituents (service users). Thus, the proposal alone was seen as a move by government to 'silence dissent' from the sector (Maddison *et al* 2004). Since its election in 2007 the incumbent Rudd Labor Government has revisited the issue of the relationship between government and the third sector and in August 2009 issued a call for submissions to review this relationship and to draft a new 'National Compact'.

Subsequent to welfare reforms initiated in the 1990s, addressed in the previous chapter as indicative of neo-liberal governmentality, third-sector organisations provide an ever greater number of the welfare services once administered by government. Welfare services provided by community and welfare agencies are therefore quite broad and respond to such diverse requirements as employment placement assistance, legal advice and advocacy, personal counselling services, as well as direct and immediate assistance such as the provision of food parcels to those eligible and in need. As these services operate largely on limited (government and private sector) funding sources, services provided by the third sector are generally targeted to specific groups and maintain strict eligibility criteria. Some third sector organisations, such as The Smith Family and The Brotherhood of St Laurence, two prominent and long established Australian welfare organisations, have increasingly moved towards developing their own research branches. As made explicit on their website the Brotherhood of St Laurence regard research as a central component of their mission to alleviate poverty:

> To achieve our vision of an Australia free of poverty, we believe that the delivery of services to disadvantaged Australians is only a part of the solution. The Brotherhood is also engaged in research and advocacy activities which seek to understand and counter the sources of poverty and disadvantage.[72]

In terms of political representation, the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) functions as the peak advocacy body for community and welfare organisations. Though working to champion the interests and needs of the sector, ACOSS regards its proper constituents to be the users of the services provided by the sector, describing itself on its website as 'the national voice for the needs of people affected by poverty and inequality'.[73]

To summarise, congruent with Henderson's efforts in the early 1970s to generate reliable quantitative data tracking poverty in Australia, Australian poverty research continues to be dominated by economists and statistical analysis (Bessant *et al* 2006:153-154). This quantitative research is regarded as crucial in directing public discussion and in informing programs funded by the government and administered by the third-sector to alleviate poverty and hardship. The full implications of this reliance on statistical research will become apparent where the poverty wars are analysed below. Firstly however it is important to make clear that it is not poverty researchers or third-sector agencies that advocate the argument that, consequent to post-war social transformations, poverty is no longer a significant issue in western liberal states. Rather, as noted above, in Australia poverty researchers and third-sector organisations claim that, in part due to on-going inequities and economic policies such as labour casualisation,

[72]From the Brotherhood of St Laurence website, date and author not provided, (<http://www.bsl.org.au/main.asp?PageId=32andiMainMenuPageId=32>).

[73] From the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) website, date and author not provided, (<http://www.bsl.org.au/main.asp?PageId=32andiMainMenuPageId=32>).

poverty – understood as a condition of deprivation relative to a given society – continues to be a troubling feature of privileged societies such as Australia (for example Saunders 2006:8-14; Serr 2006:1-7; McCallum 2005; see also Porter and Trezise 2006). It is the case, therefore, that in the Australian context the 'empirical' argument on the individualised conception of poverty is largely promulgated by researchers *critical* of mainstream poverty research. Saunders (CIS) presents one clear example of this tendency. Saunders and his colleagues at the CIS have since 2001 been engaged in a sometimes hostile, often controversial debate with mainstream poverty researchers. This debate has been tagged by one commentator as constituting 'poverty wars' (Saunders 2005:1-11). I investigate Saunders' (CIS) views on poverty and welfare below.

In 2003 Saunders (CIS) published 'A self-reliant Australia: Welfare Policy for the 21st Century', in which he advocates significant and substantial reform of the existing welfare system. In his paper on welfare reform Saunders (2003:5-6) postulates 'three modes of consumption': a 'market mode of consumption', which he characterises as prevalent throughout the nineteenth century and where the dominant reasoning was that those who could afford commodities were alone able to enjoy them; a second, 'socialised mode of consumption', which Saunders regards as characteristic of the twentieth century that, he contends, has been defined by state provision of citizens' basic consumption needs; and third a 'private mode of consumption' which, Saunders conjectures, would comprise a limited enabling state where the majority of citizens 'preferred' to transact in the private sector. Saunders (2003:5-6) asserts that the 'private mode of consumption' is the appropriate model for securing citizen welfare in the twenty-first century. In his characterisation of the three modes of consumption Saunders (2003:5-6) insists that the twentieth-century model of welfare was only ever intended as a 'transitional' period from the market mode of consumption to a private mode of consumption.

Saunders' thesis on welfare reform is largely consistent with critiques of post-war welfare delineated in Chapter 2. What is unique in Saunders' critique of welfare is that it is framed in 'empirical' terms. This framing marks Saunders' argument as unique because it sidesteps the moral arguments shown in Chapter 2 as having being dominant in the early twentieth century and reiterated in the welfare dependency discourse prevalent since the 1980s. Colleagues of Saunders at the CIS have at times framed their arguments against post-war welfare in explicitly moral terms. Lucy Sullivan (2000) in her CIS monograph 'Behavioural Poverty' is the most unapologetic advocate of the moral argument on the perceived ills of welfare.[74] In her extended essay against the welfare state Sullivan (2000:14) argues that welfare erodes the character of welfare recipients. In making her case Sullivan (2000:13) claims that the availability of 'obligation-free welfare' for the poor not only diminishes the moral character of recipients, but also erodes the moral character of the middle class. Citing Bell (in Sullivan 2000:13) she asserts that: 'The pathology of the welfare state has extended to the middle classes'.

[74] However she is not the only CIS author to argue that 'behavioural poverty' exists amongst the poor: see, for example, Hughes (2001:14, 15).

Sullivan's (2000:13-14) argument on this point is that the availability of welfare leaves people preoccupied with what they can obtain for free, distracting them from the importance of having worked for the rewards they enjoy. In advancing her view on the immorality of 'obligation-free welfare', Sullivan (2001:13) specifically concentrates her critique upon perceived negative impacts arising from the availability of welfare for single mothers (2000:1-4). Sullivan advances the view that welfare, in mitigating women's dependency upon the fathers of their children, undermines the role of men and of the (nuclear) family in society. Thus Sullivan (2000:43) contends that: 'The state, in taking over the power which resides in money, is also taking moral authority from the family'.

In mounting his 2003 critique of welfare, Saunders, in contrast, eschews this style of moral argument. What is more, Saunders (2003:13) explicitly positions his analysis of contemporary welfare as distinct from extreme anti-welfare views, dismissing these arguments as politically unrealistic:

> Radical libertarians argue that we do not [need a public welfare system]. They suggest that needy and deserving cases will be supported informally (for example, by family and neighbourhood mutual aid, coupled with charitable support and philanthropy), while the lazy and feckless can make their own decision whether to work or starve. As already noted, however, it is unrealistic to believe that any democratically elected government would stand aside and let people go without basic means of subsistence, even if they brought their fate upon themselves. Like it or not, there will be no return to the 19th century market mode of consumption.

As evident in this citation, Saunders concedes that at least some minimal public welfare will continue to be a component of contemporary liberal democracies such as Australia. However, this concession does not lead Saunders to accept welfare in the terms in which it presently exists: it simply leads him to situate his critique in historical/empirical terms rather than in a moral/ideological register. Though this alternative framing does not necessarily make his approach to welfare reform less punitive, it is significant. As outlined above, Saunders represents the current welfare system as predicated on the idea that the mass of citizens are unable to meet their needs in the private market and that the state must therefore intervene in order to assist them in having their basic needs met.[75] From this premise Saunders (2003:48) argues that the welfare state is today anachronistic because the condition it is designed to respond to – mass poverty – no longer exists:

> The welfare state as it currently exists in Australia is an anachronism, designed to meet the needs of an age that has past, [sic] and increasingly doing more harm than good. To extricate ourselves from this institutional legacy, the first step must be to reverse the 40 year trend of growing

[75] From the analysis provided of the policy origins of the twentieth-century welfare state in Chapter 2, Saunders' assertion could be contested. However, in addressing his argument my interest is not to assess whether or not his claims are 'accurate', but rather to explore the underlying rationale upon which they are premised.

> expenditure and escalating dependency. After that, we can start developing innovative policies to restore self-reliance.

In Chapter 2 reference was made to arguments which claimed welfare needed to be curbed as a consequence of slowing economies and other financial concerns. In one sense, therefore, 'empirical' arguments on welfare have already been mentioned. Saunders' view, however, is distinct from these claims about the *costs* of welfare provision. His argument is not that the state can no longer afford to provide welfare services, but rather that welfare is no longer necessary because today individuals can afford to purchase such services in the private market. Positioning his critique of welfare in historical/empirical terms in this way, Saunders' view not only differs from his CIS colleague Sullivan, it constitutes a departure from all of the critiques of welfare that have so far been analysed in this thesis. As I now elaborate, in his argument on the need and the grounds for reforming welfare, Saunders' thesis is emblematic of the 'empirical argument' on the individualised conception of poverty.

Saunders' argument patently characterises twentieth-century welfare as predicated on the idea that the mass of individuals were deprived and unable to support themselves. In the contemporary context, Saunders continues, social conditions have been so transformed that the majority of individuals no longer experience this need. In asserting that mass poverty is no longer a common issue Saunders implicitly promotes the idea that alleviation of 'residual' poverty requires precise interventions directed at 'targeted' groups rather than at affecting relations across society (as is the case in 'social' models for understanding poverty). Surveying contemporary systems of welfare in the context of these apparent changes in the structures and conditions of Australian society Saunders (2003:45) concludes his paper with the assessment that:

> We have seen that the 'mass' problem of meeting people's basic consumption needs, which brought the welfare state into existence at the start of the 20th century, has now dwindled to become a minority targetable problem. … Poverty surveys exaggerate the size of the problem of necessary [welfare] dependency by including people going through transitional periods of low income with those experiencing chronic hardship. Sustained poverty is today almost always entirely caused by lack of full-time employment, and the solution to it lies not in expanding welfare, but in getting more people who currently rely on welfare into the labour force. This means we have to ensure there are jobs for them to do – particularly lower-skilled, lower-paid jobs. The supply of lower-skilled jobs can only be expanded by further labour market reform (in particular, changing the award system and reforming the unfair dismissal laws).[76]

[76] To clarify the issue of labour market reform, throughout the decade of the 2000s, CIS authors such as Saunders (2003:31-37) and Hughes (2001:17) argued that reforms to the award system – the system which establishes uniform standards for employment conditions, including industry wages and unfair dismissal laws, overseen (at the time) by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission – needed significant reform. Hughes (2001:17) argued that unfair dismissal laws discouraged small business from hiring employees. Saunders (2003:36), who shared this position on unfair dismissal

In contrast to the moral arguments against welfare, such as the example from Sullivan above, Saunders' claim in this citation seems a moderate assessment of changes in society and an earnest call to take these changes into account in future government policy. In reviewing critically the poverty wars below I aim to show that these earnest calls, however well reasoned or intentioned, are predicated on a punitive understanding of poverty and a partisan approach to welfare reform. Doing so, I contend, highlights the limitation of the 'empirical' argument demonstrating that, rather than being 'neutral' and 'descriptive', it turns on specific understandings of poverty and welfare. Furthermore, in order to understand the full implications of the poverty wars it is fundamental to recognise that this call from Saunders (2003:45) for solving 'residual' poverty through labour reform to create 'lower-skilled' jobs, is in fact a call for precisely those policy measures that poverty researchers see as involved in exacerbating poverty and 'welfare dependency'. Where authors such as Saunders argue that casualisation leads to more jobs and less poverty, poverty researchers and third sector agencies claim that casualisation leads to less *secure* jobs and thus a *rise* in the number of individuals made *dependent* upon public welfare to supplement their income (for example Brotherhood of St Laurence 2005; St Vincent de Paul Society 2003:21-22; see also Borland *et al* 2001:3-9).

It is also the case that Saunders' (CIS) view on poverty as a residual problem, while appearing simply to be a *descriptive* assessment of the size and scope of the problem, is heavily steeped in a discourse on autonomy Hindess (2001; 2004) considers distinctive to liberal governmentality. As I now illustrate, the significance of this affinity with liberal governmentality in Saunders' argument is that it ultimately reveals an individualised understanding of poverty. In Chapter 1 I reviewed Hindess' (2001:94-101) argument that liberal conceptions of human being are implicitly constructed in terms of a developmental or evolutionary narrative where 'stages' of universal human development are seen to correspond with capacity for agency and contrasting types of rule (freedom and unfreedom). I attended to the way that, in this liberal governmental view, human agency was conceptualised as a capacity for autonomy – a capacity which not all individuals were seen to possess. In the liberal governmental mode, therefore, groups deemed as constitutionally capable of autonomy are treated as capable of self government, whereas those who are deemed constitutionally incapable of autonomy are, as Hindess (2001:100) argues, made the subjects of 'unfreedom'. In the writing of Saunders and his CIS colleagues, this implicit reasoning at the core of liberal governmentality comes to be recommended as an explicit policy directive in reforming welfare.[77]

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laws, further argued that the minimum wage was entirely too high and similarly acts as a disincentive to business. These views were largely shared by the Howard Government, whose 1995 'Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Act' pursued reforms of this variety. The legislation was highly controversial and rejected by the incumbent Labor government, though to what extent Labor Government policy constitutes repeal remains contested (Hall 2008). For discussion of the Work Choices Act see Hall (2006); Stewart (2006); Dabscheck (2008).

[77] The relationship between understandings of poverty and the role of autonomy as a predicate concept in liberal governmentality arises again in Chapter 5.

In 2008 writers from the CIS released a trilogy of papers on welfare reform entitled 'Declaring Dependence, Declaring Independence: Three Essays on the Future of the Welfare State'.[78] Saunders is listed as an author of one of the essays, though his contribution to the publication seems less an essay and more an introduction and endorsement of the arguments of his co-contributors. As the title suggests, and in keeping with Saunders' earlier thesis on the welfare state having become anachronistic, the 2008 articles were premised on the idea that it is a small minority of society who today remain dependent on the state. The vast majority of society, it is argued, could declare themselves independent of the state if only reform to government policy would be implemented so as to enable such a move (Saunders 2008:5-6; Humphries 2008:21-22, 29-30). Saunders (2008:6) asserted:

> Not everybody can look after themselves. Some people do need others to run their lives for them. But as the welfare state has expanded, so the number of autonomous people has shrunk and the number of dependent people has grown. The section of the population that needs a proactive and intrusive government has been dragging the rest of us down with it.
>
> This happens because we only have one set of rules and one set of social policies. Government applies every rule created, and every policy introduced, to everyone, whether they need it or not. Because a few people can't be trusted to run their own lives, no one is trusted, so we all end up being treated like we are incompetent. It is like being back at school, when one miscreant who misbehaved caused the whole class to be kept behind for detention. It wasn't fair then, and it isn't fair now.

As a way to distinguish between these two groups in society (the dependent and the independent), and to mitigate this 'unfair' situation, authors of the 2008 publication propose that individuals should be given the opportunity to 'declare' themselves dependent upon (Dubossarsky and Samild 2008:33-43) or independent of (Humphreys 2008:20-32) the state. Contributors Eugene Dubossarsky and Stephen Samild (2008:38) put forward the case for declaring dependence and contend that it should be possible for individuals to declare their dependence on the state, but that this declaration and the benefits it brings should not be without corresponding 'costs'. The most extravagant cost that Dubossarsky and Samild (2008:34, 38) intend should apply to individuals who declare themselves dependent on the state is the denial of franchise. A declaration of dependence is, in their view, tantamount to a forfeit of the right to vote (2008:43). In championing their proposal Dubossarsky and Samild (2008:40) argue that the loss of franchise would not equate to a loss of political representation for those 'dependent' on the state:

> We do not consider non-voting dependents to have 'lost their voice' or to have been 'silenced'. Freedom of speech and decision-making are not

[78] Continuing the theme of transnational circuits of influence in welfare policy, impetus for the 2008 CIS publication is attributed to a 2007 series of essays, 'In Praise of Elitism', to which conservative US advocate of welfare reform Charles Murray was a contributor (Saunders 2008:13-14).

> equivalent; we propose no changes to the former. We do not equate voting eligibility with citizenship, but distinguish between different expressions of citizenship. The body politic as a whole would benefit from the welfare choice model, but it is a policy reality that there would be some unintended consequences and collateral damage.

Despite their protests, it is difficult to see how denying individuals the right to vote on the basis of financial 'dependence' upon the state is not an erosion of citizenship. As a policy proposal the so-called 'welfare choice' model is profoundly dismissive of the popular historical campaigns for franchise upon which the institutions of contemporary democracy – and welfare – are, at least in part, founded. Indeed Dubossarsky and Samild's (2008:34-36, 38-39) argument, despite being couched in a concern to liberate government and democracy from the self-interest of welfare beneficiaries by denying them influence in the political process, seems very much to be a punitive way of handling a section of the community – namely, the poor – whose political preferences are interpreted to be at odds with their own. This demarcation of social groups in terms of their capacity for 'independence' – more precisely *autonomy* – is exemplary of liberal governmentality as Hindess (2001; 2004) articulates it. It is perhaps little surprise that in their article Dubossarsky and Samild (2008:34, 37, 41) repeatedly cite John Stuart Mill in making their argument that it is appropriate in a liberal democracy to treat the right to vote as contingent upon a demonstrated capacity for autonomy and financial self-reliance, rather than as an inalienable right. Dubossarsky and Samild (2008) quite literally propose the 'government of freedom' for the independent and 'unfreedom' for the dependent (Hindess 2001:94-100; 2004:28-30).

In his contribution to the published papers Saunders (2008:9) commends the rationale informing Dubossarsky and Samild's argument:

> Dubossarsky and Samild's logic here is impeccable, for people who freely admit they cannot be trusted to run their own lives should presumably not be trusted to run other people's either. Dependent children have the right to be looked after, but they cannot claim the full range of freedoms that adults expect. Likewise, those who declare themselves incompetent to organise their own lives should not expect to exercise all the rights that autonomous and responsible citizens take for granted.

This assertion, that Individuals 'dependent' on welfare are so because they cannot 'run their own lives' (Saunders 2008:9) provides a stark contrast to the milder claim in Saunders 2003 paper, cited above, that a lack of low-paid jobs contributes to unemployment (Saunders 2003:45). Furthermore, it is evident that the idea of a majority of autonomous, self-reliant citizens and a minority of needy and inept citizens clearly reiterates the conception of distinct styles of government corresponding to a capacity for 'autonomy'. Indeed, as a policy proposal the purpose of 'declaring dependence' or 'declaring independence' is to efficiently distinguish who in society falls into which group. This view is exemplified by Saunders (2008:10) who, in contemplating the arguments by Dubossarsky and

Samild, goes further than they do in their paper. Saunders (2008:10) recommends that, along with political franchise, welfare 'dependents' should also forfeit their role as potential jurors:

> If you cannot organize your own affairs, ... it is probably unwise to allow you any-where near a jury room, where you will be expected to weigh evidence and determine the guilt or innocence of accused parties in a court of law. Like voting, this is a serious civic responsibility that should only be entrusted to those who achieve full, adult citizenship. It should not be given willy-nilly to people who cannot run their own lives.

The implication of this characterisation of the poor as 'dependents' is clear: individuals who are financially dependent on the state are so due to a lack of autonomy, an inability to 'run their own lives' (Saunders 2008:10). This is not a 'neutral' description of poverty in 'affluent' societies, but a paradigmatic account of 'welfare behaviorism' (Stoesz 1997:68-69). It can therefore be seen that, at its core, the seemingly descriptive 'empirical' argument on poverty and welfare reform belies a punitive conception of poverty as caused by individual ineptitude, and a partisan understanding of welfare as antithetical to the wider interests of *liberal* societies.

The Smith Family Report and the resultant poverty wars

The above analysis drew attention to the way that the 'empirical' argument, though having the appearance of a neutral description of poverty deduced from transformed social structures in post-war Australian society, is in fact a partisan interpretation of poverty and the future direction of the welfare state. I turn now to consolidate this analysis by examining the poverty wars debates in which Saunders of the CIS was a key participant.

Previously I described the way that welfare services are increasingly carried out by third-sector organisations who are often also advocates of poverty-related issues in public discussion. In the early 2000s one Australian third-sector organisation, The Smith Family, became aware of a rising demand for their services.[79] Consequently they commissioned the National Centre for Social and Economic Modeling (NATSEM) to produce a report detailing poverty trends for the decade. As described on their website:

> NATSEM is a research centre associated with the University of Canberra that undertakes research and analysis specialising in the use of microdata and microsimulation modeling to: address ongoing and emerging research agendas and client demand, and contribute to and enhance social, economic and business decision making (NATSEM 2006).

[79] The Smith Family is a secular not-for-profit organisation established in 1922 and has as its mission promoting education as a means of overcoming the effects of financial disadvantage for children. The Smith Family provide a range of services within this mission, including, for example, English language classes for refugees and recently arrived migrants, and scholarships for eligible and enrolled school-aged children (Smith Family 2008).

The Smith Family was not the only third-sector organisation to claim a rise in demand for their services. This period corresponded with widespread reports that demand for emergency assistance services and public housing exceeded existing resources[80] (for example SACOSS 2004; Victorian Auditor-General's Office 1996; Gullo 2001; Horin 2000). Presumably, The Smith Family understood its pursuit of a research project into rates of poverty during the 1990s to be a useful venture. Debate generated by the release of the 2001 Report proved highly controversial however, and continues to have negative implications for poverty research which, as I return to elaborate, has come to be held in suspicion by some sectors of the media and the public. Indeed, release of the 2001 Smith Family/NATSEM Report is seen to mark the beginning of the 'poverty wars' (Saunders 2005:1-3) in Australia.

There are three main reports over which the poverty wars have been fought: the 2001 Smith Family/NATSEM Report (Harding *et al* 2001), the 2003 Senate Inquiry into Poverty and the corresponding 2004 Senate Poverty Report (Australian Senate 2004), and a 2005 St Vincent de Paul Society paper (Wicks 2005).[81] All three reports claimed that poverty was an issue of on-going concern in Australia. Challenging this view authors from the CIS raised the following cluster of related complaints: that the use of poverty lines in the measure of poverty conflates poverty and inequality (for example Tsumori *et al* 2002:1-3; Saunders and Tsumori 2002b:15) that, furthermore, inequality – unlike poverty – is not a morally charged concept but a politically charged one and therefore should not feature in poverty debates (Saunders 2002:8-10; 2004:2-5); that the data used to generate poverty findings are unreliable as people with the lowest incomes are alleged to lie about or underestimate their incomes (Hughes 2001:14, 16; Tsumori *et al* 2002:6-10; Saunders 2004:5-7); and that the research itself fails to achieve the standards of neutral science as the values of poverty researchers inform and lead the findings of the 'poverty industry' or 'welfare lobby' (Tsumori *et al* 2002:5-6; Saunders 2002:1; 2004:1-5; 2005c:6-7). As noted above, the purpose of this chapter is not to engage these 'empirical' and technical claims about the extent of poverty in themselves but rather to demonstrate that, underlying these seemingly empirical debates, are competing interpretations, or emendations (Tanesini 1994:207), for how poverty 'ought to be' understood. Establishing this point is necessary in order to highlight the limitation of the empirical argument: that, though it appears to be neutral and simply descriptive, it is instead interpretative.

[80] For clarification, the Australian public housing system is funded and administered by state governments not by the federal government. It is the case however that some emergency assistance housing projects are administered by third-sector organisations.

[81] The St Vincent de Paul Society, or 'Vinnies' as they are colloquially known, is a Catholic charity and international society with representatives in Australia since 1854. The services offered by Vinnies include accommodation services for homeless individuals, mental health support initiatives, provision of needed material goods and administering of thrift-stores, as well as spiritual support for individuals in need. As expressed on its Australian website the Society's vision statement is: 'to be recognised as a caring Catholic charity offering "a hand up" to people in need. We do this by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope, and encouraging them to take control of their own destiny' (St Vincent de Paul Society <http://www.vinnies.org.au/about-vinnies-national?link=170>).

Released in 2001 the first of the controversial Reports, 'Financial Disadvantage in Australia 1990 to 2000: The persistence of poverty in a decade of growth' (Harding *et al* 2001), appeared to confirm anecdotal evidence from third-sector organisations that had observed increased demand for their services that poverty and inequality were worsening during the period under review (1990s). The report gave figures on poverty measured against both (half) mean income, (half) median income and the Henderson poverty line. However, in the main body of the text, authors relied primarily on the figures calculated against (half) mean income. This 'choice' of measures emerged as a leading source of controversy in critiques of the Report initiated by the CIS (for example Tsumori *et al* 2002:5-6; Saunders 2002:7-10). The CIS were critical of the use of mean income as the primary measure of poverty in the Report on the basis of two main points. They regarded it as simple expedience on behalf of poverty researchers – measured against the mean the rate of poverty was higher than when measured against the median (Tsumori *et al* 2002:5-6; Saunders 2002:7-8). Calculated at half the mean income the poverty rate in 2000 was 13.0% while calculated at half the median income it was 8.7% (Harding *et al* 2001:5). Secondly CIS authors claimed that this measure, as it reflected poverty as a fraction of national income, conflated poverty with income inequality (Tsumori *et al* 2002:1-2, 10; Saunders and Tsumori 2002b:15-21).[82] There is some relevance to the claim about poverty and inequality being conflated where poverty lines are formulated in this way. In order, therefore, to understand and assess the CIS criticism it is important to further clarify the practice of poverty research in Australia.

Since the 1970s onwards, when poverty researchers 'dramatically rediscovered' (Rees 1998:172; Bessant *et al* 2006:177) poverty in western liberal states, poverty in these states has been said to be *relative*. What is involved in this conceptualisation is the idea that a standard of living basic to a community is established in relation to which poverty is the condition of being deprived of some or all of those basic necessities.[83] It is also the case that, since the 1970s, researchers studying the prevalence of poverty in Australia have employed 'poverty lines' in their work. As described in Chapter 2 a poverty line is a projected

[82] This criticism is also relevant for poverty lines calculated at half the median income.

[83] Importantly, while this view of poverty as relative to a standard basic to a community formally came to be considered an account of 'relative poverty' in the 1970s, this view of poverty predates this period. As Sen (1983:159) has pointed out, Adam Smith, for example, writing in 1776 implies a relative account of poverty where he argues in *The Wealth of Nations* that: '"By necessaries I understand not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but what ever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even the lowest order, to be without. … Custom … has rendered leather shoes a necessary of life in England. The poorest creditable person of either sex would be ashamed to appear in public without them."' This quote by Smith demonstrates that it is not the case, as Saunders and his colleagues from the CIS implicitly suggest in their writing, that 'relative' poverty is a concept deployed to keep poverty on the political agenda of otherwise affluent and 'self-reliant' states (for example Saunders 2003:10; Tsumori *et al* 2002:2; Saunders and Tsumori 2002b:5-6). Rather, the conceptualisation of poverty as the condition of being deprived of whatever is considered to be basic and necessary to a given community represents one way of conceptualising poverty within a particular (frequently liberal) analytical framework.

figure against which income is measured in order to determine whether an individual (or more typically, a family unit) is able to achieve the basic necessities or is likely to be deprived of them. Generally speaking, poverty lines are formulated in one of two ways: in terms of a 'basket of goods and services' or as a fraction of national income (Greenwell *et al* 2001:18-20). Though drawing a poverty line as an expression of income, when Henderson championed the use of poverty lines in Australian research in the 1970s he implicitly calculated his assessment of poverty in terms of what is referred to in the literature as a 'basket' approach (Saunders 1999:51). A 'basket' approach or 'budget standard' refers to a process by which commodities taken to make up the basic necessities of life in a given society are costed: it is in relation to this costing that the poverty line is then drawn (Saunders 1999:45). In the years since Henderson's Melbourne survey it has become established practice to calculate poverty rates at a fraction of the national income: either half the median or half the mean. The standard approach in the OECD is to set poverty lines at half the median income (OECD 2008). There are complexities that arise in calculating the poverty line as a fraction of national income.[84] The primary issue of concern is that where the poverty line is calculated in this way, rates of 'poverty' can be conflated with income inequality (Travers and Richardson 2001:32).

For those who raise concern over poverty lines expressed as fractions of the national income the issue is that it is possible to imagine a hypothetical scenario where individuals fall below the half median (or half mean) income threshold, but whose relatively low incomes do not *actually* result in them experiencing deprivation (for example Travers and Richardson 2001:32; Tsumori *et al* 2002:2-5). This consideration, while valid conceptually, is often diminished when taking into account the actual figures that poverty lines drawn in this way amount to. In the 2001 Smith Family/NATSEM Report, for example, the poverty line drawn at half the average income for an individual was $225 a week, and for a family of two adults and two children it was $416 a week (Harding *et al* 2001:3).[85] These figures reflect after tax before housing incomes. Despite the theoretical difficulties that obtain from poverty lines calculated against a fraction of the national income, in practical terms it would be difficult to suggest that an individual living on $225 or less a week in Australia in 2001 did not experience deprivation at some basic level.

As a point of comparison, in the 2000-2001 period the *median* income was recorded by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to be $414 (Saunders 2005:23-24). As Peter Saunders of the SPRC writes, this means that for an individual, the poverty line drawn at half *median* income was $207 a week. For a family with two children the half median poverty line was $434.70 (Saunders 2005:23-24).[86] Again, this projected weekly income covers housing costs, food, educational expenses, transport, and all other items. At the practical level of weekly income the

[84] Here my discussion is restricted to complexities as they arise in poverty research literature so as to assess CIS claims of poverty researchers. I return later in the chapter to consider these arguments more critically from a post-structuralist perspective.
[85] See Harding *et al* (2001:3) for details on the equivalence scale applied in this calculation.
[86] For details of the equivalence scale used in this calculation see Saunders (2005:23-24).

distinction between half mean and half median poverty lines appears less significant than the denouncements made by the CIS suggest. Indeed, according to these figures, the (half) median income poverty line produces a higher poverty line for a family unit ($434.70) than the (half) mean ($416). It is apparent that the CIS critique is motivated not so much by concern that the poverty line was too generous, but by the particular way that it was conceptualised to take into account the incomes of those at the top of the distribution, a point further reflected on below.

There is a further point for consideration when reflecting on poverty lines, their role in poverty research, and their role in the poverty wars. A tacit assumption exists in some of the CIS criticism (for example Tsumori *et al* 2002:2; Saunders and Tsumori 2002b:6-7) that poverty lines would be more reflective of 'real' poverty if they were calculated in terms of a 'basket' approach. The implicit inference is that the poverty line, if calculated in terms of a basket of basic goods and services, would be more objective and drawn lower. This assumption is problematic on both counts, for several reasons. Firstly this assumption is problematic because it overlooks that determining what is included in the 'basic necessities' and what is not is a highly interpretative activity – a point that even the CIS have at times admitted (for example Tsumori *et al* 2002:11; Saunders and Tsumori 2002b:4). In the context of mainstream poverty research, a poverty line drawn against a basket approach is also problematic in terms of its adjustment.[87] When Henderson, for example, was first calculating his own austere poverty line it was not his intention that the poverty line would remain static, but rather that it would reflect changes in the standard of living as indicated by increases in average earnings (Henderson, Harcourt and Harper 1970:194; Saunders 2005:19-21). As a consequence of its upward adjustment the Henderson poverty line is today frequently higher than poverty lines drawn against either mean or median income (Saunders 2005:19-23; Harding *et al* 2001:37). Some researchers are inclined to be wary of the Henderson poverty line for this very reason (Saunders 1999:43; Harding *et al* 2001:26).

Recognising that setting poverty lines is an implicitly fraught process the authors of the 2001 Smith Family/NATSEM Report provided a variety of calculations of poverty measured against three distinct poverty lines: (half) median income, (half) mean income and the Henderson poverty line – with the authors acknowledging the apprehension that some researchers exhibit over the Henderson poverty line (Harding *et al* 2001:26). While recognising the fraught nature of poverty lines (Harding *et al* 2001:vii-viii, 34) the authors of the Report nonetheless read the statistics as demonstrating that during the 1990s rates of poverty had risen, relying on the (half) mean income measure in making their claim. In giving their findings the authors of the Report were forthcoming about calculating poverty in terms of mean income repeatedly making mention of the contested understanding of poverty and explicating the definition that they adopt in their analysis (for example Harding *et al* 2001:viii, 2, 3, 23, 26, 34):

[87] Indeed the two issues are related; the latter is merely the quantitative expression of the former.

> There is no clear consensus about whether it is preferable to take a proportion of the median or mean income as the poverty line … Fixing the poverty line at some proportion of median incomes avoids the problems created by outliers in the sample survey data underlying the studies – that is, families with exceptionally low or high incomes. However, because of The Smith Family's commitment to work for a more cohesive society, this report uses the half average poverty line, as it better captures relative deprivation in times of rising income inequality… As the top income earners become better off, then the poor are relatively worse off. That is, they are poorer in relative terms. Furthermore, in Australia, as in some other countries, there has been concern about a diminishing middle class … In such cases there may be strong growth in incomes among high income families – but no change in incomes among middle-income families. As a result, setting a poverty line at 50 per cent of median incomes might fail to capture the impact of growing inequality on relative poverty within a society. (Harding *et al* 2001:26-27)

On my analysis the discussion on definitions of poverty by the Report's authors is an attempt at transparency. They acknowledge that poverty is a concept difficult to define and measure, and are candid in detailing the approach that they have taken. Furthermore, the authors of the Report give an argument as to why mean income appeared to them more adequate than median income in evaluating rates of poverty and financial disadvantage in the 1990s. To paraphrase, they argue that, in periods of high inequality, rates of poverty measured against median income might not provide a complete picture of the incomes of those at the bottom of the income scale as compared to rising standards affected by increases at the top of the income scale. In other words, where poverty is conceptualised as a standard basic to the community, the authors of the Report argue (Harding *et al* 2001:26-27) that it is appropriate to draw a picture on poverty by comparing, not only those at the bottom of the income scale with those in the middle, but also by comparing the incomes of those at the bottom with those at the top. Nor was this concern about the incomes of the middle class limited to The Smith Family or the NATSEM researchers. Rather in the 1990s this issue became prominent in the writings of social commentators, even warranting a shorthand: 'the disappearing middle' (Gregory 1993:66; Johnson and Tonkiss 2002:10). As Johnson and Tonkiss (2002:10) comment, in the 1990s Australia was noted at the international level for having 'one of the highest levels of income inequality in the western world'. Despite the transparency of the Report's approach, the CIS were deeply suspicious of researchers' motives in conceptualising poverty in this way.

As noted above, in their analysis of poverty trends the Report's authors relied primarily on calculations of poverty set against the (half) mean income threshold. When calculated against mean income the poverty rate had risen from 11.3% in 1990 to 13.0% in 2000. As the CIS were quick to point out, calculated at half the median income the figures suggested only nominal change in rates of inequality: 8.2% in 1990 and 8.7% in 2000. Questioning why mean income had been adopted

as the primary measure of poverty referenced in the Report, Tsumori, Saunders and Hughes (2002:6) alleged that:

> These researchers knew that, relative to the income of those at the bottom of the distribution, middle earners had not improved their situation throughout the 1990s. This meant that a poverty line based on half the median income (the usual measure) would not discover large numbers 'in poverty' during the Howard [Government] years. The only way to get these results would be to use a calculation based on the mean rather than the median. And that is exactly what they did.

This allegation certainly cast doubt upon the credibility of poverty research and poverty researchers – the suggestion being that figures are intentionally inflated to win the public over to the political agenda of 'the welfare lobby' (Saunders 2002:1; 2004:1). The deviation from the use of median income – which does in fact figure in the Report – is interpreted by the CIS as proof in itself of a political agenda aimed at denigrating the policies of the conservative Howard Liberal/Coalition Government. Given the extent to which the researchers made clear both the contested nature of poverty and the details of their own underlying definition of poverty, the accusation of intent to mislead does not seem quite fair. Regardless, the CIS show no appreciation for these attempts at transparency and continue to prosecute their allegations that measures of poverty adopted by mainstream poverty researchers are subjective and arbitrary. I attend to this allegation now, arguing that while the CIS claim neutral ground as their own in the poverty wars, an equally 'interpretative' understanding of poverty underlies their own analyses.

Subjective values or contested concept? Negotiating the poverty wars

CIS authors often derisively refer to the poverty research/third-sector community as 'the poverty lobby' (Tsumori *et al* 2002:11) or 'the welfare lobby' (Saunders 2002:1; 2004:1). These terms are revealing of the cynicism with which the CIS regard the poverty research and third sector communities and their claims about poverty. This cynicism towards the welfare sector is apparent even where the existence of poverty appears to be accepted. This is illustrated in the following extract from CIS economist Helen Hughes's (2001:17) article 'The Politics of Envy':

> A strong community social welfare sector exists in Australia with a vested interest in exaggerating the extent of poverty and income inequality. Some 10,000 to 11,000 welfare organisations exist. Fifty large ones dominate. More than 50% of the income of charities is contributed by the Government. The combined annual expenditure of charities was nearly $4.8 billion in 1993-94. They attracted $400 million in tax concessions. The industry employed about 100,000 workers and relied on many thousands of volunteers. The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) thus has a large constituency. It is joined in advocacy by many of its members. In their pleas for support, the focus has sometimes been on atypical cases at the cost of verisimilitude. 'Crying wolf ' is unlikely to be helpful in the long run.

> With the growth of very large social service organisations, moreover, transparency and service quality are needed to ensure that charitable organisations do not replicate the bureaucratic behaviour of the government agencies they have replaced. Above all, poverty needs to be reduced so that their activities are not needed on today's large scale.

Hughes' evident cynicism towards the so-called 'poverty lobby' is mirrored in a paper released by Saunders (CIS) in response to the 2001 Smith Family/NATSEM Report. In his article Saunders (2002:8, my emphasis) claims that:

> Underpinning the activities of many welfare groups is the desire to bring about substantial redistribution of income and wealth. Their aim is not simply to increase the incomes of those at the bottom; *they also want to reduce the incomes of those at the top.* Their aim is to narrow what they call the 'income gap'.

Saunders (2002:10) is sceptical, to say the least, of any allusion to an 'income gap', seeing it as a pretext for redistributing income, an attempt to 'confiscat[e] people's earnings'. On this basis Saunders (2002:8-9) is circumspect towards any definition of poverty as a relative condition, particularly where it is calculated as a percentage of income shares. Saunders (2002:8-10) considers relative conceptions of poverty to be premised on 'a politics of envy', a preoccupation with what the wealthiest have, rather than with what the poor need, as I now elaborate.

In the 2002 paper 'Poor Statistics: Getting the facts right about poverty in Australia', Saunders makes reference to research that was undertaken in 2000 in which research subjects were presented with two hypothetical scenarios intended to test whether they expressed their income preferences in relative or absolute terms. On Saunders' (2002:8) account the research found that individuals predominantly expressed a preference for income calculated in relative terms. Saunders (2002:8) declares that: 'Given the choice between reducing the income gap between rich and poor or making everybody better off [in terms of their absolute position], 70% went for the first option and only 28% went for the second.' Saunders (2002:8-10) relies on this research, and the finding that more Australians indicated they would prefer to receive a lower absolute income in order to gain a larger relative share of income, to substantiate his claim about a politics of envy being at play in Australian society and in poverty research. It is of note that similar research on income preferences has featured in writing by Hamilton and Dennis (2005:59). As I further discuss in Chapter 4, they similarly interpret relative income preferences as being motivated by covetous comparisons with the wealthy, what they regard as symptoms of the social disease 'affluenza' (Hamilton and Denniss 2005:9; also Hamilton 2006:22-27).

The animating idea behind Saunders' (and, as I return to discuss Hamilton and Denniss') interpretation of research on income preferences is the perception that 'real' poverty is measured in an absolute way as a standard of absolute need that is not relative to what others receive. Therefore, where individuals indicate they have a preference for considering income in relative rather than absolute terms,

Saunders (2002:8-9) interprets this as signifying avarice. In taking this view that there is nothing relative about wellbeing Saunders is not only at odds with mainstream poverty researchers, he is also at odds with Smith and Sen (1983:159) who, as mentioned previously, similarly regard poverty and well-being as being in some measure relative concepts.[88] Indeed, the view that poverty is in some regards a relative condition has even been accepted by economist and neo-liberal luminary Milton Friedman (1971:190, my emphasis):

> The extraordinary economic growth experienced by Western countries during the past two centuries and the wide distribution of the benefits of free enterprise have enormously reduced the extent of poverty in any absolute sense in the capitalistic countries of the West. But poverty is in part a *relative* matter, and even in these countries, there are *clearly* many people living under conditions that the rest of us label as poverty.

Saunders, it appears, dissents from this view, reading 'relative' conceptions of poverty as code for a 'politics of envy' (Saunders 2002:8). Importantly Saunders (2002:8-9) considers a politics of envy to be at play not only in the research subjects from the survey he references, but also in the definitions of poverty informing mainstream poverty research. In order to elucidate the argument underlying Saunders' claim that there exists a 'politics of envy' in Australia society it is necessary to explicate his own view on the issue of inequality.

To understand Saunders' (2002:7-10) position it is important to recognise, as he himself does on occasion, that at stake in the debates over poverty are competing conceptions of justice. More precisely, it becomes necessary to recognise that Saunders' view on justice conflicts with egalitarian conceptions of justice. Saunders (2002:9) accepts the existence of income inequality as just, even where it exists on a scale of some magnitude, believing it to have no relationship to levels of poverty or social disadvantage. At the very least he does not consider such inequality in terms of questions of *social* justice, as he regards egalitarian arguments to do (Saunders 2002:7-9). Saunders is unequivocal on this point. Critiquing comments by Rob Simmons, manager of the Smith Family's Research and Social Policy Unit, Saunders (2002:9) rejects the view that inequality is detrimental to the overall wellbeing of the community. Saunders (2002:9) alleges that such a view:

> Assumes that increasing inequality necessarily undermines 'social cohesion', but why should it? Why should a widening income gap necessarily create social fragmentation and conflict? Social cohesion will only be undermined if those with less come to envy and resent those with more. Egalitarians assume that they will, for they think inequality breeds resentment, but there is no sociological law that says that it must. If people can see that others have come by their riches legitimately, and if they recognise that the opportunities are there for them to do likewise, then class-based resentments like these need never arise.

[88] This is not to overlook that a debate occurs over *how* this relativity is to be understood (for discussion see Sen 1983).

On this point Saunders echoes Friedman's (1962:195) own analysis of a distinction between liberal and egalitarian conceptions of justice:

> The liberal will therefore distinguish sharply between equality of rights and equality of opportunity, on the one hand, and material equality or equality of outcome on the other. He [sic] may welcome the fact that a free society in fact tends towards greater material equality than any other yet tried. But he will regard this as a desirable by-product of a free society, not its major justification. He will welcome measures that promote both freedom and inequality – such as measures to eliminate monopoly power and to improve the operation of the market. …
> The egalitarian will go this far too. But he [sic] will want to go further. He will defend taking from some to give to others, not as a more effective means whereby 'some' can achieve an objective they want to achieve, but on grounds of 'justice'. At this point, equality comes sharply into conflict with freedom; one must chose. One cannot be both an egalitarian, in this sense, and a liberal.

Recalling the analysis provided in Chapter 2 of welfare and neo-liberal governmentality, another way to understand this apparent conflict between liberals and egalitarians is in regard to the proper operation of government. In the framework implicit in Saunders' and Friedman's arguments, *social* disadvantage is an anomalous concept as differential outcomes are regarded as the inevitable effects of differences in individual ability, aptitude, and *choice* (for example Saunders 2008:13-17; 2005c:6). The differential outcomes that accrue to individuals might, therefore, be considered unfortunate but to consider them in 'social' terms makes little sense. In other words, in these arguments 'the social' is not regarded as an appropriate field for providing security; it is the family and the community that are the appropriate fields (for example Sullivan 2000:33-45; Saunders and Tsumori 2003:3). Considered against the greater evil of state intervention, that is, governing through the social state, 'natural' differential outcomes – inequality – come to be regarded as necessary and acceptable (for example Saunders 2005c:6; consider also Saunders 2002b).

From the analysis given above it can be seen that the conception of a 'politics of envy' rests upon the inference that individuals should be satisfied with where they find themselves in society and should not covet their neighbours' material possessions because individuals are ultimately responsible for their position in society. If one is unlucky, or lacks talent, this might be lamentable, but it is not a justification for 'confiscating' the earnings of the fortunate and the talented in order to improve one's own position (Saunders 2002:10). Fundamental in this rationale is the premise, already stated, that individuals – including the poor and 'welfare dependent' – are responsible for their position in society. In other words, underlying Saunders' argument is the view that poverty is, if not ultimately *caused* by individual ability (luck being beyond an individual's control) it is nonetheless the *responsibility* of the individual. This is consistent with earlier examples from Saunders' writing on welfare where the argument was mounted in terms of a

concern with the autonomy of individuals and their ability to 'run their own lives' (Saunders 2008:6, 9). Indeed, this concern with individual autonomy and responsibility runs through all of Saunders' publications on welfare and poverty (for example Saunders 2003; 2005; 2005b; Saunders and Tsumori 2002b; 2003). It can be concluded therefore that this is not a *neutral* account of poverty – it is an *interpretation* of its causes. What is more, these arguments do not just reflect the 'liberal' understanding of poverty as Friedman (1962:195) describes them in the citation above – they are reflective of and constitutive of a neo-liberal governmentality which, as described at length in Chapter 2, displaces poverty and inequality as political problems and focuses instead on 'welfare dependency'.

This congruence between Saunders' stance on poverty and inequality and neo-liberal governmentality with its view that the field of the social is not an appropriate space of government is further evident in arguments by Saunders and Tsumori (2003) on reforming Parenting Payment. In Australia, where individuals meet the appropriate eligibility criteria, Parenting Payment is available to parents from the time the child is born until the time the child turns sixteen. Arguing that this policy should be revised and that parents should be required to work from the time a child is school aged (in Australia, 5 years old), Saunders and Tsumori (2003:3) claim that: 'Some single parents recognise this offer of a life on welfare for the tender trap that it is, and they return to employment before they lose their skills and before the habit of working atrophies'. The implication here is that the provision of welfare to (eligible) parents is a 'trap', rendering them dependent on the state, and thus eroding their work ethic. Furthermore, it is clear from their analysis that, for Saunders and Tsumori (2003:3), only particular *kinds* of dependence are represented as problematic. In their article Saunders and Tsumori (2003:3) make reference to recent research into long-term outcomes for single parents on Parenting Payment. They (Saunders and Tsumori 2003:3) consider the findings from the survey to support their argument that welfare causes dependency and report that: 'only one in five went from welfare into financial *self*-reliance (either as a result of finding a job, or finding a new partner who was employed and earned enough to support them).' In the case of parenting women, therefore, 'finding a new partner… who earned enough to support them' is regarded as synonymous with achieving 'financial *self*-reliance' (Saunders and Tsumori 2003:3, my emphasis). In other words, while 'dependence' on (social) welfare is undesirable for parenting women, 'private' dependence upon men and within families is seen as unproblematic and appropriate.

What can therefore be concluded is that, not only is the underlying conception of poverty in this writing *interpretative* in these accounts, but the approach to welfare, in clearly promoting the neo-liberal (ideological and governmental) view, is likewise *partisan* and not a 'neutral' account deduced from changes to the structures and conditions of life in post-war Australian society. Thus, just as Chapter 2 shows the 'ideological' argument to be limited for failing to account for the ideologically diverse origins of welfare reform implemented in the 1980s and 1990s, the 'empirical' argument can be seen to be similarly limited in that its descriptive surface, when pressed, quickly reveals one *particular interpretation* of

poverty as caused by individual ineptitude and/or bad luck. Situating the 'empirical' argument in the context of on-going debates over the measurement of poverty in Australia makes it clear that it is not so much the case that poverty is no longer an issue of empirical relevance, but rather that it is defined out of existence in arguments such as Saunders'. Rather than particular poverty alleviation approaches being led by the empirical 'facts', it seems instead to be the case that examination of particular interpretations of the empirical data reveals particular (and competing) understandings of poverty.

Poverty in 'crisis': the poverty wars and affluence governmentality

Thus far in the chapter I have addressed the poverty debates in their own terms, highlighting the way that they involve competing definitions of poverty and its causes. In this concluding section of the chapter I apply a more critical lens, attending to the way that these debates also concern competing rationales for how poverty 'ought' to be governed. I show that the competing rationales which underlie the poverty debate implicitly connect understandings of poverty to approaches to the alleviation of poverty. More specifically, 'victory' in the poverty wars involves an implicit assessment as to whether the reforms to welfare implemented in the 1990s 'solved' the problems of poverty and 'welfare dependency' or whether they have, as mainstream researchers claim, exacerbated the number of people living below the poverty line example (Saunders 2006:8-14; Serr 2006:1-7; McCallum 2005).

The CIS seem well aware that competing approaches to the government of poverty are at stake in the poverty wars. Evidence of this can be seen in Saunders' (2004:3, my emphasis) outraged comments in 2004 when the Senate Committee on Poverty accepted research delivered by ACOSS in its final Report:

> Whatever ACOSS and its allies requested, the Committee endorsed; whatever the trade unions wanted, the Committee assented to. Time and again, the Report outlines what it calls the 'evidence' by this or that lobby group, and then follows it up by recommending exactly what the group suggested. Claims made by ACOSS, its welfare allies or a trade union are not queried, and their proposals are not criticised. The Report is a manifesto for expanding the state, pushing up taxes and tightening regulations across the private sector.
>
> While the Report's value as social science is negligible, its potential propaganda value is huge. In the future, whenever their claims are challenged or their proposals are questioned, social policy intellectuals and activists will be able to refer to the authority of a Senate Inquiry to back them up. *Their subjective opinions and biases* have here assumed the status of 'findings' and 'evidence'.

In this citation the links between definitions of poverty, accounts of the causes of poverty and approaches to poverty alleviation, are clear, delineating the ways in which the poverty debate concerns, not simply issues of the *measurement* of

poverty, but also arguments over the *definition* of poverty and proposals for its *government*. It should also be noted that, while in the above citation Saunders demonstrates (outraged) concern at the potential of ACOSS research to influence government policy, he and his colleagues at the CIS themselves have had an influential role in shaping welfare policy. In reforms to welfare introduced as part of the 2005 Australian Federal Budget two out of three of the suggested changes that CIS authors advocated in their 2003 papers were adopted. This constituted significant reform to the availability and conditions of Disability Benefits and Parenting Payment. It can be seen, therefore, that it is the *definition* of poverty implicit in mainstream poverty research that Saunders and his colleagues at the CIS ultimately object to. These conceptual arguments are in effect normative disagreements over how poverty ought to be understood and *governed*, though it is never on this level that public discussion explicitly occurs. Rather, the CIS continue to claim that what the 'welfare lobby' (Saunders 2002:1; 2004:1-5) call poverty is not 'real' poverty, but the product of *their* subjective (egalitarian) biases and political agendas. In so far as this is so, the CIS fail to acknowledge that their own definitions of poverty are similarly 'subjective' and normative – a less generous definition of poverty is not necessarily a more accurate one. A more stringent account of poverty might *appear* more accurate in that its stricter terms mean that those whom it encompasses are more likely to suffer genuine deprivation, but this does not mean it is closer to describing poverty *accurately*. Its definition, in being so deliberately narrow, may exclude just as many people who experience deprivation as it includes, rendering it *inaccurate*. Such arguments are dismissed wholesale by the CIS.

Even where the CIS acknowledge the complexity involved in the conceptual and definitional work necessary to poverty research they continue to (negatively) attribute the nuances involved to the 'choices' of poverty researchers.[89] In a paper published by Saunders and Tsumori (2002:33) entitled 'Poor Concepts: Social Exclusion, Poverty and the Politics of Guilt', they give ample attention to the way that 'words do not just describe reality; they define it'. Yet even with this recognition of the way in which language itself implicitly performs a constitutive rather than a descriptive function, the CIS continue to render the imposition of 'values' in the poverty debate as resulting from researchers *choices*. Critiquing mainstream poverty researchers' recent adoption of 'social exclusion' as a way of conceptualising issues to do with poverty – a move made in part as a response to CIS critiques that poverty and inequality are separate concepts – Saunders and Tsumori (2002:37, my emphasis) assert that:

> Language is not neutral. The concepts that we use enable us to construct and sustain some interpretations of reality while closing others off. Intellectual gatekeepers in strategic institutions like universities, the media and government departments *decide* to use one kind of terminology while

[89] Once again, my purpose in making this point is not to 'rescue' poverty research. As discussed in Chapter 1, and exemplified in Chapter 2, I believe that there are many problematic tendencies in poverty research and I do not consider it politically 'innocent'. Instead, my goal is to establish that, as representative of 'the empirical argument', CIS claims on poverty are also politically problematic.

rejecting another, and this structures debates and demarcates policy agendas.

There is an inconsistency in the argument that the CIS authors make here, from recognising that language and concepts are constitutive to attributing responsibility for this to the 'choices' of 'strategically-placed' individuals. If language is necessarily constitutive and value-laden then any attempt to communicate any given view is necessarily a value-charged event. Attributing this positivity to the 'decisions' of intellectuals is inconsistent with such an analysis. In other words, if, as post-structuralists argue, language is value-laden and it is through language that we know the world, then we do not so much choose our concepts as they choose us – we are enacted by the systems of meaning against and through which we understand the world. From this perspective, the necessarily limited ways in which poverty is theorised and conceptualised – by poverty researchers and the third sector on the one hand and by the CIS on the other – are not reducible to the deliberate 'choices' and decisions of individuals working in these fields; rather, they are the product and consequence of traditions of knowledge which produce poverty as an object at the centre of a debate on the causes of the social world.

As I have sought to demonstrate in this chapter, the poverty wars are, in effect, a debate over the definition of poverty and implicitly, a debate over the causes of poverty. The poverty wars are, as such, a debate over whether poverty is the result of individual (bad) choices or whether poverty results from social structures, including government policies. This debate may itself be seen to recreate an intractable sociological debate regarding whether individuals are responsible for the social world – as the CIS argue – or whether individuals are products of the social world – the position attributed to mainstream poverty researchers and the third-sector community. The response to CIS criticisms of mainstream poverty research taken in this chapter is, therefore, not that the work of poverty researchers is *free* of 'subjective values'. The argument instead is that the presence of 'subjective values' (in the language the CIS prefer), or normative claims about poverty (in the language of the framework I employ in the thesis), are not the result of personal impositions upon an otherwise neutral area of inquiry. It is my (post-structuralist) contention that the contested nature of poverty requires that all definitions of poverty involve some interpretative assessment of what is basic to human being and in what terms social life can be accounted for. Though it is beyond the scope of the discussion to address this point in full, I would argue in contrast to the inference in CIS claims (for example Saunders and Tsumori 2002b:21; Tsumori *et al* 2002:10), that an interpretative account of poverty is not necessarily an arbitrary one. Instead, conceptions of poverty are to be defended by appeal to inductive arguments – arguments which are fraught and always limited – and not by the claim that access to objective facts has been achieved by some neutral party (Bletsas 2007:64-66). However, an openly interpretative approach to poverty is not likely to be accepted in public discussion at the present time. Rather, as I now consider, the critiques of poverty measurement continue to

be regarded as a definitive blow to poverty researchers and to the integrity of their definition of poverty as 'relative'.

Contemplating the status of mainstream poverty in the aftermath of the poverty wars Saunders of the SPRC (2005:1-14; 2006:5-7) ruminates that poverty research in Australia today faces a 'crisis of credibility'. Saunders intends this as a comment on the extent to which the poverty debates initiated in 2001, and on-going throughout the decade, have impacted negatively on public perceptions of poverty research and public discussion of poverty. More precisely, the idea of a credibility crisis refers to the way in which poverty is increasingly regarded as a marginal phenomenon and to the accompanying tendency to reject or dismiss research produced by poverty researchers that contradicts this view.

I am inclined to agree with Saunders that, in contemporary Australia, the arguments of poverty researchers are increasingly made subject to challenge. Moreover, the CIS critiques do seem to have had a role in this crisis, in so far as they have been active in promoting suspicion of mainstream researchers' motivations and disseminating a vocabulary for challenging existing research practice. One germane example which corroborates this view is a controversial public disagreement that occurred between representatives of the St Vincent de Paul Society and one of the Senators presiding over their submission to the 2003 Senate Inquiry into Poverty. While speaking to their submission in the Senate Hearing, Senator Knowles interrupted the presenters, challenging them over claims they had made in their written submission that poverty was a growing problem in Australia, and questioning the way that they were measuring poverty. The incident was reported in the local media, the headline declaring: 'Welfare agency clashes with Senator over poverty' (ABC 2003). Interestingly, in the reporting of the issue, it was members of the St Vincent de Paul Society whose figures on poverty seemed to be held in question, not the Senator. The ABC article described the incident in the following terms: 'Senator Knowles took members of the society to task over statistics about how many people are actually below the poverty line and how it is defined, in the face of Government allowances and income support' (ABC 2003). While the article seemed sympathetic to the aims of the St Vincent de Paul Society – alleviating poverty – it left unaddressed the challenge to the conceptual underpinnings of their research. What further failed to be mentioned is that *measurement* of poverty was not the only issue of contention in the 2003 disagreement between the St Vincent de Paul Society and the then Senator Knowles. Despite the failure of the ABC reporter to recognise its relevance, the issue of labour casualisation and its connection to levels of poverty and, more specifically, 'welfare dependency', had also been a central point of contention. In other words, the *causes* of poverty were also contested in the exchange between presenters and the Senator.

During the St Vincent de Paul Society submission, their representatives claimed that the growth in numbers of welfare recipients was to be attributed to the policy of labour casualisation, which had resulted in fewer full-time jobs and a greater need for welfare to supplement the private incomes of casually-employed workers

(Senate Community Affairs References Committee transcript 2003:598-599, 605-606). In contrast to this view Senator Knowles appeared to suggest that it was wanton spending on unnecessary items such as cigarettes and alcohol, and loss of income to gambling that caused people on low incomes poverty (Senate Community Affairs References Committee transcript 2003:608-609). Thus, while the ABC (2003) article treated the clash between Senator Knowles and the St Vincent de Paul Society as a disagreement over the measurement of poverty, the terms of the debate reveal that there was a more fundamental disagreement over *conceptions* and *definitions* of poverty. This demonstrates, once again, that it is not the integrity of statistical analysis and empirical research that have been undermined by the poverty wars, but rather the very specific conceptual underpinnings of their use in mainstream poverty research. In contrast to Saunders of the SPRC I read this undermining of poverty research as not simply being a product of CIS critiques. It is my contention that the CIS critiques are influential, not on the basis of their authors' efforts, but in terms of a wider governmental shift in the way welfare and poverty are conceptualised.

At the beginning of this chapter I cited Foucault's (1991:68) claim that 'Political practice does not have a thumaturgic creative role: it does not bring forth sciences out of nothing; it transforms the conditions of existence and systems of functioning of discourse.' It is my argument that the shift in welfare rationality that was described in Chapter 2 can be seen to have transformed the functioning of the discourse on poverty. It is in this context, and subsequent to this transformation that, I contend, the critiques of the CIS have succeeded in undermining the claims of mainstream poverty researchers that poverty continues as an enduring feature of contemporary Australian society. The crisis of credibility that poverty research faces is in no simple way an effect of the arguments raised by the CIS, therefore, but a result of a wider governmental shift from a motif of poverty to a motif of affluence. I continue to explore the emergence of this affluence motif in Chapter 4.

Conclusion

In accounting for the prevalence of the individualised conception of poverty in Chapters 2 and 3 I addressed the 'ideological' argument and the 'empirical' argument, respectively. It was argued that both of these commonly given assessments as to how and why poverty has come to be conceptualised in individualising ways can be seen to be limited. The 'ideological' argument was seen to be limited in that it overestimated the influence of neo-liberal ideology and overlooked the fact that progressives had similarly represented post-war welfare as problematic. Examining the CIS position in the poverty wars as representative of the 'empirical' argument, in this chapter the seemingly neutral, descriptive terms of the 'empirical' argument were shown to be instead interpretative and partisan. Thus, the empirical argument was also established as limited in accounting for the individualised conception of poverty prevalent today. As well as demonstrating these limits in the existing arguments, I have sought to

highlight a connection between reforms to welfare and the neo-liberal governmentality elucidated in Chapter 2 and the seemingly 'empirical' arguments on poverty discussed in this chapter. I consider this interplay between reform to welfare and discussion of poverty to demonstrate the existence of a wide ranging shift in governmentality. More precisely, I argue that it is in the context of these developments that affluence can be seen to emerge as a governmental motif.

Chapter 4

The politics of affluence: Emergent trends in government

'"For the most part, capitalism itself has answered the demands that inspired 19th century socialism – for an end to exploitation at work, for an end to widespread poverty, for social justice, and for representative democracy."
This is a rare Clive Hamilton opinion with which I can agree.'

Andrew Norton (2003) reviewing Clive Hamilton's book *Growth Fetish* in the CIS journal *Policy* 19:3, p.45.

The argument advanced in this thesis is that poverty is conceptualised in individualised and individualising terms as a consequence of a governmental shift from a motif of poverty to a motif of affluence. In Chapters 2 and 3 analysis was directed at demonstrating that the motif of poverty could be seen to be in demise, in changes to welfare and in sustained attacks from critics antagonistic towards mainstream researchers' definitions of poverty. In Chapters 4 and 5 attention moves from tracing the demise of poverty to mapping the emergence of affluence. The particular goals of this chapter are: to locate the idea of affluence, to contextualise the precise ways it is presently constituted to be a problem, and to demonstrate that this particular representation of affluence as a governmental problematic impacts the way poverty is conceptualised, tacitly reinforcing the individualised view. The argument on this later point, of affluence and the individualised view on poverty, is developed by establishing an intertextual relationship between conceptions of poverty espoused by (neo)liberal arguments, such as were seen in the representative CIS papers discussed in Chapter 3, and the conception of poverty espoused within Australian accounts of the politics of affluence thesis, which, as I elaborate below, is a view generally considered to be to the left on the ideological spectrum.

This chapter is primarily concerned with the ways in which arguments on affluence intersect with the poverty debate. Specifically, I demonstrate that the affluence thesis tacitly reinforces the idea that 'relative poverty' is merely a subjective, and hence arbitrary, conception, produced by comparisons with the rich and a (consequently) inflated sense of 'the good life' (Hamilton 2006:20-31; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:119). As discussed in Chapter 3, establishing this point is relevant to my overall thesis in that it supports the idea that, in the present context, poverty has not simply been 'solved' but rather that it has been defined and delimited as a new kind of problem. Building on this point, in subsequent chapters I show how the affluence thesis is centrally involved in the imagining of an emergent 'post-materialist' left politics[90] in which poverty is conceptualised as individualised, behavioural and 'residual'. In the first half of the chapter I provide a necessary historical background for the politics of affluence, situating the writing of affluence theorists in the context of existing literature. In the later sections of the chapter analysis is directed at illuminating the limits of the affluence critique of neo-liberal ideology. It is argued that the affluence thesis, though critical of neo-liberal ideology, particularly its individualistic premises, nonetheless affirms an individualistic stance by focusing on materialism as a corrupting force on *individuals'* values. The chapter concludes by demonstrating that these arguments on affluence intersect practically with the poverty debate.

[90] To be precise on this point, some affluence theorists tend to eschew the terms 'left' and 'right', seeing their approach as 'post' these ideological labels. My use of the designation 'left' in referring to these arguments is not intended in a descriptive sense, therefore, but merely to signify that affluence theorists are commonly positioned as presenting the progressive side of politics in Australian public debate. This positioning occurs largely because affluence theorists explicitly reject neo-liberal ideology. The CIS, who overtly defend free market economics, are, in contrast, seen to represent the 'right' side of politics and to promote a neo-liberal ideology. As established in Chapter 3, CIS arguments also reiterate key aspects of neo-liberal *governmentality*.

The affluence thesis: an overview

In some measure reminiscent of CIS claims of a 'politics of envy' (Hughes 2001:16-17; Saunders 2002:8-10), the 'affluence thesis' is that the primary issues facing Australian society today are clustered around the twin problems of excessive consumerism and materialism (for example Hamilton, Eckersley and Dennis 2005). In the affluence thesis these two issues are attributed largely to individual greed and to an unflagging political commitment to the pursuit of economic growth (for example Hamilton 2003:3-4, 105-106). Consequently, questions of poverty and inequality are not only made marginal in the affluence thesis but, as I return to show in Chapter 5, are conceptualised as the 'residual' problems of a previous era which is argued to have been replaced by a new age of unparalleled affluence as a consequence of neo-liberal economic policies (for example Hamilton 2003:13). This attribution of affluence to neo-liberal economic policies does not lead affluence theorists to embrace neo-liberalism; instead they are highly critical of its individualistic premises – on this point therefore they diverge from the CIS (for example Hamilton, Eckersley and Dennis 2005). The argument from affluence theorists on this point is that, whatever the benefits of widespread affluence, its realisation has not translated into a simultaneous rise in individual wellbeing (Hamilton 2003:22-33; Hamilton, Eckersley and Dennis 2005:217). Furthermore, affluence theorists argue that the unrestrained promotion of affluence actually *harms* individuals by destroying much of the human and social infrastructure that facilitates happiness and wellbeing (Hamilton 2003:x, 30-40; Hamilton, Eckersley and Dennis 2005; McKnight 2005:36-43; Eckersley 2004:6, 47). In the affluence thesis, the central *problems* of affluence in the contemporary west are, therefore, not seen to be inequality, exploitation, disadvantage or injustice (Battin and Ramsay 2006:6; for example Hamilton 2003:209-211). The problems of the affluent society are instead characterised in terms of personal satisfaction; it is claimed that, beyond a certain limit, the pursuit of wealth not only fails to advance human happiness but, more significantly, it *impedes* happiness (Hamilton 2003:x; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:119; de Graaf *et al* 2005:63-64; Eckersley 2004:6-8).

In the chapter and throughout the thesis I refer to authors who promote the affluence thesis, as I have elaborated it above, as 'affluence theorists' – though this is not an appellation they have claimed for themselves. I also apply the shorthand 'the politics of affluence' to refer to the rationales and programs of action that flow from the affluence thesis. In order to distinguish between affluence theorists and the social democratic position on poverty (associated with the arguments of mainstream poverty researchers addressed in Chapter 3), where appropriate I refer to affluence theorists as representative of the 'post-materialist left'. The reasons behind this designation are further clarified in Chapter 5.

It is important to note from the outset that, unlike the case with the CIS where the individualised and behavioural view on poverty is at times explicit (for example Sullivan 2000), affluence theorists make no explicit investment in the behavioural

poverty thesis and are generally regarded as supporting an egalitarian anti-poverty agenda that the CIS oppose. Despite this representation of the politics of affluence as egalitarian, I argue that a *tacit* construction of an individualised conception of poverty can be identified in the work of prominent affluence theorists. This individualised conception of poverty results from the psychological/values focus which undergirds politics of affluence arguments, in contrast to a social/'structural' focus.[91] I argue that it is this psychological/values focus which produces the intertextual relationship between affluence theorists who are positioned as left and the (neo)liberal right. Considered together these otherwise disparate arguments, the (neo)liberal arguments on affluence and envy (for example Hughes 2001:16-17; Saunders 2002:8-10), and the post-materialist affluence thesis are, I contend, emblematic of a new governmental motif: affluence.

As noted above, the affluence thesis is predicated on the idea that in electoral politics today there exists a 'growth fetish' (Hamilton 2003) – a preoccupation with increased economic growth as the preferred solution to all social ills. This premise is important as it leads affluence theorists to represent political parties of the left and the right as equally under the 'growth fetish' spell (Hamilton 2003:1-7; also McKnight 2005:60-63).[92] Affluence politics are therefore advocated as a way to move beyond the alleged impasse of 'classic' ideology politics and the supposed convergence between the (neo-liberal) right and the (social democratic) left on the subject of economic growth (for example Hamilton 2003:ix-xvii, 205-240; 2006:1-13, 32-41; McKnight 2005:60-63). While not explicitly rejecting a structural account of poverty, these arguments on affluence do therefore implicitly reject the social democratic politics with which the structural account of poverty is traditionally associated (for example Hamilton 2006:32-41; McKnight 2005:124-126).[93]

This point, of a fissure existing between social democratic politics and affluence politics, is of consequence. In Chapter 3 I attended to the CIS critique of mainstream poverty research, highlighting the way that the poverty wars effectively undermined the *statistical* basis of existing poverty research. The CIS accusation was that such research relies on an inappropriately 'relative' and 'subjective' conception of poverty and that, moreover, it confused poverty with income inequality (for example Tsumori *et al* 2002:1-3; Saunders and Tsumori 2002b:15). Arguments on the politics of affluence, as I demonstrate in this chapter, effectively undermine the efficacy of *anecdotal* or *qualitative* research methods, furthering the perception that 'relative' poverty is an inherently subjective concept with little to recommend it as relevant to the neutral demands

[91] Here I use the adjective 'structural' in a qualified sense in order to refer to phenomena which exist beyond the will and intent of the individual without investing in any ontological claims about these structures as universal or necessary entities (Harris 2001:338).

[92] In Australia the Australian Labor Party (ALP) is representative of left politics and the Liberal Party is representative of conservative politics. The Liberals often form a coalition government with the Australian National Country Party.

[93] The rejection of social democratic politics by affluence theorists is addressed further in Chapter 5.

of 'proper' poverty research. This implication arises as a result of claims that, subject to the current culture of affluence, where social expectations are incessantly scaled upwards, individuals can no longer be relied upon to determine adequately what the basic necessities of life in fact are (Hamilton 2006:22-27; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:9). Affluence theorists argue that individuals, naïve to the effects of the current culture of affluence, overestimate their needs and underestimate their actual financial position (Hamilton and Denniss 2005:9). Whilst acknowledging that (on their account) a small percentage of the population experience genuine hardship, affluence theorists claim that 'deprivation' in Australia is primarily an illusion of the culture of affluence, rather than a reflection of genuine material need (Hamilton 2002; 2006:20-31; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:119).

An example of this rationale can be seen in the following citation from Hamilton and Denniss (2005:9) in their book *Affluenza: When Too Much Is Never Enough:*

> The collapse of the demarcation between the rich, the middle class and the poor is associated with the scaling-up of desire for prestige brands and luxury styles of particular goods. Even people on modest incomes aspire to Luis [sic] Vuitton – if not the handbag, at least the T-shirt. We have witnessed an across-the-board escalation of lifestyle expectations. The typical household's desired standard of living is now so far above the actual standard afforded by the average income that people feel deprived of the 'good life'. Television and magazines play a crucial role in this racheting-up process, not so much through advertising but more though presenting opulence as normal and attainable.

Affluence theorists state explicitly that their arguments are not intended to fuel the poverty wars (Hamilton 2006:28-29; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:18). However, given the terms of the poverty debate, as explicated in the preceding chapter, the intertextual relationship between the arguments from affluence and the CIS critique of the 'welfare lobby' is apparent. Both positions defend restrictive definitions of poverty that effectively undermine the conceptual approaches taken by poverty researchers who insist, by contrast, that poverty and inequality need to be analysed together. Later in the chapter where I discuss submissions made at the 2003 Senate Inquiry into Poverty and Disadvantage, I highlight Hamilton and Denniss' arguments on affluence as directly contributing to this view that poverty needs to be conceptualised in restrictive 'absolute' terms.

Deprivation in Australia: real or imagined?

The subject of affluence has captivated the interest of a wide field of authors and not all of them mount an 'affluence thesis' in the terms it was elaborated above. For this reason throughout the chapter a further clarification is made between affluence *discourse* – referring to all texts that make affluence central in some manner to their analysis – and the affluence *thesis* as expounded in the previous section. While the affluence literature is transnational in its origins, and to an

extent I address this below, my primary interest is the Australian context and the particular nuances that result where the affluence thesis is advocated locally. In this regard much of this chapter addresses recent work by economist Clive Hamilton, arguably the most vocal proponent of the affluence thesis in Australia. While I take Hamilton's contribution in this area to be representative of affluence politics, he is by no means the sole theorist in this field. Authors and commentators including Richard Denniss (Hamilton and Denniss 2005), David McKnight (2005), and Richard Eckersley (2004; 2005), amongst others, can be seen to contribute, either explicitly or implicitly, to a popular canon of affluence writing of which I take Hamilton's work as exemplar. Addressing the arguments of affluence theorists in this chapter I draw out similarities and commensurabilities between the affluence thesis as exemplified in Hamilton's work and claims by Saunders (2003:5-22) of the CIS that a period of affluence has been achieved which impacts poverty, reducing its significance.

Hamilton is an important figure in the Australian poverty debate, as an economist who has repeatedly defended mainstream poverty researchers and their findings, as well as in his support of progressive politics more generally (for example Hamilton 2001:96-99; 2005; 2005b). It is perhaps no surprise then that Hamilton's work has often been criticised, debated and/or rejected by authors at the CIS (for example Norton 2003; 2005; Saunders 2002b:4; 2007-08). CIS critics, along with other conservative commentators (for example Kerin 2008; Albrechtsen 2008), thoroughly reject Hamilton's claim that governments are problematically preoccupied with economic growth and that the endless pursuit of wealth is detrimental to the wellbeing of the community. Despite these critiques, Hamilton's writing, which appears to be directed at bridging a gap between academic argument and a wider popular audience, is treated with high regard in Australian public debate. In June 2008 Hamilton was appointed Vice-Chancellor's Chair at Charles Sturt University, and Professor of Public Ethics with the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics.[94] Prior to this appointment Hamilton had been Executive Director of the Australia Institute, a self-proclaimed 'progressive' think tank which Hamilton himself was involved in establishing in 1994. For anyone familiar with Hamilton's work, the claim of an intertextual relationship between the views of poverty espoused by the CIS and those implicit in writing on affluence, including Hamilton's, might appear somewhat unexpected. It is after all the case that Hamilton, in his early writing on these themes, put forward the affluence thesis as a way of *accounting* for the neglect of poverty as an issue in Australian electoral politics (Hamilton 2002; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:190-192).

In 2002 Hamilton first postulated that a culture of affluence was dramatically altering the terrain of contemporary Australian society and its politics. In an article published in December that year Hamilton (2002) argued that a focus on material prosperity and a constant 'scaling up of lifestyle goals' had resulted in the emergence of a new character in the Australian political landscape – the 'middle-class battler'. This mordant reference to the much mythologised 'Aussie battler' –

[94] The Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics is a joint centre of the Australian National University, Charles Sturt University, and the University of Melbourne.

a character associated with the colonial and working-class origins of white Australian society that continues to be central in representations of the 'quintessentially Australian' character – sets the tone of Hamilton's 2002 article and later work on the theme. In the article Hamilton (2002) claims that, 'Despite the fact that we live in an era of unprecedented abundance, the broad mass of middle class Australians believe that their incomes are insufficient to provide for their needs'. Hamilton's (2002) article was published in the wake of the 2001 election defeat of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), and Hamilton, along with other analysts and commentators, attributed this defeat to a growing tide of cultural conservatism amongst the Australian public (for discussion see Scott 2006). In his 2002 article Hamilton implicitly associates this conservatism with the 'imagined deprivation' that he claims has become endemic in Australian society.

There are two central points in Hamilton's 2002 argument that need to be drawn out. First is his contention that the 'middle-class battler', elsewhere the 'middle-class whinger' (Hamilton 2003b), is a new character in the political landscape. Underlying this idea is an implicit claim of an empirical shift in Australian society from (relative) poverty to (relative) affluence. The second central point is Hamilton's claim that the imagined deprivation of the affluent middle class explains and accounts for the lack of support for welfare programs directed at the alleviation of poverty (Hamilton 2002). As I discuss below, this second claim in Hamilton's argument signals what I earlier addressed as the 'ideological' argument on the individualised view of poverty. Both of these claims have continued to feature in Hamilton's subsequent writing (for example Hamilton 2006:20-31; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:139-142) and require elaboration.

The first claim in Hamilton's (2002) argument about the 'middle-class battler' signifies an argument about the political sympathies of the working class and lower middle class, repeatedly problematised by commentators and analysts throughout the period of Howard's government. Disparagingly referred to as 'aspirationals', this section of the electorate, and the rise in real income it is claimed to have enjoyed over the period under discussion, is taken to have significantly influenced election outcomes across the previous decade (for discussion see Gabriel 2004; Burchell 2002; Morton 2001; Henderson 2001). The so-called 'aspirational' voters were argued to have abandoned their commitment to the ALP as a direct result of their rising incomes and thus comprise a new conservative voting bloc (for discussion and comment see also Gwyther 2008; Johnson 2007). It is to this alleged shift in circumstance and outlook, from real need and progressive politics to 'imagined' need and conservative politics, that Hamilton (2003b) alludes when he claims that 'the little Aussie battler' – the archetypal underdog of Australian national mythology – has become 'the middle-class whinger' – whose values have become individualistic and 'aspirational'. At its

core, and as I return to discuss, this is an empirical claim about deep changes in Australian society.[95]

The second claim made in Hamilton's 2002 article, averred again elsewhere (Hamilton 2006:29; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:140-142), is that it is the imagined deprivation of the relatively affluent that inhibits public support for government assistance to those in genuine need. To contextualise this second claim in Hamilton's argument, from the mid 1990s to the mid 2000s a particular trend in welfare spending emerged. While the Howard Liberal/Coalition Government sought to cut back welfare programs for those in the bottom income quintiles, it continued to spend relatively generously on those in the middle and upper quintiles through policies such as the 'Baby Bonus' and the First Home Buyers Grant, which channelled government funds predominantly to middle-class families. 'Excessive' welfare spending on the middle class became an issue over which the Howard Government attracted criticism even from its otherwise erstwhile ally, the CIS (Lindsay *et al* 2006).

These policy developments form the background to Hamilton's (2002) claim that the 'imagined' deprivation of the middle class was deployed to justify cuts to government funding for welfare programs targeting the poor. It is Hamilton's argument that the middle class, possessed of the false belief that they themselves were in need, were unwilling to share limited welfare resources with those *actually* in need of them. In Hamilton's writing this refusal to share government resources by the upper working class and lower middle class is seen as resulting, not only in the neglect of poverty as an electoral issue, but also in a general political conservatism amongst the electorate. Framed in these terms – as a consequence of electoral manipulation – Hamilton's (2002) argument on 'imagined deprivation' reiterates the 'ideological' argument on the individualised view of poverty, addressed in Chapter 2. It is certainly the case that during Howard's term in Government the Liberal Party were involved in representing welfare in ways that implied a sense of necessary competition over limited resources (Wilson and

[95] Hamilton is not the first writer to mount this argument about a rising tide of materialism, or to rely on iconoclastic Australian imagery in mounting such a claim. In 1978, Jonathan King published *Waltzing Materialism*, a book in which a similar critique of materialism as an imposed value overwhelming Australian society was the central premise. The title of the book similarly references the 'Aussie battler' iconography. *Waltzing Materialism* is a play on the title of a classic Australian folk ballad *Waltzing Matilda.* Despite having disputed origins, the lyrics of the ballad are attributed to Banjo Paterson, an Australian poet and playwright, believed to have penned them in 1895. The lyrics tell the story of a 'swagman' – a colonial epithet for a tramp – who ultimately takes his life when confronted by authorities over his theft of a sheep stolen to appease his hunger. The ballad is widely regarded as Australia's unofficial national anthem. Continuing the parallel with Hamilton's writing, King's book was also written in the wake of an election defeat of the left/progressive ALP. With regard to the election loss King (1978:11), in the opening lines of his text, asserts: 'Forget the myths, we Australians are materialists; and this more than anything else determines our behaviour. Throughout our history we have been victims of *waltzing materialism.'*

Turnbull 2001:9-11, 20-22).[96] I do not disagree with Hamilton on this point. However, Howard was not alone in shaping the welfare debate. The theme of welfare reform was comprehensively covered in Chapter 2 where I argued that there were *multiple* ideological origins to the welfare reforms of the 1980s and 1990s.

These two aspects of Hamilton's argument on affluence, articulated in 2002 and identified above as, on the one hand, the empirical claim of an increasingly affluent body politic, and, on the other, an ideological claim of a manipulated public, continue to feature in Hamilton's later work. In a 2006 publication, for example, Hamilton (2006:44-45) directly attributes commonly-held attitudes opposing welfare provision for the poor to the influence of neo-liberal ideology and its success in sponsoring an 'individualised' sense of responsibility for economic success or failure. He argues that:

> Because consumer capitalism and neo-liberal ideology have succeeded so spectacularly in creating the impression that each of us is a self-made individual, the widespread acceptance of social justice has evaporated. Australians are far less likely now than three decades ago to have sympathy for the poor, and are much more likely to attribute their disadvantage to the personal inadequacies of those so blighted. (Hamilton 2006:45)[97]

Importantly, Hamilton (2006:29-31) attributes the popular acceptance of these views of poverty not only to the dominance of neo-liberal ideology, but also to the growing levels of affluence that have occurred in the period of post-war growth: 'As affluence increases, class ceases to be a useful category: its explanatory power diminishes, and fewer people find it a meaningful category in their lives. The political implications of this have been far-reaching' (Hamilton 2006:29). Thus the 'empirical' argument and the 'ideological' argument on the individualised conception of poverty can therefore be seen as central in Hamilton's work, both in its early development (2002) and in more recent publications (2006:29-31, 45).

What has altered in Hamilton's recent work, however, is the extent to which he regards poverty as a relevant, though neglected, political issue. Indeed, where in his later work Hamilton explicitly mounts an affluence thesis and advocates affluence politics, he reproduces Saunders' (CIS) claim that the twenty-first century is *defined* by affluence (Saunders 2003:12). In both Hamilton's and Saunders' accounts the emergent affluence paradigm renders the politics of the twentieth century, with its conception of poverty and inequality as key political

[96] This move is addressed by political commentators in terms of Howard's success at 'wedge politics'. The phrase reflects the idea that to retain government Howard fractured the traditional support base of the ALP – which traditionally has been seen as representing the interests of both a socially-conservative working class and middle-class social progressives (for discussion see Wilson and Turnbull 2001; Henderson 2004; Emerson 2003).

[97] As discussed in Chapter 2, the behavioural, individualised view of poverty pre-dates this post-war period and was characteristic of the nineteenth-century approach to welfare. This suggests that, contrary to Hamilton's contention of neo-liberalism *causing* the punitive approach to poverty, a punitive approach to poverty pre-dates neo-liberal ideology, further emphasising the limitation of the 'ideological' argument in accounting for the individualised view of poverty dominant today.

problems, redundant. As Saunders (2003:12) puts it: 'the unattainable luxuries of one generation have become commonplace in the next, and the widespread deprivation that brought the welfare state into existence has vanished. With it has gone the rationale for direct government provision on a mass scale.' In his critique of Howard's 'middle-class whingers' Hamilton (2002; also Hamilton and Denniss 2005:9), it seems, is of precisely the same view.

A further commonality between Saunders (CIS) and Hamilton, as representative of affluence theorists, arises on the subject of individualism. Hamilton (2006:44-45; 2003:140-142) frequently references neoliberal discourses on individualism as a leading reason for why poverty is treated in individualised terms. Despite his doing so, as I show in this and the following chapter, the solutions to the 'problems' of affluence that he puts forward are themselves focused at the level of individual values. Hence, rather than challenging the discourse of neo-liberal individualism, the affluence thesis exemplified in Hamilton's writing effectively *reinforces* it. In order to demonstrate how this occurs, it becomes necessary to situate the affluence thesis in the context of established writing on affluence.

Problematising wealth: affluence and 'affluenza'

Arguments which address western states as affluent states are not, in and of themselves, new. There are several literatures which address the impacts of affluence, materialism, and consumerism. Existing literature on the place of commodities, the cultural artifacts of affluence, is often quite specialised and can be seen to include, for example, the field of cultural studies, where the focus of analysis is largely on individuals' uses of and interactions with specific commodities in actively constructing themselves as subjects in the post-war period (Storey 1996:113-117; for example Hebdige 1987). There is also a growing literature which addresses the relationships between leisure and consumerism from a historical perspective (for overview see Koshar 2002). Historians such as Donna Andrew also make noteworthy contributions. Andrew (for example 1980; 1988:119-165) explores the processes through which the 'excesses' of aristocratic society came to be represented as problematic in eighteenth-century society, signalling a further way existing writing engages with affluence as a general thematic. While all of these works concern some aspect of affluence – the way consumerism effects subject formation, the way an affluent aristocratic class is governed, etc – in investigating the effects and the affects of wealth this writing does not presume an affluence thesis as such.

As regards contemporary writing which explicitly postulates an affluence thesis and its impact on mass culture Thorstein Veblen, and his caustic analysis of early 'consumer' society *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), warrants special mention. Veblen (1899:68-102), once deemed 'the anatomist of affluence' (Diggins 1999:xi), is renowned for his satirical chronicling of a growing investment by both ordinary and wealthy folk in the ostentations of fashion and 'conspicuous consumption'. His notoriously sardonic book on affluence was first published in

1899, and thus indicates a long-standing concern with individuals interacting with and relying on commodities in constructing their identities, and with the subsequent ways that materialist culture is seen to present a potential threat to moral values. On this point Veblen's book is a forbearer to the affluence thesis advanced today – that materialist values and the prominent role of commodities in the lives of individuals pose a threat to the moral fabric of contemporary society (for example Hamilton 2003:70-74; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:13-16). Edith Wharton's novel, *The House of Mirth,* published in 1905, is also a relevant text on this point. In Wharton's novel the protagonist's narrative dilemma is premised on her (in)ability to reconcile her desire for material wealth with her wish to uphold moral virtue: this inability ultimately brings about the character's moral and corporeal undoing. Turn of the century writing such as Veblen's and Wharton's can therefore be seen as emblematic of one strand of the contemporary affluence thesis – its moral register and cautionary tone. Significant in this writing is the way in which affluence has a nascent ethical aspect: ethical in so far as it relates to self-formation and implicitly to *self-government* (Foucault 1983c:231). As in the tragic example of Wharton's (fictional) character Lily Brett, one's relationship with wealth and its trappings is implicitly connected to the government of the self. John Kenneth Galbraith (1958) and his seminal book *The Affluent Society* represents the other strand of the contemporary affluence thesis and I wish to reflect on Galbraith's book now as I consider it likewise to signal a pivotal moment in the emergence of affluence as a governmental motif.

First published in 1958, Galbraith has the notable credit of first bringing the term 'affluence' into use in public discussion (Thernstrom 1969:74). It was Galbraith's (1963:18) thesis that established economic thinking, what he termed the 'conventional wisdom', which had its basis in a model of large-scale material deprivation, was antiquated. More specifically, Galbraith (1963:30) argued that the presupposition that poverty for the mass of the population is a necessary social fact was a taken-for-granted assumption established within the canon of economic thought that the unfolding narrative of history had subsequently disproved. This idea in Galbraith's text of a paradigm of *mass* affluence is distinguishable from earlier formulations on wealth as connected to the ruling or elite classes of society, and it marks a common theme in contemporary writing on affluence. Indeed it is a necessary premise of the affluence thesis as it was elucidated above.

On Galbraith's (1963:32-34) reading, the investment in the idea of widespread deprivation made by modern western society's most eminent scholars had rested on two points: the legacy of two hundred years of widespread and enduring poverty, and the prevailing belief in the necessary scarcity of resources, inherited, Galbraith (1963:33) claimed, largely from the work of Thomas Robert Malthus. Galbraith (1963:30-37) argued in this way that, within the canon of economic texts, the 'economic problem' was seen to revolve around the twin 'problems' of scarcity of resources on the one hand, and the dependence of capital on continued profit on the other. Originally devised by David Ricardo as the 'iron law of wages', Galbraith (1963:34-37) postulated that, in combination, these two forces were

thought to engender the limits against which wages were necessarily and permanently fixed (Hession 1972:70). What this amounted to, in Galbraith's (1963:33-35) account, was a prevailing belief of a fixed and firm relationship between capital and labour, wherein the scarcity of resources acted to drive down the rewards of labour so that they could never rise much above a subsistence level. It was Galbraith's (1963:13-14) central contention that, despite the continued dominance of these ideas, as a result of the explosion of post-war growth, this historic pessimism no longer accorded with the facts of North American society (Hession 1972:68-69). The US, so Galbraith (1963:13-16) declared, had achieved a state of 'unprecedented affluence' which, he further claimed, analysts were failing to acknowledge due to their blind acceptance of scarcity as the – now outdated – 'conventional wisdom'.

The idea of a historic shift from deprivation to affluence is evident in the work of both Saunders of the CIS, representing the (neo)liberal right, and in Hamilton's championing of affluence politics. This rationale is apparent in the citation from Saunders (2003:48) above that: 'The unattainable luxuries of one generation have become commonplace in the next, and the widespread deprivation that brought the welfare state into existence has vanished.' Furthermore, Saunders' (2003:12) view, as expressed above, is unexpectedly consistent with Hamilton's (2003:146) perception of the implication of a 'post-scarcity' affluence paradigm:

> In post-scarcity societies, mass poverty no longer exists. Although the figure varies from country to country, 5-15 per cent of populations are significantly or seriously deprived in a material sense. Recognition of this fact leads us to focus directly on poverty itself, rather than on the general distribution of income and wealth in a post-growth society. (Hamilton 2003:146)

Though neither Hamilton nor Saunders reference Galbraith's thesis as a direct influence in advancing their arguments, it can be seen that they both take for granted as fact his thesis of a paradigm shift from poverty to affluence. I contend that in this development it is possible to map the emergence of affluence as a motif of government. Importantly my claim is not that the work of Saunders and Hamilton reflects a 'natural progression' of ideas but rather that it is emblematic of a series of disjunctions in thematising affluence. The first disjunction is signified by Veblen and Wharton as affluence and wealth come to be connected to questions of individual morality and subject (character) formation. A second disjunction in the thematising of affluence is signified by Galbraith and the conception of distinct (and competing) paradigms of affluence and deprivation. More precisely this disjunction is manifest in the construction of an affluence paradigm as having *replaced* a paradigm of deprivation (Galbraith 1963:13-16). Thirdly, as signified by the writing of Hamilton and Saunders there is the conception of affluence as a period presenting particular (political) problems which connect the moral and ethical wellbeing of subjects to the government of affluence. Exploring this disjunction between Galbraith's thesis on affluence and the more contemporary writing on affluence, as I do below, emphasises the individualistic premises of the contemporary affluence thesis. In so far as this is so,

the shift from a social understanding of poverty to an individualised understanding of poverty can begin to be identified in Hamilton's work.

A leading aspect of Galbraith's (1963:231-236) analysis in *The Affluent Society* is the rejection of economic growth (production output) as an end in itself. This critique of a production mentality, the same mentality Hamilton (2003:3) terms a growth 'fetish', is reproduced in writing on affluence and 'affluenza' – a strand of the contemporary writing on affluence which I address below (Hamilton 2003; Hamilton and Denniss 2005; de Graaf *et al* 2005). However, an important contrast between the earlier work by Galbraith on affluence and analyses produced today may be seen in the ends towards which arguments on affluence are directed. Galbraith's book has the very significant distinction of being regarded as one of the motivating forces in bringing the problems of continuing poverty to the forefront of public policy under the Kennedy Administration in the US (Thernstrom 1969:74). Galbraith's (1963:13-16) argument was not merely that the US had become an affluent society which refused to recognise itself as such. Further to this point Galbraith (1963:211) argued that investment in an outdated model of deprivation had resulted in a disconnect in the way private and public spending were valued, a situation which he described as resulting in 'private opulence and public squalor'. Galbraith (1963:267-268) was concerned to point out that this situation impacted more harshly on the life experiences of the poor in the United States than it did on the affluent (Thernstrom 1969:74). His treatise on affluence therefore came to be read as establishing a need, as well as a justification, for increased welfare spending (Thernstrom 1969:74). No such outcome is likely to arise from contemporary analyses of affluence, however. In the contemporary context, arguments which seek to characterise society in terms of affluence imagine a much smaller role for equality politics, at least as such politics have traditionally been understood.[98] As I demonstrate below, in the affluence thesis issues pertaining to poverty are increasingly represented to be problems of individual behaviour and values. Where such a representation

[98] Of course as Cruikshank's (1994) governmental analysis of post-war US welfare programs, noted in Chapter 2, demonstrates, this is not to suggest that the post-war reform programs were politically unproblematic. As stated in Chapter 1 my argument in this thesis is not that we need to return to the policy framework of the post-war era, not least of all because, as Cruikshank (1994) highlights, these reform programs, whatever their intentions, ultimately served as technologies of (self)government. Rather than simply advocate a return to post-war approaches, my aim in this thesis is to highlight that problematic political effects also arise where affluence emerges as a governmental motif due, in considerable measure, to the specific ways in which affluence is constituted a problem.

obtains, increased government spending on welfare is unlikely to be recommended.[99]

Examining the specific terms through which affluence is constructed as a problem in the writing by Hamilton and other Australian affluence theorists, it becomes apparent that a more immediate influence arises in the guise of popular US literature on 'affluenza'. The term 'affluenza' was first coined by John de Graaf in his 1997 US documentary of the same name which sought to expose the extent to which over-consumption had become a crippling personal obsession in contemporary North American society.[100] The documentary and its 1998 sequel, *Escape from Affluenza: Simple living and its rewards*, found a ready audience in the US. Since then a growing body of popular and critical literature on these themes has been produced in the US and internationally, with three separate books sharing 'affluenza' as their title.[101] In the US book de Graaf, Wann and Naylor (2005:2) define 'affluenza' in the following terms: 'Affluenza, n. a painful, contagious, socially transmitted condition of over-load, debt, anxiety and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more'. In their Australian version of the book, published in 2005, Hamilton and Denniss (2005:3) furnish the following definition:

> Af-flu-en-za n.1 The bloated, sluggish and unfulfilled feeling that results from efforts to keep up with the Joneses. 2. An epidemic of stress, overwork, waste and indebtedness caused by dogged pursuit of the Australian dream. 3. An unsustainable addiction to economic growth.

Oliver James, in his 2007 book of the same title, relies on similar definitions and diagnostics in characterising the problems of affluence. [102]

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[99] Tim Battin and Tony Ramsay (2006:7-13) have also made this point of the similarity between Hamilton's argument and Galbraith's thesis. They similarly argue that the individualistic tendencies in Hamilton's analysis are politically problematic. Rejecting this tendency they advocate instead a collective solution to the problems of affluence and deprivation (Battin and Ramsay 2006:4-17). It is on this point that the arguments developed in this chapter diverge from their critique. Unlike Battin and Ramsay (2006:16-17) I am not so much concerned with reproducing the binary of individual versus collective action; rather I am concerned with the *particular* ways the individual is imagined in the affluence thesis. I argue that the underlying conception of the individual present in the affluence thesis *reinforces* the neo-liberal conception of the individual.

[100] In his introduction to the second edition of the book de Graaf (2005:xvi) acknowledges that he happened across the word in an article he read during the making of the film. He does not however provide any bibliographic details for the article.

[101] *Affluenza: The all-consuming epidemic* by John de Graaf, David Wann and Thomas Naylor was first published in 2001 and marks the first written contribution to the field with this title. In 2005 Clive Hamilton and Richard Denniss published *Affluenza: When too much is never enough*, based primarily on Australian research and in 2007 British psychologist and documentary maker Oliver James published *Affluenza: How to be successful and stay sane*, drawing on international research and case studies.

[102] Indeed, pushing the analogy to an indelicate extreme, in his book on affluenza Oliver James (2007:vii) likens the virus to HIV. He (James 2007:vii) claims that having affluenza places one at greater risk of developing 'emotional distresses' much like having HIV places one at greater risk of developing AIDS.

In the literature on 'affluenza' individuals' values, particularly in the context of expanding capitalist markets, are the central issues of concern. This highlights that contemporary affluence politics, though taking Galbraith's model of a paradigm shift from poverty to affluence as implicit to their thesis, are more thoroughly focused upon the implications of affluence for the affluent than they are concerned with its implications for the poor. This signals the third disjunction in the thematising of affluence mentioned above. From its very definition, contemporary arguments about 'affluenza' contrast sharply with Galbraith's (1963:211) concern with 'public squalor' (Battin and Ramsay 2006:7-9). The problem of affluence in writing on 'affluenza' is represented to be an individual ailment arising from consumer behaviours. In this regard the concerns of contemporary affluence theorists more closely resemble nineteenth-century writing such as Veblen's (1899) and Wharton's (1997 first published 1905) which posed questions as to the implications of wealth on the individual's moral character. Much like its Australian counter-part the US affluenza literature addresses growing patterns of affluence and consumption which are considered responsible for the diminution of individual wellbeing, human communities and the natural environment. It responds to these issues via promotion of a simplification or 'downshifting' of lifestyle (de Graaf *et al* 2005:1-8; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:3-10; Hamilton 2003:205-217). This representation of the problem (Bacchi 1999:1-13; 2009:ix-xv) as an individual problem or affliction is also apparent in the term itself, which takes its meaning from a playful combination of the words 'affluence' and 'influenza', implying that this is not simply a viral infection which *individuals* contact, but an exceedingly common one.

The conception of affluenza as an individual pathology or ailment is most fully exemplified in the work of licensed US therapist Jessie H. O'Neil (1997). For O'Neil (2010) 'affluenza' *is* a condition, one she diagnoses as afflicting the extremely wealthy, some of whom are led to develop dysfunctional relationships with money and with other people as a consequence of their extreme wealth (Lank 2006). O'Neil (1997) is the author of *The Golden Ghetto: the psychology of affluence* published in the US in 1997, the same year de Graaf's documentary was aired on the US PBS network. In so far as it concentrates on a minority of extremely wealthy citizens, as opposed to Hamilton's 'aspirational' lower middle class, O'Neil's (1997) work suggests that 'affluenza' is a somewhat contested term. The view of affluenza as a condition ailing the super-wealthy was mirrored in a 2008 report on the Australian television show and current affairs program '60 minutes'. The piece, aired as 'Spoilt Rotten' (Hayes and Greenaway 2008), investigated claims that a group of young and extremely wealthy US teens had been infected with 'affluenza' – which, much like O'Neil (1997:21-24), it treated as a pseudo-psychological condition. The television report emphasised the 'wild' behaviour of the 'affluenza' afflicted teens, representing them as out of control, disobedient, irresponsible and largely unhappy (Hayes and Greenaway 2008). In the more widely published popular writing it is not just the extremely rich who are seen as potential victims of the pathology of affluence, however. Rather, as I elaborate below, affluenza comes to signify the idea that ordinary citizens are driven by materialist values and acquisitiveness, to the detriment of other non-material

values and pursuits. In the words of de Graaf, Wann and Naylor (2005:xviii): 'Affluenza infects all of us, though in different ways'.

As noted earlier, writing on affluenza is commonly animated by apprehension arising from an alleged diminution in both the quality of communal life and the moral character of citizens, argued to have occurred in parallel with the enormous wealth that the US economy has generated post World War II (de Graaf *et al* 2005:63-43, 132). In so far as this is so affluenza writing echoes concerns associated (most notably) with Robert Putnam (for example 1995; 1995b; 2000) on the decline of 'social capital' in North American society, and with the writing of US communitarian theorists more broadly. As point of note, in their 2005 book de Graaf *et al* (2005:65) openly reference Putnam's writing, with a chapter subheading entitled after Putnam's article (1995) and later book (2000), *Bowling Alone*. Putnam (1995; 1995b), along with seminal communitarian contributors such as Robert Bellah (Bellah *at al* 1985), was one of the first working in this area to theorise a general social malaise whereby it was postulated that individuals were increasingly preoccupied by material, 'extrinsic' goals, to the detriment of the social and political community. This reference to Putnam and, by extension, to communitarian political philosophy in the work of affluenza writers highlights that publications on affluenza and affluence politics are not merely curious developments situated at the margins of society. Rather, as I return to discuss in Chapter 6, they form a key element at the centre of contemporary political debates.

Affluenza writing has inspired something of a growing movement in the US which, to a lesser extent, is paralleled in Australia. In the US, organisations mobilising around affluenza include the Centre for a New American Dream (CNAD), who sponsor the website 'Affluenza.org', as well as the Simple Living Network, a similarly directed US collective of activists, academic and wider members, that aims to capture interest in issues such as overwork seen to be affecting 'affluent' communities. A chief goal for both US and Australian affluenza movements is to rally existing concern from sections of the community who regard themselves as 'time poor' despite, or more precisely, because of, their level of affluence. This goal implicitly addresses what is often termed the 'intensification' of work: hours spent in the office, while creating a growing level of economic affluence, limit time available for family and community. Increasingly the focus of political debate in 'affluent' countries, this trend has been described as the problem of 'work/life' balance (Pocock 2005; Healey 2008; see also Pocock 2003).

The issue of intense work routines does not constitute a new situation historically. Impoverished people have often had and, in many contexts, continue to have to work long and demanding hours in order to provide for themselves and their families, reducing time available for social and family interaction (Somavia 2003:25, 28, 74; Masterman-Smith and Pocock 2008:6, 8, 61-68). However, affluenza arguments do not focus on the subject of overwork from the perspective of exploitation. Instead they address work intensification as it affects affluent individuals and their personal values. The Simplicity Forum website, administered

by the on-line Simple Living Network, illustrates this individualising of the problem:

> By working less, slowing down and exploring frugality we can have the money we need to achieve freedom from the anxiety and drudgery that often surrounds money and jobs. By living deliberately, eating consciously, and exercising regularly we can experience greater levels of health and well-being. By reducing clutter, buying less, and rediscovering meaning we can infuse our days with purpose and inspiration. By setting limits, reworking priorities, and making time we can reconnect with the people and activities that feed us and contribute to thriving societies. By eating locally, traveling lightly, walking frequently, and building modestly we can preserve the planet for future generations. (Simplicity Forum 2008)

In contrast to the focus on structural causes of excessive workloads currently a part of industrial campaigns such as the International Labour Organization's (ILO) 'Decent Work Agenda', [103] for example, in this citation individuals 'living simply' is positioned as the solution to the work/life balance.[104]

A parallel development in Australia arises around the Wellbeing Manifesto authored by Hamilton, Denniss and Eckersley (2005).[105] The Wellbeing Manifesto serves as a call to (metaphoric) arms for concerned citizens, and is emblematic of a new politics around which to raise awareness of affluence-related concerns such as over-consumption and over-work. The Manifesto, currently published as an on-line document, has been publicly endorsed by over 9,000 ordinary and prominent Australians, including senators, media commentators and academics.[106] In so far as a re-orientation of personal values is constructed as the *solution* to affluenza, currently held values are implicitly constructed as the *problem* (Bacchi 1999:1-13; 2009:ix-xv). A difficulty inheres in this however, for as long as affluence theorists cast the solution to the problems of affluence as hinging upon changes in individuals' values and behaviour individualist premises underpin their project. More precisely, a difficulty inheres in this representation of the problem because the affluence thesis and affluence politics target excessive individualism as an underlying source of rampant consumerism (Hamilton 2003:65). In other words the 'problem' and the 'solution' are both predicated on a single notion: individual subjects making choices. As intimated above, the aim of the affluence theorists is to repudiate the self-interested, choice-maximising, fully rational consumer at the centre of neo-liberal ideology. If, however, the arguments of affluence theorists

[103] The Decent Work Agenda advocated by the ILO is predicated on four key themes: 'fundamental principles and rights at work and international labour standards; employment and income opportunities; social protection and social security; and social dialogue and tripartism' (ILO 1996-2010).

[104] It is also clear from the citation that environmental conservation is a key goal of the movement, a theme I return to consider when critically examining the affluence writing in Chapter 6.

[105] The Wellbeing Manifesto was launched 14th June, 2005 at an event held at the Edge Theatre, Federation Square in Melbourne. It is published on-line on the 'Wellbeing Manifesto' website (Hamilton, Eckersley and Denniss 2005). It also appears as an appendix to Hamilton and Denniss' (2005:217-224) book *Affluenza: when too much is never enough*.

[106] Wellbeing Manifesto website (2005 <http://www.wellbeingmanifesto.net/about.htm>).

are predicated on the very same conception of a rational choosing subject, albeit one capable of altruism and regard for others, it is not clear how they are to achieve this aim. Thus, despite the critique of neo-liberal ideology and its conception of individuals as rational agents possessed of the capacity of reason and self-government (for example McKnight 2005:36-43; Hamilton 2003:62-92), affluence theorists implicitly advance the same understanding in seeking a solution to the apparent problems of affluence. If it is this conception of individuals that has brought about affluenza, it is not at all clear how it can also 'solve' the problems of affluenza.[107]

I do not make this point in order to disparage the aims or motivations of the affluence movement. Rather this insight helps to identify the particular narrative of power that underwrites the affluenza movement as one in which it is the individual, and not the system, that requires intervention. This positioning of the individual as the site of government – the nexus at which change is to be made – signifies what Cruikshank (1993; 1994) terms a 'technology of citizenship': a method of subjectification aimed at producing political subjects by inducing them to (better) govern themselves towards specific ends (see also Rose 2007:72-78).[108] It is not the case that those working in this area fail to advocate what might be termed forms of 'structural' change. In the Australian context, for example, claims for structural change are evident in calls to limit the promotion of materialism and to ban advertising directed at children younger than twelve (Hamilton, Eckersley and Denniss 2005:222). However, the justification for this 'structural' change is itself presented in individualised terms. In the 'Wellbeing Manifesto', which forms a postscript to Hamilton and Denniss' *Affluenza* as well as being a published on-line document, we are told that we must 'discourage materialism and promote responsible advertising' (Hamilton, Eckersley and Denniss 2005:222). We must do so, however, not because they lead to the production of structural inequities but because 'Advertising makes us more materialistic' (Hamilton, Eckersley and Dennis 2005:222). Importantly then, even when affluence theorists advocate structural and institutional change, the focus remains firmly on changing individual values. Government is directed at individuals and their values.

To summarise, in the affluence thesis and 'affluenza' writing there is an invocation of Galbraith's notion of a paradigm of deprivation as an historical artifact of a previous era, and the corollary claim that the post-war period represents a new era of western society characterised predominantly by its unprecedented affluence. In so far as this is so, the affluence thesis – at least in the Australian context – openly accepts the idea that neo-liberal economic policy has delivered unprecedented

[107] In his 1994 book *The Mystic Economist* Hamilton (1994:14-22) is expressly concerned to critique this conception of the individual which he argues underwrites dominant economic thinking.

[108] It has previously been noted that Cruikshank in her 1994 work has specifically addressed the way 'empowerment' projects initiated as part of post-war US welfare policy functioned as technologies for governing the poor. It would perhaps be fruitful to more fully examine the affluenza movement for the way it similarly deploys such governmental technologies, 'empowering' the consumer to 'live simply'. An analysis of this type could present an interesting complement to and extension of the analyses presented in this thesis; however, it remains beyond the scope of the current project.

wealth to the mass of the population, radically altering society's underlying structure in the process (Hamilton 2003:105-106; 2006:34). The contemporary writing on affluence *differs* from the Galbraithian model, however, in focusing primarily on inter-subjective values, and questions of personal wellbeing, happiness and identity as marking the limits and 'problems' of this new period of affluence (for example Hamilton, Eckersley and Dennis 2005; Hamilton 2003:205-217; 2006:32-41).[109]

From the analysis of affluence and its construction as a particular kind of problem in the affluence thesis, given above, it becomes possible to identify important links with issues raised in the poverty wars. Where the affluence thesis and resulting affluence politics target individuals' responses to and relationships with commodities and their habits of consumption, there is a link to the argument that 'relative' conceptions of poverty serve to fuel a politics of envy rather than eradicating actual deprivation (for example Saunders 2002:8-9). More to the point, where affluence theorists argue that the solution to the problems of affluence requires a devaluation of wealth as a social marker of prestige, there is a parallel to the CIS argument that poverty ought to be conceptualised in absolute terms, rather than through the averages and income comparisons that, the CIS allege, preoccupy poverty researchers (for example Saunders 2002:8-9; Hughes 2001:16-17). The intertextual relationship between the affluence thesis and the position taken by the CIS in the poverty debates is explored further in the following sections of the chapter.

'Structures' versus subjective values: revisiting the poverty wars

In addressing the CIS critique of mainstream poverty researcher practice in Chapter 3 I attended to Saunders' (2002:8-10) thesis of a 'politics of envy'. To reiterate, Saunders' argument was that relative conceptions of poverty and well-being were predicated on a politics of envy – a comparative interest with the incomes of those at the top rather than an objective concern with absolute levels of poverty. In making his claim as to an existence of a politics of envy Saunders (2002:8) relied upon surveys that investigated whether respondents valued income in absolute or relative terms. Referencing this research Saunders (2002:8-10) went so far as to argue that it was this alleged preference for wealth expressed in relative rather than absolute terms, this 'politics of envy', that drove not only the motives of survey respondents, but also the political agenda of the 'welfare lobby' whom, Saunders (2002:8-10) claimed, had unduly conflated real poverty and genuine deprivation with mere income inequality. Saunders (2002:10) thus derided what he interpreted as tantamount to a move to 'confiscate' the incomes of those at the top in a radical redistributive agenda.

[109] This difference should perhaps not be too rigidly drawn given that Galbraith's own writing was criticised for facilitating little more than a paternalistic critique of the garish display of consumer culture in which the socially mobile working-class of 1950s US society engaged, (see Thernstrom 1969). The connection between Galbraith's text and contemporary writing on affluence is further addressed in Chapters 5 and 6.

In the work of Hamilton and collaborating affluence theorists, surveys on income preferences are similarly interpreted as reflecting negatively on the values of ordinary Australians. The preference for income expressed in relative terms is interpreted by affluence theorists (Hamilton and Denniss 2005:59) as evidence of a mentality of greed and unbridled materialism – a confusion of wants and needs – which leads individuals to imagine themselves to be deprived when they are not: 'Since aspirations always stay ahead of actual incomes, many people, who by any historical or international standard are wealthy, feel they are doing it tough' (see also Hamilton 2006:22).[110] Considered in these terms, the 'affluenza' virus appears to differ in few ways from Saunders' (2002:8-9) 'politics of envy'.

To recapitulate Hamilton's argument (2002; 2006:22; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:58-59), in the period of late capitalism, individuals afflicted with the affluenza virus are no longer able to distinguish want from need. This is seen to be so much the case that it is even suggested that afflicted individuals are willing to recklessly spend their way into bankruptcy without regard for the consequences of their consumer habits and needless spending. Hamilton (2006:28) is unequivocal on this point:

> Yet the 'mortgage stress' that generate[s] the headlines is not the unexpected result of rising interest rates or falling incomes: it is the result of luxury fever, which has driven many thousands of individuals to borrow more money than they can comfortably repay in order to satisfy their escalating acquisitiveness. In other words, many people have set their sights on levels of comfort and luxury they cannot afford and have taken on too much debt in order to get there…
>
> The real concerns of yesterday's poor have become the imagined concerns of today's rich.[111]

Along these lines Hamilton has therefore advocated a *devaluation* of wealth (2003:145) as more effective than a *redistribution* of wealth in improving wellbeing in the affluent society: 'changes in personal attitudes and prevailing social expectations can result in a sharp improvement in individual and social wellbeing, without any change in the physical distribution of a nation's wealth'.

The focus on devaluing rather than redistributing wealth arises in part from affluence theorists' claim that neo-liberals and social democrats are equally bewitched by the fetish of economic growth (for example Hamilton 2003:1-7; also

[110] In his analysis of the US as an affluent society in 1958 Galbraith (1963:253) made a similar assertion when characterising poverty, implying that while the political progressive might legitimately continue to feel concern for the poor, the nature of poverty in affluent societies had changed: 'Meanwhile, the individuals with whom he sympathises and whom he seeks to favour are no longer the tax-ridden poor of Bengal or the first Empire, but who, by all historical standards, are themselves comparatively opulent citizens.' The reference to 'third-world' poverty is often repeated by Hamilton (for example 2003:233; 2002b) in condemning relatively affluent subjects who, according to Hamilton, imagine themselves deprived.

[111] This claim was made prior to the sub-prime lending 'bubble' in the US which resulted in the so-called 'Global Financial Crisis'.

McKnight 2005:60-63). As mentioned previously, this supposed congruence is a central premise in the overarching affluence thesis that preoccupation with economic growth leads to the marginalisation of all other (intrinsic) goals and values; as a consequence individuals become compulsive and unthinking consumers unendingly in pursuit of commodities that they do not need. My argument is that, not only does this focus on devaluing wealth have unintended consequences in regards to poverty but, as I now draw out, it is not as effective a critique of (the ideology of) neo-liberalism as affluence theorists would hope.

With their narrow focus on individual values and reckless material desire, absent from affluence theorists' discussion is any consideration of the unequal and differentiated ways in which individuals experience the so-called 'age of affluence' (Battin and Ramsay 2006:12-14). An example of this can be seen in the discussion of credit and lending practices. Hamilton and Denniss (2005:71-84; also Hamilton 2006:28) focus their critique primarily upon the behaviour of individuals who take out financial loans, representing their actions as motivated by envy and greed (Battin and Ramsay 2006:12-14). They do make mention of the way that, in recent years, banks have engaged in a new approach to the marketing of credit – from a practice reserved for exceptional occasions to a practice constructed as fundamental to everyday living – reflecting some attention to structural and institutional processes (Hamilton and Denniss 2005:70-74). Nonetheless, the discussion of credit lending by Hamilton and Denniss may be contrasted to Howard Karger's 2005 exposure of unethical credit lending practices in the US. Karger's focus is directed particularly at fringe credit practices – practices which target impoverished and financially disadvantaged people – for considerable financial reward to their shareholders. In his investigation of the industry Karger (2005) reveals many insidious, and sometimes outright duplicitous, ways in which the fringe credit industry profits from ethically dubious, predatory practices which specifically target the poor. Many of the practices Karger (2005) exposes in his account of the US lending system are relevant to the Australian context.

Karger (2005:ix-xvi) draws attention, for example, to the way fringe credit providers often specifically target individuals on low incomes with poor credit ratings. The services they offer, whether short-term cash loans, sub-prime mortgages or debt repayment loans, are at high interest rates detailed in contracts that are frequently complex and thus not always transparent to potential debtors (Karger 2005:87-194). This makes defaulting on loans increasingly likely. In a review of the credit industry by the Victorian Government, published in 2006, similar issues were reported as pertinent in Australia (Community Affairs Victoria 2006). There were also reports of illegal practices, such as loan companies harassing and intimidating debtors and, in one reported case, appropriating all of a debtors wages after they had defaulted on a loan, leaving the individual in question with no money for food or mortgage repayments, which is against industry practice (Community Affairs Victoria 2006:97-98). The particular vulnerability faced by individuals on low incomes is that they often require short-term loans in order to respond to emergencies, such as repairs to necessary appliances (i.e. a refrigerator) or unexpected health costs.

However, due to their low incomes, these groups are not serviced by the mainstream credit industry with its lower interest rates and more stringent regulations. In the literature this is often referred to as causing 'financial exclusion' and accompanies a call for better protection of this sector of the community and increased regulation of companies which profit from their poverty and resulting vulnerability (for example Howell and Wilson 2005:128-134).

Furthering this point, qualitative research carried out in 2008 indicated that, when questioned on the subject, a survey sample of the Australian public was troubled by a rise in predatory lending practices by banks which targeted financially vulnerable groups, particularly in relation to the setting of limits on credit cards (Fear and O'Brien 2008:5).[112] In contrast to the focus taken by Hamilton and Denniss (2005:71-84), Karger's (2005) book and the local Australian research (Fear and O'Brien 2008; Howell and Wilson 2005; Community Affairs Victoria 2006) indicate that there are issues other than individual values and greed that contribute to credit and lending practices. Given the events leading up to the so-called 'Global Financial Crisis' in 2009, this point becomes even more significant.

There is an inherent limitation in the way that affluenza arguments are formulated that affects their ability to accommodate social/structural accounts of poverty. This arises from their rejection of the social democratic approach which focuses on inequality and which implicitly informs the style of analysis evident in investigations of sub-prime lending practices (for example Karger 2005; Howell and Wilson 2005; Community Affairs Victoria 2006). In contrast, politics of affluence arguments contend that the defining features of contemporary capitalism are affluence and the surety of its abundance, and that the defining issues for individuals are plurality of choice in the spheres of work and home. In so far as this is so, poverty is implicitly constructed in individualistic terms. Once this line of reasoning is established, any attempt to add to the argument that poverty is structurally produced contradicts the larger premise. If capitalism creates affluence and choice, then poverty must be the result of poor choices and cannot be attributed to any inherent structure of the capitalist system. Though Hamilton (2006:29) remains adamant that his view does not constitute an abandonment of the poor, it is difficult to see how this is the case given the specific ways in which he presents his argument. Moreover, as I return to discuss in Chapter 5, in his more recent writing Hamilton (2006:21, 34) appears to explicitly treat the issue of poverty in late capitalism as the result of individual poor choices and bad luck.

Further to this limitation in addressing poverty, the concern to devalue wealth which informs the affluence thesis results in an additional conceptual limitation. Put simply, the critique of individual values is not unique to affluence theorists. Rather, this critique is one which authors at the CIS also advance. In drawing attention to this point, that there are multiple critiques of individuals' values in

[112] The research referenced here by Fear and O'Brien (2008) was produced under the auspices of The Australia Institute, the think tank that Hamilton himself was involved in establishing in 1994. The paper was published after Hamilton resigned from his post as Director; however the research itself was carried out in late 2007 while he was at his post.

late capitalism, my purpose is to show that, despite the hopes of affluence theorists, making this critique does not necessarily lead to a rejection of neo-liberalism as an ideology. Rather, the critique of materialist *individual* values can be commensurate with promotion of neo-liberal ideology and the capitalist economic system. This is a fundamental point in examining the affluence thesis. As mentioned above, affluence theorists explicitly position their analyses as critiques of late capitalism and the diminished personal values it is supposed to lead to, aiming ultimately to challenge the dominance of neo-liberal ideology (for example see McKnight 2005:74; Hamilton 2003:209-217; 2006:32445). However, as I now demonstrate, their focus on individuals impedes their success in achieving this goal.

Ian Harper, (2003:13), in his 2003 Acton Lecture on Religion and Freedom, later published by the CIS as part of their 'Occasional Papers' series, has in a similar manner argued that Christian morality is fundamental in mitigating the individualism unleashed by market capitalism, seeing in market capitalism the potential for human misery:

> The market can and will violate human dignity, unless this is well defined and enshrined in law or custom. Market capitalism is, in the end, a servant of humanity in the interest of improving our material lot on this earth. If allowed to master us, it will debase and ultimately destroy us.

Despite this acknowledgement of a potential threat to individual morality Harper (2003:18), contra Hamilton and the affluence theorists, is not led to reject market capitalism. Rather he argues that market capitalism (i.e. ideological neo-liberalism) and Christian morality succeed as necessary complements to each other. For Harper (2003:18) there is an important distinction between market capitalism and materialism, with market capitalism having the *potential* to promote materialism but not being *reducible* to it. This duality is also fundamental in Saunders' (2002) arguments on the politics of envy. Saunders (2002:9-10), as described in Chapter 3, was adamant that it is not income inequality that has the potential to rend the moral fabric of communities but income *comparisons* which lead to greed and, ultimately, to individuals coveting the possessions of the more fortunate.

This perceived need to temper individual values so that morality is not eclipsed by the unbridled riches that neo-liberalism bestows (upon some) is shared by no less a neo-liberal luminary than Charles Murray. Murray (2007), in a 2007 *Sydney Morning Herald* article published while he was in Australia as a guest of the CIS, champions the importance of a liberal education for the 'cognitive elite' whom he claims naturally progress to prominent positions of power in western societies.[113] For Murray (2007) this liberal education is necessary in order to equip elite individuals with a moral framework from within which to make the decisions that

[113] As a point of note it was this visit by Murray in 2007 and an accompanying series of lectures, 'In Praise of Elitism', which served as the inspiration for the CIS publication 'Declaring Dependence; Declaring Independence' (2008). This is the series of essays, addressed in Chapter 3, in which CIS authors argued that individuals on welfare should be denied the right to vote.

ultimately affect all of our lives. Murray's argument is therefore similarly concerned with preventing materialist values and self-interest, recognised as potential side-effects of the capitalist system, from overly influencing decision makers who guide the direction of our societies. Clearly then, the critique of individual values under capitalism does not challenge the neo-liberal position as Hamilton and fellow affluence theorists might hope to be the case. Instead, this line of argument on individual values is largely congruent with the argument that Australian society is beset by a 'politics of envy' – the argument put forward by CIS authors in challenging claims of poverty researchers that poverty continues to be a troubling feature of Australian society (Saunders 2002:8-10; Hughes 2001:16-17).

Therefore, despite the intentions of affluence theorists, the politics of affluence appear limited in their capacity to challenge neo-liberalism as a 'hegemonic' ideology (McKnight 2005:74). Rather, on certain key points the affluence thesis is consistent with the neo-liberal (ideological) argument. As addressed in Chapter 3, Saunders and the CIS mount the (neo-liberal) argument that poverty ought to be considered in absolute and not relative terms, and that the claims of poverty researchers today are misleadingly subjective (for example Tsumori *et al* 2002:1-3; Saunders and Tsumori 2002b:15; Saunders 2002:8-10). In a not entirely dissimilar manner the affluence thesis holds that today the majority of individuals who believe themselves to be deprived are in fact only suffering due to the comparisons they make between their own incomes and those at the top of the economic scale and are, by most 'objective' accounts, affluent (for example Hamilton 2006:22-29; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:9). Where the arguments of the CIS were successful in undermining a qualitative statistical approach to the measure of poverty, affluence theorists effectively undermine the reliability of quantitative approaches, casting the experience of 'imagined' deprivation as similarly subjective. What is more, as I now turn to show, in their submission to the Senate Inquiry into Poverty, Hamilton and Denniss argue a need for restrictive definitions of poverty that shift research away from relative or subjective accounts, yet, as described in Chapter 3 these are the exact approaches that mainstream poverty researchers advocate.[114]

Poverty in question: arguing from affluence

Hamilton and Denniss addressed the Senate Panel on the same day that the altercation occurred between then-Senator Knowles and representatives of the St Vincent de Paul Society, discussed in Chapter 3. It will be recalled that during the submission by representatives of the St Vincent de Paul Society a disagreement occurred between the presenters and Senator Knowles, with the Senator implying inaccuracies in the definition and measurement of poverty given in the Society's submission. The presenters, in response, appeared to imply that the Senator's

[114] Although the submission was, in fact, delivered prior to the publication of their printed collaboration, the arguments Hamilton and Denniss present in the submission are consistent with their later publications on affluence.

comments reflected the welfare behaviourism thesis which constructs the poor as responsible for their poverty (Community Affairs References Committee transcript 2003:602-608). At a certain point in the presentation Senator Knowles interrupted the presenters' discussion of the usefulness of a budget standard approach in calculating welfare payments. Remonstrating, the Senator made the case that expenditure on cigarettes, alcohol, and gambling contributed significantly to poverty. One of the presenters, Mr. McCarthy (Community Affairs References Committee transcript 2003:608), appeared to object to the Senator's insistent tone on this point, suggesting that it was demeaning and demonising to suggest that many people on low incomes wasted it on such pursuits:

> **Mr Wicks**– A budget standard, which I mentioned earlier. We had a meeting recently with FaCS [Department of Family and Community Services]. They were talking about a new payment system for social welfare payments and that question came up. We said, 'The only way you can set a rational level for [welfare] payments is a budget standard – that is, you take a basket of goods and services that a person needs –
> **Senator Knowles**– Excluding cigarettes, excluding alcohol, excluding gambling.
> **Mr Wicks**– Yes, absolutely – take them out.
> **Senator Knowles**– Let us face it, that is a huge cost to low-income people.
> **Mr McCarthy**– To some low-income people.
> **Senator Knowles**– To a lot of low-income people.
> **Mr McCarthy**– To some low-income people.
> **Senator Knowles**– To some, but a number.
> **Mr McCarthy**– Let us not demean and demonise them again, Senator. To some.
> **Senator Knowles**– I am not demonising them – I work very closely with them, I will have you know – but I am saying that it is nonetheless a very significant problem with poverty, when people are spending $70 or $80 a week on cigarettes and going down to the pub or drinking at home. I cited an example when this committee was in Newcastle. I did a little bit of research one night when I watched a guy put eight $50 bills into a poker machine in the space of less than 15 minutes. I thought he had left the hotel – he had not. He had gone to the ATM to get more.
> **Mr McCarthy**– Are you going to tell me that he is on $20,000 a year?
> **Senator Knowles**– I watched another two guys, who did not look particularly well off – but one can never judge a book by its cover – and they were on that machine from the time I drove past and parked the car the first time until I came back 2½ hours later. Let us face it: gambling is a problem. (Senate Community Affairs References Committee transcript 2003:608-609)

In contrast to the argumentative tone evident here, the presentation by Hamilton and Denniss was a far more subdued affair. For her part Senator Knowles' only response was to state: 'I am pleased with your submission. Thank you very much' (Senate Community Affairs References Committee transcript 2003:647).

The written submission that Hamilton and Denniss presented was encapsulated by Hamilton (Senate Community Affairs References Committee transcript 2003:646) in the following terms:

> As long as everyone in Australia believes that they are doing it tough, we will never give those at the bottom of the heap who are suffering genuine hardship the attention that they deserve…
> There is serious poverty in Australia. Its extent is greatly exaggerated, but we do not give nearly enough attention to its depth and significance…

Hamilton (Senate Community Affairs References Committee transcript 2003:648, my emphasis) went on to inform the panel that: 'In our view, we need to *define* poverty quite *tightly*. We need to dismiss the complaints of those who are doing well by any *objective* measure and really tackle it.'

The implication here is that what is needed is a tight, 'absolute' rather than 'relative' measure of poverty. What is overlooked, of course, is the extent to which measures of poverty imply conceptions of poverty, an argument elaborated at length in Chapter 3. There is little point in arguing that the CIS have a behavioural conception of poverty, as Hamilton (Senate Community Affairs References Committee Transcript 2003:648-649) does later in the presentation, when, on all other points, the two are in agreement as to the wider critique of the practice of poverty research – that it conflates and exaggerates real poverty with mere income inequality or 'imagined deprivation'. This question of defining poverty arose again where Hamilton was questioned on the point by Senator Foreshaw:

> **Senator Foreshaw**– I am interested in your earlier comments about people on $60,000 or people generally who are middle class claiming that they are doing it tough. Do you have a measurement or a concept of the level at which people might be doing it tough – if they are earning say, between $30,000 and $60,000? Or do you just look at a figure and say that if you are getting $50,000 a year, which is $1,000 a week, then it is hard to argue that you are doing it tough? If people have three or four kids, by the time the tax is taken out and the rent is taken out and all the costs have been met, that is when they say to me, 'I accept I've got a job and I accept I've got an income coming in, but I still believe I'm doing it tough because I'm not able to save, I'm not able to get a deposit for a house or improve my position and I'm always struggling, with credit card debt rising all the time.' I suppose this is more financial hardship than poverty. Would you expand on that a bit?
> **Dr Hamilton**– In a way this is the core question. Of course, the extent to which people might be doing it tough on a certain income does, as you indicate, depend very much on their personal circumstances. Clearly it makes a big difference if you live in Sydney compared to Hobart and it does depend greatly, as all of us who have children know, on how many children you have and on the demands that they place on you.
> Let me make a couple of points. I have met two people who own their own house and are on the pension and feel as if they are doing perfectly well; they do not have any complaints. I have met other pensioners who are, as far

> as I can tell, in identical circumstances but who feel they are struggling to make ends meet. So *the perceptions of people influence these things a great deal.* (Senate Community Affairs References Committee transcript 2003:649-650, my emphasis)

In resolving the 'core question' of how poverty and inequality interrelate Hamilton very much appears to come down on the same side as the CIS. There is less difference than he acknowledges in arguments which claim that it is the *perceptions* of pensioners that influence their sense of deprivation and the argument from the CIS, and Saunders (2002:8-10) in particular, of a 'politics of envy'. After all, authors from the CIS were also willing to acknowledge the existence of poverty – in their writing the debate was about what *level* of poverty could be demonstrated and by what *definition* it was established (for example Saunders 2002:2-7; Tsumori *et al* 2002:1-3; Saunders and Tsumori 2002b:15) – and on these key points Hamilton and Denniss appear to agree.

To be fair, Hamilton (2006:28) insists that his argument should not be read as an attempt to 'trivialis[e]' poverty:

> In fact my intention is to counter the opposite tendency, that of talking up the extent of poverty in order to emphasise its moral and social urgency as a problem to be addressed. Too many social democrats adopt this tactic in the mistaken belief that inflating the problem will stimulate greater public sympathy and more government action. (Hamilton 2006:29)

But on this point too Hamilton can be seen to repeat the reasoning of CIS arguments that the 'welfare lobby' intentionally inflate poverty figures. As seen in the previous chapter Hughes (2001:17) makes exactly this case: 'The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) thus has a large constituency… In their pleas for support, the focus has sometimes been on atypical cases at the cost of verisimilitude. "Crying wolf" is unlikely to be helpful in the long run'. In point of fact this allegation that mainstream poverty researchers inflate poverty figures was at the centre of the poverty wars. Hamilton (2006:29), it seems, despite having been a long time defender of poverty researchers from attack by the CIS, is now inclined to claim, along lines remarkably similar to CIS arguments, that poverty figures are sometimes exaggerated by social democrats eager to win support to their cause.

Ultimately Hamilton's (2006:28-29) claim that his argument on imagined deprivation should not be read as a dismissal of the real deprivation that (according to him) a small percentage of the population experience is of little assistance given the wider ambit of the affluence thesis and the affluence politics he advocates. Instead his argument on 'imagined deprivation', once intended to account for the individualised conception of poverty, falls short of achieving this goal. In decoupling questions of poverty and inequality, Hamilton's thesis on 'imagined deprivation' is not as radically different from the politics of envy as Hamilton believes. Whatever differences might otherwise divide them, both the (neo)liberal right and the post-materialist left appear to agree that keeping relative poverty an issue on the political agenda contributes to a culture of envy

and aspiration that is grossly undesirable (Saunders 2002:8; Hamilton 2003:239; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:3-13). Interestingly, while those on the right appear to argue in this way for fear that issues of poverty and inequality have the potential to galvanise a significant and radical political constituency (Saunders 2002:8-10), the post-materialist left appear to do so on the belief that issues of poverty and inequality *do not* have the potential to do so and therefore cannot promote progressive social change (Hamilton 2006:7; 2003:ix-xiv); McKnight 2005:5, 12). The implications of this confluence of views are further examined in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

In Chapter 3 I explored the CIS critique that mainstream poverty research is premised on a confusion of 'real' poverty with 'mere' income inequality. In this chapter I have addressed the way in which the emergence of a post-materialist politics of affluence contributes to and compounds this critique of 'relative' definitions of poverty. In this confluence of views between the neo-liberal right and the post-materialist left, I contend, a new governmental motif can be identified: affluence. Demonstrating the implicit intertextuality between the 'politics of envy' (Saunders 2002:8-10; Hughes 2001:16-17) and the affluence thesis, throughout the chapter I highlighted the way that the emergence of this affluence motif has distinct implications for the way poverty is understood. In Chapter 5 I attend more closely to the way affluence is conceptualised as a particular post-material problem and the specific way poverty comes to be constructed as 'residual'.

Chapter 5

Poverty as a 'residual' problem: Affluence and post-materialism

'Since the Second World War the distribution of income has at times become more equal and at times less equal, and when it has been deteriorating in some countries it has been improving in others. But the fact is that the great majority who once lived in material deprivation no longer do. Of course, there is a residue at the bottom who continue to struggle; we still have poverty, something sustained growth and protracted efforts have failed to eliminate. As a society we have an obligation to attempt ceaselessly to eradicate poverty, but why does the Left continue to base its entire political philosophy and strategy on the circumstance of the bottom ten percent? This is a philosophy that has more in common with the ethic of Christian charity than of radical social change.'

Clive Hamilton (2003) *Growth Fetish*, p.xii

Chapter 4 mapped the emergence of affluence as a governmental motif, attending in particular to the role of the affluence thesis in the poverty wars. In examining the affluence thesis it was argued that a dilemma arose in Hamilton's attempt to treat subjective accounts of deprivation in Australia as a problem of inflated consumer desires whilst at the same time claim that some people *really do* experience genuine deprivation and that the state needs to intervene to relieve this situation. Examining Hamilton's (for example 2002; 2003; 2003b; 2006) writing in particular, and the affluence thesis more generally (for example McKnight 2005; Hamilton, Eckersley and Denniss 2005), it was thus argued that the claim from Hamilton and Denniss (Hamilton 2002; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:3-16) that Australia is beset by 'imagined deprivation' was not particularly distinct from the CIS conception of a 'politics of envy' (Hughes 2001; Saunders 2002:8-9; 2004:13; Saunders and Tsumori 2002b:58). Furthermore, an actual and direct connection between the writing on affluence and the poverty debate in Australia was demonstrated. However, establishing this relationship does not in itself establish that there is a *necessary* connection between the affluence thesis and the individualised conception of poverty. It would be an unfair and incomplete assessment to suggest that the affluence thesis should be reduced to the political uses to which it is put, or appears to be put, as this proves nothing as regards the textual content of the affluence thesis. Hence, the aim of this chapter is to provide a closer reading of the affluence thesis and the specific account of poverty it endorses.

In contemplating the affluence thesis in this chapter particular attention is given to exploring post-materialism as constituting its fundamental premise. It is argued that the post-materialist hypothesis and the developmental narrative upon which it is predicated, as explicated in the early work of Ronald Inglehart (1971; 1977), *inherently* and *necessarily* constructs poverty in the so-called 'affluent society' as a 'residual' and thus, largely individualised, problem. In so far as the affluence thesis is premised upon this post-materialist hypothesis, elucidated in the chapter, the affluence thesis similarly commits to the view that poverty is residual and individualised. Indeed the shift in conceptualising poverty (from social to individualised) present in the work of affluence theorists, is expressly highlighted in this chapter. The chapter thus contributes to the overarching thesis that affluence serves as an emergent governmental motif by explaining the underlying rationale that constructs poverty and affluence as necessarily separate and discrete stages of human development.

Having provided an analysis of the affluence thesis as predicated on a post-materialist hypothesis, in the final sections of the chapter the similarities and discontinuities between the CIS (for example Saunders 2003; 2002:8-10; Hughes 2001:16-17) arguments on affluence and the post-materialist left arguments on affluence (for example Hamilton 2006; Hamilton and Denniss 2005; McKnight 2005:125-126) are reflected upon. The aim of the discussion is to challenge the apparent neutrality of these arguments, pointing out the ways in which they are, at core, interpretative and not merely descriptive of empirical phenomena. It is argued that while the demographic changes that they reference may and do occur

the attempt to address and articulate any such change is not merely a descriptive task but a project full of meaning. That is to say, it is a *political* project which is neither neutral nor 'natural'. Framing the discussion in these terms in Chapter 6 an alternative account of the so-called 'affluence paradigm' is posited. There the argument of a governmentality of affluence is further elaborated, as is the contention that changes to social and political institutions are more effectively explained by the changing nature of governmental problematics and the 'normal frame of life' (Dean 2006:32), than simply by demographic shifts.

Post-materialism

It has perhaps been imprecise to refer above to *the* post-materialist hypothesis, for there are arguably several sociological and philosophical theses which fit such a description. The one which concerns me here is that associated with the work of political scientist Ronald Inglehart (1971; 1977) who in the early 1970s argued that a significant and unprecedented shift, what he described as tantamount to a 'silent revolution', was underway in the value system of western publics. Inglehart (1977:262-290) characterised this shift as a move from 'materialist' to 'post-materialist values'.[115] In Inglehart's (1971:993; 1977:27-31) postulation materialist values correspond with instrumental and acquisitive value preferences, while post-materialist values are expressive, outward looking, and group oriented.[116] Inglehart's post-material hypothesis did not involve merely the reporting of citizens' value preferences. He was also concerned to furnish an analysis which accounted for the revolutionary development that he believed his surveys had uncovered. This particular hypothesis is of relevance to the discussion at hand.

Inglehart (1971:991-992; 1977:3, 22-24) hypothesised that individuals socialised in relative economic and physical security were inclined to take for granted their economic ease and, as a consequence, held more 'evolved' values. This hypothesis was premised on the fact that a significant percentage of survey respondents reporting post-materialist values came from the middle class, as well as on certain tenets of developmental psychology (Inglehart 1971:991-992; 1977:22-24). In advancing his hypothesis of an alleged post-materialist value shift, Inglehart (1971:991-992; 1977:22-24) drew, in particular, on the work of US psychologist Abraham Maslow and Maslow's conceptualisation of a hierarchy of human needs:

> My basic hypothesis is that given individuals pursue various goals in hierarchical order – giving maximum attention to the things that they sense to be most important unsatisfied needs at a given time. A man lost in a

[115] In the 1971 article in which Inglehart first put forward his hypothesis of a 'silent revolution' he did not use the terms 'materialist' and 'post-materialist', but 'acquisitive' and 'post-bourgeois' instead. In the revised book-length account of his argument, published in 1977, he had substituted these terms with 'materialist' and 'post-materialist' and it is these terms by which his argument has come to be widely known. It is these terms I therefore adopt in the thesis.

[116] As a point of note, this language on 'expressive' versus 'acquisitive' values reflects the central terms of the affluenza writing addressed in Chapter 4 (de Graaf *et al* 2005; Hamilton and Denniss 2005).

> desert, for example, may be obsessed by his need for water, devoting virtually all his attention to the search for it. When a supply is readily available but food is scarce, he may take the former for granted (having achieved biological homeostasis in that respect) and may devote himself to gathering food. (Inglehart 1971:991)[117]

With this postulation of individuals' value-ordering as prompted by 'drives' of need, and the additional caveat that an individual's formative identification with political parties has an enduring – and thus disproportionately influential – impact on their political allegiances,[118] Inglehart (1971:991-993) advanced his claim that political values corresponded with material/economic development. As a means of testing this post-materialist hypothesis Inglehart drew attention (1971:991) to the uneven material development within the societies he surveyed, arguing that this differentiated experience of privation corresponded with differences in individuals' values:

> Drawing on the work of Abraham Maslow, we reason that the age cohorts who had experienced the wars and scarcities of the era preceding the West European economic miracles would accord a relatively high priority to economic security and to what Maslow terms the safety needs. For the younger cohorts, a set of 'post-bourgeois' values, relating to the need for belonging, and to aesthetic and intellectual needs, would be more likely to take top priorities.[119]

A great deal more could be said about Inglehart's analysis, the details of his methodology, and its significant refinement in the thirty plus years since its initial publication. However, for the purpose of the present discussion the two related points elucidated above are fundamental to understanding post-materialism. The two points, to reiterate, are: firstly that values, like needs, are hierarchically ordered; and secondly, that the state of affluence or economic ease corresponds with, or ought to correspond with, ascendance up the hierarchy of values. Post-materialism, as explicated by Inglehart (1971:991-993), constructs a continuum between biological, social and cultural needs, ordering and valuing them in a hierarchical fashion. As explained above, the post-materialist hypothesis takes for granted that once 'basic' needs of human biological functioning, such as those associated with subsistence, have been met, need and effort naturally progress towards the attainment of 'higher' goods associated with the cultural sphere and human flourishing. This rationale constitutes a developmental narrative: the post-

[117] Repeating this theme in his 1977 book Inglehart (1997:3) asserts: 'a desire for beauty may be more or less universal, but hungry people are more likely to seek food than aesthetic satisfaction.'

[118] Inglehart (1971:991-993) relied on this caveat of enduring party allegiances to explain why increases in wealth experienced in the course of an individual lifetime did not, in the research, translate into changing voting patterns.

[119] This same argument is repeated in greater depth in Inglehart's 1977 book *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics.* In both his 1971 article and his later book Inglehart (1971:992-993; 1977:285-286) deploys the post-materialist hypothesis as a means for explaining the support of the revolutionary actions taken in France in 1968, arguing that the younger generation of citizens, in supporting this action, were disproportionately possessed of 'post-materialist' values.

materialist/materialist binary not only establishes that there are different types of values, but orders human needs and values hierarchically. This effects a distinction between lower values (basic material needs) and higher values ('higher' cultural needs). Post-materialism may therefore be seen to ascribe to a universalised and essentialised notion of human being and human development.

There is of course considerable debate and on-going contestation as to whether or not a value shift, such as described by Inglehart, has *actually* transpired amongst the citizens of western states.[120] Hamilton (2002; 2004; 2006:20-29), Denniss (Hamilton and Denniss 2005:1-8), and the US affluenza theorists (for example De Graff *et al* 2005:1-8) whose work was discussed in Chapter 4, for example, contest this interpretation. Indeed Inglehart's hypothesis of a shift from materialist to post-materialist values is almost inverted by affluence theorists such as Hamilton and Denniss (2005:9, 58-68) who allege that citizens of western states are becoming more rather than less materialistic as their level of affluence increases. Despite the contestation that exists in determining the *actual* values of citizens, I contend that the hierarchy of needs and values central to Inglehart's post-materialist hypothesis is similarly central to the affluence thesis. I aim to demonstrate that, while affluence theorists might challenge the idea that western citizens have developed post-materialist values, their arguments are predicated on the presupposition that, in the circumstance of affluence which (they claim) characterises western society today, citizens *ought* to have developed post-materialist values.

Affluence as a post-materialist paradigm

It is important to clarify that the post-materialist hypothesis, as it was explicated above, has an especially significant role in Hamilton's overall critical project. As acknowledged in Chapter 4, Hamilton's (2003:1-21; Hamilton, 2006:36-37; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:1-18) overriding project is to furnish a critique of the imperative of economic growth – the 'growth fetish' – and to recommend an alternative political program. Hamilton (2003:xi-xv) rests his critique on the following premise: if deprivation is no longer a mass problem, then economic growth is no longer a self-evident good, and it becomes possible to treat growth as merely one of several equally-weighted social goods to be debated over and traded-off in keeping with other, higher-value ends. This reasoning is not only implicit in Hamilton's writing; it is shared by other affluence theorists who are also concerned to challenge the status afforded to economic growth as I now demonstrate.

As Hamilton proclaims the existence of a 'growth fetish', Galbraith (1963:107-120) in his book *The Affluent Society* declared that amongst economists of his day there existed what amounted to a production fetish. Galbraith (1963:231-236) argued

[120] For discussion, including mention of some of the technical points arising in attempts to measure values, see Hansen and Tol (2003).

that the value accorded production, and production efficiency, needed to be re-examined given that broad scale affluence had (according to Galbraith) now been achieved. More precisely, Galbraith (1963:231-236) asserted that, as the purpose of production was no longer to meet basic needs – affluence having been achieved – it was no longer self-evident that other goals should be subjugated in order to increase production efficiency. Galbraith (1963:233) thus concluded that:

> If the modern corporation must manufacture not only goods but the desire for the goods it manufactures, the efficiency of the first part of this activity ceases to be decisive. One could indeed argue that human happiness would be as effectively advanced by inefficiency in want creation as efficiency in production. Under these circumstances, the relation of the modern corporation to the people who comprise it – their chance for dignity, individuality, and full development of personality – may be at least as important as efficiency.

The rationale here parallels Hamilton's argument: where affluence is achieved economic production is no longer trumps, but needs to be weighed against other higher-value ends, such as the 'development of personality' (Galbraith 1963:233).[121]

Eckersley, a fellow affluence theorist, displays a similar sentiment in his argument of a need to appraise economic development against higher-value ends. In an article entitled, 'The challenge of post-materialism', Eckersley (2005:5) argues that the paradigm of 'sustainable development' has risen as a challenge to the growth imperative: 'Sustainable development does not accord economic growth "overriding" priority. Instead, it seeks a better balance and integration of social, environmental and economic goals and objectives to produce a high, equitable and enduring quality of life.' For Eckersley this shift is congruous with a shift in individual values – Eckersley (2004:243-248) agrees with Inglehart that individuals are becoming less and not more materialistic, though he asserts that 'the bar for middle-class [material] aspirations … keeps getting raised' (2004:248). There is a consistent sequence of ideas in the underlying rationale evident in these three examples. The critique of growth as a policy imperative is predicated on the idea that a stage of affluence has been achieved, and the idea that a stage of affluence has been achieved is in turn predicated on the developmental narrative (a progression from basic material needs to higher cultural values) fundamental to the post-materialist hypothesis. Thus, the post-materialist hypothesis can be seen to be a necessary premise in the critique of economic growth that affluence theorists make.

In further exploring the way that the affluence thesis is informed by the post-materialist hypothesis I am particularly concerned to identify junctions at which the affluence thesis can be seen to be explicitly informed by the two points described above as central to post-materialism. The two points are: the

[121] As I return to consider, this rationale also implicitly suggest that 'the poor', those whom are forced to labour long hours for subsistence requirements, have not had the opportunity for 'full development of personality' (Galbraith 1963:233).

hierarchical ordering of needs and values; and the related presupposition that as affluence increases so values *ought* to 'evolve'. One incidence of an implicit investment in this perception of a progression from biological needs to cultural needs is apparent in the following claim from Hamilton (2003:147):

> In countries where the economic problem has been solved it is no longer necessary or desirable to think of work primarily as a means of material survival. The great majority of people are freed of this constraint, so work can become first and foremost an activity devoted to fulfilling human potential.

Not only is a distinction drawn between needs associated with basic survival on the one hand and human flourishing on the other, but, importantly, there is an implicit *hierarchy* of needs in this construction. The inference of developmental progression positions cultural needs, such as those alluded to by the phrase 'fulfilling human potential' (Hamilton 2003:147), as being of a higher order than basic biological needs associated with a merely 'material' existence.

Additional examples of a developmental narrative can be discerned in Hamilton's writing. One example pertinent to the discussion at hand arises in his argument of a need to shift the object of left politics from deprivation to affluence. As intimated in the citation given at the beginning of the chapter, in Hamilton's (2003:xii) analysis the Australian left have failed to recognise the transformation from deprivation to affluence. Their failure to do so, Hamilton (2003:xiv) maintains, accounts for their repeated electoral losses:

> The deprivation model saps progressive people of their creative energy, not only because they are co-opted into supporting the fundamental goal of neo-liberalism…[the imperative of economic growth] Adherence to the deprivation model explains why social democratic and labour parties find it so difficult to truly separate themselves from their conservative opponents.[122]

Hamilton's claim is that, in focusing on 'deprivation', social democratic and labour parties in the west have acceded to the neo-liberal agenda and its imperative of economic growth.[123] As elaborated in Chapter 4, it is Hamilton's contention that as long as the focus is on deprivation individuals will continue to believe themselves in need and will privilege material goods above other values (for example Hamilton 2002; 2005b:8). In other words, it is the focus on material deprivation that Hamilton (2003:x-xii; 2005b:7-8; 2006:26-41) argues limits the potential for 'radical' social change. Where in the 1960s Galbraith argued that economists were failing to acknowledge affluence as the central characteristic of the modern US,

[122] This argument was mounted by Hamilton in 2003 after consecutive election defeats of the ALP. At present the ALP are the elected party in federal government. The Rudd Labour Government defeated the Liberal/National Coalition ending their ten year term in government in 2007.

[123] As point of note Galbraith (1963:87) made a similar deduction in his book *The Affluent Society* arguing that economic production had achieved bipartisan support as the primary goal of governments as US liberals, much like their conservative counterparts, had reluctantly become convinced of the capacity for increased economic production to make incremental upward adjustments to the quality of life of their constituents.

Hamilton argues that today political leaders of the Australian left make the same error.

In the affluence thesis the alleged shift from mass deprivation and satisfaction of basic material needs to mass affluence and the pursuit of cultural/post-material needs is thus considered to require a subsequent shift in politics: from a focus on 'material' resources associated with the social democratic tradition and the post-war welfare state to a post-materialist politics of meaning and wellbeing.[124] This rationale is clear in Hamilton's unequivocal account of what is problematic about contemporary left politics in Australia:

> The shift in the 1960s from a politics of inequality to a politics of identity involved a new focus on the cultural and social domain, rather than on underlying economic forces. In an unexpected way, however, the position I am advancing, which stresses the central place of identity and alienation in modern consumer capitalism, returns to an economic explanation. In the process, what we understand by the 'economic' has changed. Social democracy and socialism emphasised the relationship of individuals to the means of production. Today it is not production but consumption that is key, in particular the relationships of individuals to the goods they buy and the influence of marketing in the formation of those relationships. (Hamilton 2006:40)

Hamilton's (2006:40) goal, in keeping an economic approach central to his analysis, is to draw attention to what he argues to be the changing nature of society from an economy based in *production* to an economy based in *consumption.* The affluence politics that he advocates are therefore not directed at protecting individuals from the structures which keep them in poverty – a mentality he associates with social democratic politics and the 'deprivation model' (Hamilton 2003:xiii) – they are targeted instead at restricting the scope of marketing and advertising industries to influence the decisions individuals make. This rationale, that a developmental shift from poverty to affluence requires new interventions in government, can be seen to rely implicitly on a post-materialist hypothesis (Hamilton 2006:40).[125] In the post-materialist hypothesis developmental stages of society are reflective of the developmental stage of the majority of its members; individual development and social development, on this view, largely map on to each other. What is more, this developmental narrative at the core of the post-materialist hypothesis has specific implications for the way poverty is conceptualised.

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[124] Of course, the claim that the (materialist) concerns of social democratic politics have been made redundant by shifting demographics and growing affluence predates Hamilton. In his 1977 book Inglehart (285-286), for example, affirms this argument in forwarding his analysis of the May 1968 crisis in France and the subsequent return of a Gaullist Government. In their more recent review essay, 'The End of Social Democracy?', Callaghan and Tunney (2001:68) address post-materialism as reflecting one of various challenges to the on-going relevance of social democratic politics.

[125] It is also the case, as I return to discuss later in the chapter, that this rationale has implications for the way individuals and power are understood in the affluence thesis.

If affluence is a *developmental* stage replacing an earlier period of deprivation, then those who remain in poverty, the 'residue at the bottom' in Hamilton's (2003:pxii) terminology, do so as a result of their own shortcomings, not the shortcomings of the state or social relations inherent to the capitalist system (as the social democratic view suggests). Where in his work he advocates a devaluation of wealth instead of a redistribution of wealth, Hamilton (2003:145-146) makes this line of reasoning on 'residual' poverty explicit. While conceding the need for an enduring and primarily *principled* commitment to redistributive policies, Hamilton's (2003:145-146) assertion that mass affluence has been achieved prompts him to claim that: 'Recognition of this fact leads us to focus directly on poverty itself, rather than on the general distribution of income and wealth in a post-growth society'. While in Hamilton's analysis such a claim is not seen as justifying a move to the punitive policies associated with welfare behaviourism, in practice 'focusing directly on poverty' (Hamilton 2003:145) all too often translates into focusing directly on *the poor*. Compulsory income management, first imposed upon Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory, now applicable in 'any area of extreme disadvantage' (Lunn 2009), serves as an example of the effects of this rationale of 'focusing on poverty' rather than on relations across society. As discussed in the Introduction, this policy is problematic as it treats the causes of poverty as arising from the alleged dysfunction of poor communities, rather than addressing the conditions of life in 'poor communities' in wider social and historical terms. Indeed this policy deduces the supposed dysfunction of poor communities from their status as poor: poverty itself is treated as proof of dysfunction. Where a 'post-scarcity' period is seen to have been achieved at the societal level, as the affluence thesis alleges, any 'residual' poverty comes implicitly to be explained in terms of the (presumed) developmental delays of the poor themselves.

Galbraith's analysis of the 'affluent society' is again of relevance in understanding the way poverty is conceptualised in the contemporary affluence thesis. While Galbraith's (1963:260-261) discussion of poverty is complex, to speak in general terms, as he himself does in his book, he clearly formulates poverty as a residual problem in the affluent society, 'a special case' rather than 'a general case'. Galbraith (1963:260-268) asserts that poverty in the affluent society falls into two categories: one he terms 'case poverty' and the other 'insular poverty'. Case poverty Galbraith (1963:262) describes in terms which are reminiscent of what, in the contemporary vernacular, is termed 'welfare behaviourism' (Stoesz 1997:68-69):

> Case poverty is commonly and properly related to some characteristics of the individual so afflicted. Nearly everyone else has mastered the environment; this proves that it is not intractable. But some quality peculiar to the individual or family involved – mental deficiency, bad health, inability to adapt to the discipline of modern economic life, excessive procreation, alcohol, insufficient education, or perhaps a combination of these handicaps – has kept these individuals from participating in the general well-being.

Galbraith (1963:262) claims that case poverty is evident in all times and all places 'however prosperous that community or the times'. However, his assertion that one of the defining characteristics of this category of poverty is that 'nearly everyone else has mastered the environment' (Galbraith 1963:262) seems to take for granted a period of mass affluence. In other words, 'case poverty' is implicitly a definition of poverty as a *residual* problem.

The second category of poverty that Galbraith (1963:263-264) contends to be of continued relevance is what he terms 'insular poverty'. 'Insular poverty' (Galbraith 1963:263-264) corresponds to what in the contemporary lexicon is referred to as 'locational disadvantage': poverty which is located in particular geographic regions within the wider nation state. Despite general prosperity at the level of the nation state, the particular geographic region, for whatever reason, no longer has the economic infrastructure necessary to provide adequate employment (and thus income) for its residents. At first glance this account of 'insular poverty' seems to suggest a social/structural understanding of poverty. Lack of infrastructure could be seen to result from government neglect, or globalisation and the process by which manufacturing industries, for example, relocate from one community to another in pursuit of more lucrative terms of contract. However, in Galbraith's (1963:263) treatment of the subject insular poverty is constructed in individualistic terms:

> Insular poverty has something to do with the desire of a comparatively large number of people to spend their lives at or near their place of birth. This homing instinct causes them to bar the solution, always open as an individual remedy in a country without barriers to emigration, to escape the island of poverty in which they were born.

Clearly the two categories of poverty proposed by Galbraith, 'case poverty' and 'insular poverty' construct poverty as a 'residual' and individualised problem.

The above analysis highlights the way that the chain of inference I indentified in Hamilton's writing is not limited to his own analyses. Rather it is the case that, where a post-materialist hypothesis of development is accepted, either explicitly or implicitly, poverty *necessarily* comes to be represented in individualistic and individualising terms. Having thus established the significance of the post-materialist hypothesis and its developmental narrative to the affluence thesis I proceed to examine in greater detail the kind of problem that poverty is implicitly represented to be in this writing.

Poverty as a 'residual problem': the post-materialist account

Examining post-materialism and its particular construction of the 'problem' of poverty in the following sections of the chapter (Bletsas 2007:64-65; Bacchi 1999:1-13; 2009:1-24) I rely on Hamilton's work as exemplary of the affluence thesis. In tracing shifts in his analysis, from a social democratic approach to a post-materialist approach, I contend that it is possible to identify a simultaneous shift in

understanding poverty from a social to an individualised problem. As noted in Chapter 4, there are certainly moments in Hamilton's (2003:55; 2003b:649) analysis when his understanding of poverty appears to be cast in social/structural terms. Hamilton observes that unemployment, for example, is a product of a market system. In such examples Hamilton (2001:96-99; 2003:55; 2003b:649) expressly attributes poverty to causes external to individuals. Moreover, Hamilton (2003:149-150), whose analysis is directed at explaining changes in the capitalist economic system, specifically positions his approach in contrast to theorists who focus on changes to the project of modernity. Theorists of the period of post or late modernity advance the view that in contemporary western societies the cultural politics of identity and interpersonal relationships displace the centrality previously afforded questions of justice and equality, themes ordinarily associated with social democratic politics and a redistributive welfare state (for discussion see Kumar 1995:102-105,112-121).[126] Hamilton (2003:149-150) rebukes theorists who address changes in contemporary social life as constituting an emergent period of 'post-modernity', arguing that it is changes to *capitalism* that these theorists are observing, not changes to *modernity*.

It might seem reasonable to presume that Hamilton, the left economist, makes this criticism out of a sense that capitalism ought to be addressed in terms of economic justice and equality. After all, post-modern cultural theorists are frequently accused by their critics of failing to provide a role for materialist questions of resource distribution (for example Nussbaum 1999; for discussion see Fraser 1997:11-39; Fraser and Honneth 2003). At first glance, Hamilton's (2003:149-150) argument that changes in society ought to be read in terms of changes to its capitalist economic structures certainly appears to imply a commitment to a social democratic politics and a social understanding of poverty. As I demonstrate below, however, where Hamilton advocates a politics of affluence, this is not the case.

As noted, Hamilton situates his analysis of affluence as part of a critique of rival theories focused on changes to the project of modernity. One body of work towards which Hamilton has been repeatedly critical is that of the Third Way, particularly as it has been formulated in the work of Anthony Giddens (Hamilton 2001; 2003:122-145; 2006:13-19). I turn now to address Hamilton's critique of the Third Way, and in particular his claim that power remains troublingly absent from Third Way discussion, a claim elaborated below. In providing this analysis it is possible to map a shift in Hamilton's understanding of poverty from a social understanding to what I contend to be a thoroughly individualised, post-

[126] I use the terms 'post' and 'late' modernity interchangeably here and in the following sections as I refer broadly to sociological theories which seek to characterise the contemporary historical period in terms of changes to modernity and not to theorists who explicitly apply postmodernism as a framework in their theorising. Though I use the terms 'post' and 'late modernity' in the discussion, in doing so I do not concede that 'modern', 'post modern' and 'pre modern' are appropriate terms for characterising actual social milieus. Indeed, as I make clear in the argument developed across this and the following chapter I reject the developmental narrative in relation to which such distinctions are formulated.

materialist account of poverty as a 'residual' issue. I consider this transformed understanding of poverty to be emblematic of the affluence thesis.

Giddens is a prominent sociologist whose work has been of significant influence both in arguing the existence of fundamental social changes in the period of late modernity, as well as in helping to shape the treatment of such change in UK party politics. Giddens' influence on the policies of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, a fellow Third Way advocate, is a matter of record. Though the phrase has since fallen into disuse, in the 1990s when the ideas associated with the 'Third Way' were first being publicly disseminated they attracted significant attention, and for good reason. While promoting the idea of social democratic 'renewal' Giddens (1998:1-3; 2000:2-3; see also Giddens 1994:1-21), in advocating the Third Way, nonetheless argued that established ideological positions of left and right had become increasingly irrelevant in responding to the political problems for which contemporary governments sought solutions. The Third Way was thus positioned as a means through which old dogmatic commitments to left and right could be 'transcend[ed]' in order to fashion what was touted as a new, pragmatic, yet innovative and progressive approach to electoral politics (Giddens 1998:26; also Giddens 2000:1-7). This new 'Third Way' in politics, it was argued, brought together the best of established left and right approaches and, in so doing, surpassed the limitations of both (Giddens 1998:18-26; see also Latham 2001:15-16).[127]

A significant aspect of Hamilton's (2001:92-93; 2003:126-129; 2006:14-17) critique of Giddens and the Third Way, particularly as it appears in his earlier work, arises as an argument on ideology. Hamilton, in his appraisal of the Third Way (2001:92-93; 2003:127), has been critical of the view that ideology is something that can be 'overcome' or 'transcended' , a claim he attributes to Giddens and Third Way analysis.[128] Importantly, in this instance 'ideology' refers to ideological positions such as 'neo-liberal' or 'social democrat' and, more precisely, to the particular social relations of power that these ideological positions implicitly assume. Hamilton's (2001:92-93; 2003:126-130) argument on the question of ideology and the Third Way, as expounded below, is that it is impossible to transcend ideology because all views on how the world 'really is' are to some extent ideological – they are embedded in relations of power. In more precise terms, Hamilton's (2001:92-93; 2003:127) criticism of the Third Way is that, in so far as its proponents claimed

[127] The Third Way is reflective of a significant body of work which in the 1990s presumed, and then sought to characterise, a fundamental shift in the nature of contemporary 'modern' societies (Rose 2000:1396). The idea, tacit here, of a paradigmatic transformation in 'modern western societies' is consistent across all such accounts, and it is a theme that is further addressed in Chapter 6.

[128] Hamilton is not alone in making this critique of the Third Way. Indeed it arose as a central point of controversy in appraisals of Third Way politics. See for example the 2001 collection of essays, *Left Directions: Is there a Third Way*? (Nursey-Bray and Bacchi 2001), which engage this issue from multiple perspectives. Writing from a governmentality perspective Rose (2000:1398-1402) has also explored what he likewise contends to be a problematic treatment of power in the social thesis of the Third Way. Rose's critique of power is put forward in quite different terms to that implicit in Hamilton's analysis and this distinct and divergent Foucaultian approach to power is addressed later in the thesis.

they had found a means through which to transcend the ideological paradigm of left and right, they merely concealed the extent to which their own ideological position had shifted from a social democratic view concerned with issues of justice, towards a neo-liberal (ideological) position concerned with economic growth and electoral expediency. In this regard Hamilton (2001:99-100; 2006:13-15) identifies Giddens' work on ideology and the Third Way as playing an important part in what he considers to constitute the 'death of social democracy'.[129] Articulating this perspective in 2001 Hamilton charged:

> The Third Way is determined to be pragmatic, to avoid sterile ideologies, and to embrace change rather than resist it. It does not have a 'worldview', only some practical policies to make the world a better place. It is apparent that the conscious rejection of ideology serves as a political function. But by eschewing a 'worldview', the Third Way does not make itself innocent, for, contrary to the positivists of the economics profession, there is no practical objectivity that predates ideology. If it does not have its own worldview then it has nothing to separate itself from the prevailing worldview, and must therefore share it. (Hamilton 2001:92-93; also Hamilton 2003:127)

In the 2001 essay cited here Hamilton defended social democratic politics from Third Way advocates whom, in advocating a 'post-ideology' politics, Hamilton contends were intentionally undermining the relevance and 'practicality' of social democratic goals. Hamilton (2001:95) describes, with a sense of irony, the way that the rise of (neo-liberal) globalisation as natural and inevitable was countenanced with an affected air of resigned disappointment by proponents of the Third Way who proclaimed it to be so: 'The old values of social democracy might remain admirable, but in the new globalised world those who still adhere to its political program are hopelessly utopian'. Reviewing his argument on the Third Way in 2003 Hamilton again repeated this critique. In 2003 however Hamilton (2003:144) concluded his analysis by asserting that, 'Despite all this, the nature of inequality does need to be reconsidered in post-scarcity societies.' As I turn now to discuss, while Hamilton's critique of the Third Way remains consistent, his understanding of poverty does not.

Despite his continuing critique of Third Way advocates, in a 2006 essay entitled 'What's Left? The death of social democracy', Hamilton (2006:34) not only claimed that 'neo-liberalism has fulfilled its promise of prosperity, delivering large increases in income across the board', but also proclaimed social democratic politics antiquated and redundant. Indeed by 2006 Hamilton (2006:1-7) was declaring the end of established ideology. In his assertion that the 'old-left view of the world had been out-run by history' Hamilton (2006:3) echoed the view he had once regarded with derision in the ersatz lamentations of Third Way advocates. I argue that, connected to this shifting appraisal of the relevance of social democracy is a shifting understanding of poverty from social to individualised. In order to make clear the two distinct approaches to poverty in Hamilton's analysis I draw out and further consider an extended quote from Hamilton's 2001 account of

[129] It should be apparent that the Third Way arguments addressed here also had a role in welfare reform initiated in the 1990s and were addressed in that capacity in Chapter 2.

the changing role of equality in left politics in which he rejected the claims of Third Way advocates:

> Traditionally the focus has been on equality of outcomes with emphasis on ameliorating income inequality. The primary solution of social democracy has been the progressive tax system and public ownership of essential services. The shift to equality of opportunity is attractive in an era of apparent public resistance to high taxes, for if disadvantage can be overcome then inequality of outcomes ought to be reduced. But there is a trap in this. If inequality of opportunity is the problem and the problem has been fixed, then inequality of outcomes simply has to be accepted. However, equality of opportunity will not be enough if an unacceptable level of inequality is built into the very structure of the capitalist economy. Then there is no escaping the need for redistribution.
>
> To reach this conclusion one needs a social analysis that identifies the sources of structural inequality, something the Third Way assiduously avoids… [I]nstead of powerful social classes imposing unfair structures that benefit themselves and leave much of the populace poor (relatively at least), in the worldview of the Third Way we must simply accept that what 'the market' delivers is natural and inevitable…
>
> Such a worldview is preferred by those at the top because it has a politically neutralizing effect. There is no powerful oligarchy at which to point the finger, only an impersonal system, the global market that lays down the ground rules by which societies and governments must operate… Consequently, misfortune is seen to be a product of the relationship between an individual and the market, and it is pointless to look for someone to blame. *The solution to disadvantage, therefore, is to fix the individual rather than the economic and social system*. The Third Way has thus subtly redefined the traditional concern of the left for social justice. *It is now an issue not of structural economic disadvantage but the politics of life choices*. In other words, *social justice has become individualised and divorced from the essential structure of capitalism* at a time when capitalism has reached its most purified form. (Hamilton 2001:97, my emphasis)

Given the sophisticated insight present in the above quotation it is of considerable concern that such an astute critic of equality politics could have turned in 2006 to claim that: 'sustained increases in living standards have so transformed social conditions as to render social democracy redundant as a political ideology' (Hamilton 2006:7). For, in so doing, Hamilton has conceded that the 'death' of social democracy, and the social account of poverty along with it, is a natural result of history rather than the outcome of power relationships.

What is more, while Hamilton (2003:123-144; 2006:13-19) retains his critical stance on the ideas of the Third Way, the same cannot be said for his commitment to the 'relatively' poor and disadvantaged, towards whom Hamilton's position has altered markedly. In his 2006 essay Hamilton (2006:21, my emphasis) argues that:

> It is now clear that being allocated to the working class on the basis of one's relationship to the means of production is meaningless in the presence of

> affluence. But the argument goes further. Not only are those remaining in poverty, or significant material hardship, a small minority of the population, *it is also no longer tenable to argue that their deprivation is an inherent part of the economic system.*

It is my argument that, as a consequence of this conceptualisation, poverty is not understood as 'residual' simply in terms of numbers of citizens in want, but is constructed as 'residual' in a larger sense that impacts on the way in which *causes* of poverty are implicitly understood. The shift from a defence of social democratic politics to an attack of social democratic politics as obsolete manifests the emergence of affluence as a post-materialist governmental motif. The argument in Hamilton's later writing quite clearly asserts that poverty is no longer central to governmental projects, as now it is affluence and its problems of overconsumption, overwork and environmental degradation that need to be addressed as pivotal. As this shift occurs in the motif of politics so too can a shift in understandings of poverty be seen to transpire. Once again this emphasises the centrality of the post-materialist narrative of development to the affluence thesis: in the affluence thesis, where a 'post-scarcity' period is seen to have been achieved at the societal level, any 'residual' poverty comes implicitly to be explained in terms of the (presumed) developmental delays of the poor themselves.

Further exploring the passage from Hamilton (2006:21) cited directly above, in which he claims that it is no longer tenable to attribute deprivation as inherent to the economic system and gives an exposition of his claims that the class basis of social democratic politics is today obsolete, it can be seen that his argument on poverty follows precisely the rationale I have described. Hamilton (2006:21, my emphasis) asserts:

> In his book 'Beyond Left and Right', David McKnight reminds us that *poverty is generated at the level of the family and is associated with family breakdown, substance abuse, mental illness and poor education.* While these misfortunes do tend to be concentrated in some groups, it makes no sense to attribute them to class divisions.

What this amounts to is a near complete reversal from Hamilton's earlier quoted position on equality politics (Hamilton 2001:97). Where Hamilton (2001:97) was once critical of the Third Way for its failure to address structural causes of poverty and deprivation, now he argues in exactly this same manner. Where formerly he critiqued the Third Way position on poverty and inequality, arguing that it resulted in the idea that 'the solution to disadvantage, therefore, is to fix the individual rather than the economic and social system' (Hamilton, 2001:97), now Hamilton (2006:21) positively *affirms* this individualised view where he endorses the view that 'poverty is generated at the level of the family and is associated with family breakdown, substance abuse, mental illness and poor education'. It seems therefore that the 'trap' Hamilton (2001:97) himself identified in the thinking of the Third Way – that defining equality in terms of equality of opportunity resulted in an individualised rather than a social/economic account of poverty – is one that

he himself has not managed to avoid. What this demonstrates is that the affluence thesis, in so far as it proceeds from a post-materialist premise, *necessarily* constructs 'residual' poverty as the result of individual failures of development. In so far as the post-materialist thesis constructs poverty in this individualised manner, it parallels the arguments by the CIS authors addressed in Chapter 2 (for example Saunders 2008; Dubossarsky and Samild 2008). Consequently, a consensus that poverty in Australian society today is primarily an individualised problem can be seen to exist between proponents of (neo)liberalism, such as the CIS, and left post-materialists, two otherwise ideologically-opposed positions.

Affluence: description, ascription, government

As elucidated above, the affluence thesis is premised upon a developmental narrative whereby wide-spread affluence is alleged to have replaced wide-spread poverty. The claim pursued in this thesis is that this developmental narrative reflects not only a particular *interpretation* of demographic change in the post-war period but an *essentialist* interpretation. More precisely the argument is that the arguments on affluence constitute an emergent governmental development offering competing modes and styles, or 'arts of governing' (Foucault 1991:90). In Chapter 6 I return to elaborate more fully the critique of the developmental narrative as involving an essentialised view of poverty and affluence. The present aim is to attend to the way that the affluence thesis, and the new arts of government it authors, are interpretative and not merely neutral and descriptive as affluence theorists represent them to be.

The underlying rationale of the post-materialist hypothesis and its construction of poverty and affluence as constituting discrete developmental stages was explicated in the analysis above. It was shown that as affluence comes to be positioned as necessarily in opposition to poverty, affluence politics are correspondingly positioned as replacing the social democratic project. In the work of arguments advanced by affluence theorists there is no sense in which affluence is merely 'added on' to a social democratic politics; rather, as demonstrated above, affluence is considered to herald a new era in politics. In so far as this is so affluence effectively displaces poverty as a motif of government. In reflecting on the affluence thesis my argument therefore is that affluence politics are not merely the *natural* outcome of demographic shifts but are *interpretative* and *prescriptive* accounts which seek to fix affluence as a motif of government.

If it *were* the case, however, that the affluence thesis was simply descriptive of social changes it would not be unreasonable to expect to find some record of these changes in the book by McKnight (2005) that Hamilton (2006:21) cites in making his assertion that 'poverty is generated at the level of the family and is associated with family breakdown, substance abuse, mental illness and poor education'. It might be assumed then that McKnight's (2005) *Beyond Right and Left: New Politics and the Culture Wars* is a book containing the very up-to-date

'value neutral' empirical research on poverty that critics claim has so far been absent from the poverty debate (for example Tsumori *et al* 2002:1-6; Saunders 2002:1; 2004:1-5). This, however, is profoundly not the case. *Beyond Right and Left* (McKnight, 2005) is ostensibly not about poverty at all. Instead, as the title suggests, the book is a normative assessment of changes and reformulations in the established ideology of left and right and how these changes might and should impact on the future of Australian politics.[130] McKnight (2005:15) himself describes his book as:

> [A]n extended argument with two premises. First, it argues that the problems of the Left reside at the level of ideas and philosophy. Tinkering with policies, presentation and leadership is not enough. Second, it argues that it is only by confronting certain flaws in cherished ideas that the Left can rebuild its intellectual and values framework in the wider Australian society.

It is, therefore, clearly the case that if the changes that could justify Hamilton's reversal on the position of poverty and inequality do indeed exist as simple demographic developments, whatever else its merits, McKnight's is *not* the book to demonstrate this. What this highlights is that the arguments on affluence are not simply descriptions of empirical change but are interpretations of this change aimed at furnishing a new approach to politics, a new 'art of governing' (Foucault 1991:90).

The section of text from McKnight (2005:126, my emphasis) to which Hamilton makes reference reads, more fully, as follows:

> Increasingly, what appears as poverty (economic inequality) is generated by the crises at the level of the family – by substance abuse, mental illness, poor education or often by a combination of these things.
>
> Perhaps it may be argued that the one unequivocal and modern example of the importance of class might be the vast wealth and power held by the wealthy corporate elite of many countries, particularly in Europe and the United Sates. Such a concentration of power is indeed a massive problem, as well as being morally obscene, *but acknowledging these problems does not validate or make up for all of the flaws of class analysis as a world view and a prescription for social change.*

In this citation the causes of poverty and economic inequality are judged as synonymous with the merits – or rather – *deficiencies* of a class-based 'world view'.[131] This again establishes that McKnight's analysis is not a neutral evaluation of poverty considered in its own terms. Instead McKnight's project, much like

[130] Given Hamilton's manifest antagonism towards Giddens' arguments on the Third Way, demonstrated above, it is somewhat curious to note that McKnight's 2005 book title *Beyond Right and Left: New Politics and the Culture Wars*, is an inversion of Giddens' 1994 book entitled *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics*, the book in which Giddens laid out his argument that established ideology politics had become redundant – the very argument that Hamilton had in 2001 been so keen to denounce.

[131] Battin and Ramsay (2007), critically reflecting on Hamilton's thesis on affluence, provide an 'empirical' counterpoint to this view, arguing class is of continued relevance to Australian politics.

Hamilton's, is directed at finding a way through which political parties of the left can publicly promote agendas for progressive change. What these affluence theorists hold in common is the belief that any contemporary analysis of power which maintains questions of class at its centre is limited in its ability to promote a 'left' agenda (McKnight 2005:126; Hamilton 2003:xii; 2006:21). Affluence politics thus come to be positioned as an alternative means by which social change can be achieved. The affluence thesis, in other words, is not merely an attempt to accurately *describe* demographic change but to represent, or more precisely, to discursively *constitute*, this change in such a manner as to 'win' the public imagination. Understood in these terms, Hamilton and McKnight's primary project (much like Saunders working from the right) is to fashion a new approach to (progressive) politics – one that finds its 'rational' end in the notion of the affluent, 'post-scarcity', society.

In advancing this argument that the affluence thesis is interpretative my point is not to impugn either Hamilton or McKnight's perspectives as being somehow 'calculated' or self-serving. Indeed the inference is not of an *intentional* move to make affluence a motif of government. Rather, what I have endeavoured to show in this chapter is that the underlying rationale upon which these arguments are premised is itself constitutive of an emergent governmental motif of affluence. Affluence becomes the taken for granted presupposition in these accounts of contemporary politics and, where it does, I contend, it displaces poverty as a motif of government. One pressing consequence of this development is that poverty comes to be configured as a 'residual' problem. The construction of poverty as a residual problem facilitates precisely the kinds of discriminatory interventions that the apparently progressive Australian government today promotes, such as the Rudd government's extension of compulsory income management as now potentially applicable to all welfare recipients (see thesis Introduction). I therefore conclude that, whatever demographic changes are relied upon to legitimate the views on poverty implicit in arguments by the post-materialist left, the relationship between these accounts and the empirical world continues to be *interpretive*. The 'facts' of affluence are by no means 'apparent'; they are ascribed as problems. It may therefore be seen that the consensus view on poverty as individualised is an outcome, not of deductive argument based on changes in the nature of poverty, but instead arise as a result of political struggles and governmental developments. To reiterate, in taking this view of post-materialist arguments as interpretative, it is not my intention simply to malign them for failing the test of neutrality. Rather I argue the case because, to the extent that the consensus view on poverty as individualised can be seen to result from governmental transformations, it becomes possible to contest and resist this individualised view of poverty and the punitive interventions that it facilitates.

Conceptions of power in the state of affluence: the 'problem' of free selves

In this Chapter I have argued that the particular understanding of poverty as a residual problem in the writing of affluence theorists is consistent with CIS arguments, considered in Chapter 3, that implicitly construct poverty as the product of individual ineptitude, choices and bad luck (for example Saunders 2008; 2002:8-10; Sullivan 2000). In arguing that this consensus is common to both the post-materialist left view on poverty and the CIS view (which was shown to be consistent with the neo-liberal ideological and governmental approaches to poverty and welfare) the claim is not that post-materialism and neo-liberalism are, as ideologies, inter-changeable or reducible to each other. I do not overlook the continuing differences between these two approaches. Indeed, it is predominantly *because of* the existing differences between these two views that their shared understanding of poverty as residual is so concerning. My overarching argument is that the similarities between these two views arise as an effect of a governmental shift wherein which affluence is accepted as a fundamental presupposition, but the appropriate means of its government remain contested. For these reasons in this section of the chapter I provide an account of the similarities shared by these two views in order to furnish a more detailed analysis of how it is that such an unlikely consensus arises. I argue that the consensus on poverty as individualised arises out of a shared, though in each case nuanced, investment in a developmental narrative of 'authentic' human being.[132]

In Chapter 3 where I addressed arguments on poverty and welfare by the CIS I addressed the way that, in the liberal and neo-liberal ideological (and governmental) schema, society is conceived of in terms of the choices of autonomous individuals who contract freely with each other. I highlighted the way that, as a result of this conceptualisation, in writing by CIS authors power is implicitly conceived of in terms of the demands of the state as an extraneous force which imposes upon and attempts to regulate otherwise free individuals (for example Saunders 2002; 2008). It was shown that, on the basis of this rationale Saunders (2002:10), for example, argues that egalitarian claims in the poverty wars are tantamount to a move to 'confiscat[e] people's earnings'. However, in addressing CIS arguments in that Chapter, it was shown that, just as Hindess (2001:94-95, 100-104) has argued to be the case, this is not the entire (liberal) story on the question of power and freedom. To recapitulate, Hindess (2001) argues that in the liberal mode of government some subjects are seen as having a capacity for freedom and thus the capacity for self government, while other subjects are constructed as being constitutionally incapable (or not yet capable) of freedom. In Hindess' (2001:94-95) analysis, there are therefore two aspects of liberal government: for those subjects deemed evolved enough to be able to self govern, there is the 'government of freedom'; for individuals constructed as lacking the capacity for self government, there is what Hindess (2001:94) terms 'the government of unfreedom'.

In Chapter 3 Hindess' (2001; 2004) analysis of liberal governmentality was shown to be pertinent in understanding the approach to welfare taken by CIS authors. It

[132] Hamilton's (2008) most recent book *The freedom paradox: Towards a post-secular ethics* could indeed be read precisely as an attempt to author a metaphysics of 'authentic' life.

was demonstrated that the presumption that some people were simply constitutionally incapable of the level of autonomy deemed necessary for self government was central to recent CIS arguments on welfare (for example Saunders 2008; Dubossarky and Samild 2008). Saunders (2008:6, my emphasis) was quoted in Chapter 3 as asserting that:

> *Not everybody can look after themselves. Some people do need others to run their lives for them.* But as the welfare state has expanded, so the number of autonomous people has shrunk and the number of dependent people has grown. *The section of the population that needs a proactive and intrusive government has been dragging the rest of us down with it*.

Examining this argument in Chapter 3 I discussed the way it served to substantiate Hindess' (2001:98-99) view that liberal government is premised upon a narrative of evolutionary development. Hindess and Helliwell (2005) have argued that this developmental narrative treats difference as a 'temporal' problem seeing the less-evolved as the living residuum of advanced civilization. As demonstrated in Chapter 3 the dual approach to government described by Hindess (2001; 2004) is apparent in CIS arguments where self-government is advocated for those deemed capable (independent) whilst a significantly more onerous form of government is regarded as necessary for those on welfare and hence deemed 'incapable' of freedom (dependent). Implicit in this duality is a sense that some social groups are more capable – more *evolved* than others (Helliwell and Hindess 2005:414-415). I now turn to demonstrate that the developmental narrative that I have argued to be fundamental to the post-materialist hypothesis reiterates this dual positioning between freedom and unfreedom. The argument advanced on this point is that, in post-materialist theorising, power is reduced to the notion of material constraints. Where material constraints, and thus the impositions of power, are seen as having been overcome in the state of affluence individuals, in post-materialist writing on affluence, come to be positioned as free. Affluent individuals are in this way positioned as 'free' and (at least implicitly) more *developed*, than 'unfree' individuals who still struggle under the imposition of material need. At the crux of post-materialist analysis affluent individuals are therefore constituted as fundamentally autonomous selves: 'Of course the individual is always conditioned by powerful social forces, but when those influences are stripped away we are left with just an individual and a conscience' (Hamilton 2008:xi). I argue that this construction is consistent with the liberal conception of individuals as autonomous free selves and that it explains the similarities between the post-materialist left affluence theorists and the CIS in understanding poverty.

In the post-materialist hypothesis tacit in the writing of affluence theorists, freedom is constructed as the absence of the constraining forces of material need. *Capacity for* freedom thus comes to be treated as synonymous with *freedom from* material need. Unlike the CIS account (for example Saunders 2008), therefore, in the post-materialist affluence thesis everyone is considered to be, in principle, constitutionally capable of freedom. Nonetheless, there is still a hierarchical progression at play in this post-materialist analysis: a developmental trajectory from un-free subjects oppressed by power to freely acting agents. Investment in

such a developmental trajectory is unmistakable in Hamilton's (2006:45, my emphasis) summary of a transformation in contemporary politics:

> Social democracy saw the individual as a member of a class engaged primarily in an economic struggle, from which was derived an identity and a place in the social order. Today's individual is free-floating; *no longer subject to material privation, his or her choices are vastly expanded*, at least in principle. Many people could *choose* to step off the materialist treadmill and distance themselves from the influence of the market.

Reflected in this quotation is an understanding of power as a materially constraining force in society. Within this understanding power is conceptualised as the subjugation of the individual on the basis of a need to meet subsistence requirements. This is an account of power understood as a repressive force (see Foucault 1991c:23-24; 1990:17-35). However, in their characterisation of society as defined by its abundance, on-going and systemic material privation is the very condition that the affluence thesis puts in question. Consequently, citizens of the affluent society are constructed as by and large free.

This claim is not particularly controversial. Indeed Hamilton is quite overt in establishing the point in his writing. In his 2006 essay 'What's Left? The death of social democracy' Hamilton (2006:45, my emphasis) is succinct:

> It is the argument of this essay that the compulsion to participate in the consumer society is no longer driven by material need or by political coercion, but by the belief of the great mass of people that to find happiness they must be richer, irrespective of how wealthy they already are. *If ordinary people today are exploited, then it is by common consent*. *They choose* the gilded cage and would prefer not to be told that *the door is open*. Thus, in rich countries today the power of the market is primarily an ideological rather than an economic one.

This rationale asserts that if individuals are not *compelled* by *need* to participate in the system then clearly they are 'choosing' to participate. In so far as this is so a particular account of power is implicit: there are materially unfree individuals who are compelled to labour in order to meet their needs, and free individuals who *choose* whether or not they participate in the system. Excluding one important caveat I discuss below, this encapsulates the understanding of power as it informs the affluence thesis. Central to it is a distinction between the affluent and the poor, the free and the unfree.

To briefly review the analysis presented thus far, as has been repeatedly demonstrated in this and the preceding chapter, affluence theorists do not claim that there are no longer points from which to critique capitalism. Rather the argument is that the contemporary critique of capitalism must now be framed in terms of ethical values. It is argued that what is needed today is not freedom from material want – such a project, it is claimed, has already been achieved – but liberation from a deeper, more fundamental spiritual longing/need. More to the point, affluence theorists contend that this need is obfuscated by the clamour of

consumer capitalism (Hamilton 2003:209-211; de Graff *et al* 2005:74-80; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:3-18; Hamilton, Eckersley and Dennis 2005).

> When the new social movements rejected traditional standards, expectations and stereotypes, it was a manifestation of the deeper human longing for self-determination. The democratic impulse – which until the 1970s took the form of collective struggles to be free of political and social oppression – had metamorphosed into something else, a search for authentic identity, for true individuality. At last, here was the opportunity for the mass of ordinary people to aspire to something beyond material security and freedom from political oppression. Before we had an opportunity to reflect on *our new-found freedom*, however, and to answer the question 'How should I live?' the marketers arrived with their own answer to the quest for true identity.
>
> Over the last two or three decades, the agents of the marketing society have seized on the primal desire for authentic identity in order to sell more gym shoes, cars, mobile phones and home furnishings. And what has happened at the level of the individual is echoed in society's preoccupation with economic growth, an autistic behavioural pattern reinforced daily by the platitudes of the commentators and the politicians.
>
> Today, most people in rich countries seek proxy identities by means of commodity consumption. The hope for a meaningful life has been diverted into the aspiration for higher incomes and increased consumption. *Why do we succumb?* (Hamilton 2006:36-37, my emphasis)

Evident here is Hamilton's investment in a progression from material needs to higher order values of individual identity that I have discussed in the opening sections of the chapter. Also apparent here, albeit more subtly, is an indication of the way this developmental narrative suggests a particular understanding of power. Power is here understood primarily in 'material' terms of the power of capital to subjugate the disempowered worker, who must sell the labour of his/her body in return for a minimal dividend of the prosperity that labour in the service of capital generates. However, as I have sought to establish both in this and the preceding chapter, affluence theorists are overwhelmingly committed to arguing that this model of power no longer reflects the conditions of contemporary society. The shift to an affluence paradigm correspondingly leads to the idea that equality is a largely finished project. This has a significant implication for the way in which power is seen to function – once a coercive constraining force deriving its strength from the brute facts of human need and material dependence upon capital for survival, it now comes to be seen as purely 'ideological'. On this point the caveat alluded to above becomes central.

In the post-materialist account, once the burdens of material subsistence are seen to be overcome for the majority and a state of affluence has been achieved, the behaviours of individuals come to be considered in terms of a paradigm of materially-free choice. The caveat in this formulation is that, while regarded to be free of the constraining forces of material need, individuals are not seen to be free from all external influences. Hamilton (2003:79-97; 2006:36-37; Hamilton and

Denniss 2005:36-57) is very concerned with the influence and pressure exerted upon materially free individuals by 'the marketers', as evident in several of the citations above. However, in these accounts 'ideology' no longer signifies deep structures of power, as was the case in Hamilton's (2002) use of the term when critiquing arguments by Giddens addressed earlier in the chapter. The implicit presupposition in Hamilton's claim about power functioning in an 'ideological' rather than in a 'material' sense is that power has shifted from being a constraining force in society, to being a hegemonic force which obscures from otherwise free individuals their 'real' interests, directing their attention to the vacuous pursuits of consumer capitalism (Hamilton 2003:71-72).

While in liberal (and neo-liberal) governmentality it is the case that the distinction between the free and the unfree turns on the idea that the unfree *need* to be governed by an external imposing force and that, in contrast, the free are deemed adequate to the task of self-government, in Hamilton's formulation the materially free still need governmental intervention. However this intervention no longer involves primarily redistributive programs, as equalisation of resources is no longer deemed a necessary goal, but instead the regulation and state oversight of marketing practices in order to mitigate the influence of 'the marketers' (Hamilton, Eckersley and Dennis 2005:222). Hamilton (2003:71-72) argues that:

> Market ideology asserts that free choice allows consumers to express their 'individuality'. Extending the essence of liberalism, libertarian political philosophy counterposes the freedoms of the individual against those of the collective, and especially the state. Consumer capitalism trades on the modern desire for individuality, to mark oneself out from the crowd. However, as the sociologist George Simmel told us many years ago, the individuality of modern urban life is a pseudo-individuality of exaggerated behaviours and contrived attitudes. The individuality of the marketing society is an elaborate pose people adopt to cover up the fact that they have been buried in the homogenising forces of consumer culture. The consumer self is garishly differentiated on the outside, but this differentiation serves only to conceal the dull conformity of the inner self.
>
> In fact, to discover true individuality it is necessary to stage a psychological withdrawal from the market economy, since that is a place where one can only buy manufactured identities – masks bought to provide clones with the appearance of difference.

Here Hamilton (2003:71-72) asserts that authentic human being, as the next (or final) developmental stage, has not been fully achieved and that its realisation is impeded by the siren calls of consumer capitalism. In contrast CIS authors, representative of the neo-liberal (ideological) view, implicitly argue that, in so far as capitalism constitutes a free market system and that freedom to contract is what is required for human beings to realise their true selves, the conditions for the realisation of authentic human being *have* been achieved (for example Saunders 2007-08:7-8; consider also Saunders 2007; 2005c:6-7). The debate that occurs between these two positions is fought over competing conceptions of being and freedom, yet the finer points of this debate obfuscate the fact that, in

certain respects, the underlying conceptions of the self are remarkably similar in these arguments. Both the CIS and the affluence theorists assume human being corresponds to developmental stages and that some forms of life are more 'authentic' than others. The debate, then, is over what constitutes authentic life and the steps government ought to take to promote it. Hamilton's (for example in Hamilton, Eckersley and Denniss 2005:222; see also Hamilton 2003:66-92; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:36-57) argument is that the state *is* authorised to act to mitigate the influence of the 'marketers' and their persuasive powers of influence in impeding the proliferation of authentic human being now that the material conditions seen (in the post-materialist analysis) as necessary for its realisation have been met (for example Hamilton, Eckersley and Denniss 2005). In the neo-liberal story of course, and as discussed in Chapter 3, it is the power of the state and its proxies (such as the third sector) which are the intrusive and corrupting influences that need to be restrained (for example Hughes 2001:16-17; Saunders 2005c:8-10). The interventions that Hamilton argues for are considered by the neo-liberals, in so far as they are directed unreservedly at all members of society, to unduly frustrate and penalise the individual choices of those capable of self government (for example Norton 2005:52-53; see also Saunders 2007; 2007-08).

While it is very much the case that affluence theorists disagree with neo-liberals over the *details* of what constitutes authentic human being, the fact that both positions insist that there is such a condition is what accounts for the similarities between them. It is this notion of authentic human being, suspended at various points in a teleological narrative of progress, which leads to the consensus between neo-liberalism and post-materialism on the subject of poverty as residual. This explains the curious way in which both perspectives consider the current period to constitute a 'paradigm of affluence' which renders poverty as residual not only in terms of numbers in need, but in terms of its underlying causes for in both accounts affluence is implicitly treated as a stage of development. In contrast, the argument of this thesis is that the *ideas* of 'authentic' humanity and 'residual' poverty are deeply problematic.

In mounting this argument I do not deny the increases in personal wealth that have occurred in the previous half century. Nor do I overlook the extent to which this wealth has been amassed primarily in 'western' states. It is certainly the case that degrees of economic privilege can be identified in contemporary societies. However a state of economic privilege is not tantamount to a state of 'freedom'. More precisely, my critique and point of divergence from the affluence theorists occurs over their analysis of power, which I find to be severely limited. While it may well be the case that identity for some of the privileged wealthy minority has become individualised, or individuated, and as such decoupled from its more established markers of ethnicity, class and gender, such a situation does not imply an absence of power – it merely presupposes an understanding of power as a repressive force (see Foucault 1991c:23-24; 1990:17-35). In the approach taken in this thesis it cannot be seen to be the case that actual individuals have themselves free-floated away from a larger system of meaning which *enacts them* as subjects.

Nor is such a system in any way reducible to the conscious and intentional manipulations of the so-called 'marketers'. While there remains political import in attending critically to the way in which individuals are induced to think of themselves in commercial advertising, unlike Hamilton and other affluence theorists I do not believe that questions of equality and justice can be reduced in any simple way to questions of capitalist marketing and individual responses to it. The very idea of human being as potentially autonomous and self-actualising, central to both post-materialism and neo-liberalism, is *itself* historical, context-dependent, theory-bound. In this thesis therefore I seek an account of power which questions the idea that the process of identity and its signification is a natural result of internal 'mental' structures and, as I elaborate in Chapter 6, I find such an account in the Foucaultian-influenced governmentality studies literature.

Conclusion

Thus far in the thesis the focus has been on tracing the demise of poverty and mapping the emergence of affluence as a motif of government. Having established affluence as an emergent theme in governmental texts, in Chapter 6 I turn to elaborate my argument that this amounts to a governmental shift where poverty is displaced by affluence as a motif of government. I argue that, consequent to this shift in motifs from poverty to affluence, debates over the 'normal frame of life' (Dean 2006:32) arise as debates over personal values, the place of community, and environmental degradation. In elaborating this view I argue against the naturalistic and essentialist premises of affluence theorists who claim that the problems of poverty have been 'solved' and that social democratic politics have thus been made redundant. I do so by examining existing governmentality studies literature on poverty. Referencing Dean's (1992) genealogy of poverty I argue that affluence is not simply a natural phenomenon, on the basis that poverty, which it allegedly replaces, is itself not simply a natural phenomena but rather a governmental motif central to nineteenth-century liberal government. In Chapter 6 I therefore elaborate the argument developed throughout the thesis that it is the transformation of the liberal mode of government which, I contend, facilitates the displacement of poverty and the emergence of affluence as a governmental motif.

Chapter 6

Affluence governmentality

> 'What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity.'
>
> Michele Foucault (1977) 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', p.142

In this thesis I have sought to demonstrate that a growing consensus exists whereby poverty in Australia is constructed as a 'residual' problem. I have demonstrated that the conception of poverty as residual implicitly presupposes an individualistic understanding of poverty, treating it as most effectively explained by the culture and behaviour of 'the poor' rather than by social structures. While it is the case that individualistic and punitive understandings of poverty have a long history, and this point was addressed in Chapter 2, the goal has been to highlight the way that, in the present context, this view of poverty is justified through appeal to the idea that it is affluence and not deprivation that defines contemporary western societies. My purpose in establishing that this view of poverty exists is to challenge its salience and it is towards this end that I direct my analysis in this chapter.

Exploring the confluence of ideas on poverty as individualised, in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 both the CIS and the post-materialist left were shown to invest in a developmental narrative of human being. It was further demonstrated that, consistent with this developmental narrative, in both accounts the current period of supposed mass affluence is seen to replace an earlier period of mass poverty. The emergence of affluence is thus argued to constitute a natural end to the need for a politics based in redistributive policies associated with the post-war welfare state and the social democratic tradition (for example Hamilton 2003:pxii, xiv; 2006:1-7; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:178-183; Saunders 2003:10, 48; Saunders and Tsumori 2002b:81-86). The affluence paradigm, in other words, is seen to arise naturally as the result of sustained economic growth and its impact on the demographic make-up of 'affluent' nations such as Australia (for example Saunders 2003:10, 48; Saunders and Tsumori 2002b:81-86; Hamilton 2003:xiv, 213-214; 2006:1-7; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:178-183). In this chapter, counter these arguments, I elaborate my alternative governmental thesis on the 'paradigm of affluence'. I argue that the political concerns currently ascribed to the affluence paradigm do not replace existing concerns associated with the so-called 'deprivation paradigm' as a *natural* result of demographic changes. Instead, the argument put forward in this chapter is that the displacement of poverty by affluence should not be read in naturalistic terms because the political concerns associated with the 'deprivation paradigm' are not themselves 'natural'. If poverty itself is not simply a neutral description of a developmental phase but a governmental motif, then its displacement by affluence does not constitute a natural demographic event but an intervention in motifs of government. From this premise the argument put forward in this chapter is that existing perspectives on affluence are therefore not attempts to 'describe' the affluent society so much as they are attempts to *constitute* it.

The chapter reviews critically the literature on affluence already addressed in the thesis. Two central points are advanced. Firstly it is argued that the developmental narrative upon which the affluence thesis is predicated is analytically limited. On this point a comparison is provided between the naturalistic developmental account of affluence and a genealogical account, terms elaborated more fully below. In particular I examine Galbraith's (1963) developmental understanding of

affluence and poverty against Dean's (1992) genealogical reading of the emergence of poverty as a problematic of government in the nineteenth century. The second point advanced in this chapter builds upon the first. Addressing affluence as a governmental motif, it is argued that affluence becomes a central presupposition in contemporary debates over the 'normal frame of life' (Dean 2006:32). As I return to clarify, the phrase 'normal frame of life', borrowed from Dean (2006:32), refers to discourse or debates over what is sanctioned, what is taken for granted, what is accepted and what is rendered transgressive and marginal in a community's ways of ordering and thinking its existence. Shifting the argument in this way, from an abstract analysis of affluence as displacing poverty as a nodal concern in the mode of government, to an illustration of this displacement at the level of socio-political debate, the aim is to move from an abstract to a practical analysis of affluence as a motif of government. Consequently in the final sections of the chapter attention is directed to the way that key themes of community, interpersonal values, and the environment – all central to constructions of affluence as a new and distinct paradigm – serve as key points of debate currently fought over by social capital theorists, communitarians and left post-materialists, among others. It is my contention that these debates are in effect debates over the 'normal frame of life' (Dean 2006:32) in the affluent society and that they signify a shift from a politics of welfare associated with the post-war period to a politics of wellbeing. The debates function as attempts to define the norms, and thus the excesses and transgressors of a frame within which political debate currently occurs. I conclude the chapter reflecting on the place of poverty in this reconfigured normal frame of life.

The paradigm of affluence: a genealogical perspective

Accounts of the so-called 'affluent society' addressed in earlier chapters may be seen to constitute an essentialist or historically 'naturalistic' view of affluence. This is a claim I elaborate. In chapters 3, 4 and 5 of the thesis I established the way that the emergence of the so-called affluent society was treated by both the CIS and the post-materialist affluence theorists as, on the one hand resulting from extemporaneous events – a consequence of the fortuitous post-war economic booms – and on the other hand as natural. This construction of affluence as 'natural' is illustrated in the developmental narrative which represents affluence as a progression in the evolutionary process. While affluence theorists present the actual internal workings of the affluent society as aberrant and almost pathological,[133] this writing was shown in Chapter 5 to nonetheless treat the *idea* of a developmental post-scarcity period as constitutive of a natural evolutionary progression. Indeed it is in relation to an idealised conception of the way post-scarcity society *ought to be* that affluence theorists base their critiques that contemporary consumerism at best conceals, and at worst causes, existential despair (for example Hamilton 2006:36-41; de Graaf *et al* 2005:72-80).

[133] For example Hamilton (2003:66-97); Hamilton and Dennis (2005:3-16); de Graaf *et al* (2005:1-8).

In so far as this construction of affluence treats it as a natural, discrete stage of development, it furnishes an historically 'naturalistic' explanation of affluence. The origins of affluence as a developmental stage are identified in post-war growth and seen to result in a corresponding cultural shift up the developmental hierarchy. The developmental narrative upon which such arguments are based is itself positioned as an extension of Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of physiological human needs (discussed in the previous chapter) – further emphasising the extent to which this view on affluence takes a naturalistic and essentialist understanding of human being. Of fundamental importance on this point is that the naturalism implicit in this account is not limited to understanding affluence. Where social democratic politics are argued to be redundant because the problems of scarcity have been solved, the underlying rationale is that the politics of poverty were likewise *natural* – a result of wide-spread deprivation, just as the politics of affluence are today seen to be the natural consequence of wide-spread affluence (for example Saunders 2003:5-22; Hamilton 2003:ix-xvii). This chapter challenges these naturalistic assumptions. Looking to existing literature from governmentality studies the chapter demonstrates that the naturalism tacit in the arguments of affluence theorists is politically naïve.

In contrast to the historically naturalistic view the argument developed in this chapter is that affluence does not mark a distinct stage in the evolution of human development and that, moreover, neither does deprivation. Poverty, it is argued, has not been a motif of government on the basis that it is widespread, but as a consequence of governmental developments in the nineteenth century. More precisely, the argument elaborated in this chapter, first intimated in Chapter 1, is that affluence arises as a governmental motif in a context where liberal governmentality, framed in the nineteenth century around the motif of poverty, is transformed in the twenty-first century. Thus, in opposition to the view that affluence has a 'natural' history, a contrary view that the 'origins' of affluence are *genealogical* is advocated instead (Foucault 1977:140). In order to clarify what is involved in drawing this distinction between a genealogical and a natural history approach an amended summary of Foucault's (1977:139-164) thesis on the practice of 'effective history' or 'genealogy' is provided below.

In his 1977 article, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', Foucault famously made a critique of the practice of history as an academic discipline, arguing after Nietzsche that it rested on an erroneous notion of the singular origins of things. Foucault's (1977:142-147) claim was not that things did not have 'origins' in the sense of historical beginnings, but that the practice of writing history did not involve simply and peaceably tracing and isolating the origins of things and then neutrally reporting their subsequent development through time. For Foucault (1977:147-152) both the practice of writing history *and* the origins of things were effects of struggles of power, of disruption, agitation, subjugation. Therefore, when situating his own work Foucault (1977:154-163) was concerned to author a history practice that did not conceal these struggles of power or treat them as somehow extra-curricular to the origins of things, or to the practice of historical writing, as he imputed 'natural' history to do. Instead Foucault (1977:153-154)

sought a style of history practice that put political struggles at its very centre (O'Malley *et al* 1997:506). Along these conceptual lines, when writing the history of the penal system Foucault (1991c) did not ask the metaphysical question, 'what is crime?', and then begin to map historically how it had been punished through the ages. Instead, as elaborated below, Foucault (1991c:135-228) articulated the ways in which practices of discipline and practices of punishment had been configured in a given social system as methods of subjectification.

As noted in Chapter 1, a key concern in governmentality studies analyses is to examine the way practices of rule produce particular kinds of (human) subject. In this body of work, the individual is not a finished entity that exists prior to the imposition of power: rather, individuals – as subjects – are produced *through* and enacted *by* relations of power. In authoring an alternative history of punishment Foucault (1991c:18-23) was therefore concerned to articulate the connection between the practice of discipline and the enactment of particular kinds of subjectivities (Miller 1987:196-202; see also O'Malley 1992:252-253). One example of this analysis is Foucault's (1991c:16-22) claim that modern approaches to punishment 'created' the criminal. By this claim Foucault (1991c:16-22) argued that, while individuals had perhaps always committed prohibited acts, it was not until the question of *why* some people commit some crimes was first postulated (by modern psychological approaches to crime and criminality) that the 'criminal' as a *subject type* came into existence (1991c:16-22). For Foucault (1991c:10-23) this development constitutes a significant disjuncture in the way crime and punishment had previously been envisioned, marking what one might call a discrete new *rationality* of crime and punishment. Thus, for Foucault (1991c:16-23) crime and punishment did not have singular origins; they did not have a single 'essence' and, therefore, they could not be treated as separate from the invention of other kinds of social practice, for example the self-confessions associated with psychoanalytic practice, and the discipline of psychology more generally.

Conceptualised in this manner, Foucault's (1991c) genealogy of punishment, the 'history' of penality, became, among other things, the story of the disciplining of bodies as a technology of power in the modern period, a technology of power that Foucault (1991c:24-31) argued was practised in the dormitory and on the factory floor *as well as* in prisons. In Foucault's genealogical method metaphysical and ontological notions of crime and punishment in this way were treated as opaque and strategic concepts. Their presence was not to be found in tracing the transmutations of an essential origin through time; instead their presence was indicated by their effects. In his 1977 article Foucault termed this alternative approach to historical writing 'effective history' or 'genealogy'. Since that time 'genealogy' has become the commonly used phrase for this historical method concerned more with struggle and disruption than with attempts to isolate and record the 'essence' of things.

From the Foucaultian (1977) argument on styles of history writing as 'natural' (or 'metaphysical') on the one hand and 'genealogical' on the other, it becomes apparent that the literature on the so-called 'affluent society' that I have

addressed in the previous chapters may be seen to constitute a historically *naturalistic* view of affluence. As I have demonstrated previously, in both CIS and post-materialist left writing the emergent paradigm of affluence is portrayed as a consequence of inevitable historic forces. Its origins, if not quite seen as singular, are certainly constructed as distinct and essential; deprivation falls away/is conquered, and affluence emerges in its place. The paradigm of affluence is thus seen to constitute a discrete and unique phase of human history. In contrast to this historically naturalistic and implicitly essentialist view, I argue that affluence is *not* primarily a *developmental stage* but a new way of *thinking* and *rationalising* government. Indeed, in contrast to the naturalistic approach, in my own discussion of the arguments on affluence in this thesis I have implicitly been taking a genealogical approach by situating the emergent idea of an affluent society in the context of on-going and pre-existing debates about the constitution of poverty and the welfare state. The argument, in the thesis and more directly in this chapter, is that the history of affluence is not a story unto itself, but instead, to apply Foucault's (1977:142) terms, a partial and politically-loaded narrative that emerges from 'dissension' on the government of poverty.

In emphasising these two different ways of understanding affluence I turn now to provide an extended comparison of two contrasting positions on the emergence of poverty as a fundamental tenet of economic thinking in the nineteenth century. The purpose in doing so is to explicate the displacement of poverty by affluence as occurring at the governmental level. Addressing Galbraith's treatment of the subject I highlight the way that the idea that affluence enacts a natural stage of development is premised on the idea that the earlier period, the period of deprivation, was likewise a result of some natural order of things. Against this naturalistic account Dean's (1992) genealogical approach to poverty advances an alternative, and in my view more persuasive, reading of the place of poverty in economic and other governmental texts in the nineteenth century. Building on Dean's discussion of the emergence of poverty as a rationality of government in the nineteenth century the emergence of an affluence paradigm is thus argued to constitute less a neutral description of contemporary society and more an intervention in the way government is transformed and (re)rationalised in the contemporary context.

'Knowledge' and 'existence': two levels of analysis

In Chapter 4 of the thesis I first mentioned Galbraith arguing that his book, *The Affluent Society,* published in 1958, is significant to the emergence of affluence as a motif of government. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 I highlighted points on which Galbraith's book prefigures and reiterates the affluence thesis and, in particular, an understanding of poverty as 'residual'. To recapitulate, Galbraith's (1963:13-15) argument was that, where poverty had previously been the basic and most fundamental feature of human existence, in the contemporary context it was

affluence and not poverty that had become commonplace.[134] Galbraith (1963:17-27) further claimed that, despite this monumental shift from poverty to affluence, the canon of (western) economic thought had not been adequately revised to reflect the new state of affluence. Ultimately Galbraith's (1963:13-14) criticism was that the US of the 1960s was being managed according to outdated norms established in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the texts forming the economic canon were first authored. Importantly, in his charge that the 'conventional wisdom' of economic thinking had fallen into obsolescence Galbraith (1963:15) did not claim that the conventional wisdom was wrong in an absolute sense, but that it had only been true to its time, and that its time had passed. Thus it was Galbraith's (1963:14) contention that economists continued to treat poverty as the basic ontological fact of human existence despite the fact that, empirically, it was affluence and not poverty that had become the common experience for the great majority of US society.

Galbraith's argument clearly constructs a developmental narrative which treats affluence in an essentialist, or historically naturalistic, manner. In order to demonstrate this point I explore Galbraith's (1963:17-27) claims about the limitations of the 'conventional wisdom' in greater detail. Galbraith's analysis of the conventional wisdom signifies a key methodological difference between what was described above as the 'natural history' approach to affluence, and the 'genealogical' approach. In a chapter of his book entitled 'The concept of the conventional wisdom' Galbraith (1963:17-27) situates his argument about existing ('conventional') economic wisdom and its failure to recognise, what he contends to be, a shift from mass poverty to mass affluence. Galbraith (1963:17) asserts:

> The first requirement for an understanding of contemporary economic and social life is a clear view of the relation between events and the ideas which interpret them. For each of these has a life of its own, and as much as it may seem a contradiction in terms each is capable for a considerable period of pursuing an independent course.
>
> The reason is not difficult to discover. Economic, like other social life, does not conform to a simple and coherent pattern. On the contrary, it often seems incoherent, inchoate, and intellectually frustrating. But one must have an explanation or interpretation of economic behaviour. Neither man's [sic] curiosity nor his inherent ego allows him to remain contentedly oblivious to anything that is so close to his life.

In Galbraith's analysis of the United States in the late 1950s, mass affluence had come to replace mass poverty and, as a result, empirical events had out-paced the ideas relied upon to explain them (1963:13-15). Galbraith's (1963:17-27) critique of the 'conventional wisdom' is that its purchase derived from its status as convention rather than from accordance with contemporary empirical facts. In

[134] This idea of a historical shift from a period of poverty to a period of affluence is a consistent theme in all accounts of the existence of a paradigm of affluence, as was established in Chapter 4. Thus, though focusing on Galbraith here, I consider the argument that follows to be of relevance to all naturalistic accounts of the so-called affluent society as these follow the same style of explanation.

making this critique Galbraith (1963:22) draws attention to the way that presuppositions central to theories about the world do not have a straightforward or uncomplicated relationship to the things that they claim to explain or that individuals may observe to exist. Tacit in this claim of a dissonance between the theories we have about the world and the world itself is the idea that a vast difference exists between our embodied experience of the world and the theories which render the world – including our experience of it – meaningful. What is more, fundamental to Galbraith's (1963:22) criticism of the conventional wisdom is the idea that objects gain their ontological status not from their existence in the empirical world, but from the weight they are afforded in theories which seek to organise or make meaningful the empirical world; poverty was presumed to be the norm in 1960s US society not because of its apparent existence, but because of the central place afforded it in what had become 'the conventional wisdom' of the economics texts (Galbraith 1963:13-15, 28-37).

Beyond recognising that there is complexity between what can be observed to exist by any single person and what is named as existent in theories which organise the way we come to know the world, Galbraith maintained no interest in further developing this theoretical point in his book. Galbraith's purpose in claiming (1963:13-15) that a rupture existed between the (on-going) ontological status of poverty and its (allegedly retreating) empirical status was merely to direct attention to faulty thinking in economic texts – an error of logic he sought to amend with his own thesis that affluence had become the empirical norm and thus needed to be recognised in economic thinking as the basic fact of human society. Though Galbraith did not do so, I further explore this distinction between 'events and the ideas that interpret them' (Galbraith 1963:17). I seek to demonstrate that this theme of disjuncture becomes more fully a feature of Dean's (1992) contrasting genealogical and governmental thesis on the constitution of poverty in the nineteenth century.

Galbraith's (1963:13-27) argument on the status granted poverty in the conventional wisdom of the economics texts, as noted above, was not that it was inaccurate in an absolute sense, but that it merely reflected the reality of an era long concluded. In his own words: 'The shortcomings of economics are not original error but uncorrected obsolescence' (Galbraith, 1963:15). Taken for granted in the claim that the post-scarcity affluence period has displaced the earlier norm of mass poverty is the presupposition that poverty, and its central role in the economic texts, itself arose as a natural fact, at least in the historical period where it was seen to be the norm. This assumption is clear when examining Galbraith's analysis of poverty and its status in the canon of nineteenth-century economic thought. Discussing the subject of poverty and its central place in nineteenth-century economic thinking Galbraith (1963:28-37) credited three collaborating influences: two hundred years of mass poverty; David Ricardo's findings on the 'iron law of wages' wherein, as Galbraith summarised, wages could never rise beyond a minimum subsistence level without threatening the entire capitalist enterprise; and the nineteenth-century invention of population studies – with its related presupposition of necessary scarcity – by statistics pioneer Robert Thomas

Malthus. In his discussion Galbraith (1963:30) treats the interplay between Ricardian 'gloom', the Malthusian conception of scarcity, and the brute fact of unremitting poverty for the majority of the population, as natural and inevitable:

> Economic ideas began to take their modern form in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was against this background of centuries-old stagnation relieved now by increasing wealth, but wealth not of the many but the few, that they were first worked out and offered. Economists would indeed have been indifferent to both history and environment if they had not taken the privation and economic desolation of the masses for granted. In economics misfortune and failure were normal. Success, at least for more than the favoured few, was what had to be explained. Enduring success was at odds with all history and could not be expected. This was the legacy of circumstances to ideas. (Galbraith 1963:30)

Dean (1992) has also written on the constitution of poverty, and the status it achieved as the ontological fact of human being in the nineteenth century. In contrast to Galbraith's (1963:30) analysis that the centrality of poverty to nineteenth-century economic writing represented the *natural* 'legacy of circumstances to ideas', Dean (1992:217-219) contends that investment in notions of scarcity and poverty as fundamental facts of human being arise at this time as interventions in government. Dean's (1992:217-219) argument, contra Galbraith, is that poverty was not 'discovered' as a problem in any simple way, but that rather it came to be constituted as a particular *kind* of problem through which the project of government came to be thought in the nineteenth century.[135] Dean's (1992:234-235) position, in other words, is that poverty at this time achieves its status in economics and other texts as it becomes a problematic of government. This view of poverty as a problematic of government is examined below.

Discussing governmentality studies in Chapter 1, I discussed the way that power and government are addressed in terms of the rationalities which organise and structure their practice. In this context I claimed that, from a Foucaultian-influenced governmentality studies perspective, it was imprecise to speak of power as a singular force and that it was more appropriate to speak instead of specific *kinds* of power*s* conceptualised as distinct and historically-located ways of 'conducting' people and arranging social relationships (Foucault 1983:216-226). It could be said that the project of genealogy, as introduced above, is a method for articulating these relational motifs of power and the practices in which they are imbedded. Correspondingly, in his genealogy of poverty, Dean's (1992:215-219) project is to demonstrate the way that understandings of poverty are not 'natural'

[135] Procacci (1991), who also adopts a governmentality studies framework, has similarly made interesting and important contributions to analysing the relationship between poverty and emergent nineteenth-century (liberal) governmentality. In Procacci's (1991; also 1989) analysis however 'poverty' is addressed in terms of its construction as a social problem – that is as the problem of 'the poor' – rather than, as in Dean's (1992) analysis, at the level of national economies and related governmental texts. Though there is clearly a relationship between these two styles of analysis it is beyond the scope of the argument to consider this relationship further in this thesis.

or simple but, rather, that poverty comes historically to be constituted within relations of power, that is, relations of *government*:

> The general thesis here is that the history of the treatment of poverty, and, by implication, what we call welfare or social policy, cannot properly be understood within a history of ideologies, within the evolution of morality, or even within an economic history. It must be understood, above all, in terms of governance and the 'forms of life' which are promoted by it... (Dean 1992:218)

In his analysis of the constitution of poverty Dean (1992:215) therefore comes to argue that, *despite* the existence of material suffering – what in today's lexicon might be termed 'absolute deprivation' – for hundreds of years, and the early existence of a police of the poor, prior to the nineteenth century poverty did not exist as a thought-space of government – that is to say, it was not conceptualised as a discrete thing to be governed or managed. More precisely, and as will be discussed more thoroughly, Dean (1992:234-235) argues that this conceptualisation of poverty in terms of the necessary facts of scarcity and the threat to the on-going wellbeing of the population comes to be an incredibly useful way of formulating problems of government in the emerging liberal mode of the nineteenth century.[136] The distinctiveness of Dean's view can be understood through comparison to Galbraith's formulation that poverty was simply the legacy inherited by economic authors of the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries like Ricardo and Malthus. Putting in doubt the apparent 'naturalness' of this simple trajectory of ideas and events Dean's (1992:215) argument is that the terms of the relationship between the empirical fact of poverty and the understanding of poverty as a 'problem' to be solved, or at the very least managed, as it came to be treated in the nineteenth century, is not so straightforward. In Dean's (1992:234-235) genealogy, poverty and Malthusian scarcity are not seen to form an intellectual couplet as a result of some 'natural' order of things in the nineteenth century, but as a result of a very *particular* ordering of things occurring at this time. Poverty, therefore, is not merely a natural fact to be managed by economists, as in Galbraith's reading, but an *intervention in government* connected to specific interventions in knowledge.

Thus, where Galbraith's (1963:13-15) analysis challenged the on-going connection between poverty as an empirical reality and poverty as a precept of economic knowledge in the context of the United States in the 1960s, Dean's genealogical analysis goes further to suggest that there *has never been* a natural relationship between the empirical fact of poverty and its ontological status in theories about

[136] By 'useful' the implication is not that this development was being consciously put into use by any individual or group of individuals, or that it was 'useful' in achieving some conscious scheme to seize power. What is intended instead is simply that the poverty/scarcity couplet constituted a nodal point in an emerging rationality of liberal government, as I return to elaborate.

the world.[137] Dean's (1992:217) genealogy, unlike Galbraith's analysis, does not take for granted the ontological status of poverty as a discrete problem to be managed, as intended by the projects of Ricardo and Malthus, to cite two opportune examples. The difference evident in these two approaches – between Galbraith's (1963:28-37) treatment of poverty as merely a natural phenomenon to be understood, analysed and solved, and Dean's (1992:215-219) genealogical example, addressing poverty in terms of the way it has come to figure in shifting understandings of the government of society – amounts to the difference between a natural history account of poverty and a *genealogy* of poverty.[138]

As commented in Chapter 1, the argument from Dean (1992:218-219, 234-235) on the 'origins' of poverty is significant to the argument in this thesis. If poverty is itself a motif of government, connected to a particular (economic) understanding of the social world as defined by scarcity, then what does it mean to claim, as affluence theorists do (for example Hamilton 2003:147), that 'the economic problem' has been solved? The argument developed here is that the 'problems' of poverty are today reconstituted through the motif of affluence. If the relationship between the existence of mass poverty for actual people and the existence of poverty as a factor in the economics texts is treated as complex and not simple, if, in other words, the 'economic problem' is an *intervention* in forms of life rather than a natural consequence of the conditions of life, then there is reason likewise to put into doubt the hierarchical narrative of 'natural' human development upon which affluence writing is predicated. In contrast to the naturalistic view of affluence it is therefore argued that, just as the emergence of liberal government played a constitutive role in the genealogy of poverty, so too the transformations of the liberal mode of government function as constitutive in the unfolding history of affluence.

Transforming the social: the government of affluence

In Chapter 1 I addressed the way that, in the governmentality literature, the liberal mode comes to be regarded as a mode of governing-through-the-social. I revisit

[137] Though here I focus on Dean's contribution, there are other important writers and texts, some of which were mentioned in Chapter 1, who have arrived at a similar conclusion. Escobar (1995) has applied Foucaultian concepts in his analysis of the industry of western aid, arguing that in the 'development' context poverty is very much a governmental intervention. His argument clearly has resonances with the current discussion. Rojas (2004:97-115) has applied a governmentality studies analysis at the level of international poverty arguing similarly that it is governed through the rationality of 'aid'. Anthropologist Maia Green (2006), applying a broad lens of cross-cultural comparison, has similarly argued that 'poverty' is an imposed concept that has little relationship with the way in which conditions of 'deprivation' are understood and experienced throughout the world. The anthropologist Marshall Sahlins (1996:395-400) has likewise written critically on the concept of scarcity, arguing that it is one of the basic tenets of the western Judeo-Christian cultural tradition and that, as such, it greatly limits the capacity of westerners to understand the majority world.

[138] It also signals the distinction between an ontology of being and an ontology of becoming addressed in Chapter 1 (Chia 1996:36-38).

and extend the discussion here, introducing 'bio-power' and 'biopolitics' as additional concepts through which analysis proceeds. Where the liberal mode of governing is seen to operate through the social in governmentality studies literature it is implicitly understood to constitute a form of 'bio-power' or a 'biopolitics' (Dean 1999:113). The concept of 'biopolitics' arises from Foucault's (2003:242-250; 1990:141-142) argument that in the eighteenth-century (and into the nineteenth-century) period something fundamentally new emerges in the field of rule that had not existed as its subject in earlier modes: that thing, it is argued, is life itself. [139] As the prefix 'bio' suggests, Foucault (2003:243; 1990:135-139) defines biopolitics as a technology of power directed at the biological processes which can be applied either to foster biological life or to frustrate it. In specific terms, Foucault (2003:241; 1990:135-139) formulates bio-power as the power to 'make live and to let die' and he demarcates this power in relation to the sovereign power of the king to 'take life or let live'. Biopolitics are not rationalised as power over life in the sovereign sense of taking life and consigning to death, but in terms of regulating, and promoting, a range of phenomena associated with the proliferation of life understood specifically in terms of its biological functions (Foucault 1990:136-139).[140] In so far as it is concerned with aggregated outcomes of birth, death and disease, bio-power, as I further clarify below, operates through the social (O'Malley 1992:253). In this context governmentality scholars argue that liberal governmentality is a form of biopolitics which relies upon the social as a thought-space of government (Dean 1999:113).

It was noted above that a key characteristic of biopolitics (Foucault 2003:243-244) is that it governs the population as a collective entity. This 'massifying' tendency in biopolitics was likewise adumbrated by Foucault (2003:242-244) in relation to earlier forms of power, such as discipline, which, as mentioned previously, Foucault (1991c) identified as an individualising technology of rule directed at disciplining individual bodies (O'Malley 1992:252-253). In his conception of bio-power as directed at 'man-as-species', what Foucault (2003:243-247) sought to

[139] There is an on-going debate in the literature regarding the accuracy of this claim by Foucault. This debate arises chiefly in response to Arturo Agamben's (1998) arguments on the issue of 'bare life' and its existence as an object of government. In contrast to Foucault (1990:143) who identifies bio-power, the politics of live itself, as constituting the 'threshold of modernity', Agamben (1998:5-7) considers 'bare life' to have a far longer history as a central concern of (sovereign) rule and his philosophical observations on this issue cast the relationship between bare life and sovereign power in significantly different terms from those of Foucault. Without engaging this debate, what can be asserted is that, despite whether or not life, conceived at the level of its status as an organism, was brought into the realms of the political prior to the eighteenth and nineteenth-century period, the rise of *biological* sciences, such as modern medicine, does appear to confirm that, at least at the discursive level, the specific terms in which organic life was understood, and thus governed, took a new 'biological' form in the nineteenth-century period. This is a more circumscribed claim than Foucault's (1990:143) assertion that bio-power signifies the 'threshold of modernity'.

[140] Importantly, this specific rationality of biopolitics as concerned with the promotion of organic life does not make biopolitics any less implicated in state sanctioned killing (forms of power associated with sovereign rule). Contemplating the emergence of biopolitics Foucault (1990:136-137) notes: 'wars were never as bloody as they have been since the nineteenth century, and all things being equal, never before did regimes visit such holocausts on their own populations.

isolate was the proliferation of a series of technologies, emerging in the period of the late eighteenth through to the early nineteenth century, which formulate problems of human welfare in terms of trends in population aggregates. Foucault's (2003:243-247) argument that bio-power constituted a distinct technology of power was premised on his observation of the way that during this period these emerging statistical forms of knowledge facilitated a new way of acting on society by creating society – 'population' – as a thing in itself to be counted, known and, potentially, regularised. Put another way, the welfare of the population was to be governed at the level of population. Where governmentality scholars refer to liberal government as a form of governing-through-the-social it is in terms of population life functions – birth rates, death rates, incidence of illness and disease – to be collated, organised and regulated, that the government of 'society' is understood (Rose 1993:289; Walters 2001:62-63; O'Malley 1992:252-253).

This review of the governmentality studies' understanding of liberal government as a form of governing through the social that is predicated upon the biopolitical concern with life functions serves to better contextualise Dean's (1992) genealogy of poverty. It becomes apparent that, at least from the governmentality perspective, the population studies in which Malthus was involved, for example, signify more than a mere consolidation of economic wisdom in the face of the 'natural' fact of poverty as Galbraith in his analysis presumes. Instead, these population studies on scarcity signify a pivotal moment in the proliferation of new forms of knowledge and, connectedly, new technologies of power. To reiterate, the argument from Malthus (1798:4) was that, if humans as individuals and as legislators did not proceed with extreme caution, then two competing 'natural' phenomena, reckless human breeding on the one hand, and necessarily limited environmental resources on the other, would threaten the fate, not only of those individuals who proved reckless, but of the human species at the species level. As Dean (1992:234-235) has demonstrated in his genealogy, poverty is not merely a 'natural fact' in this hypothesis but a central problem of significance to the welfare of the nation. It can therefore be seen that, in Malthus' formulation, the scarcity/poverty couplet very much embodies the biopolitical question of the survival of the species described above as central to biopolitics. It similarly exemplifies the linking together of the government of the individual with the government of population (Foucault 1990:145; 2003:243). It operates at both the individual and aggregate level and, in a novel way, constructs a perceived need to secure the safety of one from the instabilities and potential threat of the other – all elements of biopolitics. As Dean (1992:234-235) makes clear, Malthus' construction of poverty as a spectre that haunts the continued existence of the species in this way opens up the possibility of whole new governmental interventions, both at the level of the population and at the level of individual conduct. Crucially this 'opening up' of poverty as a thought-space of government occurs specifically at the level of the wealth and poverty of the nation and not at the level of the wealth or poverty of individuals within the nation. It is in these very

terms that Dean (1992:324-238) claims poverty first takes form as a thought space of government in the nineteenth-century period. [141]

Poverty, in the nineteenth century, comes to form a link in a conceptual chain that connects the management of the nation's resources to the conduct of individual persons (Dean 1992:15). This development, which I refer to as a conceptual linking of poverty-scarcity-population, is exemplified in Malthus' (1798) arguments about scarcity and poverty and the subsequent belief that, without careful (moral) checks, unregulated breeding posed a genuine threat to the survival of the nation as a whole. To reiterate, where interventions in knowledge such as statistical analysis are necessary to the construction of the poverty-scarcity-population conceptual chain, it can be seen that during this period the economic canon does not make a default presumption of necessary deprivation as a *natural* result of mass poverty, but rather arises from a very *specific* formulation of poverty and scarcity as being central to the management of the wealth and welfare of the nation. It is therefore in relation to the poverty-scarcity-population nexus, rather than as a spontaneous response to material deprivation, that the problems of government, in the nineteenth century, are formulated in terms of the problems of poverty: deprivation, overpopulation, limited resources, and by extension, urban crowding, public hygiene, sexual morality etc, etc (Dean 1999:125-126). So too it was against and in relation to these governmental problematics that the institutions of the welfare state came to be made meaningful in the twentieth century, and in the context of these political concerns that resistance calls for equality, fair working conditions, public health care, and relief from poverty came to be made (Rose 1993:292-293). Poverty, in other words, became a central motif of government and a key precept in debates about what constituted the 'normal frame of life' (Dean 2006:32).

Where in the nineteenth century the conceptual link population-scarcity-poverty became established as a part of the liberal governmental mode, in contemporary writing on affluence the poverty-scarcity-population conceptual chain is explicitly questioned. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, its relevance as a motif of government in the contemporary period is increasingly called into doubt. It is not my argument however that this situation constitutes an irrevocable break with the preceding period. As established above, the poverty-scarcity-population conceptual link was installed as a part of the liberal mode of government. It would be arguing too much to claim that the liberal mode of government is today altogether irrelevant. Nor can it be said to be the case that some distinct new way of thematising society on par with the invention of population studies in the early nineteenth century has

[141] To be precise, Dean (1992) does not situate the emergence of poverty simply in the context of Malthusian population studies. The emergence of this form of statistical knowledge is a key theme for Dean but poverty is nonetheless seen to be located within a wider context of emergent knowledges that are not limited to the work of Malthus. In discussing Dean's (1992) writing my purpose, however, has not been to give a detailed overview of the many finer points of his genealogy, but rather to highlight the way that, at its core, it constitutes a different approach to the history of affluence and poverty to Galbraith's formulation. Furthermore the aim is to demonstrate that this formulation of poverty is pertinent to the argument that affluence displaces poverty as a motif of government.

enacted entirely new technologies of government. The categories of population are still relevant, as are the categories of individual, and of society. More precisely then, it is not the categories themselves but the *relations between* these categories that are currently being contested. This is made explicit in arguments, such as those addressed in Chapter 2, that claim there is a need to rewrite the welfare 'contract' on the grounds that the established model focused too much on individual rights and not nearly enough on principles of mutuality and social obligation (for example Giddens 2000:6-7; Thatcher 1987; Etzioni 1996:7; Glendon 1991:ix-xiii; Blair 1998:4). In these arguments it is clearly not the actual categories of individual and society that are in question, but the *principles* by which the relations between them are organised and governed.

In addressing the shift from a governmental motif of poverty to one of affluence as signifying, not rupture and breach, but a *transformation* in the overriding and taken for granted norms of liberal government, the analysis developed in this chapter complements governmentality studies literature on the 'transformations of the social'. As discussed in Chapter 2, in the governmentality studies literature changes currently wrought in the governing rationalities of post-war liberal states are considered to effect a transformation in the way the social is constructed as a thought-space of government. Along these lines I contend that the displacement of poverty by affluence as a precept of *neo*-liberal government constitutes one such site of transformation. In more precise terms the thesis is that, while government still occurs through a (neo)liberal mode, affluence signifies a disjunction in the earlier established conceptual link, displacing the poverty-scarcity-population chain as motif of government, and emerging as a fundamental precept of the normal frame of life. In advancing this position my argument is that, without discounting the rising incomes of the middle classes of the western world, neither scarcity nor poverty have been 'solved'. It is rather the case that new ways have been found to 'do' government, new motifs are emerging to 'conduct conduct', and that affluence, as one of those motifs, effectively constructs the 'rational' points of governmental practice in new ways. Under the auspices of the emerging politics of affluence a new conceptual chain of affluence-post-scarcity-population is being established, and while the (liberal) biopolitical themes and technologies persist, the political problems to which they are seen to correspond are being imagined in distinct new ways. It is my contention that it is this shift from poverty to affluence, mapped in detail in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5, rather than simple demographic changes, or an altered constitution of poverty, which accounts for the present consensus on poverty as individualised. Where poverty was once a central tenet in debates about what constitutes a 'normal frame of life', now it is affluence. In this new context, and as I have demonstrated in the discussion on the post-materialist thesis in the previous chapter, existing poverty is implicitly constructed as 'residual', a sign of individual or community dysfunction, with responsibility for its existence therefore devolving to the individual.

The government of affluence and the normal frame of life:

from welfare to wellbeing

As stated above, in arguing that the growing consensus of an emergent affluence paradigm signifies a new motif in the rationality of government it is not my claim that either the social or the biopolitical are no longer relevant. Rather, my circumscribed thesis on affluence is that in the *neo*-liberal mode biopolitics, as the political questions of life functions, are presently imagined in the context of new debates. My thesis, therefore, is that it is *not* the case that the emergence of an affluence norm signifies a distinct period of human development. The paradigm of affluence, though real in its effects, is not 'natural', but a construction, a putting into place of a novel motif of government – a government of affluence. What the emergence of affluence as a governmental motif thus signifies, is not a distinct period in human development, but rather, as will be discussed below, a new series of themes through which to debate the terms of the 'normal frame of life' (Dean 2006:32).

To explicate this claim about affluence as a continuation of biopolitics and a subsequent reconfiguration of the normal frame of life, I reconsider the citation, first referenced in Chapter 4, from the Simplicity Forum's website. The Simplicity Forum is an on-line forum administered by the Simple Living Network which, as discussed in Chapter 4, promotes the idea that 'affluenza' is rife in contemporary US society. As well as diagnosis, the Simplicity Forum (along with affluence theorists more generally) offers remedy:

> By working less, slowing down and exploring frugality we can have the money we need to achieve freedom from the anxiety and drudgery that often surrounds money and jobs. By living deliberately, eating consciously, and exercising regularly we can experience greater levels of health and well-being. By reducing clutter, buying less, and rediscovering meaning we can infuse our days with purpose and inspiration. By setting limits, reworking priorities, and making time we can reconnect with the people and activities that feed us and contribute to thriving societies. By eating locally, traveling lightly, walking frequently, and building modestly we can preserve the planet for future generations. (Simplicity Forum 2008)

The above citation is revealing of the way that, within the affluence thesis, there is still a biopolitical concern with the preservation of the species, a biological interest that, arguably, has been extended to include non-human organisms, as evident in the concern to 'preserv[e] the planet for future generations'. Indeed, it is an implicit biopolitics which serves as the anchoring point in prescriptive claims about the government of conduct in the above citation. The Simplicity Forum website counsels us to 'work less', to 'set limits' and to 'walk frequently', not because these are necessarily pleasurable occupations, but because the preservation of the planet depends on our doing so. Hence, there is still a sense of needing to stave off potential catastrophe reminiscent of Malthusian formulations on scarcity. However, the problem of staving off catastrophe and preserving the planet for future generations is, in the example from the Simplicity Forum, formulated in quite different terms from those associated with the threats of poverty and over-

population. As previously discussed, for Malthus the problems of scarcity were reckless breeding and limited resources. In writing from the Simplicity Forum and the affluenza movement, as well as in the affluence thesis more generally, it is consumer practices rather than breeding practices that are seen as the harbingers of potential catastrophe. There is, therefore, both continuity and dissonance when comparing affluence and poverty as motifs of government.[142]

Leaving Malthus and his fellow logicians of scarcity in the shadows of an historic catastrophe seemingly averted, an overview of the catastrophes and political problematics that are positioned as most urgent in the contemporary affluence thesis is now provided. It is argued that the affluence thesis reiterates certain key themes germane to political debate today and that these themes constitute defining points in debates over the normal frame of life in the affluent society. The three leading problematics which affluence theorists postulate are: personal values and character, quality of life and community, and the environment, a contested concept understood in a loose and shifting context. These themes have all been touched on in addressing the affluence thesis in Chapters 4 and 5. In exploring the ways these three themes figure in contemporary debates, as I do in this chapter, I will necessarily be brief, it being beyond the limits of the present discussion to give them the full attention they deserve. The objective is merely to sketch the way that the government of affluence is enacted in contemporary political debates. More precisely, I want to draw attention to the way in which these three central issues – individual values and character, community, and the environment – map on to debates currently engaged in sociological, philosophical, and political arenas which are quite outside the narrow terms of the affluence literature as I have addressed it in this thesis. The purpose in doing so is to demonstrate the way that a governmentality of affluence is not restricted to the writing which explicitly addresses the proclaimed 'problems' of affluence but is actually an underlying presupposition in a range of contemporary sociological, philosophical, and political debates about the terms in which the problems of contemporary 'affluent' societies are to be understood. I contend that these debates are in effect constitutive of a shift from a politics of welfare associated with the post-war welfare state to a contemporary politics of wellbeing.

As my interest resides in the debates *as* debates, attention is directed at elaborating *just what it is* about values and character, community, and the environment that is seen to be problematic in these competing sociological and political accounts. It is the shades of difference, the contestations and conflicts

[142] Certainly it remains the case that arguments on reckless breeding are still present in public discussion (as is the concern with finite resources), most typically in relation to the breeding of those on welfare such as in the example by Sullivan (2000) cited in Chapter 3. Nonetheless, while there is a persistent interest in limiting the breeding patterns of certain social groups, today alongside such arguments is a rising popular concern that population numbers are too low, and falling (as reported for example by Manne 2003:1; Farouque 2004:4; for discussion see McDonald 2000). This construction of declining birth rates as a problem is almost a complete inversion of the kind of population explosion that Malthus (1798) imagined as the catastrophe haunting the human species – though it does not disavow the technologies of power encapsulated by population statistics.

across the contrasting and competing perspectives on the problems seen to define, shape and, in some instances, threaten, the on-going security of the 'affluent' society that are highlighted here. Indeed, it is the unfinished nature of these arguments that constitutes them debates about the 'normal frame of life' (Dean 2006:32) in the contemporary setting. Thus I do not regard the sociological, philosophical and political arguments touched on below to be purely 'descriptive' of life in contemporary affluent societies. Instead, to reformulate Tanesini's (1994:207) statement on meaning claims, I consider them competing 'proposals about how we ought to proceed from here.' It is also important to note that, while these themes are argued to be central to an emergent government of affluence, they are taken to be its *provisional* themes. This is to say that limiting the analysis to these three areas should not be taken to imply that the areas nominated exhaust the themes of affluence as a governmentality. Instead I conceptualise them as constituting, not the necessary terrain over which 'normal frame of life' *must* be fought, but three areas over which these political debates are currently *being* fought.

Previously in the thesis I addressed the way that both affluence theorists of the post-materialist left (for example Hamilton 2002; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:9) and Saunders of the CIS (2002:8-10) were concerned with what they interpreted as a growing acquisitiveness and materialism amongst the Australian public. In Chapter 3 it was also highlighted that the affluenza movement emerging from the US was similarly premised on a concern with the feckless material consumption of US citizens and the perceived implications of such consumption for individual values (for example de Graaf *et al* 2005:23-30). This concern with the supposed erosion of individual values and the diminution of character in the post-war period is not limited to the writing on affluence. In Chapter 4 of the thesis I noted the way that, in so far as the affluence thesis in general, and the US affluenza literature in particular, address the alleged demise of individual character, this writing is consistent with themes pursued in the social capital literature.[143] The concept of social capital has come to constitute a common shorthand for bonds of social reciprocity, and is a concept currently applied in diverse academic and policy locales. The core argument in the work by Putnam (1995:65-67), one of the leading contributors in this area, is that changes to the institutions of western life occurring in the post-war period have fractured and undermined the social virtues required to maintain effective democracies. In terms of time periods under analysis there is a clear synchronicity between the social capital literature and the affluenza writing. If there are parallels with the social capital writing there are also disparities however, and it is both continuities and disparities to which I draw attention. Social capital arguments, most notably as they appear in writing by Putnam (1995:66-73), are primarily concerned with political engagement, understood as high degrees of activity in civil society organisations, in a manner which is almost entirely absent from the affluenza writing. What is more, and as I show below, while there is a shared sense in which individuals are seen to be possessed of narrow 'extrinsic' values in both social capital writing and writing on

[143] I also noted that neo-liberals such as Murray (2007) had similarly taken a position in the debate on 'values' arguing a need for social leaders to have a firm moral education.

affluence, the two bodies of writing attribute the causes of this state of things to different, though sometimes overlapping, phenomena.

As discussed in Chapter 4, in the affluenza writing (and the wider affluence literature), the apparent rise of acquisitive selves is attributed primarily to rising income levels and to the development of a marketing society inundating individuals with media-based directives to realise their identities through material consumption (for example Hamilton 2002; Hamilton and Denniss 2005:19-57; de Graaf *et al* 2005:153-159). While it is the case that the social capital literature also credits television as a negative influence (Putnam 1995:75; 1995b:677-680) the social capital literature is generally less critical of television as a vehicle for the promotion of consumer capitalism and more concerned with the way television viewing promotes individualistic pastimes and individualistic recreational pursuits, in contrast to older traditions of group pastimes and collective activities. A further contrast between the affluence thesis and the literature on social capital in explaining the alleged fracturing of the so-called social virtues is that the social capital writing addresses, albeit only to later disregard as cause, the fractured and geographically mobile pattern of work emerging in the post-war period (Putnam 1995:73-74). Affluence theorists, though concerned with over-work, do not address this sort of structural transformation of the labour system in their analyses.

On the theme of a fractured working life and its implications for individual values Richard Sennett's 1998 publication, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, is also a relevant title. Sennett is a leading sociologist and his meditations on individuals' value development in western societies in the post-war period are situated neither within a social capital framework nor within the affluence thesis. Nonetheless the themes Sennett addresses in his 1998 book intersect with the wider theme of individual values in significant ways. The impetus behind Sennett's (1998) analysis was not the idea that individuals had become more acquisitive or less politically engaged, but rather that changes in the work model of capitalism, from continuity and repetition to flexibility and change, were undermining the capacity of individuals to create cogent narratives of the development of their selves, to develop, as it were, their 'characters'. Sennett's (1998:10-11, 30-31) argument that the disorganisation of work structures was eliminating some of the tools necessary to individual workers in their ability to structure coherent narratives of identity thus constitutes yet another account of the problem of the self in the post-war period. [144]

[144] Sennett's (1998) work on the 'corrosion of character' has affinities with Ulrich Beck's (2002) arguments on 'individualisation' and in point of fact Beck's work is frequently cited by theorists such as Giddens (for example 1998:36) and Hamilton (for example 2006:43). I have chosen to highlight Sennett's work rather than Beck's as it (arguably) reflects discontinuity with arguments by Giddens and Hamilton in that it acknowledges social structures, including class, in its account of individuals' value development. Given that this review of the literature is brief and directed at highlighting discontinuity and contestation in the debates it seemed pertinent to take such an approach.

Though his argument differs in stark ways from that found in the affluence thesis including the affluenza writing from the US, from Saunders of the CIS, and from the social capital literature, the example from Sennett highlights a growing theme at the centre of an emergent politics that, while not always insensitive to questions of class, nonetheless tends to present the problems of identity and personal values in the affluent society in explicitly ethical terms. The example of Sennett, who is described as a political radical (Benn 2001) and maintains a commitment to questions of class, highlights the level of contestation that arises in these debates. Sennett, unlike the affluence theorists, leaves scope in his analysis to address social structures though, like the affluence theorists, he addresses these structures in terms of their impact upon individuals and their character development.

Connected to this concern with the diminution of individual character is a concern with interpersonal values expressed in terms of concerns about 'community' and family life. As relates to the affluence literature this theme is readily apparent in the critique of the encroachment of consumerism into communal and family life in the affluent society (Hamilton 2006:40; Eckersley 2005; de Graff *et al* 2005:36-71). The argument from affluence theorists on this point is that acquisitive individuals are not communal individuals and that the spread of consumerism promotes urban sprawl which in turn compounds the 'individualisation' which breeds acquisitive selves. Self-involved acquisitive selves, so the argument continues, create communities around consumer centres – the shopping malls and generically designed market places that today populate the ever-expanding urban landscape (de Graaf *et al* 2005:63-71). This concern with the status of communities is likewise an overarching theme in the social capital literature, as evident in the central metaphor in Putnam's (1995:70) title 'Bowling Alone'. Putnam (1995:66), as mentioned above, was primarily concerned with the status of civic organisations in US society. For Putnam the success of liberal democracy was premised on the maintenance of a thriving civil sector. Putnam's (1995:66) very specific argument is that the importance of civic organisations arises from their inherent ability to inculcate in individuals the *values* that would render them 'good' citizens. Connectedly, Putnam (1994:8) affirmed that engagement with civil society organisations served to foster and promote bonds of social trust.

Francis Fukuyama (1995), the former neo-conservative, is also a key contributor to the debate about social virtues, such as trust. In his 1995 book *Trust: Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, Fukuyama argued that forms of social trust would become necessary characteristics for success in the emerging 'new capitalism'. More precisely Fukuyama (1995:3-12) argued that, in the period following the demise of the Soviet Union and what he claimed constituted an 'end to history', the nations that would prosper were those that had established forms of social trust which assisted in meeting the demands of new corporate capitalism. In Fukuyama's (1995:3-12) analysis those nations that were not able to fit the model of the corporate institution would be the ones to suffer most. In a way, Fukuyama's (1995) book effectively brings together ideas about the government of communities on one hand and economic prosperity on the other, arguing that

the future of affluent societies *depends* on the social virtues that they have in place. Of course, in tying the use-value of strong communities to economic ends Fukuyama effectively undermines the sentiment in both the affluence writing and the social capital thesis that there is a value in community life which transcends economic concerns. Despite the antagonism which might thus arise between Fukuyama (1995) and his potential interlocutors from the social capital or post-materialist perspectives on the value of community as inherent or otherwise, Fukuyama's (1995) book is an exemplar of the way biopolitical concerns of wellbeing, the proliferation of the conditions deemed necessary for thriving economic life, are presently imagined in ethical terms.

In giving this brief survey of the broad and growing literature on the ethics of self and community, the aim is not to arrive at a conclusion as to whether individuals are more or less acquisitive or whether the institutions of communal life could be said to be thriving or in decline. Instead the aim is to draw attention to the way in which these debates are premised on the idea that a period of affluence has been achieved that brings with it its own political problems. It would be remiss, therefore, to discuss the role of community in recent sociological and political debates without attending to the contribution made by communitarian political philosophy.[145] There are two main lines of critique from the communitarian writing that are relevant to the present discussion. The first arises in the form of Charles Taylor's (1985:187-189) charge that rights-based liberalism was committed to a kind of atomism, treating individuals as autonomous units, pre-formed and independent of their communities. The second communitarian critique relevant to the discussion arises in the work of philosophers such as Etzioni (1994), Bellah (Bellah *et al* 1985) and Glendon (1991) who question not the value of community to individual development in an abstract sense, but actual community values and standards, arguing, more often than not, that these values and standards are in decline (Bell 2009; for critical anlaysis see also Rose 2007:180-184). Etzioni's critique, in other words, is premised on questioning the implications of a rights-based regime for the civic development of actually existing individuals (for example Etzioni 1996:3-4, 8-9; see also Glendon 1991). In this regard this second communitarian argument tends to be directed less at political philosophy at an abstract level and more at political developments at an electoral and policy level (Bell 2009). Indeed the communitarian argument was addressed in this capacity in Chapter 2 where transformations to the post-war welfare state were discussed.

A certain degree of circularity is apparent in the arguments on personal values and community that have been explored above, and this is most evident in considering the contributions by communitarian philosophers. In communitarian analyses the problem of declining communities is explicitly attributed to the dominance of rights-based thinking in the US seen to contribute to an alleged preponderance of

[145] As point of note Etzioni (2001:223-224) actually reviewed Putnam's arguments on social capital as he made them in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* arguing that 'social capital' was itself a scientific euphemism for 'community' and that Putnam had failed to grapple with the normative questions of what constitutes a moral community.

rights-focused liberal individuals (for example Etzioni 1994:3-20; 1996:7; Glendon 1991:ix-xiii, 109-144). Debates about community life can in this way be seen to be connected to debates about individual values and character. The corrective offered in the communitarian analyses is often a renewed rhetorical (and policy) focus on responsibility and on the mutuality of rights and responsibilities (for example Etzioni 1994:4-11; 1996:8-9). The tendency to trace the problem of diminished communities to individualistic selves marks congruence with the affluence thesis, while the concern with mutuality and obligation reintroduces ideas associated with the rewriting of the welfare contract, towards which, as discussed previously, communitarian arguments are sometimes overtly directed (for example Etzioni 1992).

From the analysis above quality of (communal) life can be seen to be a central problem in the government of affluence.[146] While this continues the biopolitical theme of governing society as a collective entity the concern is no longer with overcrowding, sanitation and public hygiene – issues that were central points of debate and contestation in the government of poverty in the earlier liberal period. Quality of communal life is now understood in an expressly ethical manner in debates about over-work, over-consumption and the active construction of the self. The resultant tendency, as elaborated in Chapters 4 and 5 where the affluence thesis was explicated, is to treat these issues as attached to questions of individual choice, behaviour, and values, rather than focusing on 'material' interventions. Consequently the solutions to the problems of affluence are not likely to be seen to reside with the state. Instead it is individuals and communities who are increasingly positioned as needing to take responsibility, to 'build their capacity' (Welfare Reform Reference Group 2000); in short, to better govern themselves.

There is one additional area which I consider pertinent to these debates over the normal frame of life in the affluent society, and it continues the biopolitical theme of connecting biological life and species life. That area is the environment. Attention has been given in the literature to addressing environmental politics as biopolitics (see Rutherford 1999). While there is much to commend about this literature my interest in the debates about environmentalism as they relate to the current discussion does not arise from the way that environmentalism constitutes a *technique* of (biopolitical) power. Instead my purpose is to draw attention to a debate being had over the content and meaning of environmental politics, one which questions whether environmental issues are better imagined as constituting a radical politics or a politics of 'conservation' (for example McKnight 2005:101-103). In attending to this debate the purpose is to show that the environment is not simply a means through which technologies of power are applied, but is simultaneously a point over which understandings of the normal frame of life are contested. In this way I argue that, ultimately, in the affluence literature

[146] Rose (2007:167-196), a governmentality scholar whose work was mentioned in greater detail in Chapters 1 and 2, argues that in the contemporary context we are 'governed through community'. The argument here certainly affirms Rose's critical insights.

environmental politics are also cast in terms of a personal ethics (technologies of self).

The contention is that, while they may seem peripheral and primarily steeped in scientific discourse, debates over environmental politics are not simply debates over whether or not climate change is occurring. They are not simply the debates between climate change 'believers' and 'sceptics' that make headlines today (for example Franklin and Kerr 2000). Instead, they are more nuanced debates over how to understand environmental politics. These nuanced debates are waged over the terms in which environmental politics 'ought' to be cast. As debates over individual values and the status of communities contain stories about how the world *ought to be* understood and ordered, as I now elucidate, so too do debates on environmental politics.

As evident in the quotation above from the Simplicity Forum website, the affluence thesis, and the affluenza discourse more particularly, can, to some extent, be seen to be an off-shoot of the environmental movement.[147] However, in this project 'the environment' is imagined in definite terms which themselves are of relevance to the related debates on values and community. The environmentalism apparent in writing on affluenza, and in the affluence thesis more generally, is clearly cast in terms of what Carolyn Merchant (2003:1-8) describes as an 'Edenic Recovery narrative.' In her 2003 book, *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*, Merchant (2003:1-7) argues that the Edenic Recovery narrative is a totalising narrative which is repeatedly deployed across the history of western civilisation as a means through which to make meaningful the project of human endeavour. In Merchant's (2003:2-7) analysis the Edenic Recovery narrative, which serves as both a mainstream narrative and a counter-narrative, accounts for the way that some forms of environmental discourse are cast in terms of an implicit quest to reconcile the fallen self, concepts heavily imbued with Christian ideas. This conception of environmental politics as predicated on a particular understanding of the self is significant in that it demonstrates that, in some instances, environmental politics effectively constitute a personal ethics: questions of the environment are understood as inherently connected to questions of the self, as I explore below.[148] This is in contrast, for example, to styles of environmental politics which are premised on a rights-based or political economy framework such as 'third world ecology' (for overview see Bryant 1998).[149]

[147] Interestingly, when introducing communitarianism as a political movement in *The Spirit of Community* Etzioni (1994:2) described it as: 'an environmental movement dedicated to the betterment of our moral, social and political environment', highlighting the way that 'environmental politics' are concerned with much more than 'natural' resources.

[148] For further discussion and for an illustration of the way technologies of self government are deployed in inducing a 'green subjectivity' see Bowerbank (1999).

[149] For further discussion of environmental discourses and the way they reflect distinct and competing approaches among the so-called 'third world' and 'first world' see Taylor and Buttel (1992:411-414); Buttel and Taylor (1992:223-226).

Merchant (2003:2) argues that the Christian narrative of the fallen self is one in which individual spiritual recovery becomes formulated as the goal of recreating the wilderness of Eden on earth; indeed it casts all human striving as an attempt to reach precisely this end. Understood in terms of Merchant's thesis of an Edenic Recovery narrative, environmentalism, as it is formulated in the affluence thesis and affluenza writing, thus involves more than the preservation of the natural environment; it involves a *very specific way* of understanding the relationship between individuals and the natural environment. In Merchant's (2003:2) own words:

> Many environmentalists see the loss of wilderness as a decline from a pristine earth to a paved, scorched, endangered natural world… But even as they suggest new pathways to a just society, these counterstories of a slide downward (or declension) from Eden buy into the overarching, metanarrative of recovery.

An Edenic Recovery narrative, positioned as a way to correct the declension supposedly brought about by rampant materialism, is apparent in the work of de Graaf *et al* (2005:128), the authors of the US book on affluenza. In their book they trace the origins of the affluenza virus to the mythological Garden of Eden itself, claiming that in coveting the forbidden fruit Adam and Eve were in fact the first victims of the affluenza virus, 'patients number zero', de Graaf *et al* (2005:128) term them, declaring that (material) greed itself is the original sin. In the book, this discussion is accompanied by a cartoon by David Horsey (in de Graaf *et al* 2005:128) depicting a naked heterosexual couple in a wilderness encroached upon by bulldozers, trucks, and a human-sized snake who wears a construction helmet and carries architectural draft plans under his arm. The caption reads: 'Sin Enters the Garden'. Hanging from the bulldozer in the cartoon is a sign which reads: 'Eden Crest Development: Condominiums, Business Park, Shopping Mall' (Horsey 1998 in de Graaf *et al* 2005). Though the cartoon and the accompanying argument is couched in a tongue-in-cheek, jesting tone (as is the entire text of the book, the aim perhaps to avoid alienating readers by taking a judgemental posture), investment in environmental conservation as constituting an Edenic Recovery narrative (Merchant 2003:2) is also apparent in the repeated references throughout the book to a wilderness which is always invested with qualities of the divine. Recovery of this divine wilderness is implicitly represented to be tantamount to the recovery of the divine, or 'authentic', self. This particular conception of wilderness is similarly present in Australian examples of the affluence thesis.

In the Australian context Hamilton's early book *The Mystic Economist* (1994:167) is a consummate example of the Edenic Recovery narrative. Critiquing the conception of the individual tacit in neo-classical economic thinking Hamilton (1994:167) argues that the loss of natural wilderness parallels the destruction of the 'wilderness within' and that the project of environmentalism is to regain unity of self and environment. Though these themes of spiritual reunification are not central in Hamilton's later work where affluence becomes his direct target, his concern with a rediscovery of the self remains apparent in at least his 2003 book in

claims such as; 'Protecting the natural world requires not only far-reaching changes in the way we use the natural environment: it calls for a radical transformation of our selves' (Hamilton 2003:97). While in Hamilton's analysis this understanding of environmental politics as part of a recovery narrative is tacit, a consequence of his conception of individuals today being profoundly alienated, in McKnight's (2005:101-104) analysis the debate over understandings of environmental politics is explicit. McKnight (2005:101-104) posits two distinct ways of understanding environmental politics. On the one hand is a formulation of environmental politics as a radical politics, a formulation McKnight (2005:102) considers distinctly unappealing. On the other hand, McKnight (2005:102-104) postulates, there is environmentalism as a 'conservation' project. McKnight (2005:102-103) sees conservation as strategically more palatable to ordinary middle-class Australians. It could be argued that what is 'palatable' about environmentalism as conservation is that it is consistent with the themes Merchant (2003) identifies in the Edenic Recovery narrative. The affinity between 'conservation' and 'recovery' turns on the way in both instances – conserving what is precious and recovering what has been lost – environmentalism becomes an extension of an ethics of the self.

If these are the points of debate, the *terms* in which the normal frame of life in the affluent society is being contested, the *rationale* through which the project of government is imagined, it is important to question the way they effect and construct poverty. Poverty is positioned at the outer limits of each of these themes. The perceived rise of acquisitive individuals and the correlating need to bring back mutuality and obligation, when applied in the context of poverty and welfare debates, ultimately represents those on welfare as dysfunctional or as motivated by greedy comparisons with the more affluent (see Chapter 3, Chapter 4). As addressed in Chapter 2, individuals who rely on welfare for their subsistence, the 'welfare dependent', are thus treated as dysfunctional and inept. Similarly, the focus on 'healthy' and 'responsible' communities managing *themselves* fosters concern over locations of 'extreme disadvantage'. Thus, communities designated as 'locations of extreme disadvantage' are, as shown in the Introduction, targeted for punitive interventions such as compulsory income management. Similarly, where environmentalism is formulated as the project of 'conserving' what is precious and 'recovering' what has been lost, power differentials are eclipsed and the concerns of the poor – particularly those who reside in the so-called 'third world' are obfuscated by a (specifically first-world) investment in technologies of the self.[150] What is more, in so far as environmental politics are imagined in line with the preservation of a wilderness imagined divine, it is easy to overlook the way that it is the poor who suffer most the degradation of the environment (Bryant 1998:87).

[150] The suggestion on this point is not that the idea that the relationship with the 'natural' environment is an extension of the relationship to the self is exclusive to western culture. Rather, the point is that, as a discourse on environmental politics, it is a specifically western narrative of self that dominates.

Conclusion

In contrast to the essentialist and historically naturalistic view of affluence as corresponding to a stage of human development, in this chapter I have sought to demonstrate that affluence is intimately connected to governmental struggles, and that the origins of affluence as a rationalising motif in the practice of government resides, not in the discovery of some new state of being, but rather in the dissolution of poverty as an earlier-existing governmental motif. While the emergence of the affluence norm does not constitute an 'end' to poverty, it certainly marginalises a politics that recognises the differential ways in which contemporary political issues impact upon those who continue to suffer material deprivation. Consequently the causes of deprivation become less frequently recognised as being a product of a society which, having defined itself in terms of its affluence, fails to fully acknowledge the presence of poverty in its midst, insisting instead on treating poverty as 'residual': a product of individual dysfunction and, in so doing, increasingly denying those who experience deprivation the few rights to which they had won access in the last century.

Conclusion

Poverty as a 'residual' problem

'"When pauperism has been conquered, only the poor will remain, that is a certain sum of accidental poverty"'

Cherbuliez 1826 in Gianna Procacci (1991)
'Social economy and the government of poverty' p.159

'How did we pass from a usage of "the social" understood as the problem of poverty, the problem of others, to its current definition in terms of a general solidarity and the production of a life-style; what enabled it to be made into a showcase of development, whose defense comes before all else, something to be offered to the world at whatever cost?'

Jacques Donzelot (1979) *The Policing of the Family*, p.xxvii

The lives of the poor have perhaps always been subject to police by those who consider themselves superior citizens. The advent of affluence into the zone of government affects this dynamic in new and important ways, however, and it has been the object of this thesis to trace this emergence and highlight its effects. As discussed in Chapter 1, existing governmentality studies scholarship establishes poverty as a central motif of government (Dean 1992:228-239; Rose 1993:284-285; Procacci 1991:151-168). This scholarship explicates poverty as central to the emergence of a liberal governmentality in the nineteenth century (Dean 1992:228-239; Procacci 1991:151-168) and to the problematics of the early twentieth-century welfare state more generally (Rose 1993:284-285). Accepting and building on this literature in Chapters 2 and 3 I was concerned to show the way that (as Donzelot implicitly notes in the quote cited above) poverty, as a governmental motif, is today in decline. As shown in Chapter 2, the government of welfare has been transformed, with poverty increasingly constructed as an individualised problem and the post-war welfare state rendered obsolete and in need of drastic reform. As post-war welfare, with its understanding of poverty as a social problem, is rendered obsolete, so too are the claims to equality made during this period. From this initial analysis of the political demise of poverty I have argued that, while poverty remains a problematic of government, it is no longer conceptualised in the same terms as it was in the post-war period, but through reference to the notion of an emergent period of affluence.

In Chapters 4 and 5 the contemporary writing on affluence was examined and a particular thesis on affluence was identified. The affluence thesis is predicated upon an evolutionary narrative of development, according to which affluence is seen to have replaced poverty, bringing with it new and self-evident political problems. Theorists of competing ideological positions promulgate this developmental narrative in their interpretative accounts of affluence. Governmental texts by both the neo-liberal right (for example Saunders 2003:48) and the post-materialist left (for example Hamilton 2003:ix-xvii; Hamilton 2006:20-31; Hamilton and Dennis 2005:3-18; McKnight 2005:126) assume affluence as a taken for granted norm. In Chapter 6 the affluence thesis and its role in existing political debates was further elaborated. More precisely, Chapter 6 elucidated the apparent problems of the 'age of affluence' as evident not only in writing explicitly on the subject of affluence, but also as implicitly informing a series of debates pertinent to public discussion and policy today on personal values, community life and the environment. Examination of these arguments illustrated that, rather than being a neutral description of demographic changes to western societies, the affluence thesis signifies a conceptual shift in thematising and governing contemporary western societies: from a politics of welfare to a politics of wellbeing.

Chapter 6 illuminated the ways that citizens today are governed as autonomous consumers, as responsible community members and as custodians of the natural environment. A new ethics of the self is mobilised and citizens are impelled to conduct themselves in accordance with these emergent themes of government. Political debates and contestation arise not over whether environmental politics,

citizen values and the functional status of communities *ought* to be considered as a part of the 'normal frame of life' (Dean 2006:32), but over *how* to understand environmental politics, *what* comprises a healthy community, and *what kinds* of interventions are needed in order for individuals to develop the 'proper' values. In so far as affluence underwrites these themes, affluence marks the nodal point in a new politics of the normal frame of life. As a consequence of the emergence of affluence as motif and norm poverty is not only displaced as a governmental motif, it is also constructed as the 'residual' problem of an earlier era. This understanding of poverty as residual casts the poor themselves as the causes of poverty; it is *their* dysfunction, *their* developmental delays that need to be addressed and 'fixed'. Once this logic is prescribed punitive and draconian policy interventions are authorised.

One example of punitive approaches to welfare mentioned both in Chapter 2 and the thesis Introduction is compulsory income management, initially introduced as part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response Act (NTER). As mentioned previously, in 2007 the Australian Government, led by the conservative Liberal/National coalition, first implemented compulsory income management as part of its radical and racist intervention into the lives of select Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. In 2009 a newly elected and supposedly progressive Government, led by Australian Labor Party (ALP) Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, passed legislation extending this policy as potentially applicable to all welfare recipients. While there was some public dissent reported at this move (for example Vinson in Lunn 2009; Siewert 2009), there was also considerable support for it (for example Barby in Lower 2009; *The Australian* Editorial 2009). The government expressly recommended the policy on the basis that it allowed the Racial Discrimination Act, suspended by the Howard Government in 2007, to be reinstated in the Northern Territory:

> The new scheme of income management has been designed to be non discriminatory for the purposes of the Racial Discrimination Act. The Racial Discrimination Act will apply in relation to the new scheme of income management from commencement of implementation in July 2010. (Macklin 2009)

It is an underlying contention of this thesis that targeting communities for differential and punitive treatment on the basis of their poverty is no less offensive than targeting communities on the basis of their cultural or ethnic identity. This policy – and the construction of poverty as residual – has negative connotations for all individuals in poverty or on welfare. However, as the implicit logic of this policy represents impoverished communities as *developmentally delayed* and 'residually' poor, its application has a particular significance when the communities in question happen to be Aboriginal communities, and this must be noted.

Indigenous peoples have historically been represented to be 'pre-modern' in a way which constitutes Aboriginality as itself 'residual' – constitutive of a stage of evolutionary development that western 'moderns' have allegedly transcended

(Hindess 2001; 2001; for example Rundle 2007:39-40).[151] In Chapter 1, I made reference to the work of Hindess (2001; 2004) who describes this developmental logic as being implicit in liberal colonial governmentality. Helliwell and Hindess (2005) argue that this narrative constructs difference as a temporal problem, with Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal culture treated as historical anachronisms: relics of pre-modern 'traditional' society. As I discuss below, the evolutionary narrative upon which constructions of 'residual poverty' is premised implicitly reinscribes this colonial understanding of some cultural groups as developmentally (and temporally) advanced, and others as delayed; it is merely the case that the distinction between groups is now predicated on economic status and not cultural status. While the effects of understanding poverty as 'residual' are therefore negative for all individuals whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, in so far as it recreates a colonial governmentality, the governmentality of affluence, as I now elaborate, has a further significance for Indigenous communities.

In Chapter 1, Hindess' (2001) analysis of liberal government as powers of freedom and powers of unfreedom was first addressed. It is Hindess' (2001:93-95) argument that in liberal governmentality power operates along two trajectories, the government of freedom and the government of unfreedom, and that these two trajectories have been fundamental to colonial rule. For citizens deemed capable of self-government liberal rule operates as the government of freedom, whereas people subject to colonial regimes have been deemed incapable of self-government and thus governed through coercive rule – what Hindess (2001:100) describes as the government of 'unfreedom'. Importantly it is individuals *themselves* who are deemed to be unfree – not because they are subjected to colonial regimes, and *made* 'unfree', but because they are seen as inherently less evolved than their western liberal counterparts and thus considered to lack the *capacity* for freedom (Hindess 2001:101-102).

I have endeavoured to demonstrate in this thesis (Chapter 5) that in the 'age of affluence' these two trajectories of freedom and unfreedom map on to the categories of the 'affluent', who are deemed capable of governing *themselves* as consumers, community members and custodians of the natural environment, and the 'poor', the 'residue at the bottom' (Hamilton 2003:xii), deemed incapable of self-government and thus needing to be governed through coercion. In the governmentality of affluence this differential *punitive* treatment of citizens establishes a bifurcated approach to government based on economic status. Though this bifurcation seems very much at odds with the stated tenets of liberal political philosophy of preserving the freedom of all individuals equally (for example Friedman 1962:195), it is not recognised to be problematic by liberal advocates of welfare reform (for example Saunders 2008; Dubossarsky & Samild 2008). Instead, the assumption, much as is the case with colonial liberal governmentality (Hindess 2001:95; Helliwell & Hindess 2005:415), is that the

[151] This can be the case even where the author is sensitive to the political issues which confront Indigenous Australians, as in Rundle's (2007) paper.

different capabilities of citizens – in this instance imputed from their economic status – justifies a dual approach to government.

In CIS arguments this rationale is explicit. As addressed in Chapter 3, authors Dubossarsky and Samild (2008:34, 38) argue in a CIS paper on welfare reform that receipt of welfare should preclude welfare recipients from the right to vote. Endorsing this view enthusiastically Saunders (2008:6) defended this dual approach to government and the two categories of people it created – the free and the unfree – on the claim that:

> Not everybody can look after themselves. Some people do need others to run their lives for them. But as the welfare state has expanded, so the number of autonomous people has shrunk and the number of dependent people has grown. The section of the population that needs a proactive and intrusive government has been dragging the rest of us down with it.

Fundamental in this construction of some individuals as capable of freedom and others as inherently 'unfree' is the way that the unfree are seen to be so on the grounds that they are *less developed* than their affluent counterparts. As addressed in Chapter 5, the evolutionary narrative implicit in the affluence thesis constructs the poor and 'welfare dependent' as the social 'residuum'. Where affluence is taken for granted as norm there is an inherent tendency to construct the poor as the social residuum of a previous era.

As argued in Chapters 5 and 6 the governmentality of affluence enacts a new way of demarcating citizens designated as autonomous and thus capable of self-government from those individuals and cultural groups designated 'residual'; backwards, inept, and in need of authoritarian rule. Therefore, whether compulsory income management is targeted at Indigenous communities on the basis of their cultural status as Indigenous, or as an extension of the idea that their poverty renders them developmentally inferior and thus inept, the deployment of this (colonial) governmentality in the contemporary policy setting clearly has distinct implications for the ways Indigenous people are governed and their cultures are valued. In both instances – colonial governmentality as Hindess and Helliwell (2005) describe it and affluence governmentality as explored in this thesis – Aboriginal communities are rendered as 'residual' historical anachronisms. In its declaration that the revised NTER Bill simply: 'extend[s] the benefits of income management to the wider community' (Macklin 2009) the Australian Government therefore shows a lack of compunction in advocating an extension of compulsory income management. It is *not* the 'wider community' whom the Government intends to subject to this form of rule and the stigma of dysfunction it bestows but the wider community *of individuals on welfare*. These 'welfare dependent' have been similarly rendered 'residual' and historically anachronistic – they are seen to represent a stage of evolutionary development that the affluent majority are claimed to have surpassed. Thus, while reinstating the Racial Discrimination Act may have the appearance of fair and equal treatment, if colonial government is understood in terms of a *mentality* of governing, as Hindess (2001:95) and Helliwell (Helliwell & Hindess 2005:415) argue, then the

appearance of fairness is merely that – an apparition. In recreating the rationality of colonial government and representing impoverished communities as 'developmentally delayed' it could be argued that, instead of promoting fairness, the revised NTER and its program to further deploy compulsory income management to Aboriginal (and non-Aboriginal) communities experiencing 'extreme disadvantage' reinscribes colonial violence for all Aboriginal people in Australia.

Furthermore, if this cleaving of people into two distinct groups – one to be governed through freedom and the other through unfreedom – is implicit to the govern*mentality* that operates today then it is worth questioning how long it might be until welfare reforms advocated by the CIS, (Dubossarsky & Samild 2008:34, 38; Saunders 2008:6) of denying welfare recipients the right to vote, follow. While this extreme view might seem anathema in contemporary democratic societies, the rationale underlying the CIS approach to welfare reform is an extension of the rationale implicit in compulsory income management. Where poverty is constructed as a residual problem and 'the poor' are correspondingly constructed as developmentally inferior to the 'affluent majority', proposals such as the denial of voting rights are represented as an extension of accepted 'common-sense'. After all, as emphasised throughout the thesis the view of poverty as residual, upon which the proposal rests, is held not only by ideological conservatives, but is also implicit in writing by apparently progressive advocates such as post-materialist affluence theorists.

As discussed in Chapter 5 this understanding of poverty as residual is tacit in the arguments by Galbraith (1963:262) and his theorising of 'case poverty':

> Case poverty is commonly and properly related to some characteristics of the individual so afflicted. Nearly everyone else has mastered the environment; this proves that it is not intractable. But some quality peculiar to the individual or family involved – mental deficiency, bad health, inability to adapt to the discipline of modern economic life, excessive procreation, alcohol, insufficient education, or perhaps a combination of these handicaps – has kept these individuals from participating in the general well-being. (Galbraith 1963:262)

'Case poverty' parallels, in nearly exact terms, the understanding of poverty and its causes implicit in the writing of contemporary post-materialist left affluence theorists who assert that:

> [P]overty is generated at the level of the family and is associated with family breakdown, substance abuse, mental illness and poor education. While these misfortunes do tend to be concentrated in some groups, it makes no sense to attribute them to class divisions. (Hamilton 2006:21 citing McKnight 2005:126)

If the view of poverty from the left so closely aligns with the understanding of poverty in neo-liberal accounts of CIS authors, on what basis is this understanding of poverty as residual and individualistic likely to be challenged? Certainly

mainstream poverty researchers cannot be expected to play an influential role here. Not only are their claims about poverty diluted by declarations that today concerns over inequality are passé, as illustrated in Chapter 3, but critical analysis of mainstream research demonstrates that it frequently reinforces the kinds of individualistic understandings of poverty which contribute to its construction as 'residual' (for discussion see O'Connor 2001; see also Procacci 1991:158-167; Cruikshank 1994). One pertinent example of this tendency was emphasised in Chapter 2, where the concept of 'welfare dependency' was shown to be produced as a problem in writing by social researchers as well as by neo-liberal ideologues.

Governmentality studies scholarship, which informs the methodological approach taken in this thesis, has itself been criticised for its failure to comment critically on the governmental regimes it describes (O'Malley *et al* 1997:503:-508). Against this tendency, and in part arising from the post-structuralist approach which also guides this thesis, I have argued that the governmentality of affluence emergent today needs to be problematised. The reasoning on this point is that governmental regimes are not neutral in their effects and that in exploring developments in government there is a political duty to draw attention to areas where the effects of a particular governmentality may have negative consequences for citizens. However, in arguing that affluence is problematic the claim is not that 'government' *per se* is bad. This is not a libertarian argument *against* government, but a post-structuralist critique of the effects of affluence on the government of 'the poor'. Nor is the claim presented here that government is immutable. It is through regimes of government that we are enacted as subjects but we are still subjects. We are governed today through a regime predicated upon affluence, but this does not mean that it is impossible to problematise this regime. Attempts at resistance or problematisation may well lead to unexpected outcomes and unintended effects. However such an acknowledgment does not serve as a justification for acquiescence: it remains necessary in tracing out rationales of government to highlight the effects which *today* can be seen to have negative effects on people's lives.

Importantly, in focusing upon the limitations and negative effects of a governmentality of affluence the view advocated in this thesis is not that affluence needs to be rejected as a governmental motif, or that poverty needs to be reinstated in its place. Rather, a key theme of this thesis has been to challenge the erroneous assumption that we need to make an either/or choice between affluence and poverty as is implicit in accounts which construct poverty and affluence as constitutive of stages of development (for example Galbraith 1963:31-16; Hamilton 2003:ix-xvii). If affluence and poverty are instead conceptualised as *governmental motifs* and the aim is to pursue justice, then we do not need to choose *between* governmental motifs so much as we need to highlight their negative and positive effects in an attempt to find ways to establish effective points of resistance to the punitive government of poverty evident today. What was valuable about post-war welfare politics was not that they focused upon poverty. Indeed, governmentality scholars such as Cruikshank (1994) and Procacci (1991) have shown that governing through poverty can result in policies just as

undemocratic and punitive as governing through affluence, and that a focus on poverty does not necessarily lead to positive interventions for the poor. More precisely then, what was useful in the politics of post-war welfare were the resistance politics that operated as claims by individuals upon the state. Understanding post-war welfare in this context, what Dean (1999:129) describes as (an admittedly contested) 'ethos or ethical ideal', it becomes apparent that the political significance of this welfare ethos is that it provided the possibility of a relational framework that did not sheet responsibility for poverty back on to individuals. The ultimate contention informing this thesis is that, unlike the case of the post-war 'welfare ethos' (Dean 1999:129), a focus on relations across society – on equality – is absent from arguments on affluence and that the progressive potential of affluence politics is limited as a result. This limitation in the affluence thesis needs to be recognised by advocates of affluence politics. However, any such recognition will be meaningless unless the developmental narrative at the core of the affluence thesis is abandoned.

The developmental narrative which underwrites the affluence thesis is inherently problematic. It is problematic because in constructing a universal narrative of human being it typifies stages of economic 'development' as congruent with stages of *human* development. With Helliwell and Hindess (2005) I reject this view outright. A fundamental proposition of this thesis is that people living in conditions of poverty are no less 'developed' than people living in conditions of affluence. To imply otherwise constructs 'difference' as a temporal problem that reinscribes a colonial governmentality (Hindess & Helliwell 2005). Wealth in liberal societies is more widespread today than in previous centuries; this may well be a 'fact' of contemporary western societies. The aim of this thesis has not been to query levels of wealth and deprivation, but rather to question their meaning. Hence, conceding such a point has no bearing on the argument advanced in this thesis which focuses instead on *interpretations* of poverty and affluence and how these are deployed in regimes of government. Indeed, as Foucault (1983b) himself noted, 'problematisations', the thematics of government, have a relationship with things in the world; they are 'answers' to questions which are real. The argument of this thesis is that affluence politics as advocated today provide at best an incomplete answer to the 'question' of wealth and at worst a dangerous one. The construction of poverty as a consequence of the failures and inadequacies of individuals cannot advance a politics of justice which recognises the dignity of all people; rather it frustrates such a project. The aim of this thesis has been to describe how this is so. Reflecting critically on affluence as a governmentality it becomes possible to resist its claims regarding poverty and its causes. I hope to have highlighted why such resistance is so important.

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