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**“The Milk of Human Kindness?”:
Responding to Precarity and Hunger with the
Private Sector and a Return to Charity.**

A Thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree
of
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Kimberly Jackson



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Abstract

This research investigated the phenomenon of free school milk in Aotearoa New Zealand as an exemplar for broader shifts in understandings of poverty and hunger, responsibility and citizenship. The provision of free milk to school children has occurred in two distinct periods in the history of Aotearoa New Zealand. The first school milk initiative was introduced in 1937 to bolster childhood nutrition after the deprivations of the Great Depression, as part of the formation of the welfare state. This first free milk scheme lasted until 1967. The re-introduction of school milk nationally in 2013 occurred amidst public concerns about growing numbers of hungry children in schools and the consequent proliferation of ad hoc food in schools schemes.

The theoretical framework of community psychology provides a broad framework for an interdisciplinary project that contextualises the material and symbolic object of school milk. The everyday lifeworlds of those experiencing hardship was part of this investigation, both historically and in the present period. Narrative psychology methods were applied to the collection and analysis of empirical materials that relate to hunger and responses to hunger in the 1930s, and the 2000s. A narrative approach provided continuity across three categories of empirical materials, incorporating an historical analysis; a contemporary media and policy analysis; and extended semi-structured interviews with parents feeding their families on low incomes. The analysis incorporated complexity and identified *structures of feeling*, which are tacit but knowable sets of historically and culturally constructed understandings that shape responses to hungry children and their parents.

This investigation found that approaches to hungry children and families around the period that school milk was re-introduced in 2013 were situated within neoliberal narratives that emphasised children in schools as targets for compassion without acknowledgement of the historical, social, political and economic context for contemporary food insecurity. A dominant settler context that values self-reliance and aspiration in a presumed land of plenty shapes persistent notions of the ‘deserving and undeserving poor’. Diversified non-state responses to hunger and increased targeting in the contemporary period reflect historical assumptions that are further amplified within the neoliberal characterisations of ‘welfare dependent’ parents. Neoliberal narratives also build and sustain the notion that the market can provide the appropriate solution to hunger in schools. My research found that although both the 1937 and 2013 schemes occurred in contexts of poverty and hunger, there are important differences between the two schemes. During the 1930s, milk in schools formed part of a

society-wide effort to reduce the harms of poverty for families and their children. In contrast, the promotion of school milk in 2013 avoided connection to either poverty or parents, treating schools as spaces carved out for commercial interests. In rendering parents and whānau invisible, and prioritising the child as a future consumer, milk in schools reflects the position of many contemporary responses to hungry children. What is distinctive about school milk in Aotearoa New Zealand is its symbolically important role in drawing attention away from contemporary precarity and towards a nostalgic imagined past.

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Glossary of Māori Terms

The Māori language (Te Reo Māori) is nuanced and words can have multiple meanings, depending on the context in which they are used. This glossary was compiled with the assistance of the Te Aka Māori Dictionary (<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>), but the English translations here reflect the meanings of the words as they apply in this thesis, rather than providing a conclusive definition.

Māori	English
Aotearoa	Originally referred to the North Island, but now often used as the Māori name for New Zealand. <i>Note.</i> In this thesis I use Aotearoa New Zealand, which has become a means for New Zealanders to acknowledge indigenous rights for Māori and to politically recognise the bicultural relationship. For brevity, I use New Zealand for the adjective form (for example: ‘New Zealand schools’).
Hapū	Sub-tribe.
Kai	Food
Kaupapa Māori	Kaupapa refers to a set of guiding principles or values. A Kaupapa Māori approach draws on Māori knowledge, skills, values and customary practices to align with Māori world views and cultural ways of being.
Koha	Donation or gift.
Koro	Grandfather or elderly man.
Manaakitanga	Hospitality, generosity, kindness and care for others.
Māori	The indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.
Pākehā	New Zealanders of European descent.
Whānau	Family - extended family, but also sometimes used for groups or communities connected with each other but not necessarily through kinship ties.
Whakapapa	Genealogy, lineage.

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Term/Acronym	Definition
Anchor	Brand of dairy products, founded in New Zealand in 1886. The brand is owned and marketed by Fonterra as one of its flagship brands, domestically and internationally.
CCEAG	Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on Child Poverty.
CPAG	Child Poverty Action Group
Fonterra	New Zealand's largest dairy co-operative and largest company, established by amalgamating smaller co-operatives in 2001. Although still owned by dairy farmers, it is a multinational publicly traded company and exports dairy products to 130 countries worldwide.
MSD	Ministry of Social Development. The public service department responsible for social policy and social services.
New Zealand First	Populist, anti-immigration political party led by Winston Peters, since its foundation in 1993. Under New Zealand's MMP voting system, NZ First has formed part of coalition governments with both major parties.
The New Zealand Labour Party	Centre-left political party. One of the two major parties.
The New Zealand National Party	Centre-right political party. One of the two major parties.
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations, previously referred to as charities. I use NGO interchangeably with charity in the contemporary analysis (as both are used in the empirical materials examined for the thesis). It is worth noting that although both imply a sector separate from the state, NGOs or charities are often contracted by government agencies to provide services and can receive partial funding from the government.

Term/Acronym	Definition
Plunket Society	Nation-wide mother and baby health and welfare service, founded in 1907. Originally promoted infant rearing theories of Dr Frederic Truby King through a network of Plunket nurses and family centres. Plunket is partially credited with dramatically lowering infant mortality rates in New Zealand during the first half of the twentieth century.
RNZ	Radio New Zealand. Public service radio broadcaster and crown entity. Operates multiple broadcast networks, most pertinently <i>RNZ National</i> , which has covered news and current affairs since 2015. Prior to 2015, the network has been known variously as <i>Radio New Zealand National</i> , <i>National Radio</i> , and <i>The Broadcasting Corporation of NZ</i> .
Sanitarium	Cereal and vegetarian food company with factories in Australia and New Zealand. Owned by the Seventh Day Adventist Church and therefore not liable for tax on profits, despite high annual revenues.
School Deciles	School decile ratings indicate the proportion of students from lower socio-economic areas. A decile one school is in the ten per cent of schools with the highest number of its students from low socio-economic neighbourhoods, while a decile ten school has the lowest proportion of such students. The decile ratings were developed for funding purposes to provide additional resourcing for low-decile schools. From 2023, the decile ratings will be replaced by an equity index system, to provide more precise indicators of schools' resourcing needs and to combat the public perception of decile numbers as measures of school quality.
Weet-BixTM	Whole-grain wheat cereal manufactured by Sanitarium in Australia and New Zealand. Promoted since the 1980s with the advertising jingle of "Kiwi kids are Weet-Bix kids TM "
WFF	Working For Families. Income assistance for low to middle- income families in paid work. WFF consists of a set of tax credits administered by Inland Revenue, and childcare subsidies administered by WINZ
WINZ	Work and Income New Zealand. Administers employment services and social security benefits

Chapter One: Introduction

In the playground of a primary school in Aotearoa New Zealand, children, aged between five and eleven years, are sitting on a bench in the sunshine drinking a portion of milk that has been handed out by a nearby teacher. A number of these children enjoy their daily milk as a cold drink, instead of water. There are also children in this setting who are drinking their milk because it momentarily relieves their empty stomachs in the absence of breakfast or lunch. At first glance, the children in this scene are taking part in a simple transaction. Milk is portrayed as beneficial for growing children and these school children receive it for free without reference to their family circumstances. Nonetheless, this practice, taking place every weekday in New Zealand primary schools, manifests a complex national and transnational story about much more than milk. Fundamentally, it is important to consider that providing milk to school children has occurred in two distinct periods in the history of Aotearoa New Zealand. The first school milk initiative was introduced to boost childhood nutrition in 1937, as one strand within the newly formed social welfare state. This first free milk scheme lasted until 1967. Free school milk was reintroduced again in Aotearoa New Zealand as a pilot scheme in 2012, followed by a national roll-out in 2013, amidst a proliferation of additional schemes providing food within schools. Paradoxically, school milk in 2012/2013 evoked public nostalgia about the discontinued original school milk programme, but was occurring in the context of a retrenched welfare system and increasing economic and societal divisions.

This research investigates the phenomenon of free school milk in Aotearoa New Zealand as an exemplar for broader shifts in understandings of poverty and hunger, responsibility and citizenship. Narrative psychology methods are applied to the analysis of a broad range of materials that relate to hunger and responses to hunger in the 1930s, and the 2000s. A narrative approach provides continuity across varied categories of empirical materials, highlighting the ways that characterisations of low-income citizens are constructed through stories, both within multiple settings and at different levels of social production. Examining the continuities and contrasts between free milk in 1937 and the more recent formation of free school milk illuminates the extent to which school milk is situated within distinct conceptions of citizenship in each period.

I examine the contemporary milk in schools scheme's use of positive nostalgic cultural echoes from an era of expanding care and the reification of milk as a superior source of nutrition for children (Atkins, 2016; DuPuis, 2002; Mein Smith, 2003). I compare the original 1937 milk in schools scheme, as a symbol of expanding state responsibility for improving standards of living for all citizens and negating the need for stigmatising charity

(McClure, 2013; Mein Smith, 2003), with the contemporary scheme. The 2013 scheme is situated within a context of proliferating charitable and corporate school feeding initiatives and exemplifies a contraction of care towards a narrow target group: children. I investigate the entry into school spaces by corporations and charities in the 2000s that was necessitated by policy decisions that minimise or deny underlying causes of material hardship (Beddoe, 2014; Cotterell et al., 2017; Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Groot, et al., 2013). The resulting ad hoc responses to hunger bear more similarities to the pre-welfare era in Aotearoa New Zealand than they do to the collective social contract of which milk in schools was a part during formation of the welfare state. Consequently, understanding the phenomenon of the re-introduction of free milk in schools in 2013 requires an investigation informed by history.

Outline of Chapter One

The first section of this chapter introduces the methods deployed in order to investigate the phenomenon of free milk in schools as a contextualised social practice. The methods were integral to enabling a multi-layered investigation into the issue of hunger within schools, distinguishing my research approach from existing studies within this topic area. I provide a brief summary of relevant New Zealand research to illustrate the broader scope taken within my research. The exemplars of milk in schools in two historical periods are examined through a range of empirical materials, reflecting the aim of analysing how the public issue of hunger in schools, and responding to hunger in schools, are shaped by their social, cultural, political and historical contexts. In addition, I conducted, transcribed and analysed semi-structured interviews with parents living on low incomes, in order to incorporate the lived experiences of those subject to food insecurity.

The second section provides an overview of the issue of hunger in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Great Depression (1929-1935) is identified as a period when the problem of people going hungry became more prevalent and more publicly visible (Belich, 2001; McClure, 2013). Next, I explicate evidence for the more recent manifestation of people going hungry, characterised as food insecurity in the contemporary context. Aotearoa New Zealand is a relatively wealthy, food-producing nation but has also experienced significant increases in rates of food insecurity from the 1990s onwards (O'Brien, 2014). Household food insecurity experienced by families living on low incomes forms the backdrop to public concerns about hungry children in New Zealand schools in 2012/2013, when school milk was re-introduced.

Section three situates the issue of food insecurity within increased levels of poverty and inequality from the 1990s in Aotearoa New Zealand. Notably, the data reveals sharp increases in household poverty across multiple measures from the 1990s. The fourth section identifies neoliberalism as a key influence underpinning policies that have resulted in increasing inequality and poverty during the period from 1990 to 2017 (Barnett & Bagshaw, 2020). Neoliberalism as a transnational economic and political ideology has its own history, but I focus on clarifying the predominant tenets of neoliberalism. Further, the concept of ‘actually existing neoliberalism’ (Brenner & Theodore, 2002) expresses a research orientation towards examining how neoliberalism is expressed within complex and dynamic local conditions. A subsection consequently illustrates ways in which government responses to food insecurity and poverty around the time of the re-introduction of school milk reflected strategies for embedding neoliberal policies. The dominant preference for conceptualising poverty as ‘Child poverty’ is noted and critically situated within the development of the Third Way, a prevailing model of neoliberalism (Giddens, 2013; Lister, 2006).

Section five connects conceptions of class with an evolving neoliberal status quo and the consequent value of incorporating an intersectional class lens within psychology scholarship. Specifically, Standing’s (2011) concept of the precariat provides insights into contemporary class relations. Precarity connects the accounts of low-income parents analysed within this research with broader structural shifts in Aotearoa New Zealand, and globally. The final part of this chapter is a roadmap of the thesis as a whole, providing an indication of how this thesis draws together analyses of distinctive sets of empirical materials to construct a coherent account.

Methods

Although the present study encompasses interdisciplinary methods, community psychology provides the core framework for conducting an examination of free milk in schools and responses to the issue of hungry children in schools. Community psychology offers an orientation to social issues that is, firstly, deeply contextualised, situating social phenomena within multiple interconnected systems. Community psychologists study the social world from the perspective that human beings and social practices cannot be understood in isolation from the multiple interconnected contexts that shape them (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Social issues, such as increasing numbers of children who are hungry at school, are typically the result of complex inter-related processes, including social, economic, cultural and historical antecedents. The introduction of food in schools programmes in Aotearoa New

Zealand (primarily through charitable or business funding) are also practices that reflect their local and wider contexts and function to embed philanthropy within schools. There is consequently a need to illuminate the upstream drivers of hunger within schools, as well as to query the consequences, both intended and unintended, of how hunger in schools is being addressed.

A second, and related, important feature of community psychology is that community psychologists have challenged mainstream or traditional psychology's identified tendencies toward individualism and monoculturalism (Parker, 2005; Rappaport, 2002; Watkins, 1992). Community psychologists instead recognise that people's cultural and social contexts profoundly shape their lifeworlds. Researching human beings from the perspective of their immersion within cultural contexts also necessitates acknowledging power dynamics within colonised nations such as Aotearoa New Zealand that result in significant disadvantages for some groups and reinforce privileges afforded to the dominant culture (Reid et al., 2014).

One way in which traditions within the discipline of psychology have been questioned is through signifying the features of the majority of psychological research with the designation WEIRD (Henrich et al, 2010). The acronym WEIRD psychology (Western Educated Industrialised Rich Democratic) has been developed by critically engaged scholars who have identified the overwhelming prevalence of the aforementioned characteristics within the majority of psychology research produced. The ubiquity of WEIRD participants and researchers (particularly in dominant wealthy universities in North America) raises questions about the knowledge produced by psychological studies (Henrich et al., 2010). Claims to objective and scientifically produced psychological knowledge have, at times, been deployed in ways that reinforce prejudice and inequitable power relations (Parker, 2007). For example, Hodgetts and colleagues (2020) have identified the imposition of European models of psychological health on indigenous populations, who have distinct cultural concepts of wellbeing that may not align with assumptions about individual independence built on WEIRD research. When an indigenous population is subject to definitions of appropriate ways of being that reflect the framework of the more powerful social group, this can contribute to their marginalisation.

In addition, knowledge produced in WEIRD studies frequently makes claims to universality in relation to human characteristics, yet cannot reflect the diversity of human beings, their cultures and lifeworlds (Groot et al., 2018). Adopting the term WEIRD to denote mainstream psychology recognises the need for ongoing work within the discipline to expand the focus beyond WEIRD perspectives. Part of this critical reflection is the recognition of

indigenous psychologies, as well as approaches within community psychology that locate human beings within broader systems (Allwood & Berry, 2006; Hodgetts et al., 2020; Watkins & Shulman, 2008). In order to avoid reproducing WEIRD psychology limitations, my research was informed by history, culture and social contexts. The following subsection briefly summarises previous research into the emergence of food in schools schemes in Aotearoa New Zealand, and indicates the insights a deeply contextualised, interdisciplinary community psychology approach can offer this topic.

School Feeding Schemes

In contrast to many other countries, Aotearoa New Zealand does not have a history of meal provision within schools, and instead the norm has been reliance on parents to provide a packed lunch prepared at home (Powell, 2022). Programmes providing food for children within schools have predominantly emerged after the 1990s, within the context of concerns about children going hungry at school (Thrupp et al., 2020). The majority of food provided in schools in response to hunger during the period from 2000-2017 was donated through philanthropic activity by charities or corporations. Given the absence of an established school meal programme, food provision in New Zealand schools arises as a crisis response to a social problem. Perhaps as a consequence, the introduction or expansion of schemes for feeding children in New Zealand schools instigated cost-benefit style analyses for determining the efficacy of such interventions in relation to school attendance, classroom behaviour, and academic achievement and/or health targets (Ansell, 2016; Chua, 2015; Mhurchu et al., 2013; Mhurchu et al., 2010; Walia, 2016).

In addition, companies and charities providing food in schools commission research that is principally designed to demonstrate measurable impacts for their programmes (Social Impact Lab, 2020). For example, Fonterra, Aotearoa New Zealand's largest dairy co-operative, funded research that demonstrates more children are meeting recommended daily calcium requirements when they participate in its Fonterra milk for schools scheme (Marsh et al., 2018). Constructing measurable outcomes and assessing the cost effectiveness of feeding children in schools appears to introduce rationality and scientific evidence to a potentially contentious issue. Effectively, the preference for narrow research parameters effectively situates child hunger as a de-politicised phenomenon that can be quantified, accounted for, and managed, without recourse to deeper understandings of the context for that hunger.

In terms of more critical analyses of hunger in New Zealand schools, education scholars have studied the implications of food insecurity for school children, as well as its

implications for schools, principals and teachers. Research situated within schools highlights how New Zealand schools have to determine ongoing means for addressing hunger within the school environment, often through accessing multiple sources of assistance. The ethnographic evidence suggests that the social effects for children accessing donated foods within schools are not solely positive, although findings consistently affirm that there are significant numbers of children in need of nutrition during the school day (Bloy, 2005; Fuentes, 2016; Gerritsen, 2005; Spray, 2020). For example, Spray (2020) undertook anthropological research within Auckland schools, conducting a fine-grained analysis of how children within the schools are experiencing food insecurity and the social and educational impacts for these children. Spray's research revealed that while children in the low-income school she studied were frequently hungry, the stigma associated with accepting donated food available at school was socially and emotionally risky. Research within schools contributes important findings about both the level and nature of hunger in schools, and also how schemes responding to hunger in schools operate 'on the ground'.

In terms of education scholarship with a greater focus on policy, Anscombe (2009) conducted research for his unpublished education thesis examining the issue of hungry school children from the perspective of establishing responsibility for addressing the growing problem within schools. Anscombe draws on his connections within the education sector to question how the issue of hunger in schools was negotiated ideologically by different stakeholders, in the context of rising numbers of children going hungry at school. Anscombe concluded that government silence in the early 2000s about the problem of hunger in schools was forcing individual schools to take responsibility for hungry children. Yet, staff within schools held diverse views on what (if any) action was appropriate to address hunger within their schools, resulting in many children being left without food during the school day whilst debates took place about whose responsibility it was to feed them. More recently, critical analyses of corporate encroachment into school environments and the curriculum in Aotearoa New Zealand have been conducted by scholars researching physical education and health curricula (Burrows, 2010; Plum et al., 2018; Powell, 2018, 2019). Powell (2018) illuminates how school children and teachers are positioned by private sector strategies within schools towards becoming uncritical consumers. Of note is Powell's finding that teachers and principals are conditioned to accept the growing brand promotions within schools because of philanthropic sponsorship.

While the settings of schools, and those within them, form an important part of understanding the phenomenon of milk in schools in two periods, this thesis casts a wider net.

The investigation situates milk in schools within multiple contexts, including an historical investigation and the perspective of parents maintaining their households on low incomes. I examine the important symbolic role of targeting ameliorative activities towards children in schools, questioning how such activities encapsulate the ways in which economically well-resourced citizens conceptualise those subject to food insecurity. Incorporating an historical lens highlights the relational nature of school milk and non-state schemes aimed at alleviating hunger in schools. There is a process of ‘de-familiarisation’ that occurs when an historical lens is applied, facilitating clarity in identifying continuities, inconsistencies and incoherences in the present (Berridge, 2018; Fraser, 1997). This thesis thus identifies the contemporary burgeoning of schemes to address child hunger as an important signal that significant social, political and cultural changes have occurred since the discontinuation of the original milk in schools scheme in 1967. A contextualised and situated examination of milk and food in schools requires methods that accommodate and illuminate complex, multiple and dynamic threads that are woven into the daily social and material practice of providing milk to children in schools.

This thesis is informed by the recognition that history profoundly shapes the nature and characteristics of social issues in the present (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). On one level, it can be argued that it is simply not possible to understand food insecurity and how we respond to food insecurity without looking at the ways in which the past has shaped these issues. Further, taking an historical approach to studying an intervention such as milk in schools does not just ‘set the context’, situating such an initiative within its historical and cultural background as a set of linear events. The history of milk in schools is built into the fabric of the contemporary iteration of milk in schools, given that the present scheme embodies symbolic and material connections to the past within its nostalgic and cultural formation.

Foucault (1975/1991) identified the concept of ‘a history of the present’ as an expression of how researchers might acknowledge the role of history as an ongoing constructive process within present phenomena (Garland, 2014). History is not therefore confined to the past in the analysis, but instead contributes multiple constituents to the formation of meanings and identities in the present, including contributing to emotional structures through shared memories, as this thesis goes on to show about histories of poverty. The past, in turn, is continually re-negotiated and composed by human beings in relation to the present, necessitating research that is alive to the ways in which the past is interpreted from a position that is not static (Thomson, 2013).

The analysis draws on a broad range of materials to incorporate the interconnected elements that build up an understanding of the meaning and practice of milk and food in schools. Firstly, the thesis incorporates an historical analysis of primary and secondary historical materials, to identify core understandings of poverty and hunger that shaped responses to poverty and hunger at pivotal points in the history of Aotearoa New Zealand. The history sources examined include oral history and radio recordings, historical books and newspaper articles, as well as political pamphlets, manifestos, speeches and parliamentary debates. Secondly, the contemporary analysis draws on advertising and promotional materials, mainstream media, policy and political material, including field notes from political speeches and meetings attended during 2013. Thirdly, while exploring public and media documents is important to a project such as this, it is also imperative that we do not make invisible or disregard the lived experiences of citizens living with economic insecurity. To do so would be to contribute to their disempowerment as people who are frequently written out of history or unrecognisable from the hegemonic perspective of psychological theory and research (Hodgetts et al., 2014). Both conceptually and ethically, the work therefore also needs to reflect the everyday lifeworlds of citizens navigating food insecurity as a material reality. Therefore, the everyday lived experiences of parents who need to feed their families on low incomes are explored in the thesis through qualitative interviews. In addition, I undertook ethnographic ‘go alongs’, an ethnographic interview technique whereby the researcher accompanies the participant during a routine activity, in contrast to a sit-down interview (Andrews, 2014; Kincheloe, 2005; Kusenbach, 2003).

The range of materials, both historical and recent, reflects the construction of meaning at different levels, and requires an analytical unit that can illuminate dominant constraints on citizens without denying creativity and agency. These objectives are met in the application of a narrative psychology approach. The emergence of narrative psychology reflects the realisation of how people use stories in everyday life as a primary means of interpreting and negotiating meanings (Andrews, 2014; Bruner, 1990; Rappaport, 2000). Individuals develop their understandings of themselves and their own lifeworlds through the narrative resources of shared stories, in concert with their own experiences (Andrews et al., 2013). However, the narratives available and meaningful to individuals are shaped through processes of power, since not all narratives are promoted or developed equally. Bruner argues that asking the question “why one story rather than another?” provides the map for moving between personal understandings and wider configurations of power and control (Bruner, 1990, p. 14).

The analysis of media and policy in the thesis is designed to identify public stories that both contribute to, and reflect, the prevailing “structure of feeling”, around poverty problems and responses to poverty in characterisations relating to food in schools (Fiske, 1993; Williams, 1961). The concept of a *structure of feeling* was developed by cultural theorist Raymond Williams (1961), in order to express the notion of dominant understandings that are prevalent in particular historical, social and cultural contexts. The *structure* referred to is the set of often unspoken or unacknowledged boundaries that exist around which narratives are possible at a given historical moment. The *feeling* expresses the interpretation and acceptance of such boundaries in the public and personal narratives that we construct around a given topic. For example, there are common-sense understandings in the contemporary period in Aotearoa New Zealand that characterise citizens who cannot afford to feed themselves as being primarily individually responsible for their position (Graham, Hodgetts, et al., 2018). In this example, the moral characterisations of individuals subject to food insecurity is hence built around the level of personal culpability that they hold, and whether they should therefore be educated, supported, abandoned, or punished. This narrative may not be stated explicitly, nevertheless it can be identified across dominant media and policy settings, in the construction of responses to hunger at community level, and also within the narratives of individual citizens (Jensen & Tyler, 2015; McNeill, 2011). This is not to suggest that these constructions of the problem of food insecurity are the *only* narratives available, since there are also groups and individuals with counter viewpoints. In light of public attention towards hungry schoolchildren, the following section provides an important background consideration for this research: the issue of people being unable to feed themselves and their families adequately in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Hunger in Aotearoa New Zealand

The need to counteract malnutrition and nourish strong future citizens drove the original state funded school milk provision in 1937 (Mein Smith, 2012). The provision of milk to children in schools was re-introduced nationally in 2013, after a pilot milk scheme was trialled in 2012 by New Zealand’s largest dairy co-operative, Fonterra. The reappearance of school milk, over four decades after the original milk scheme was discontinued, occurred in the context of growing difficulty for some families in providing milk to children at home (Fox, 2012; Frankham, 2015). From 1990 onwards, schools reported significant numbers of children arriving at school hungry, as well as increasing numbers without any lunch, or with insufficient food for the day (Anscombe, 2009; Uttley, 1997; Wynd, 2009). Many schools

attempted to manage hunger through accessing a plethora of ad hoc charity and community initiatives. Fonterra Milk for Schools was introduced within this context of increasing school hunger, and the difficulties many families have with trying to provide what have previously been considered basic foods (Cotterell et al., 2017; Rashbrooke, 2013; Wynd, 2009).

The issue of people being unable to afford sufficient food in Aotearoa New Zealand is of particular note during two periods, the Great Depression, from around 1929 until 1935, and then subsequently the period from the mid-1990s up to the present. The Great Depression was a sudden and hard shock to the nation that affected a wide swathe of society including some households that had previously been relatively well-off (Belich, 2001; King, 2003). In some cases, unemployment resulted in families losing the capacity to pay for housing, heating or sufficient food (Tennant, 2007). Providing for a family became more difficult, particularly in households with lower incomes prior to the Great Depression (Belich, 2001). Although official data about food poverty was not collected, it is clear from available evidence that an unprecedented number of families found themselves with rapidly dwindling incomes and in need of charitable assistance (McClure, 2013). The burgeoning food charity sector during the Great Depression included soup kitchens and trucks, ration tickets for groceries, charitable food depots and church or community food donations (Simpson, 1974)

Given the economic crisis, the hunger that was witnessed in classrooms during the 1930s was further evidence of the level of poverty that existed outside the school-gates and within children's homes (McClure, 2013; Simpson, 1974). While keeping children fed was important, it was also the case that men who were obligated to participate in physically demanding manual labour in order to claim unemployment relief payments could not undertake their work without sufficient basic nutrition (King, 2003; Simpson, 1974). Calls for solutions drew on evidence of child malnutrition, mass unemployment, and a moral responsibility to alleviate suffering in the face of structural economic insecurity (Tennant, 2007). Political and social institutions, developed in the wake of the widespread suffering of children and their families, were shaped by concepts of universal social security and collective protection against unemployment and ill health (Cheyne et al., 2008). Such concepts were mobilised politically, through working class movements that were able to draw broader social legitimisation during a time of crisis (Roper, 2005). Another key impetus for the development of state welfare in Aotearoa New Zealand, like elsewhere, was widespread dissatisfaction with charity as a mode of alleviating poverty (Thomson, 1998). Consequently, the milk in schools scheme in 1937 was part of a broad range of measures that formed the welfare state, signalling a political shift towards security from 'the cradle to the

grave' for the whole nation, rather than policies aimed at selected groups (Belich, 2001; Mein Smith, 2003).

Decades later, the spectre of underachieving children, listless or disruptive in class because of hunger, had become a common trope prior to the re- introduction of free school milk in 2012/2013. Mainstream media outlets, drawing on a growing awareness of 'child poverty,' began a sustained focus on hunger in schools around the period of the re- introduction of school milk (Binning, 2011; Clayton, 2012; Hartevelt, 2012; Lee, 2012; Mediaworks, 2012). The appearance of hunger within schools from the 1990s onwards was situated in conditions that differed from the relatively abrupt, shared crisis of the Great Depression. This hunger was not part of a catastrophic economic collapse, such as the Great Depression had been. Instead, classroom hunger had been a more gradual and incremental phenomenon. Although official records of the numbers of children arriving at school hungry are not collected, reports from people inside schools and organisations supporting low- income communities identified an increasing problem with hunger in schools in the late 1990s (Dale et al., 2011; Gerritsen, 2005; Wynd, 2011). It appears that since the 1990s, the numbers of underfed children coming to school gradually increased alongside a surge in numbers of families accessing foodbanks (Boston & Chapple, 2014; St John & Wynd, 2008; Wynd, 2009). Further, the contemporary experiences of hunger are not evident across a range of social groups. They are instead more concentrated in low-decile schools and amongst pupils from ethnic minorities and low-income households (Beavis et al., 2019; Carter et al., 2010; O'Brien, 2014). This concentration of child hunger reflects the polarisation of incomes, wealth and lifestyles that have become a feature in an increasing number of OECD countries today including Aotearoa New Zealand (OECD, 2011b; Rashbrooke, 2013; Schrecker & Bamba, 2015).

Hungry School Children

Responses to hunger in the 1930s and 2000s reflect their own specific conditions, although both periods highlight the function of schools as sites where citizens living in varied circumstances interact. In light of the compulsory nature of primary school attendance, schools operate as a key site for revealing the extent of hunger and for creating the urgency to do something to alleviate its suffering. In the school environment, deprivation becomes evident when children going unfed are seated beside their well-provisioned peers, creating dilemmas for children and teachers. Increasing numbers of children without lunch in schools therefore serve as a visible signifier of hunger experienced by parents, families, whānau and

communities in less visible spaces (Hopgood et al., 2010; O'Brien, 2014; Smith et al., 2013a).

The stated purpose of schools is to support children's learning, socialisation and eventual participation in the labour market (Education and Training Act 2020, s. 32). Such objectives are undermined if school pupils are hungry, creating a vested interest for parents and teachers in addressing hunger within schools. Moreover, in the contemporary education system, teachers operate within tight time frames to meet specific learning goals and cover the curriculum, something more difficult to achieve in classrooms where children are hungry (Connell, 2013). The task of managing hungry children and their potentially disruptive behaviour in classrooms impacts on teachers' ability to meet learning objectives for all children, not just those who are hungry (Anscombe, 2009).

Since social and educational goals of compulsory schooling place schools at the forefront of seeing child hunger, teachers and school principals have provided food at times through informal means (Anscombe, 2009; Gerritsen, 2005). During the Great Depression teachers sometimes attempted to ameliorate hunger by sharing food between children, pooling children's pennies to buy cheap supplementary foods, and reaching into their own pockets to try to alleviate the hunger in front of them (Radio New Zealand, 1965; Tuhiwai Smith, 2001). Likewise, in the late 1990s and 2000s, teachers and charities attempted to 'manage' the hunger appearing in classrooms through small scale and ad hoc means (Bloy, 2005; Carson, 2013; Clements, 2016; "Full tums help the sums," 2015). Whether historically or in the present period, the daily needs of children cannot easily be ignored within a school classroom, regardless of who is responsible for children going hungry. It is less relevant to schools what is causing the increase in numbers of children going hungry, and more important to alleviate the problem. Whilst schools have frequently been tasked with managing the problem, to understand the growing prevalence of hunger within schools it is necessary to move outside of the school gates and consider the difficulties families are experiencing with feeding everyone within their households.

Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is the term more recently used to denote the constrained access to food that is found amongst economically disadvantaged households within wealthy countries. Food insecurity is defined as the lack of "readily available, sufficient, nutritionally adequate and safe foods, as well as the inability to acquire such foods" (Parnell & Gray, 2014). In Aotearoa New Zealand, a Ministry of Health survey in 2002 found that food regularly runs out before

there is an ability to replenish it in 22 per cent of households (Ministry of Health, 2003). By 2008/2009, the Ministry of Health found that 41% of households experienced some degree of food insecurity, partly reflecting an increase in the costs of many staple foods (University of Otago & Ministry of Health, 2011). It is important to emphasise that within such averages there are households experiencing extended periods with severely restricted food intakes, high levels of anxiety about accessing food, and consequently health impacts from stress, malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency (Ministry of Health, 2019).

The issue of insufficient food is part of the experience of food insecurity, but another element is the low quality of nutrition available to poorer households. The Department of Human Nutrition at Otago University produces a yearly estimate of the lowest basic cost for meeting recommended nutritional requirements. In 2014 in Hamilton, the weekly costs were: \$64 for an adult man; \$54 for a woman; \$67 for an adolescent boy; \$55 for an adolescent girl; and from \$31 to \$47 for children, according to age (Gray et al., 2015) While such figures represent the minimum for sustaining health, they are not achievable for the majority of families on low incomes, including many families in paid work (Hopgood et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2013b) The higher cost of meeting the nutritional needs of teenagers is particularly noteworthy, since teenagers are the targets of very few milk or food schemes. Nutrient deficiency in developed countries has been called the 'hidden hunger' (Kirkpatrick & Tarasuk, 2008). Moreover, the pricing of food currently favours less healthy food as a more realistic means to alleviate hunger (Kettings et al., 2009; Kirkpatrick & Tarasuk, 2008; Smith et al., 2013a; Wilson & Mansoor, 2005). Yet reliance on cheap, energy-dense, processed food to satiate hunger does not support sound health (Kettings et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2013a; Tarasuk, 2001).

The stark food budget shortfall in many low-income households means that people are forced to find alternative ways to feed themselves. People are increasingly relying on emergency grants and benefit advances from the state welfare agency Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ), to cover food costs. In 2005, 40 per cent of such payments were provided for purchasing essential groceries (McNeill, 2011). There are no nationally collated figures for foodbank use or community meal provision, but we do know that in 1989 there were 16 foodbanks in Auckland, and by 1994 there were over 130, indicating rapid growth in the numbers of people requiring food charity (Wynd, 2005). The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services periodically reports on changes in provision across some of their foodbanks (those with the capacity to collect data). Their comparison between foodbank use in 2004 and 2007 reports increasing requests for food parcels, including greater demand from

people participating in paid work (NZ Council of Christian Social Services, 2008). McNeil (2011) found that the level of foodbank distribution and community meal provision in Hamilton is characterised by increasing demand that exceeds available resources, and cannot be considered sustainable. The entrenchment of food insecurity results in foodbanks and charity meals becoming institutionalised in the lives of many people on low incomes, and forms part of a pattern of consumption at micro-levels, which “offend the cultural norms of both the individual on which they are imposed, and arguably, wider society” (McNeill, 2011, p. 178). People required to routinely access charity in order to feed themselves and their children frequently experience distress and social isolation (Graham, Hodgetts, et al., 2018).

Within households, food insecurity is interconnected with numerous other deprivations and financial constraints (Ministry of Health, 2019). The immediate needs of the body, as well as the social role of food are strong incentives to prioritise nutrition over other activities (Siefert et al., 2001). Winson (1992) characterises food as a commodified resource within capitalist societies, but a resource that, like water, is essential for our bodies and therefore an ‘intimate commodity’, distinct from other goods. The drive to maintain food, as both a fuel and a social practice, is hence a powerful human impulse and one that is not surrendered lightly. In particular, the resolve to keep children fed can supersede many other basic needs (Fram et al., 2011; Reid et al., 2014; Siefert et al., 2001). Food insecurity in wealthy countries must therefore be understood as one expression of hardship that is nested within layers of multiple disadvantage for those who have been economically marginalised.

The increasing difficulty households are having with feeding all their members principally relates to the insufficient resources they have to meet the costs of all of their outgoings (Ministry of Health, 2019; Smith et al., 2013b). No amount of planning, organisation or management of resources can make money sufficient to cover basic costs in many low-income households (St John & Wynd, 2008; Wynd, 2005). Food is frequently one of the few flexible costs in such households. Hence, despite the importance families place on keeping food in the cupboards, the food budget is sometimes unavoidably ‘robbed’ in order to meet other routine costs, such as rent, heating, and transport or to cover additional, less regular expenses, including car repairs, dental bills or school supplies (Cox & Black, 2011; Graham, Hodgetts, et al., 2018). This type of situation can instigate families accessing expensive forms of credit, resulting in debt traps that exacerbate financial difficulties (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Groot, et al., 2013; Walker, 2011). With no capacity to build up a ‘buffer’ of savings, households can become acutely vulnerable to food insecurity as a result of trying to juggle competing expenses on insufficient and inconsistent incomes. This is

particularly difficult when people have insufficient and inconsistent income long term, which is now the reality for increasing numbers of New Zealanders (Boston & Chapple, 2015).

In summary, considering the current situation in Aotearoa New Zealand, the visible manifestation of hungry school children requires a consideration of the broader processes that subject their households to food insecurity. The wider extent of poverty in a relatively wealthy food-producing country such as Aotearoa New Zealand raises a number of questions that cannot be answered by focusing principally at the individual level. Given the structural nature of inequalities and poverty, it is necessary to situate food insecurity within the context of significant economic, political and social shifts that have taken place during the past three decades.

Inequality and Poverty

An important change in Aotearoa since the 1980s has been an increase in the income gap between our poorest and wealthiest citizens (Easton, 2020). Income inequality increased in the majority of OECD countries from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s (OECD, 2012). In Aotearoa New Zealand, this inequality is reflected in the fact that the richest 10% of households had a growth in real household incomes of 2.5% per year, while the poorest 10% had only a 1.1% growth (OECD, 2011a). The increase in inequality between 1985 and 2010 in Aotearoa New Zealand was the second largest among all OECD countries (OECD, 2011a). High levels of inequality are associated with poorer health and social outcomes for all groups within an unequal society (Marmot & Wilkinson, 2005; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2007). There are particularly damaging consequences for the health of citizens who end up most disadvantaged in a society with deep inequality (Dorling et al., 2007; Marmot & Wilkinson, 2005).

Increased economic inequalities constitute one part of the story, and are associated with poorer outcomes for a society overall. Additionally, societies with greater levels of inequality tend also to have higher levels of poverty (McFate et al., 1995; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2010). This is apparent in Aotearoa New Zealand, where growing inequality over the past two decades was accompanied by an increase in poverty (Perry, 2013). A particularly sharp increase is notable in the After Housing Cost (AHC) 60% “moving line” measure of child poverty from 14% in 1988, to 24% in 2013 (Perry, 2014). The rate of increase in child poverty was internationally notable in terms of its steep trajectory, particularly since the 1990s (Blaiklock et al., 2002; Boston, 2014) The growth in child poverty rates was a focus of

concern for the UN, who warned of poverty undermining children's basic human rights (Henaghan & Ballantyne, 2015; Te One et al., 2017).

Policy decisions made over the past two decades have contributed to higher child (and therefore family) poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand (Boston & Chapple, 2015). These include cuts to benefit rates in 1991, a lack of adjustment of benefits to reflect real wage growth and less progressive taxation (for example, the introduction of a Goods and Services tax (GST) that effectively increased tax being paid by low-income people, and a lower income tax rate for the highest income earners) (Boston, 2014). The Child Poverty Monitor, produced by a group of academics and experts, cites child poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand at 27% in 2012, using 60 % of the median income after housing costs (Craig et al., 2013). Since then, living costs have increased markedly due to the continuing escalation of property values in many New Zealand cities and the low supply of social housing. This situation is putting further pressure on low-income households (Howden-Chapman et al., 2012).

The introduction of a tax credit policy, 'Working for Families' (WFF), in 2004 improved the situation for some households with people in paid work. 'Working for Families' is a tax credit provided to families in order to subsidise household incomes for those who undertake paid work. The policy is designed to incentivise parents' paid work by paying childcare subsidies and topping up incomes where people work for a specified number of hours (Perry, 2004). This policy was introduced under a centre-left Labour Government and promoted as a hand-up for those whose incomes were slipping below what was required to maintain minimum living standards. Regardless, this policy did not offer its additional support to people without paid work, so widened the gap for households deriving their incomes from benefits. Consequently, around 70 per cent of beneficiary families lived in poverty (St John & Dale, 2012). Nonetheless, paid work was not necessarily a route out of poverty as employment figures have consistently shown that over half of people in poverty are in paid work (Cotterell et al., 2017, p. 18). Increasing numbers of households rely partially on welfare benefits to top up low-paid work, or have members who move in and out of insecure work but cannot maintain sufficient income to support themselves or their families (O'Brien, 2013).

In terms of public understandings about rising rates of poverty, the concept of 'relative poverty', in contrast to 'absolute poverty', has been deployed to minimise the extent of poverty in wealthy countries (Foster, 1998). Absolute poverty describes circumstances of being unable to afford basic necessities of life, typically associated with low-income countries where people may be subject to life-threatening malnutrition, insanitary living

conditions and other severe material deprivations. Relative poverty denotes the circumstances of people living below a minimum expected and appropriate standard, relative to the norm within that society. From this perspective, most poverty in high-income OECD countries is characterised as ‘relative’, in order to distinguish such poverty from the subsistence level hardship experienced in countries with few economic safety nets. Yet, a growing research literature is highlighting the widespread and damaging impacts of relative poverty specifically (Lister, 2015; Stiglitz, 2012; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2007). We are deeply social beings and the constant confrontation with social positioning below what is considered relatively acceptable in a particular society has lasting emotional, cognitive and physical consequences that are now a key focus in research literature on the health of low-income citizens in wealthy countries (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017; Marmot & Wilkinson, 2005; Schrecker & Bambra, 2015). Health inequalities, particularly for economically vulnerable groups such as Māori, are a significant issue in Aotearoa New Zealand (D’Souza et al., 2012; Reid et al., 2014).

In addition, evidence suggests that a sharp distinction between absolute and relative poverty is in itself an over-simplification, since the two frequently overlap and poverty in low-income countries is relative to some degree (Boston & Chapple, 2015; Nussbaum, 2011). In the case of Aotearoa New Zealand, there are people unable to afford nutritious food, warm clothing or heating in winter, medications, and basic hygiene items such as a toothbrush, or to pay their rent (resulting in homelessness) (Asher & St John, 2016; Garden et al., 2014). The experiences of those living in circumstances thus constrained would fit criteria for absolute poverty and further, proximity to a majority of others whose living standards are high creates additional stress. Sen (1995) has argued for a capability focus since people use resources in order to create the lives they seek for themselves and their families. People’s capacity to participate and flourish within a given society can be constrained by material hardships. Sen’s approach foregrounds how poverty functions to exclude people from various activities or experiences considered routine by other members of a society, highlighting the relational nature of poverty, without discounting people’s own agency (Sen, 1995).

Another issue within media and political forums is that discussions about the extent of poverty are often constrained by an over-reliance on single measures (Cattell, 2012; Lister, 2015). As Perry (2002) argues, there is a substantial mismatch between income-based poverty measures and poverty measured in terms of deprivation and low living standards. One of the issues is that income-based measures do not take account of the significant advantages more affluent citizens derive from their accumulated assets (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). The

Ministry of Social Development acknowledges that any use of an equivalised disposable income measure (either before or after deducting housing costs) is an imperfect indicator of actual living standards (Perry, 2014). This is because households each have unique circumstances, resources, assets and costs. A particularly important factor is also the different likely outcomes for those who experience lengthy periods of time on low incomes, in contrast to those experiencing a short, transient episode of hardship (Perry, 2014).

The use of a deprivation index can provide additional understandings of the conditions in which some people are living (Perry, 2016). The New Zealand Household Economic Survey has included questions from an Economic Living Standards Index since 2006-07 (Jensen et al., 2005). This index uses questions relating to a lack of essentials, such as fresh fruit and vegetables, or possession of a raincoat or suitable shoes. The survey also asks people about their ability to meet other costs, for example, visits to the doctor, staying warm, or being able to cover unexpected bills (Perry, 2016). Material hardship rates using this measure have traditionally related closely to income levels of 50 per cent of the median in Aotearoa New Zealand (Boston & Chapple, 2014). During the 2009-2011 period, the income poverty rates for children were static yet the material hardship trend was increasing (Perry, 2013) In addition, a greater number of families with incomes above the 60% poverty threshold are reporting increased hardship, suggesting growing insecurity. This indicates increasing vulnerability to material deprivation for families on low incomes.

The points raised above reveal that there are many ways to measure, conceptualise and understand what poverty means in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand. A wide range of measures can be drawn on to provide a clearer picture about what has been happening over the past decades, and the extent to which some citizens are slipping behind what could be expected in a wealthy country. Nonetheless, it is crucial that work on poverty does not become mired in debates about definitions and measurement, at the expense of a closer engagement with those citizens whose lifeworlds are a daily struggle. A focus on whether 'poverty' even exists in Aotearoa New Zealand and debates around the percentage of median income as an accurate measure is frequently deployed politically in order to obfuscate the issue (Boston & Chapple, 2014). The evidence for hardship is resounding, by many and varied methods, and the discussion needs to shift towards upstream causes and developing solutions (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). Understanding how people are becoming trapped in levels of insecurity that were not prevalent in Aotearoa New Zealand during the decades from 1940 to 1990 requires attention to some significant changes over that period. The following

section will unpack the ideological project at the heart of these economic and social changes, the rise of neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism became the dominant political paradigm in Aotearoa New Zealand, somewhat rapidly, during the 1980s (Cheyne et al., 2008). In the 1970s global prices fell for previously lucrative export products, such as wool, at the same time as a sharp rise in the price for importing oil (Nixon & Yeabsley, 2010). The resulting economic stagnation in Aotearoa New Zealand led to a recession. Although enacted locally, the economic restructuring that began in the mid-1980s was situated within a neoliberalising project that was transnational, reflecting global trends in political and economic theory (Mudge, 2008; Peck, 2010). Neoliberalism has been characterised as a label that can encompass a confusing and multifarious range of definitions and usages, academically and in popular culture (Mudge, 2008; Venugopal, 2015). Although the development of neoliberalism can be traced as a specific historical and philosophical process, neoliberalism also evolves and translates ideology within different contexts (Peck, 2010; Wacquant, 2012). The dynamic nature of how neoliberal ideology expresses itself and interacts with other traditions and practices in different contexts can obscure its tenets, particularly when they have become common-sense doctrines (Hall, 1998; Hall & O'shea, 2013; Humpage & Baillie, 2016). After summarising key points in the development of neoliberal political ideology I will therefore identify a framework of neoliberal principles that are most relevant for the task of understanding the development of responses to hunger in schools in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Briefly, the label *neoliberalism* reflects its roots in a revival of eighteenth-century classical liberalism. Classical liberalism had been an important influence on European politics, and shaped nineteenth-century economic policies, particularly in Britain (Stedman Jones, 2014). The concept of 'laissez-faire' governance embodied the classical liberal ideal that government should limit itself to protecting private property, the rule of law and the operation of trade. The assumption was that such minimal government allows the development of a perceived 'natural' equilibrium in the distribution of resources. The settlement of Aotearoa New Zealand by predominantly British migrants during the nineteenth century suggests that classical liberal ideals were a considerable influence in the colony. However, historians have also pointed to a significantly interventionist state and managed economy during settlement, especially in relation to controlling the acquisition, sale and management of land (Belich, 2001; King, 2003). In addition, by the end of the nineteenth

century, there was growing acknowledgement in Europe that state intervention was necessary in order to protect the rights of individuals, as well as the common good, and laissez-faire fell out of mainstream favour (S. Clarke, 2005; Stedman Jones, 2014).

After the Second World War, arguments for a return to the principles of eighteenth-century classical liberalism were promoted by influential economists in Europe and North America, for example, Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek (Harvey, 2007; Stedman Jones, 2014). The belief that economic liberalisation was inextricably linked to democracy and to personal freedom was emphasised. The underlying assumption was that the unfettered operation of markets is necessary for freedom in all other spheres of life (Mudge, 2008). An important context for these ideas was a distrust of state authority and the perceived excesses of ‘collectivity’ in the European post war context, which were assumed to be associated with the extremes of both Nazism and Communism (Stedman Jones, 2014).

A macro-economic crisis in the 1970s created political opportunities for proponents to offer neoliberalism as a ready solution to the ostensible ‘crisis of Keynesianism’ (Clarke & Newman, 1997). Keynesianism had been politically ascendant in Aotearoa New Zealand after the Great Depression, underpinning a preference for managing the economy actively to promote social and economic goals, such as full employment (Castles, 1996; Roper, 2005). In contrast, advocates for neoliberalism promoted the notion that economic recessions in America, the UK, Australia, and Aotearoa New Zealand were the result of overly bureaucratic, heavily regulated, expensive, out-dated mechanisms of the Keynesian state (Clarke et al., 2000). The argument was that these presumed excesses of intervention had resulted, not only in sluggish national economies, but also in de-motivated and un-productive citizens, in need of adjustment to a new globalised economy (Adams et al., 2019; Allen, 2013; Rose, 1999). The solutions therefore lay in de-regulation, greater competition, privatisation, and commodification (Cahill et al., 2018).

Many global organisations had shifted substantially into a neoliberal status quo by the 1990s, including the European Union, OECD, IMF, and the World Bank (Stiglitz, 2018). All became adherents to the neoliberal common sense that facilitated global trade for multinational corporations and reduced the complexity of the social world through free market logic (Cheyne et al., 2008). In Aotearoa New Zealand, the Fourth Labour Government, elected in 1984, instituted arguably the deepest and swiftest transformation from a welfare state to neoliberal governance in the Anglophone world, a reminder that neoliberalism could transcend traditional political party definitions of ‘Left’ and ‘Right’

(Reardon & Gray, 2007). The depth and scope of neoliberalism in the contemporary period therefore necessitates a working definition of its underlying principles and their implications.

Principles of Neoliberalism

There are several interconnected elements of neoliberal ideology that form the foundation for neoliberal political developments globally. Firstly, the market is held to be the best mechanism for the distribution of resources (Clarke & Newman, 1997). The market, it is argued by proponents of neoliberal principles, should be kept as free as possible from monopolies and regulations, allowing individuals to compete in order to provide the best means of distribution by tapping into a presumed ‘natural’ desire to maximise our own resources. Individuals rationally pursuing their own self-interest competitively is viewed as operating in the common interest, reflecting the classical liberal tenet of allowing ‘the invisible hand of the market’ to distribute goods and services (Palley, 2005). The following quote from a founding figure of classical liberalism, Adam Smith, encapsulates this logic, locating human motivation within self-interest:

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard for their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages. (Smith, 1776)

The extract from Smith’s treatise illustrates the belief that individuals pursuing their own interests is what creates products and services for consumers.

Secondly, the role of ‘choice’ in neoliberal societies is pivotal (J. Clarke, 2005). Markets are deemed to achieve natural balance between supply and demand when consumers have the freedom to choose goods and services as freely as possible. The notion of choice, in neoliberal terms, rests on the premise that all individuals have the opportunity to freely choose from a range of options, and are responsible for both the rewards and consequences of those choices (S. Clarke, 2005). The practical outcome of privileging choice in neoliberal societies is that there are classes of people who can consume and choose because of their economic and social resources, and other groups who hear the rhetoric of ‘choice’, but cannot exercise it because of their disempowered position (J. Clarke, 2005; Harvey, 2007). The other important impact of situating choice as the central tool of distribution, is the atomized view of human beings it encourages, since individuals in this model are deemed successful when they

construct their lives in terms of maximising personal preferences and opportunities (Adams et al., 2019).

Thirdly, supporters of neoliberal reforms advocate liberalisation as a means to facilitate 'free markets'. Liberalisation in this context is usually defined by removal or minimisation of state regulation of markets, industries and firms (Peck, 2010). State intervention is characterised as an interference in the smooth running of the market, and deregulation is a favoured strategy (Mudge, 2008). The liberalisation model is promoted in terms of the positive associations generated by the concept of 'freedom', and favoured by those who can profit from fewer state controls over their businesses (for example, the lower costs of employing people when their rights to breaks or minimum hours are not protected by regulations). The question of whose interests are served by liberalisation is therefore important (Clarke & Newman, 2012; Harvey, 2007).

Fourthly, privatisation is favoured by neoliberal economists, manifesting a mistrust of the state and preference for minimal state responsibility (Ball, 2009). The goal of privileging individual choice is served by private enterprise offering competing goods and services. The choices of citizen-consumers are deemed to drive up the quality and value for money of what can be accessed. In addition, private provision of goods and services devolves costs and responsibility from the state, serving the notion of a minimal state with low input from taxpayers (Clarke, 2004; Hackell, 2013). Consequently, there is political impetus to convert state enterprises to private ones, and to devolve as many state services as possible to private, competitively tendered contracts (Ball, 2009; Clarke & Newman, 1997).

The fifth, and final, important point about neoliberalism distinguished in this section is the extent to which the concepts listed above are translated from an economic context into ideas about social organisation (Campbell & Pedersen, 2001; J. Clarke, 2005). Assumptions about human beings, their motivations, values and social relationships are fundamental to the ideology and political project of neoliberalism (Adams et al., 2019; Hall & O'shea, 2013). The free-market is positioned as the optimum vehicle for human potential and freedom, which makes it seem logical to extend marketisation and financialisation (constructing activities around monetary calculations and exchanges) into as many spheres of life as possible. If the profit motive and an ability to exercise individual choice are seen as the basis for human behaviour, then organising society around these concepts becomes a logical basis for social policy, in neoliberal terms (Lewis et al., 2000).

‘Actually Existing Neoliberalism’

The neoliberal turn in New Zealand politics, precipitated by the election of the 1984 Labour government does not signify that neoliberalism is a completed or uncontested project in Aotearoa New Zealand, nor elsewhere. Brenner and Theodore (2002) highlight the importance of studying neoliberalism in terms of how it is expressed in the world, rather than as an abstracted ideological construct. An orientation toward ‘actually existing neoliberalism’ has been adopted by many researchers seeking to understand neoliberalism as it has unfolded, and continues to unfold, in distinct contexts (Peck, et al., 2018). Neoliberal governance has not operated as a monolithic authority, producing uniform results through top-down processes (Cahill, 2013; Larner & Butler, 2005). Instead, neoliberalism is introduced and develops in conjunction with local conditions and cultural specificities, adapting within existing historical, political and economic influences. Such an approach situates neoliberalism as a fragmented and ongoing project, always incomplete and negotiated within specific contexts (Peck, 2010). One of the implications of the negotiated nature of ‘actually existing neoliberalism’ is that maintaining neoliberal governance requires ongoing efforts to reinforce neoliberal orthodoxy and constitute the social world accordingly. Consequently, neoliberalism in Aotearoa New Zealand must be understood as mobilising certain adaptive practices that operate in concert with pre-existing social and institutional formations.

Peck (2010) has explored the extent to which the process of ongoing ‘neoliberalisation’ as it unfolded in countries such as Aotearoa New Zealand, began with an emphasis on ‘rolling back’ the state (de-regulation). The promotion of ‘rolling back’ state control was attractive in settings where there was a perception of excessive state regulation. Nonetheless, Peck and colleagues point out that neoliberalism has moved increasingly into a phase of intensive ‘roll-out’ of interventions designed to embed the position of neoliberal frameworks (Tickell & Peck, 2003). Cutting back state services and dispersing responsibilities from the state is sometimes characterised as a ‘hollowing out’ of state power, providing a semblance of greater community empowerment (Geddes, 2007; Grey & Sedgwick, 2013). In fact, the operation of neoliberalism has frequently required an intensification and concentration of power and more top-down management systems in order to advance its aims (Clarke & Newman, 2012). An example of this impetus is found within increasingly authoritarian and punitive welfare systems, structured to enforce the discipline of the state in its interactions with citizens (Grahame & Marston, 2012; Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Groot, et al., 2013; Wacquant, 2012; Wiggan, 2012).

The 'roll out' phase of neoliberalism, alongside entrenchment of neoliberal assumptions in the present period rests on the promotion and maintenance of pro-market, neoliberal citizenship ideals (J. Clarke, 2005; Layton, 2010; Wacquant, 2012). The neoliberal citizen learns that competition and choice are the drivers of prosperity, and providing 'flexible' labour to maximise business profits is a priority (Miller & Rose, 2008; Peters, 2017). Neoliberalism requires citizens to engage in an ongoing creation and re-creation of an aspirational, entrepreneurial and insecure 'neoliberal self' (Gibson, 2009; Miller & Rose, 2008; Rose, 1999). Paid work is emphasised as the core responsibility of citizenship and activities that are not monetised, notably unpaid care or community roles, are devalued (Lister, 2006). The impact of these changes is further explored in the section below on the role of precarity in contemporary Aotearoa.

In order to maintain the ascendancy of individualism it is advantageous to actively discourage collectivism, across as many settings as possible. Thus, institutions and organisations that have their basis in collective means of managing the risks of life are sometimes portrayed by supporters of neoliberal policies as having little relevance or legitimacy (Stedman Jones, 2014). Such views have led to the erosion, dismantling and/or privatisation of trade unions, guilds, welfare, state education, housing and universal healthcare (Standing, 2014). Discrediting previously cherished institutions, such as the social security and health systems, was also required to advance neoliberal aims (Mudge, 2008; Stedman Jones, 2014). Institutions, such as public healthcare that had been widely supported in the post-war period, are sometimes de-legitimised and even denigrated, in order to encourage people to view privatised services and greater 'choice' as preferable to services funded by the state (Lewis et al., 2000; Tickell & Peck, 2003).

Changes to the welfare system under neoliberal regimes are not purely economic, they also have a moral objective (Mudge, 2008). Given the emphasis on self-reliance, neoliberal regimes are designed to portray those who seek state income support as potentially morally unworthy, except in limited circumstances, such as illness or disability (Wiggan, 2012). Welfare has moved from its inception as a space of care, and towards a focus on addressing perceived moral and behavioural deficits that represent barriers to participation in paid work (McKenzie, 2013). Consequently, citizens who access welfare benefits are often subject to stringent and judgemental treatment, in order to minimise state expenditure and reinforce the idea that the responsibility for poverty lies with the failure of the individual (Whitfield, 2012). Punitive welfare policies are designed to reduce the perceived appeal of welfare support, to ensure that those without work are not a burden to the reified hard working 'tax-

payer' (Jensen & Tyler, 2015). The increased conditionality within the welfare system, along with the degrading treatment often experienced in welfare interactions, leave more families without a safety net for food and living costs (Garland, 2018; Wacquant, 2012).

In the New Zealand context, an austerity focused budget in 1991 substantially cut state benefit levels for the unemployed and single parents, resulting in benefits levels sliding further below wages and the cost of living over the ensuing decades (Boston et al., 1999). In addition to benefit cuts, policies were introduced that contributed to more insecure employment, lower wages and increasing living costs (housing, energy, food and transport), alongside the reduction of funding for health and social services (Barnett & Bagshaw, 2020; Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Groot, et al., 2013). Despite the structural constraints that families were experiencing, individual choices were frequently positioned as the primary explanation for poverty. This assumption was expressed by John Key, who was Prime Minister from 2008 to 2016. For instance, in February, 2011 the Prime Minister was questioned in parliament in relation to Salvation Army concerns about growing demand for food parcels. John Key was reported as responding that:

But it is also true that anyone on a benefit actually has a lifestyle choice. If one budgets properly, one can pay one's bills. And that is true because the bulk of New Zealanders on a benefit do actually pay for food, their rent and other things. Now some make poor choices and they don't have money left. (Trevett, 2011)

Key's explanation for rising foodbank use blames the poor decisions of individuals for their lack of resources. These assumptions convey a neoliberal emphasis on individual failure rather than structural explanations for food insecurity and poverty (Lunt, 2014).

Government policy in relation to food insecurity between 2000 and 2017 largely maintained the neoliberal status quo, emphasising the primacy of paid work and denying state responsibility for poverty. Nevertheless, the view that those accessing food banks have made poor choices became less acceptable to the broader population when those going hungry were young children. Consequently, defining poverty through the lens of 'child poverty' became important for activists attempting to mobilise empathy from the wider population. The following subsection illustrates how the initial value in mobilising support for children living with poverty was reinforced and co-opted within the neoliberal iteration of the Third Way. The dominance of Third Way neoliberalism and its complicity with framing poverty as 'child

poverty’ underpins how hungry children in schools have been responded to in Aotearoa New Zealand from 2000 to 2017.

The Third Way and Child Poverty.

Despite the increase in household poverty and income inequality since 1990 in Aotearoa New Zealand, poverty has predominantly been framed around concerns for children. Emphasis on children as a focus of compassion has resulted in a preference by NGOs, advocacy groups, media, and politicians for the term ‘child poverty’, rather than other conceptualisations of deprivation (Devine, 2014). For example, New Zealand’s Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), following international precedents, was formed in 1994 by those concerned about growing levels of economic hardship:

Child Poverty Action Group (Inc) is a non-profit group, formed in 1994 and made up of academics, activists, practitioners and supporters. CPAG advocates for more informed social policy to support children in Aotearoa New Zealand, specifically those children who currently live in relative - and occasionally absolute - poverty. CPAG believes our high rate of child poverty is not the result of economic necessity but is due to policy neglect.

www.cpag.org.nz

CPAG’s advocacy concentrates on children in order to highlight the injustice of poverty through its impact on the most vulnerable group. Speaking up for children has provided CPAG with a moral authority as spokespersons in media on issues of poverty and inequality. Advocacy for families and communities who are struggling economically is aided by emphasising the consequences of poverty on children, who cannot be blamed for their circumstances (Jackson, 2014).

Highlighting the plight of innocent children who do not have the resources they require to thrive seems like a self-evidently important task. Yet, the current emphasis on children reflects more complex concerns than a presumed ‘natural’ response to suffering. During the period of the re-introduction of milk in schools, around 2013, children were foregrounded, not only to mobilise charitable support, but also politically. Children occupy an important symbolic role within political rhetoric associated with the Third Way (Lister, 2003; Pinkney, 2000). The Third Way was a name coined for a form of governance that sought to soften the harsher impacts of market capitalism, while maintaining its basic economic model (Fairclough, 2001; Giddens, 2013). The Third Way claimed a position that

moved away from ideological commitments to ‘Right’ or ‘Left’, and attempted to chart a middle path, emphasising pragmatism and modernisation (Clarke, Gerwitz and McLaughlin, 2000:10). The claim is that an enabling state will balance rights with responsibilities and cultivate opportunities for citizens to build successful lives and communities (Giddens, 2013). This approach was typified by the Tony Blair New Labour government in the UK (1997-2007), and by Helen Clark’s Labour government in Aotearoa New Zealand (1999-2008). In effect, policies inspired by Third Way thinking further embed the neoliberal project by mitigating some of its more disagreeable effects without disrupting underlying inequities (McManus, 2009).

Children as subjects of policy provided a means to politically differentiate late 1990s Labour governments in the UK and Aotearoa New Zealand from the more unfettered neoliberal regimes that preceded them (Lister, 2006; Porter & Craig, 2004). Children could embody the more compassionate narratives required to draw in support from voters who felt uncomfortable about the consequences of economic inequality. The notion of investing in children in order to create a fairer start for all citizens also appeals through its nostalgic evocation of past national initiatives promoting child health and welfare. Parents and communities can be characterised as victims of bad luck or ‘intergenerational social breakdown’, but more frequently are constructed as being in need of up-skilling, education, behavioural change and the favoured ‘hand up, not a hand out’ (Fairclough, 2001; Hall & O’Shea, 2013; Shildrick et al., 2016). Parents and communities are reminded of their social obligations, and rights are always framed alongside responsibilities and duties (Fairclough, 2001). The notion of opportunities, rather than equity, becomes the focus for state investment (Elizabeth & Larner, 2009).

There is debate around the extent to which the fifth National government, in power from 2008 to 2017 and during the period leading up to the introduction of contemporary milk in schools, adhered to the Third Way model (Hackell, 2013; Larner, 2013). The relevant point here is that the National government continued tax credit policies such as ‘Working for Families’, which topped up the low and often insecure incomes of precarious employment for those with children. Further, the promotion of early childhood education provision was linked to the capacity for mothers to enter paid work, particularly for mothers receiving welfare support (Elizabeth & Larner, 2009; Te One et al., 2017). Such state intervention and generosity is perhaps not congruent with a neoliberal agenda. Fundamentally, the idea of investing in children is still tied to neoliberal objectives, as it advances the employability of

both mothers and fathers, as well as the children themselves as future ‘citizen-workers’ (Lister, 2006, p. 316).

One of the issues with the Third Way is that policies framed as ‘child centred’ do not necessarily equate to improved outcomes for children. Working for Families is a good example of this, in that it is helpful for those in paid work, but entrenches beneficiary households below the poverty line, inflicting hardship on children according to the moral classification of their parents’ work status (St John, 2014). In addition, the complexity and conditionality of Working for Families can cause people in need to miss out, or acquire debt within the system (Cotterell et al., 2017). As economist Susan St John points out, policies relating to families are often more accurately described as ‘paid work-centred’ rather than child-centred, whatever claims are made regarding their focus on children (St John, 2014). Child Poverty Action Group has highlighted the extent to which an underlying lack of respect for the role of caregivers undermines claims to care about children. A central concern is that, “A lack of value currently given to parenting politically compromises any value given to children” (Child Poverty Action Group, 2018, p. 8).

Importantly, during the 2008-2016 period, media reports featured teachers and school principals raising concerns about child hunger, including those from households where one or both parents were in paid work (“Full tums help the sums,” 2015; Neale, 2009; Rilkoff, 2013; Wilson, 2016). Rather than address the issue of children’s suffering, the Prime Minister at the time, John Key, promoted the notion that poverty in a developed nation is a disputed concept, and that instead, welfare dependency, and a lack of incentive and work ethic are contributing factors. For instance, during a radio interview in 2012, John Key maintained that:

There are a lot of children living in welfare-based homes that are living in a form of poverty as it’s defined in a developed economy...if there’s a cycle of dependency and we can see some examples of that where there’s intergenerational welfare dependency... The welfare reforms we have been undertaking have really been about saying, how do we, through both a combination of sticks and carrots, put some pressure on the system to ensure that those who *can* work, *do* work. (Radio New Zealand, 2012)

The Prime Minister’s comments above frame the problem as ‘dependency’, followed by a logic of applying inducements and punishments to coerce people into paid work (Cotterell et al., 2017). This standpoint reflects transnational ideological themes in neoliberal welfare reform, including disproven claims about a culture of intergenerational worklessness

(Featherstone et al., 2014; MacDonald et al., 2014; Ralston & Gayle, 2017). Although neoliberal regimes have intensified focus on ‘welfare dependency,’ denigration of dependency is long standing, encompassing a tradition of positioning people on low incomes, particularly beneficiaries, within an underclass population that sits outside of mainstream social norms (Brady, 2009; Fraser, 1997; Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Harvey, 2007).

It is also the case that ‘dependency’ as an illegitimate state in neoliberal societies resonates readily with historical settler narratives in Aotearoa New Zealand, those emphasising sturdy self-reliance, capability and independence (Tennant, 2001, p. 150). These values were characterised by John Key as ‘The Kiwi Way’ in a speech he gave to the National Party prior to its election to government in 2008 where he stated: “We believe in working hard and getting rewarded for it; we think no one is born superior to anyone else and that everybody deserves a fair crack in life (New Zealand National Party, 2007). The ideals of working hard and getting rewarded for it sit alongside the implication that those not being rewarded must not have worked hard enough.

This section of the introduction chapter has highlighted how neoliberalism in Aotearoa New Zealand has emerged from a global political ideology but that it is nuanced by local conditions. In addition, the Third Way has been influential within the development of New Zealand’s neoliberalising project. The power of Third Way rhetoric lies in its capacity to promote the notion of pragmatism and balance, both appealing prospects in the New Zealand context. Of note in relation to understanding responses to hungry children in schools, is the symbolic importance of children politically. Regardless of what is said publically about compassion for children, food insecurity has become increasingly entrenched since the 1990s for families that children are part of and policies have not addressed the upstream drivers of food insecurity for children or their families. It is important to question who occupies the position of collateral damage within the economic system (Bauman, 2005). One of the ways to understand how this inequality operates and is sustained, is by incorporating awareness of class into the thesis, particularly the role of class in the context of neoliberal reforms.

Re-theorising Class: the Rise of the Precariat

Despite notable exceptions and a sustained focus on issues such as social inequalities and poverty, psychology has not historically explored the social world through the lens of class to the extent of other social sciences (Hodgetts & Griffin, 2015; Holt & Griffin, 2005; Kraus & Stephens, 2012). While psychology has included economic position as a contextual factor in people’s lives, an inclination towards individualising people within mainstream psychology

frameworks has tended to sideline class theory as a focus (Griffin, 2010). The fields of community and critical psychology are most likely to engage with the role of class relations in shaping society (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Crucially, psychologists who seek to include class relations in their analysis must contend with the historical position of psychology as a discipline that has been complicit and constituting in the pathologising and policing of class groups (Featherstone et al., 2014; Parker, 2007).

Despite challenges in establishing contemporary concepts and definitions of class, understanding responses to hungry children in schools requires a class analysis. Most importantly, a class lens helps to ground the research in an awareness of the operation of power. Incorporating class keeps the focus of the research on the relational nature of poverty, as an alternative to individualised understandings of poverty (Riemer et al., 2020). In most cases, poverty research focuses primarily on the experiences and characteristics of the individuals who are poor (Gillies, 2013; Griffin, 2010). In contrast, a relational approach explores the wider relationships and power dynamics between groups that facilitate wealth accumulation for some groups while others fall further behind (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). In the context of such divisions, maintaining inequality is typically in the vested interests of dominant class groups. Hence, in the New Zealand context, the concentration of economic insecurity for some groups sits alongside the fact that other members of New Zealand society have profited well from dominating higher paid work and benefiting from house and land prices that have increased substantially (Rashbrooke, 2015).

In order to understand the ways in which class relations are shaping and sustaining current responses to hunger in schools the thesis is informed by social and economic class theory. The following sub-section outlines the key features of class that have shaped responses to hunger, both in the 1930s and the present. First, I briefly summarise the Marxist position, in order to clarify the basic principles of class as a relationship between citizens and how they attain their incomes, and a relationship between groups that have different interests because of their economic position. Secondly, this section acknowledges that the work of Marx has informed other theorists, who have expanded his ideas into the realm of the social and cultural, providing tools for re-thinking identity, status and social value (Atkinson et al., 2012; Devine et al., 2005). This opens up the possibilities for capturing greater complexity and considering the diffused nature of contemporary power relations. Finally, the need to comprehend rapid, global transformations in recent decades requires new tools in order to understand changes that are shaping both macro relations of production and individual

lifeworlds in new ways. Therefore, the development of the concept of ‘the precariat’ provides understanding of emerging class structures (Standing, 2011).

Karl Marx (1818-1883) established a class analysis that has been influential for over a century, both academically and politically (Marx & Engels, 1848/1967). At its heart, a Marxist approach emphasises the relationship between capital (those who own the means of production and therefore assets and profits) and labour (those who must work for wages). In Marx’s analysis, the key determinant for the differences between class groups is thus economic, and access to economic power is determined by the relationship of a class group to the means of production. This means that the capitalist, who owns and controls the means for producing wealth will profit from the labour of those who have to sell that labour in order to survive. Marx developed his ideas about the working class at a time when mass labour was being deployed in factories and industries during the industrial revolution (Mackintosh & Mooney, 2004). Ultimately, Marx predicted that the working class would rise up against the control of capitalists and reshape society through communal ownership of the means of production (Ollman, 1987).

The Marxist conception of the working class is salient in considering the solidarity of unemployed men during The Great Depression. High levels of awareness among the population of the international context for New Zealand’s sharp economic downturn facilitated political understandings of the nature of the crisis. Left-wing and working-class organisations, particularly unemployed workers’ unions, became important sources of information about the nature of the Great Depression, as well as the possible solutions to it (Chisholm, 2021; King, 2003). The principles of Marxism (or Communism) gained popularity as the Great Depression endured, spurred on by unemployed men who increasingly resented their disempowered position (Belich, 2001; King, 2003). The notion that workers should receive a greater share of the profits from their labour, and that nationalisation of core industries and services would place more wealth and control in the hands of working -class New Zealanders gained traction (Roper, 2005). The growth in solidarity and activity by working-class movements during this period supports a Marxist concept of a ‘class in itself’ becoming a ‘class for itself’, that is, a working class with awareness of its own position and identity, creating collective power to improve its conditions (Mackintosh & Mooney, 2004).

Marx’s analysis has subsequently been critiqued, developed, extended and nuanced by scholars across the social sciences. Bourdieu (1984/2010) is one such scholar who has been influential within the development of class analyses in psychology, as well as other

disciplines. Bourdieu contends that class may have its basis in economic relations but it has also developed as a cultural and social phenomenon, reflected in patterned ways of life that are deeply ingrained into our identities, tastes and practices (Bourdieu, 1984/2010). Bourdieu draws our attention to ‘taken for granted’ ways of being, ways of being that are classed through the deeply rooted experiences of our earliest socialisation. Class relates not solely to economic power, in this analysis, but is inextricably linked with status. Through our socialisation into practices and preferences that are classed (in ways we may not be aware of) we learn to define our own cultural value and that of others, according to the social value placed on different practices and preferences (Mackintosh & Mooney, 2004).

For example, Skeggs’ (1997) analysis of the position of working-class women in the UK explores how class dynamics locate the women economically, socially and in terms of their own identities. Contemporary complexities around identities, representation and understandings of class do not change the underlying configuration of elites (‘capitalists’ in Marxist terms) seeking to exploit labour by keeping wages down (Skeggs, 2013). Nevertheless, Skeggs argues that a focus on material production no longer captures the ways in which the process of exploitation is predicated and sustained through new moral and cultural formations. Class operates as a moral category, because the features, practices, artifacts, and even bodies of different classes hold different social value. This in turn structures the ways in which differently classed people can access and use social spaces. The operation of class as a moral category allows the continued exploitation of those with the fewest resources, but this denigration occurs in continuously developing, dynamic ways (Adkins & Skeggs, 2004). The dynamic nature of how symbolic power operates in everyday life requires research that is alive to shifting contours of class-based representations over time, and in different settings.

In addition to awareness of class as a symbolic, historical, social, and cultural formation, class is now increasingly understood through intersectional frameworks (Anthias, 2013). Intersectionality is a concept that has been advocated particularly by feminist researchers, in an attempt to engage with the ways in which culture, ethnicity, gender, class, health, and many other social ‘locations’ dynamically interact and shape our experiences (Adkins & Skeggs, 2004; hooks, 2000; Lucey et al., 2003; Reay, 2009). An intersectional understanding of social class provides a means to highlight the rich complexities and ambivalences of class experience when it is investigated in the context of people’s everyday lifeworlds (Devine et al., 2005). It is also an orientation gaining increasing prominence within psychology (Hodgetts & Griffin, 2015).

Intersectionality is important in the New Zealand context, particularly in relation to how the Māori population is situated within interconnected forms of disadvantage (Stubbs et al., 2017). The interplay of class, gender, ethnicity and age situates Māori more frequently within insecure income groups, shaping their economic position through historically grounded processes. Consequently, Māori people are over-represented in measures of poverty (Cheyne et al., 2008, p. 171). Māori women, particularly single mothers, are a group highly vulnerable to poverty, and their children, along with Pasifika children form the majority of children attending low-decile schools (those schools with the highest levels of deprivation and hunger amongst their pupils) (Gordon, 2015). The historical element of this thesis highlights the legacy of colonial attitudes in framing responses to hungry children and the positioning of Māori parents within dominant assumptions about feeding children in schools.

In addition to incorporating intersectional approaches that focus on the cultural and social value of class and other social locations, this thesis acknowledges changes in the economic and political structures that shape class in the contemporary context. In order to apply concepts of class in an analysis of responses to hunger in schools it is important to take account of the social, political, and technological changes that have taken place between the two periods being examined in this thesis, the 1930s and the period from 1990 onwards (Roper, 2005). Understanding the experience of class disadvantage in the present period requires new tools that can incorporate transformations in both global economic organisation and shifts in identity that mitigate against class solidarity amongst citizens who now live with economic insecurity.

In order to identify the ways in which contemporary global economic and ideological formations impact on citizens this thesis is informed by Guy Standing's (2011/2014) work on class. Standing unpacks the ways that transnational economic policy shifts since the late 1970s have resulted in a transformation of class relations in wealthy countries. Of core relevance to this thesis is Standing's concept of the burgeoning 'precariat' (Standing, 2011). The precariat are defined as an emerging class of people who live with entrenched labour market insecurity, that spills over into a range of other insecurities in their lives, including housing and food. Insecurity is now increasingly salient for those on low incomes in Aotearoa New Zealand, as it is in many other OECD countries that have been subject to globalised market reforms (Bauman, 2005; Perry, 2013). The position of the precariat is understood as a shift in labour market power but also a psycho-social change in how people experience and understand their position (Neilson, 2015). Five key features of Standing's analysis are of particular relevance to the present study.

Firstly, the issue of income insecurity has been identified earlier in this chapter as a central theme in the lives of New Zealanders who are struggling to keep their families fed, but the concept of precarity is distinguished by characterising insecurity as an entrenched “new normal” (Standing, 2014). One consequence of neoliberalism in wealthy countries is the increasing prevalence of what has been deemed “jobless work”, defined as “casual, short-term, uninvolved and prospectless” (Bauman, 2011, p. 4). People who occupy the low paid end of the labour market have become subject to less secure employment because employers have been able to organise jobs around maximum flexibility and profitability for businesses in a less regulated labour market (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2012). The notion of the precariat captures the extent to which this labour instability translates to more than simply insecure work for a temporary period, or for very few types of employment (such as seasonal work). Instead, the precariat are expected to habituate to unstable labour. This places low-income citizens in an increasingly vulnerable position economically, over the long term (Cotterell et al., 2017; St John & Wynd, 2008).

Secondly, a loss of rights is a feature of life for the precariat, reflected in greater conditionality being applied across a number of settings. The notion of citizenship rights and social rights that are conferred solely through belonging to a community is declining (Standing, 2014). Standing makes the point, for example, that labour rights that the working class struggled to establish in earlier periods have been eroded (Standing, 2014, p. 16). One consequence of this loss of protections is the ongoing need for the precariat to seek additional jobs and additional hours of work to try to create sufficient income in the face of insecure, contractual employment (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2012). The time required to fulfil the constant need to search for, obtain and retain enough paid work is time no longer available to those on low incomes for undertaking other activities. In addition, the loss of labour rights has been accompanied by greater difficulty in qualifying for and accessing welfare benefits, as well as an erosion of state services (Cotterell et al., 2017; Wiggan, 2012).

In practice, the loss of rights for the precariat now translates into a loss of not only employment protections and social security, but additionally a loss of access to traditional community and social resources that have become increasingly subject to privatisation and commodification (McKenzie, 2015). Social rights are increasingly formulated through market rationality, emphasising consumer choices as rights (Clarke et al., 2000). For example, parents are increasingly expected to top up funds for state schools from their own pockets in order to maintain their children’s educational opportunities. Children no longer have the right to study all of the subjects on offer at school, or participate in school activities that may

contribute to their academic assessments unless individual parents can pay for these opportunities (Thrupp et al., 2020). The educational rights of children who are being raised in precariat households are thus increasingly constrained by lack of resources within their families. In the case of children going hungry, without recourse to a concept of social justice that defines their nutritional needs as a human right, children and their parents must endure the food insecurity that frequently accompanies precarity (Beavis et al., 2019).

Thirdly, the changing conditions for the precariat have mitigated against solidarity and therefore the potential for political action on issues such as food insecurity. A lack of collective identity for the precariat partly relates to the very nature of insecure employment. The afore mentioned issue of how much time and effort must now be spent on trying to secure and retain income, both from paid work and welfare benefits, means many precariat citizens are busy and chronically exhausted (Cotterell et al., 2017; Grahame & Marston, 2012). The creation of competition within workplaces (to try and secure enough rostered work hours when others in a workplace are also seeking more work hours) discourages the development of solidarity with colleagues. These changes in the organisation of work are also amplified by political reforms in Aotearoa New Zealand since the 1980s that have drastically decreased participation in trade unions, and the collective identities that trade union participation facilitated (Bryson, 2008).

Whilst the nature of contemporary employment and welfare leaves the precariat with less time and fewer opportunities for collective organisation in the workplace and outside of paid work, neoliberalisation has also socialised citizens to view their insecurity as an individual failure (Allen, 2013; Layton, 2014). Working-class identity has been a source of pride and positive identity (McKenzie, 2013; Reay, 2013). There is no comparable sense of pride and shared identity associated with being a member of the precariat. The precariat have frequently lost a sense of occupational identity, and are subject to shaming processes in their encounters with the welfare system and other services (Beddoe, 2014; Jensen & Tyler, 2015). Neoliberalism favours an emphasis on individual aspiration as the route out of poverty, despite the structural drivers that the precariat are subject to (Bauman, 2011; Cooper & Whyte, 2017). Media portrayals of people on low incomes often reinforce individualised explanations for poverty, reinforcing the shame that members of the precariat can suffer when they cannot make ends meet (Garthwaite, 2016b; Hall & O'shea, 2013). The individualised nature of people's struggles and the need to compete with others on insecure incomes therefore shapes the experience of precarity, isolating people's troubles and creating anxiety (Neilson, 2015; Wilson & Yochim, 2017).

The other issue that is discouraging a collective response to insecurity in the present period is the expansion of insecurity across broader social groups. The growth of fixed term contracts and fewer employment rights is prevalent, but not exclusively confined, within the low-paid sectors of the labour market. Job insecurity, and an accompanying requirement to constantly seek and create individual opportunities in order to maintain income, is now also increasingly a feature of previously secure occupations. Although people on higher incomes can weather insecurity more readily than those on the breadline, the pervasive sense of anxiety generated by precarity is becoming discernible amongst higher income citizens (Layton, 2010; Livingstone, 2015; Standing, 2014). The problem with this shift into a diffused sense of insecurity across social and income groups is that, rather than increase empathy for the worst off in society, fear of economic insecurity keeps people separated into their own private struggles to maintain income (hooks, 2000). If more well-resourced citizens are experiencing themselves as being subject to economic threat, and requiring more resources to maintain their ascribed life styles, then the position of those worse off attracts less sympathy and makes increasing taxation undesirable. The sense of insecurity that prevails in neoliberal contexts does not tend to draw social groups together, rather it is entrenching divisions as the perceived competition for resources intensifies (Humpage & Baillie, 2016).

A fourth important feature of life for members of the precariat is the way in which these labour market transformations have been framed as a form of desired 'flexibility' for the workers in question. The unpredictable nature of available work and income that the precariat are asked to assimilate to, provides a market advantage for employers, businesses and corporations. Yet, irregularity of hours and wages is often presented as offering a 'work-life balance' configuration for those who need to balance care and work responsibilities. In contrast to the 1930s, women are now expected to provide waged labour, yet they primarily retain responsibility for domestic and caring roles (Cummins & Blum, 2015; Sørensen, 2017; Wilson & Yochim, 2017). The conundrums of managing parenting and other caring responsibilities while attaining sufficient income have become additional individualised challenges that perpetuate stress for precariat citizens (Broussard et al., 2012; Grahame & Marston, 2012; Lister, 2006; Pollack & Caragata, 2010). Standing argues that the current economic and political model cannot resolve these dilemmas in people's lives because it disregards unpaid work and cannot incorporate the breadth of activities that human beings undertake to contribute to, and participate in, families and communities (Standing, 2014, p. 12).

In a final and related point, the experience of precarity must be understood as a practical reality, reflected in people's everyday lifeworlds. The precariat, in Aotearoa New Zealand, as in many other countries, now experience daily lives that are saturated with instability and insecurity (Chan, 2013). The encroachment of precarity into everyday life reflects the traps that operate to keep people confined to insecurity, and consequently, poverty (Boston & Chapple, 2015; Rashbrooke, 2015). The examination of precarity in this research therefore incorporates the perspective of those experiencing these daily realities of trying to get food on the table. Understanding what happens in the visible space of a shared classroom is part of the story of hungry school children. Another set of stories takes place within homes where scarcity must be managed, priorities must be determined, and social practices are woven within relationships.

In summary, this introduction chapter has established the rationale and context for researching the issue of responding to hungry children in New Zealand schools, using the exemplars of milk in schools in two historical periods. In the 1930s, the abrupt economic crisis of the Great Depression instigated concerns about children's needs in concert with concerns about families and communities experiencing hardship. In 2012, the specific issue of hungry children in schools had arisen as part of an erosion of prosperity for some groups. Increases in inequality and poverty, with their attendant food insecurity, from 1990, are indicative of the impacts of neoliberalism in Aotearoa New Zealand. Third Way inflected neoliberalism has been influential, including the tendency to refer to policies as 'child centred' in order to imply compassion to children. The structural focus afforded by including class in this research, particularly the recognition of deepening precarity, shifts the lens towards the broader context for why a focus on children as targets for compassion has become popular. Perhaps most importantly, the incongruence between targeting 'child poverty' (and government focus on 'welfare dependency') and the structural constraints of precarity become evident. By examining the exemplars of milk in schools in their contexts, this research can investigate how and why such incongruences between neoliberal common sense and increasing precarity shaped responses to hungry children in New Zealand schools during the period from 2000 to 2017. The following section provides a roadmap of how this thesis proceeds.

Roadmap of Thesis

This thesis introduction has explained how the research examines the context for the introduction of free school milk in 1937, in order to illuminate narratives of poverty,

citizenship, and responses to hunger that contextualise the re-introduction of free school milk in 2012/13. Understanding the ways in which school milk has operated both symbolically and materially in both periods reveals the role of these iconic schemes within New Zealand's social, political and historical narratives. In both periods, the provision of milk to school children was situated within political projects that shaped the relationship between citizens and the state.

Chapter Two explains the approach taken to achieve coherence between theory and methods by deploying narrative psychology. The underlying concept within this approach is that human beings create and sustain meaning primarily through stories (Brockmeier, 2009; Bruner, 1990). In the policy and media context, narratives, which characterise social problems and groups of citizens within dominant political framing, can operate as resources for people's understandings of issues such as poverty (Andrews, 2014). The concept of the 'past in the present' (Foucault, 1975/1991) is also a useful lens, incorporating a narrative approach to the multiple stories in the historical material, and their re-imaginings in the present. The addition of parents' accounts to the research also engages with narratives at the level of the self, considering how everyday lifeworlds are storied through wider processes and individual biography (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001). The research underlying this thesis draws on a broad range of material, representing three main areas of analysis, an historical analysis, contemporary media and political analysis and ethnographic interviews with parents feeding their families on low incomes. The range of empirical materials for analysis provides a richly textured account of the storied meanings being brought to interventions that respond to child hunger.

Chapter Three provides a historical overview of responses to poverty in the early settler history of Aotearoa New Zealand. The chapter begins with an analysis of the pre-Depression origins of the types of support available to citizens struggling to feed themselves during the Great Depression of 1929-1935. I examine concepts of the deserving and undeserving poor in the provision of aid, which white European settlers to Aotearoa New Zealand in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought with them from the 'Old World'. Māori social organisation and practices were stigmatised and undermined in the pursuit of economic opportunity prefaced on appropriation of land from Māori (Belich, 2001). I explore the notion of Aotearoa New Zealand as a land of plenty, and its attendant assumptions that only the lazy, feckless or irresponsible could ever go hungry. Consequently, the oral history material about the Great Depression details not only the daily suffering caused by poverty, but also the added burden of judgement and conditionality experienced by

those accessing help. The chapter investigates how people's accounts about living with poverty and increased contact with suffering and injustice across social classes contributed toward the political and moral momentum for social security and the welfare state.

Chapter Four introduces the milk scheme that began in 1937, as a symbolic expression of the nation's new commitment to child health, a commitment reinforced across multiple policy spheres (Mein Smith, 2003). The 2012/2013 milk in schools scheme is then similarly explored as a material and symbolic phenomenon. The context for the re-introduction of free milk in New Zealand schools is examined, including increasing levels of food insecurity. Yet, unlike during the 1930s the state has not played a central role and hence the 2012/2013 scheme represents a philanthropic corporate response. I examine a proliferation of additional initiatives for feeding children in New Zealand schools occurring around the time of the launch of Fonterra Milk for Schools. Such philanthropic activities in New Zealand schools are a focus for dominant narratives that characterise the problem of hunger in schools in distinctive ways that I analyse with reference to prevalent narrative tropes. Chapter Four highlights the historical and contemporary antecedents for the preoccupation with children in everyday discussions about, and responses to, poverty and deprivation. I argue that the focus on the poverty and feeding of children has become a morally charged micro-level response that largely circumvents consideration of the structural drivers of poverty.

While Chapter Four demonstrates public concerns about children in schools, Chapter Five instead considers the experiences of food insecurity from the perspective of those parenting amidst precarity. Four mothers offer their accounts of everyday life on a low income, providing contextualised descriptions of daily practices within their households. The narratives explored in this chapter are the result of a series of repeated, in-depth conversations and go-along interviews with the parents (Kusenbach, 2003). The participants reveal the ways in which precarity operates as a pervasive and relentless feature of contemporary life on a low income, across multiple settings. Through stories about insecure paid work, inadequate housing, health and education challenges, punitive welfare, parenting, and feeding the family, the participants narrate the ways in which they navigate precarity and try to reconcile their caring and economic roles. The contemporary accounts echo some of the experiences of poverty explored in the historical analysis, notably in relation to the deserving/undeserving status of mothers seeking support. In addition, hegemonic silences reinforce a dominant narrative of egalitarianism for New Zealand parents, despite rising economic and social inequalities. The participants recount their efforts to provide their

children with an idealised ‘Kiwi kid’ childhood that is often beyond their reach. Nevertheless, personal narratives that emphasise agency, resourcefulness and endurance are evident.

Chapter Six draws together the findings that are explored in chapters three, four and five. The discussion chapter considers the key elements of the preceding chapters as expressing an interwoven story about the role of free school milk in Aotearoa New Zealand. The free milk schemes in both periods are situated within particular social, political, economic, and historical moments, encapsulating understandings about poverty and hunger within each period. Narratives that emerge in media and policy spheres, as well as in the material objects associated with school milk and its role within the school environment, provide an opportunity to connect contemporary understandings of child hunger with the past. The possibilities for a deeper understanding of the present landscape of precarity are also enhanced by defamiliarising the present, particularly in light of the dominance of neoliberal conceptions of morally worthy citizenship (Fraser, 1997). The narratives of parents themselves provide a counterpoint to dominant narratives examined in media and policy materials. The three findings chapters are drawn together in the discussion to reflect on issues of conditionality, responsibility, blame, and morally worthy citizenship within narratives relating to hungry school children and their parents.

Chapter six concludes the thesis by arguing that Fonterra Milk for Schools draws on the nostalgia of the original free school milk scheme through powerful national narratives of collective care for child and family welfare and the bountiful products of a pastoral landscape as a colonial ‘kiwi’ birth-right. Despite nostalgic connotations, current approaches to providing food in schools, including school milk, sit within a landscape of conditional social, economic and welfare narratives that are narrowing the targets of care and compassion.

Chapter Two: Methods

The aim of the present research was to investigate the introduction in 1937 and the re-introduction in 2012/13 of free school milk as phenomena situated within social, historical and cultural processes. Milk in schools provides this research with an exemplar for exploring broader socio-political processes within two distinct historical periods. On one level, school milk operates as a localised, material practice within schools in Aotearoa New Zealand. Simultaneously, the provision of free school milk is layered with meanings that extend beyond the concept of milk as a pragmatic response to hunger in childhood. In particular, the re-introduction of milk in primary schools in 2013 demonstrates how the issue of hungry school children was being conceptualised and responded to. This research aimed to contextualise micro level practices taking place within schools by questioning wider structural processes that produce and reproduce material responses to food insecurity. It was not a goal to prove or disprove a specified hypothesis or to test a theory (Brinkmann, 2012). Instead of answering pre-determined questions, I undertook an analysis that sought to explore micro and macro processes in relation to hunger in schools and responses to hunger in schools.

This chapter outlines the research approach underpinning this thesis and the methods applied to investigating milk in schools as socio-historically and ideologically situated phenomena. First, I explain that the exemplar of milk in schools provides this research with a convergence point for establishing a ‘structure of feeling’ (Williams, 1961) around the issue of hungry school children. Next, I consider the type of knowledge engaged in within the thesis. A critical and relational approach to the social world provides the backdrop for the thesis, conceptualising people as interconnected, embedded within and reproducers of material and social relations (Gergen, 2006). I outline how this socially and relationally embedded concept of human beings extends to the role of the researcher and recognising my own position within the knowledge I produce. Having established the importance of human meaning making as a social process, readers are presented with an overview of the narrative approach taken and how narrative methods provide coherence across the three main elements of the research.

Next, the current chapter explains how a narrative approach can be actioned through ethnographically orientated research methods. I explain how ethnographic principles were applied in my research, despite not conducting a standard ethnography. An inductive and responsive research orientation is explained through reference to the concept of *bricolage* (Kincheloe, 2011). I describe how the interdisciplinary nature of my methodology is

underpinned by the flexibility of bricolage, which is an approach to qualitative inquiry that recognises the complexities of investigating the lived world and consequent value of the researcher deploying multidisciplinary concepts and methods. This chapter subsequently examines some of the specific issues relevant for the three main sections of the thesis: 1) the historical analysis; 2) contemporary media and policy analysis; and 3) participant case studies. I describe the different materials used in the research and key considerations for each type of material. In addition, ethical considerations for conducting the research are outlined.

The final section explains the analysis process and situates it within an ethnographic tradition. I outline why the ethnographic principle of overlapping stages of data collection and analysis contributed to deeper qualitative analysis. ‘Negative capability’ is explored as a useful concept for approaching qualitative materials, reflecting my commitment to qualitative methods that embrace complexity and contradictions (Thomson, 2014). Mapping techniques that I deployed during analysis demonstrate the core role of the researcher in ‘stitching together’ a coherent account from diverse materials (bricolage). This chapter concludes by acknowledging that there are tensions inherent in producing research that incorporates agency within contextualised accounts of the social and material world.

Structures of Feeling

This thesis conceptualises the introduction of free school milk in 1937 and its re-introduction in 2013 as exemplars for analysis of a ‘structure of feeling’ around hunger in schools (Williams, 1961). The concept of *structures of feeling*, originating within the work of cultural theorist, Raymond Williams (1961), expresses the tacit character of many culturally shared social understandings. Investigating the *structure of feeling* in this research recognises the role of emotions in shaping how and why people respond to the issue of hunger in schools. In addition, Williams’s reference to structure reflects his observation that culture is shaped by boundaries that are rooted in specific historical moments. The ways in which people respond to an issue such as hunger in schools, for example, is governed by prevailing conventions that are often unstated or slightly elusive. Despite connotations of stability that could be read into the label ‘structure’, Williams suggested that *structures of feeling* are mutable rather than rigid or deterministic (Matthews, 2001). Common-sense understandings encapsulated within the notion of *structure* are not fixed, rather the researcher must remain aware of the emergent and dynamic nature of the social world (Hall, 1993).

Williams argues that the boundaries around what is or is not said about a particular issue are relatively intangible and are often connected with affect rather than cognition.

William's use of the word *feeling* therefore contends that everyday life is imbued with feelings that can be highly influential, whether or not they are acknowledged (Sharma & Tygstrup, 2015, p. 1). In addition, establishing a *structure of feeling* around hunger in schools also required a commitment to "making the familiar fascinating" (Back, 2015, p. 821) or defamiliarisation. In the context of investigating school hunger, I drew from work that explores emotions as socially shared experiences (Ahmed, 2014; Berlant, 2014; Brennan, 2015).

Dominant psychological traditions tend to focus on affect as an individually-contained, personal experience. In contrast, this research explores how emotions form part of the ways in which political and social power are mobilised and maintained (Ahmed, 2014; Burford, 2015). The decisions well-resourced people make about poverty and deservedness, for example, are shaped and transmitted by socially mediated appeals to emotion. In addition, there are cultural and social boundaries around how emotions are expressed and whose emotions are privileged (hooks, 1989, p. 12; Jensen, 2010, p. 10). These boundaries have significant implications for people living with everyday hardship that contribute to them being excluded from decisions about their own lives (Friedli & Stearn, 2015; Frost & Hoggett, 2008).

A Critical and Relational Social Psychology

It is crucial for a qualitative researcher embarking on research of this kind to reflect on issues of epistemology (theory of knowledge) and ontology (the nature of being and reality) as well as relational ethics. This research characterises knowledge as socially constructed and therefore embedded within social milieu (Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 2006). A relativist ontology contends that there is no objective universal truth awaiting discovery and that individuals and groups create social realities through their own experiences of the world and when interacting with each other (Moon & Blackman, 2014). While acknowledging social constructionist understandings of 'reality', the ontological position taken in this research is not that of complete relativism. Interpreting the world is understood to be a subjective experience, which implies that multiple interpretations are possible. Nonetheless, this perceived reality is also viewed as being configured and reconfigured through historical, cultural and material processes. The structural impacts of historical processes create social entities (for example, institutions and catastrophes such as global warming) that can be defined as realities.

Further, boundaries may primarily arise as a product of social relations, but they can still control space and place and have material effects (Massey, 1995). Boundaries that are

constructed through the exercise of political and economic power are therefore not located solely within linguistic constructions or other modes of communication. Essentially, my research does not make claims to uncover objective truths that sit outside of human engagement with the world. Instead, this research examines how meanings are negotiated through people's interactions within the social world. Nevertheless, it is important ontologically to note that such interactions also take place within a world of material constraints and consequences, including the physical and health consequences of childhood deprivation.

A notable element of this research is the observation that people always establish meanings within socially mediated contexts (Gergen & Gergen, 2000). Our interpretations of the world reflect the interconnected nature of individuals and society, since our subjective meanings develop in relation to other people. Becoming a member of a society places us in relationships with others and meanings are created through our ongoing interactions. This interactive creation of meaning is not solely a process of language, as human beings are also embedded within material, embodied and cultural contexts (Brockmeier, 2009; Bruner, 1990; Gergen, 2006). As such, even the study of social phenomena as intersubjective and interconnected takes research beyond a focus on identifying and measuring specific social context characteristics for analysing human behaviour (Himmelweit & Gaskell, 1990). People and their practices are instead considered to be enmeshed within complex and ongoing social worlds, actively engaged in interaction with their material and social environments (Hodgetts et al., 2020). There are important implications for the research design of understanding human actions, policy, and media as part of a relational and interconnected social world.

The first objective of the methods in this research is to analyse meaning making as a social process that is historically and politically located. The language that becomes dominant in relation to social phenomena shapes how meanings are created and shared (Fairclough, 2001). Relatedly, this thesis draws on the insights of a tradition of interpretivism (Crotty, 1998). In taking an interpretive research stance, I sought to understand why particular meanings develop within particular settings. Social phenomena are analysed with the assumption that the meanings assigned to them are subjective and historically situated (Billig, 2018). This approach has been encapsulated within the observation that "there is no view from nowhere" (Nagel, 1989, cited in Hodgetts et al., 2020, p.141; see also Busch-Jensen & Schraube, 2019, p. 238). By accepting that knowledge is produced by people within specific contexts, the researcher can analyse people's interpretations of the world and produce

qualitative accounts that examine why some versions of knowledge become dominant while others are marginalised.

A second intention of the research approach adopted relates to an interconnected view of the social world and the understanding that research itself is also a social process. This project involves interpretation and the production of knowledge for specific purposes in accord with the epistemological standpoint that the researcher is not simply a detached objective observer, recording and making sense of accounts and artefacts produced by others. Consequently, I acknowledge that within the research process I am engaged in the work of socially constructing knowledge. Once again, the claim that there is “no view from nowhere” is fundamental. Acknowledging the subjective role of the researcher does not mean reneging on academic rigour. In fact, acknowledging one’s own role within knowledge production practices is a key component of scholarly rigour, requiring reflexivity and sensitivity (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Stanley, 2013, p. 11). Bruner (1990) asserts that culturally situated research “demands that we be conscious of how we come to our knowledge and as conscious as we can be about the values that lead us to our perspectives. It asks that we be accountable for how and what we know” (p.30). Accordingly, Bruner’s comment highlights the importance of understanding our own position within the research accounts we produce.

One example of where reflexivity is of importance is my experience as a Pākehā researcher writing about the lived experiences of Māori or studying Pākehā accounts of the Māori world within secondary sources. Respect, openness and taking the position of an apprentice were appropriate modes in my engagement with Māori world views and experiences. The apprentice position places the researcher as the learner within an interaction, foregrounding the lived experience and expertise of participants (Downey et al., 2015). The historical component of this research added additional depth to understanding the colonial legacy for Māori who live with precarity. I have been fortunate during my project to receive support from academics within the Māori Psychology Research Unit (MPRU) at The University of Waikato. The opportunity to learn about Māori perspectives on social issues has contributed to this research, in addition to contributing to my ongoing development as a scholar.

Reflecting on my own positionality was not confined to awareness of ethnicity, culture, and colonisation within my research. It was also relevant that I was conducting my research from a position of financial security that was in stark contrast to the precarity of the research participants. I would define my family of origin as middle class, although also active in left-wing political organisations. At the time of conducting the research for this thesis I

carried considerable unpaid care responsibilities, for three children and my ailing parent. Nevertheless, I was not rendered precarious or required to live in poverty while I undertook my caring roles. Consequently, whilst the conversations I had with participants in my research were enriched at times by our shared identity as mothers, my economically secure, middle-class experience of motherhood was very different to the lifeworlds of the participants. The accounts produced for this thesis were shaped by my familiarity with some aspects of the participants' (and also the historical interviewees') experiences. However, my interpretations were also shaped by the juxtaposition between the austerity of the participants' lifeworlds and the privileges within my own home. Macqueen & Patterson (2021) argue that reflexivity entails ongoing processes within qualitative research, by attending to multiple elements of the research, including ethical and interpretive implications of researcher positionality. It was therefore necessary to take account of the situated nature of my own assumptions and interpretations throughout the different stages of this research.

A third important concern for the methods used in this project is the question of the status of the knowledge that is produced in the research. I have described above the epistemological position taken in this research, which is an interpretivist orientation within the tradition of social constructionism. Accordingly, this research stands in contrast to what has come to be known as a positivist stance, that seeks to produce objective knowledge through modes of enquiry modelled on investigation in the physical sciences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 7). The scientific method, coming into early psychology via British empiricism, typically seeks to produce a generalizable theory or conclusion that can be applied across multiple settings and has predictive power. The goal of research within this mode of inquiry is sample-based generalisability, which relies on the ability to replicate findings, and often requires research settings within which variables can be controlled (Radley & Chamberlain, 2012). In contrast, my research begins from the proposition that the social world is inherently subjective, co-created and sustained through people's own interpretations and interactions. From this standpoint, it is not possible for the researcher to produce a truly objective account, since the researcher is also a part of the social world (Brinkmann, 2012). Rather than attempting to control variables, this research embraces complexity and context.

A case-based research tradition in social and community psychology provides an appropriate framework for situating the knowledge produced within my research. Qualitative research that focusses on exemplars allows the researcher to conduct detailed analysis that is grounded within a concrete case. The knowledge that is generated through analysis of

exemplars is based on specificity, rather than aggregated data that acquires power through large samples (Busch-Jensen & Schraube, 2019). The choice to use the exemplars of free school milk in two historical periods provided case studies for empirical analysis. These two exemplars each occur within specific conditions and are not conceptualised as being representative of the wider population. Rather, each case provides insights into processes that generate the specific case, which reflects, through interpretive processes of abstraction, how aspects of general phenomena can be explored at the local or micro level (Schraube & Højholt, 2019).

I also deployed a case-based approach towards participant interviews in terms of conducting in-depth study of the particularity of the lifeworlds being presented to me. An important feature of this type of research is the production of detailed accounts incorporating multiple characteristics that draw on existing literature and theory, to make sense of people's lived experiences (Dreier, 2019).

The issue of generalisation and how local experiences are intertwined with general processes has been deliberated by social psychologists for some time (Schraube & Højholt, 2019). Hodgetts and colleagues (2019) propose the use of theoretical, referential and empathic concepts of generalisability in relation to qualitative case-based research. Theoretical generalisation refers to linking the local specificity of an exemplar to the academic literature and bodies of broader knowledge. The concept of theoretical generalisability contends that although a case study is an in-depth study of a particular phenomenon, the particular can still contribute to a body of knowledge that generates theory (Flyvbjerg et al., 2012). Theoretical generalisation is applicable for the creation and refining of theoretical analysis, in contrast to research designed to generalise across populations (Radley & Chamberlain, 2012). Analysis begins from respecting the unique characteristics of a case and attending to its specificity (Flick, 2009, p. 134). Subsequently, a case study can contribute to testing theory or it can be analysed in relation to another case (Silverman, 2010, pp. 138-151). The attention to specificity and accepting some of the 'untidy' elements of the social world, including elements that do not verify pre-existing assumptions, contributes to robust theoretical development (Radley & Chamberlain, 2012).

Referential generalisability requires the researcher to situate the everyday experiences of participants within structural, macro level processes, moving the research account beyond individual experience (Hodgetts et al., 2019). Chapter Five in this thesis, exploring everyday experiences of precarity for low-income parents, follows this approach in terms of situating individual accounts within broader processes. In Chapter Five, I write about everyday

practices not solely in terms of individual and idiosyncratic lifeworlds, but instead link these everyday experiences with larger dynamics that contribute to the participants' precarity. The participants' stories are therefore explored as contextualised accounts, situated within constraints that are broader than personal biography (Back, 2015). Of particular importance to this research was the exploration of fine-grained detail about the daily impacts of social policies within participants' lives. I was able to examine some of the contradictions and inconsistencies between the stated aims of policies at the institutional level and how policies operate on the ground for the participants. Further, examining the ways in which participants in my study were required to accommodate the vagaries of institutional practices also revealed connections with political and transnational imperatives (Clarke & Newman, 1997, pp. 14-17).

The notion of empathic generalisability relates to the recognition of the humanity and dignity of marginalised people within research (Hodgetts et al., 2019). This research reflects commitment to including people's own knowledge and experiences within the research and facilitating societal dialogue that is inclusionary rather than perpetuating marginalisation. Generating empathic knowledge reflects an ethical commitment to research that does not simply reproduce existing power relations (Parker & Burman, 2008). Accepting the expertise that participants bring to their own lived experiences provides the researcher with an opportunity to listen and witness (Murray, 2000; Rappaport, 2000). The capacity to create action on poverty is facilitated by participatory engagement (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Nonetheless, methodologically, empathic knowledge also requires the researcher to accept limitations for our research because we can only ever view the lives of others as a form of snapshot. The full depth and complexity of people's experiences can never be definitively captured in a research account (Alexander, 2002).

The concepts of theoretical, referential and empathic generalisability provide a methodological framework that is congruent with the qualitative methods used and the knowledge produced for this thesis. In terms of conducting this research, the introduction to this thesis highlights the dynamics of food insecurity as a product of relationships between different social groups. The group relations that govern how children are fed in schools are relations undercut by class, ethnicity, history and material relations. It was therefore important to work within a psychological mode that is contextualised and relational, in contrast to work that focusses on individual responsibility and pathology (Rimke, 2016). Community and societal psychology are centrally concerned with the interconnected nature

of society and the concept of human beings as relational, social, embodied and emplaced (Brinkmann, 2012; Gergen, 2006; Howarth et al., 2013).

Studying people as embodied and embedded within relationships and the material world is facilitated by research within people's own environments, rather than research based within experimental conditions (Himmelweit & Gaskell, 1990). An early example of this type of community psychology is the Marienthal study conducted by Marie Jahoda and colleagues in the 1930s (Jahoda et al., 1933/1972). In order to research the psycho-social impacts of high rates of unemployment, Jahoda created an in-depth ethnographic project within the French village of Marienthal. Jahoda was open to many forms of data collection and data, arguing that "the methods emerged as a result of the concentration on the problem, and not for their own sake" (Jahoda, 1938, p. xv). The Marienthal study captured previously unrecorded aspects of unemployment as an individual and community experience, including findings about embodied practices and time that remain salient (Fryer, 1992). Jahoda's flexible approach to studying how people live, work and relate to each other has also provided a pathway for future psychology scholars to embrace insights from different disciplines.

The use of methods that contextualise people's experiences conserves complexity and crucially, can situate social phenomena within historical context. Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010) argue that psychologists need to be aware that social problems in the present have "deep historical roots" (p.26). The argument Nelson and Prilleltensky make is that addressing issues in the present is not possible without understanding what the historical antecedents are for those issues. Similarly, Foucault (1969) has been influential for advancing the role of history within the social sciences and his work has informed this research. Foucault's concept of conducting a history of the present entails unpacking social phenomena and tracing multiple elements backwards in order to illuminate how and why a phenomenon is constructed in particular ways in the present (Foucault, 1973/1994, 1975/1991). Consequently, the past is considered active within the present through the language and practices that are products of historical processes. Incorporating historical analysis therefore serves to highlight how shared assumptions about an issue like hunger in schools are shaped by their genealogy, and therefore cannot be understood without reference to their historical antecedents (Watson, 2000).

Situating social phenomena within a historical context also serves to defamiliarise the present for the researcher (Fraser, 1997). History provides a means for the researcher to step back from immersion within the present, and to instead attempt to view social phenomena from a different vantage point. Including an historical perspective avoids a tendency toward

‘presentism’ that arises in psychology and policy research when social issues are examined solely within their current context (Berridge, 2018; Rimke, 2016, p. 7). Continuities and contrasts between past and present can both provide clues for deeper understandings of the present. In the case of this research, the examination of how poverty and low-income parents were conceptualised in the past afforded insights into how people respond to food insecurity in the present period. The differences and continuities between the two periods demonstrate the dynamic and emergent nature of how social issues are responded to, revealing the mutability of taken-for-granted notions in the present. By emphasising the socially constructed nature of dominant assumptions about poverty, historical analysis thus forms part of a critical analysis of how poverty is responded to in the contemporary period.

Narrative Psychology

There are challenges in interdisciplinary research when seeking to create a coherent analysis, particularly when research material incorporates meaning making at macro and micro levels. It was therefore important to choose a theoretical framework that is flexible enough to accommodate multiple types of empirical material and create a consistent approach to analysis across different elements of the project. In order to address the role of subjective agency and meaning, without diverting from structural issues, I chose a narrative approach to the research. This approach is anchored in the observation that stories are fundamental to how human beings understand themselves and participate in the social world (Sarbin, 1986). Narratives shape cultural and social formations, but also occupy a central role in the construction of self (Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001).

Narratives are most simply defined as storied formats where both form and content are recognisable culturally as ‘making sense’ sequentially, rendering the world comprehensible (Parker, 2005). A narrative typically requires events to connect to each other consequentially and this ordering of incidents is understood as a plot. The plot of a narrative usually features a breach or rupture of some sort, requiring resolution (Bruner, 1990; Parker, 2005; Riessman, 2008; Salmon & Reissman, 2008). Stories are distinguished by these recognisable sequential and chronological conventions, in contrast to information that is organised in logical or categorical forms (Bruner, 1990). Researchers from diverse academic disciplines focus on features of storying within social life (Andrews et al., 2013; Kreiswirth, 2000; Peters & Besley, 2012). For example, narrative analysis can place a spotlight on the archetypal nature of shared stories and the typologies they deploy, or the role of plotlines in how we imagine our past and future selves (Andrews, 2014; Brockmeier, 2009).

In this thesis, adopting a narrative lens at each stage of the research process underscored the social functions of narratives. Narratives are not purely a stylistic organisation of words or visual images, rather narrating involves processes deployed in order to do things and make sense of social phenomenon. Stories are important because they have consequences (Plummer, 2016). Murray (2000) argues that to understand how narratives operate it is necessary to consider the purposes of narrative at different levels. In his work on illness narratives, for example, Murray highlights the key function of personal narratives for how human beings feel a sense of control and order, and in how they reconstitute identity. The origins, purpose and intended audience for a narrative can be stated or immediate but at other times the functions of a narrative are more opaque. In the context of this research, a narrative featured in a charity advertisement may have an overt function of eliciting compassion as a way of seeking material support. Similarly, narratives that sustain and reinvigorate the concept of Aotearoa New Zealand as a 'natural' pastureland can be deployed ostensibly in order to sell dairy products. Yet, at the same time, such pastoral representations can additionally function to reinforce historically situated stories about land and wealth in a colonised nation. Stories that situate dairy farming as natural are an example of how narratives are embedded within specific historical and cultural contexts that give them meaning (Beattie & Holmes, 2011).

A narrative approach accommodates social structures and personal agency because stories form the architecture for organising collective memories, institutional power, social participation and ultimately our own biographies (Jovchelovitch, 2012). Dominant narratives, explored in this thesis through a range of materials, can over time develop a status as being common-sense understandings, ritualised through mainstream media, policy and institutions (Couldry & Curran, 2003). Importantly, dominant narratives are not the sole narrative resources available to individuals. Rappaport (2000) highlights the interplay between personal stories, community/setting narratives and dominant cultural narratives. Community or setting narratives are those storied understandings that are shared among a group (Rappaport, 2000, p. 4). It is the weaving together of individual biographies, shared community stories and dominant cultural narratives that produces accounts of the social world. This interweaving of personal and collective stories means that, "understanding community narratives is a way to understand culture and context and its profound effects on individual lives" (Rappaport, 2000, p. 6). Individuals therefore encounter dominant narratives from the position of their own cultural context.

The process of understanding stories is a participatory enterprise because it entails interactions between shared symbolic resources or narratives, personal narratives, the storyteller, and also the audience (Rappaport, 2000). The reception of media narratives, for example is not a passive process, rather the stories offered are resources that communities and individuals respond to from their own position and experiences (Andrews, 2014, p. 97). Narratives are therefore co-constructed because they always develop in relation to an audience (Salmon & Reissman, 2008) and in relation to existing structures of feeling. Interaction between the story, storyteller and audience is equally important within narrative concepts of the self. The presentation of self within an interview with a participant reflects the context of the interaction, including its purpose and the personal characteristics of the interviewer. The narratives shared within the interview are ultimately a co-creation, because they are produced within the relational and dialogic features of the interview. Narratives are therefore present at different levels of social experience, but their meanings are not always stable or fixed. We are perpetually responding to public and personal narratives by drawing upon them, creating/re-creating them, and sometimes contesting them (Andrews, 2014).

The dialogical and socially constructed nature of narratives does not signify that all narratives hold equal status and authority. Power is deeply implicated in which stories become dominant. While communities and individuals may take up and inflect dominant stories, not all groups are equally placed in the creation and control of dominant narratives. In particular, low status and vulnerable groups in society hold little capacity to shape the ways in which they themselves are depicted (Couldry & Curran, 2003). Bourdieu (1991) established that dominant groups develop the means to maintain (and extend) their economic and social power through their ability to define and control how other groups are represented. Part of the way in which wealthy, high status groups maintain their position is through deployment of symbolic power, a concept used by Bourdieu (1984/2010) and developed by cultural theorists such as Hall (2001) and Couldry (2003) in relation to the media. Symbolic power operates as a form of domination embedded in the social relations between classes, reinforcing the social hierarchy in the ascribed value of different groups (Skeggs, 2013). Characterisations of lower income groups are thus predominantly controlled by those who are materially wealthier, but who also exercise symbolic power to maintain cultural ascendancy (Bourdieu, 1984/2010).

In light of the role of symbolic power in shaping the portrayal of low-income groups, this research foregrounds characterisation in the analysis of narratives. Characterisation in the context of narrative research refers to how an audience for a story is invited to infer qualities

from how a person and their actions are represented. Stories at the levels of media and policy often relate to moral positioning, which subsequently denotes the legitimacy of characters and their actions (Wagenaar, 2011). In terms of narrative form, the enactment of the plot frequently requires characters who behave in ways that are comprehensible within the plotline. In other words, the audience for a story has a culturally mediated expectation of how the characters will behave and what their behaviour means. Bruner (1990) describes this process of interpreting narratives and the characters within them as inherently moral in nature because stories are “always normative” (p.60). Although not *all* stories are normative, particularly idiomatic, personal accounts, it is the case that narratives often convey understandings of social expectations and form a strategy for humans to create a sense of order when something seems ambiguous (Ricoeur, 1979; Silverstone, 2007). Mainstream media and political narratives frequently offer characterisations and causal relationships that can provide explanatory power within their historical and cultural context (Phelan, 2014).

This section of the present chapter has emphasised that stories derive their meanings from their socio-cultural context, and that dominant narratives reflect the power or lack of power of different groups. Narrative research also enables the researcher to approach the experiences of participants through the ways in which the participants themselves organise and attribute meaning (Brockmeier, 2009; Bruner, 1990; Murray, 2003). Narrative interviews facilitate extended stories from participants that build the researcher’s understanding from the position of the participant (Kohler Riessman, 2000). The interviewer is aware of the social and cultural contours within which individual experiences are situated, but the participant’s story is from their biographically distinctive position (Couldry, 2010, p. 9). Foregrounding the participants’ priorities, guards against the researcher excluding or misrepresenting participants’ own ways of making their lives meaningful (Brockmeier, 2009). This opens up the possibility for research that makes sense of people’s real life experiences and is based on mutual respect.

Narrative as Method

A narrative approach does not entail the application of a codified set of techniques. Instead, narrative methods are notably flexible and can encompass a range of research materials, techniques and emphases (Bryman, 2012). Because narrative analysis seeks to research the ways that people create and share meaning, the organisation of information into stories in any form of text, visual images or interaction is potential data. The breadth of material that can constitute data, and the dynamic, multi-layered nature of how narratives function and

articulate the world do not lend themselves to a specific circumscribed research procedure (Riessman, 2008). Accordingly, I collected material relating to hungry school children and milk in schools from many sources, taking a flexible approach to collecting material for analysis. This section outlines the decisions I made about what to include or exclude while collecting materials for analysis.

In order to capture a breadth of meaning making and incorporate narratives at different levels, I approached the issue of hungry school children and responses addressing hunger in schools with an ethnographic orientation. Ethnographic research traditionally involves the immersion of a researcher within a defined social setting, collecting and analysing research material in the form of fieldwork (Taylor, 2001). An ethnographer often situates themselves within a setting for an extended period as either an observer or participant observer and strives to understand the experiences of people within that setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Immersion within the setting is important for tuning the researcher into material, social and cultural features (Back, 2015). The aim is often to capture as many features of the research setting as possible as ‘data’ and in so doing, to understand social practices from the perspective of the participants themselves. Central to this type of research is openness to the research environment and any features that emerge through deep engagement with people, objects and places. The use of ethnographic methods is particularly salient within community psychology because such methods prioritise research with participants in their own environments, rather than seeking an experimental condition abstracted from everyday contexts (Taylor, 2001).

The present research was not a traditional ethnographic study situated within a specific setting or community, such as those conducted more typically in the field of anthropology. Nonetheless, several aspects of an ethnographic orientation were drawn on in this research. Firstly, the ethnographic concept of ‘foreshadowed problems’ formed the starting point for beginning the research, rather than a hypothesis or research question (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). I initially observed mainstream media attention directed towards the return of school milk in 2013 and the accompanying stories about child poverty and hunger in schools. The ‘foreshadowed problem’ that became my focus was to explore how and why a particular response to child hunger that was deemed necessary following the Great Depression was again being rolled out in New Zealand schools in 2013. I began my investigation into the issue of free school milk by reading theoretical texts that would orientate the research and give shape to data collection and analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Delving into the academic literature deepened my critical thinking and

attuned the investigation to the political, cultural and social contours within which narratives about hungry school children were situated. When the focus of the research shifted to the materials for narrative analysis, I knew that ‘foreshadowed problems’ included issues of charity, responsibility, the roles of children, childhood and parents, precarity, and the shifting relations between citizens and the state. I did not use the categories identified to simply filter or code the narratives, since it was important to remain open to additional findings once I began analysis. I therefore generated categories and questions through literature review, but the emergence of categories also occurred throughout the research process (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2013).

A second feature of the research methods that aligns with an ethnographic orientation and narrative analysis was a focus on responsive methods, where collecting data and interpretation were not separate components. This feature provides an opportunity for the ethnographer to, “remain open to elements that cannot be codified at the time of the study” (Baszanger & Dodier, 1997, p. 8). The inductive orientation of ethnography means that a wide net is cast and that the emergence of important features of the data may not be apparent until analysis has progressed considerably (Flick, 2014, pp. 233-234). In conjunction with the ‘foreshadowed problems’ discussed above, this research worked in broad stages with different types of empirical materials. I did not delineate completely between collection and analysis. The historical material, for example was being read and analysed alongside an ongoing attention to contemporary media and policy. This flexible process does not mean that I took an entirely inductive approach, as the research had some grounding in the theoretical work prior to the empirical investigation. Nevertheless, the researcher in this model is engaged in a process of moving dynamically between collecting material and analysis, and the research material can consist of many different elements of the social world.

In practice, the methodological strategy for this research entailed remaining open to examining any material that came within my orbit pertaining to child poverty, hungry school children and milk or food in schools, for the duration of the research. An example from the historical analysis was that I came across Victorian-era books about travel whilst looking for historical first-person accounts of poverty and realised that the travel accounts contained noteworthy narratives about the colonial social world and how poverty was characterised. Another example of the extent of my research immersion relates to the many casual conversations I had with schoolteachers and parents who asked about my research in social settings. Casual conversations did not form material for analysis within this research, but such interactions alerted me to the ways in which hungry children had become a focus for

management within schools. Such informal conversations sensitised me to the recognition of milk in schools as a social practice, mediated by individuals within everyday settings, not fully bounded by corporate or school narratives. In addition, I obtained both the contemporary school milk carton and the glass bottle from the original 1937-1967 milk scheme and these material objects each reflect the narrative context for their production and distribution. The storied nature of these objects, and their function within the daily world of children who interacted with them, denote how milk in schools should be understood as both a symbolic and material practice.

Methods invoked thus far demonstrate a third feature of this research that is often associated with ethnographic methods. The role of the researcher as *bricoleur* is a concept that acknowledges the active role of the researcher in the research process. *Bricolage* refers to methods that incorporate innovation and improvisation as strategies within the research (Kincheloe, 2005). The ability of the researcher to adapt and bring different sets of theoretical tools to the research is central in this concept, since the social world is complex and unpredictable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). A bricoleur enters into the research context with a range of experiences, skills and engagement with theory, all of which provide a basis for interacting with the research context. The bricoleur is able to adapt to the research material as it evolves during the research process (Berry & Kincheloe, 2004). The methodological stance of bricoleur provided a model for an interdisciplinary form of investigation that allowed me to be responsive to highly varied research materials, for example, multiple types of text, political meetings, broadcast media items and qualitative interviews. In the role of bricoleur, I could draw on the insights of social policy analysis, sociology, critical education studies and history, alongside work in community and societal psychology.

Further, ethnographic research produces accounts of the social world that are descriptive and capture multiple elements of social phenomena. Back (2007) argues that part of an ethnographic researcher's purpose is to capture the richness of particular social worlds. Evoking everyday lifeworlds is not achieved purely through description. Instead, accounts of social life that are informed by theory, literature and analysis can deepen one's understanding of complex social and historical phenomena. This research, in seeking to establish a *structure of feeling*, discussed earlier within the current chapter, is designed to produce a contextualised and storied account of the social world that incorporates complexity. In weaving together historical, social and political context with everyday experiences of precarity, this research recognises writing as an important analytical tool. Ethnographers frequently focus on producing texts that incorporate multiple features of social phenomena,

positioning writing itself as a key research task (Alexander, 2002, p. 109; Geertz, 1988). The concept of the researcher as ‘quilt maker’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) is a helpful metaphor for the process. The concept of creating a quilt points to the active and reflexive role required of the researcher. Pulling together multiple elements into the creation of a coherent picture or narrative requires writing that can interpret and connect different types of research material. The craft of writing is therefore an important tool for connecting diverse elements of this research together while also preserving their particular textures.

The intent of this research was to include multiple voices and acknowledge and consider the dialectics between different versions of narratives relating to school hunger. Hence, the first consideration for selecting research materials was the necessity of including narratives produced for different purposes. Incorporating narratives produced and inflected for different audiences acknowledges that narratives are located within historically and culturally situated communities (Gergen & Gergen, 2000). Dominant narratives, encapsulated in mainstream media, policy and advertising concerning the re-introduction of free school milk and its purpose, formed the initial impetus for this research. Dominant narratives remained an important component of the analysis because of the key role such narratives play in shaping and sustaining how social issues are understood. Ultimately, dominant narratives have material impacts, including impacts on people’s health and capacity to flourish by enabling or constraining their everyday life situations (Parker, 2005). Equally, this research also involved reflecting on how dominant narratives are adapted and received at different levels.

Portrayals within media and political deliberations regarding people living with precarity and food insecurity are foundational in the development of responses to hunger in schools (Borden, 2021). This is because many well-resourced people in Aotearoa New Zealand do not directly interact with those who are struggling to afford food. More accurately, affluent people are frequently unaware that they may be interacting with people who are struggling to afford food. The stigma associated with food insecurity and poverty has often impelled families to keep quiet about their struggles (Garthwaite, 2016b; Graham, Hodgetts, et al., 2018). As a result, dominant narratives about food insecurity and poverty for social groups are largely constructed by people who are not subject to such circumstances. This is exacerbated by the tendency for conversations hosted in the public domain to be about, rather than with, those directly affected by food insecurity. Community level responses to school hunger therefore frequently reflect the preoccupations of dominant stories, including culturally dominant models of poverty amelioration. The extent to which dominant

stories are shaping community responses to hunger make it especially important to include perspectives of those with direct experience of food insecurity. Stories from individuals navigating austere circumstances expose the psychosocial and material impacts of dominant narratives, but also possibilities for agency that are not confined within the stigmatising terms of dominant narratives (Rappaport, 2000).

Three Categories of Empirical Materials

My research strategy incorporated narratives collected from three broad categories of material. First, the historical analysis incorporated narratives at the levels of dominant, community and individual stories. Second, an analysis of material from the contemporary period included media (print and broadcast), public relations and advertising, policy, political speeches and promotional material. Third, idiosyncratic personal stories from four participants who were parenting on low incomes were explored through multiple interviews with each participant. These interviews adopted a narrative orientation in terms of foregrounding participants' own extended stories as well as their thoughts about dominant narratives. Although the research created connections and coherence across multiple sets of materials through narrative methods, the different materials each presented some unique considerations within the research process.

The following table, Table 1, demonstrates the range and quantities of empirical materials that were collected for analysis. After Table 1, I discuss the implications of choosing and investigating each of the three main categories of empirical materials.

Table 1*The Range of Empirical Materials*

	Historical Materials	Media/Policy 2000-2018	Participant accounts
Oral history recordings (documentaries or interviews)	11		
Autobiographical and biographical texts	5		
Books written 1800s-1930s	9		
Letters to the Editor	7		
Radio broadcasts (interviews/speeches/news items)	3	20	
Newspaper articles	15	91	
Magazine articles/editorials	4	4	
Parliamentary debates	1	2	
Political parties: pamphlets/election material/manifestos	3	5	
Workers/grassroots organisations: pamphlets/promotional materials/websites	3	5	
Policy documents/reports/briefings		7	
Expert Advisory Committee reports		4	
NGOs, Corporates & partnerships: Advertising/promotional material/PR		30	
Political Meetings 2014 general election		5	
Online comment sections (below news items)		4	
Newspaper editorials or commentaries (opinion pieces)		12	
Blogs/Think tank online commentaries		8	
Press releases		6	
Television news/current affairs items		11	
Transcribed interviews			9
Go-Alongs (shopping trips)			3
Total Items	60	214	12

Category 1: Historical Analysis

The principal aim of the historical analysis was to contextualise and culturally situate contemporary responses to hunger by examining responses to hunger in the past.

Nonetheless, the ambitions for the historical analysis were more substantial than providing a descriptive context. The current chapter earlier argued that narratives about poverty and hunger in the contemporary period have a genealogy that positions them and shapes their role. The approach to history embodied in the concept of a genealogy is not to use history as an inert background. History is instead conceptualised as being alive within the present, continuously shaping and being shaped by contemporary events (Carabine, 2000; Watson, 2000). In light of this understanding, an historical investigation was pivotal for unpacking the present moment because the symbolic role of free school milk in Aotearoa New Zealand in the present is underwritten by the role of free school milk in 1937. In order to examine the role of the past in current school hunger narratives, the historical analysis required materials that would yield narratives produced for varied purposes at different levels of narrative.

The initial stage of the historical analysis comprised secondary readings to establish historical perspectives on social, economic and political developments. The level of dominant narratives was then explored through primary sources. Community level narratives were also identified within primary sources, for example pamphlets created by unemployed workers' unions during the 1930s that challenged the sitting government's policies. The level of everyday lifeworlds was primarily explored through archived oral history recordings, although some written first-person accounts were also included. Additional background material that was useful for the historical analysis was psychological literature on the psychosocial impacts of unemployment (Bakke, 1934; Feather, 1982; Fryer, 1986; Fryer & Stambe, 2014; Furnham, 2013).

Crucial to the historical analysis was continued awareness of the interpretive focus of this research. The focus for historical investigation was on people's socially constructed understandings, rather than seeking a definitive historical account. Narrative methods were applicable and effective in relation to historical material, since stories and the telling of stories are fundamental to the discipline of history (Hyvärinen et al., 2010). Further, narrative theory itself also recognises the importance of history in how we understand ourselves and interpret the world (Andrews, 2014). History is part of how we formulate the story of our present self because we try to understand the present with reference to the past. The process of constructing stories with reference to the past occurs at the level of individual biography, but also as a collective experience when histories become shared stories. The histories that

become authoritative typically reflect issues of symbolic power. As discussed earlier in this chapter, power is always evident in terms of whose stories become dominant. Despite the challenges of multiplicity, historians increasingly examine the past through a critical lens that attends to the contested and diverse nature of how we story the past, including the voices of those previously marginalised within dominant historical accounts (Anderson et al., 2015; Coleborne, 2015; Poovey, 1995).

The historical investigation for this research required an initial reading of multiple histories of Aotearoa New Zealand and New Zealand social policy (Belich, 2001; Cheyne et al., 2008; King, 2003; Labrum, 2009; McClure, 2013; Phillips, 2013; Roper, 2005; Tennant, 1989). Text-based historical materials provided narratives that reflected collective and culturally dominant understandings about poverty and responses to poverty. These secondary sources contained narratives about colonisation, the Great Depression and development of the welfare state. The stories that emerge in these texts are predominantly stories about a nation and its perceived place in the world. Of interest was the observation that histories of Aotearoa New Zealand were inflected by the periods in which they were written, demonstrating nuances of their own historical position. A narrative approach acknowledges that the past is not static, but changes in relation to shifts within the present (Phoenix, 2013). Historical accounts are thus always produced from the position of the present day, and this has important implications for the accounts we produce (Parker, 2005).

The storying of the welfare state provides a core example in this research of the ongoing relationship between the past and the present in relation to key historical moments. The welfare state is subject to ongoing revision because of its political and symbolic import. The role of history in the creation and reproduction of nation states has been captured in the concept of 'the imagined community' (Anderson, 2006). Imagined communities are a form of collective (therefore social) memory that captures how we wish the past actualised. A sense of unity is evoked by claims to our past that cannot reflect the experiences of everyone, but functions to connect people to national identities (Billig, 1995).

The introduction of the welfare state has functioned at times to reinforce a nostalgic narrative about Aotearoa New Zealand being an optimal place for children (Labrum, 2009). It is also the case that, since its introduction, the welfare state has been subject to critiques from a variety of sectors. As feminist scholars have highlighted, the welfare state has played a role in reinforcing concepts of family that entrench ethnic and gender inequalities (Brookes, 2016; Lister, 2000; Nolan, 2007). More recently, neoliberal reformers have positioned welfare states as a symbol of inertia, failure or indolence (Clarke et al., 2000). Part of understanding

how the present inflects the past is reflected in the understanding that any ‘definitive’ account of the welfare state explored within this current research needs to remain open to further questions and contestation.

Although histories do have numerous and endless threads, any chronicle of history needs a beginning and an end in order to communicate a coherent account. One challenge in this thesis was the decision of how far to go back in tracing the historical derivations of the present. Reading secondary texts about the Great Depression and the ensuing development of the welfare state eventually pulled my investigation back to an earlier period. Responses to poverty during the Great Depression were the products of Victorian narratives that were themselves heirs of earlier European concepts. For pragmatic reasons, a decision had to be made to locate the history chapter of this thesis from the Victorian period. Yet, this particular starting point does reflect the crucial role of colonial settlement in the development of narratives about poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand. I made a decision to combine secondary readings, including critical social history texts with locating material that was written during the 1800s and early 1900s about Aotearoa New Zealand.

In addition to the secondary readings and books written from the 1800s until the 1920s, I also accessed primary sources from the period of the 1920s and 1930s. Library and archival searches yielded parliamentary debates and political pamphlets, autobiographies, a popular women’s magazine, ‘The Ladies’ Mirror’, and books written for children about Aotearoa New Zealand during the 1920s. The intention of looking at material, such as magazines and children’s texts, was to see whether topics such as poverty or hunger filtered into popular sources. The magazines, for example, did not address political topics, but these sources did demonstrate women’s engagement with the organisation and provision of charity. Online archives provided material from multiple newspapers that could be accessed by topics and dates. One unexpected feature within the newspaper searches were letters to the editor expressing people’s concerns about the Great Depression and the political management of poverty during the 1930s.

Oral histories provided individual stories about experiences during the Great Depression. I obtained the oral history material by investigating what forms of first-person accounts relating to poverty and hunger in the 1930s might be accessible through the national sound archives, Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision. With the assistance of the archivist, Sarah Johnston, I selected first-person accounts, predominantly interviews recorded for radio documentaries in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The availability of direct testimony of everyday experiences during the Great Depression was a key issue for the material that was

used for analysis. I was obviously confined to historical first-person accounts recorded for various purposes that were not directly comparable to the narrative interviews that I undertook in the present period.

Despite the fact that the archived oral histories were frozen moments from the past, I did not harvest these sources for discrete data points. Instead, I approached the oral histories as dialogically produced, remaining aware, when possible, of the contexts for the production of the accounts (Gergen, 2001). One example of this dialogical approach is referred to in Chapter three, where I include within an extract the comments that the interviewee directed to the interviewer. The interviewee appeals to the young man interviewing him to imagine what it would be like for him to be unable to forge a valued identity in life because of unemployment. The interview is therefore actively shaped by attempts by the person being interviewed to connect with the interviewer. The interviewee appeals to a shared youthful masculine social identity in order to foster greater understanding of his life situation. Another example of the situated nature of the knowledge presented in the oral histories was a comment within a 1960s interview with a man recorded as A. Nixon about his experiences during the Great Depression. During this interview, Nixon expresses shock and disbelief about the level of deprivation he saw that he had not seen before or since, making the comment, "There were actually beggars on the street!" (Radio New Zealand, 1965). Listening to this comment in 2015, momentarily reminded me that in the 1960s the idea of significant numbers of people begging on New Zealand streets was shocking, rather than a routine feature of city life as it is today. As this example demonstrates, a historical analysis can be a useful tool for defamiliarising that which can be taken-for-granted or is commonplace, in the present.

Another implication of using history recordings is the status of oral histories as memories, rather than experiences taking place at the time of the recordings. Oral historians have investigated the issue of the reliability of older people's memories through verification from secondary sources (Sussex et al., 2010). Elderly interviewees could reliably recall detail from events that happened many decades ago, even when memories formed in the present periods were less reliable. Events of high emotion in the distant past are recalled in greater detail than more neutral events (Christianson & Safer, 1996, p. 219). The deeply embodied nature of suffering during the Depression, including hunger, cold and illness, provides a painful impetus for memories. In addition, the experiences of shame described within the oral histories also stand out as vividly detailed narratives.

In terms of this research, the extent to which the oral histories reflect some kind of objective accuracy is less relevant than how people in the oral history recordings are creating narratives from what were sometimes traumatic experiences. Thomson (2013) argues that historians must consider oral histories as a form of dialogical composure. Composure takes place in the ways in which people construct their narratives in conjunction with the person they are speaking to, but also in relation to the social and historical context for producing or reproducing the narrative. For example, the concept of composure can connect with the previously discussed notion of ‘an imagined community’ (Anderson, 2006), by creating emphasis on particular features of the past within people’s accounts. Memories about a significant societal crisis, such as The Great Depression, are shaped by the ways in which the crisis is storied culturally. Memories, especially memories that relate to a time of crisis, are storied collectively, not solely as individual experiences (Green, 2011). Consequently, these culturally shared understandings of past events are the foundation on which people build their own narratives relating to important past events. Dominant cultural stories about past events are also a means by which people connect with each other’s experiences because dominant stories provide a framework for shared understandings (Gergen, 2001).

Category 2: Contemporary Media and Policy Analysis

This section explains the second category of empirical materials that contributed to the present study. Analysis of media and policy material was conducted from the perspective that media and policy formation are significantly intertwined in the contemporary context. Nonetheless, the relationship between policy formation and mainstream media depictions of social issues is interconnected, rather than deterministic or unidirectional (Borden, 2021). In Aotearoa New Zealand, legacy media, including broadcast, text and associated virtual news sites, remains implicated in the formation of government policies. Media do not create policy directly, rather media often reflects and amplifies a *structure of feeling* around social issues (Devereux & Power, 2019; Morrison, 2019). When media stories present an audience with troubling events we seek resolution in terms of understanding the problem and in questioning what is being done about the problem (Bacchi, 2009; Borden, 2021).

Political decisions that are made in relation to a problem depicted by media regularly reflect the extent to which such a problem is portrayed as a responsibility of the state (Phelan, 2014). Despite the amelioration that can be instigated by media attention to an issue, it is also the case that dominant political narratives shape the ways in which the media portrays such issues (Mooney, 2012; Morrison, 2019). Hence, the role of media in both reflecting and

developing policy responses is important, but political imperatives also determine the parameters around how social problems are portrayed (Couldry & Hepp, 2018).

In order to understand the ways in which a *structure of feeling* shapes contemporary responses to hunger within New Zealand schools, I examined dominant narratives in selected media and policy material from the 2000s. As stated earlier in this chapter, media sources provide an important conduit for narratives about the nature and degree of problems that people may not experience directly. Silverstone (2007) provides relevant insights into the moral role of the media. Everyday life confronts citizens with ambiguity and paradox, which are often experienced as threatening. The role of popular media is to exhibit contemporary crises (social, political, economic, technological, environmental) that prevail, but equally to provide a framework that structures the onslaught of knowledge into some form of order (Silverstone, 2007, p.113). A key role of media is to present to the audience stories about people and events, which we may never encounter first-hand and to render these distant people or events as comprehensible.

In order to investigate a *structure of feeling* around hunger in schools I conducted topic searches on the Stuff website. Stuff is the most popular online news site in Aotearoa New Zealand in terms of daily visits and incorporates items from the majority of regional newspapers as its partnership sources. The comments sections appearing below articles relating to feeding children in schools were also useful sites for exploring narrative understandings about hunger in schools. I also searched news material online by topic and located material from broadcast television, websites and magazines, for example, 'The New Zealand Geographic'. The searches were focussed on stories relating to milk in schools, hunger in schools, feeding children in schools, and child poverty. In addition, I skimmed print versions of The NZ Herald (the national newspaper with the highest subscriber numbers) and The Waikato Times (the principal regional daily newspaper for my geographical area) each day over a period of around 18 months to check for stories and advertisements relating to hunger in schools and responses to hunger in schools. During the same period I regularly listened to current affairs programmes on the national radio broadcaster, RNZ. I made notes and transcribed quotes from relevant interviews and news items broadcast on RNZ, for example interviews with charity organisers and politicians. Collecting stories about feeding children in schools, milk in schools, school hunger and child poverty from print, broadcast and online sources was accompanied by investigation into policies and policy releases that were frequently referenced within the media material. I therefore investigated policy developments in relation to hunger in schools during the period 2011-2018.

In twenty-first century, media has become much more pervasive in terms of the availability of news media on new technology platforms. Moreover, people's engagement occurs across multiple platforms that are not confined to specific places or devices, but permeate everyday life (Morrison, 2021). Media is defined widely here, signifying forms of mediated content and communication that circulate "accounts of the world" (Silverstone, 2007, p. 109). Silverstone refers to 'A woven fabric' of media and the everyday, reflecting rapidly expanding production and consumption of mediated content. Indeed, the process of integration between media platforms and everyday practices has become considerably more prevalent since Silverstone's study (Wilson & Yochim, 2017). In addition, popular entertainment genres such as "reality television" can function to perform and reinforce dominant narratives about class, gender and ethnicity (Jensen, 2014; Skeggs & Wood, 2011). Consequently, the dialogic and relational self is a self that is developing partly in a dialogue with these mediated sources of information about the world (Couldry, 2010, p. 8).

Dialogical features of media use were demonstrated by some readers in comment posts following stories about feeding children in schools, responding to media with accounts of their own experiences and assumptions. The comments sections also instigated comments between readers, particularly when readers disagreed vehemently about interpretation of the issues. Dialogue implies an exchange and interaction of different perspectives and the communication style demonstrated within the Stuff comments section was more accurately described as declarative. The tendency for online commentary to exhibit aggressive statements of opinion rather than facilitate constructive, open communication is well documented (Hsueh et al., 2015; Santana, 2012; Strandberg & Berg, 2013). Notably, for the purposes of exploring the narratives that shape responses to hunger in schools, the opinionated, even strident, statements that were common within comments sections provided insights. Comments from readers often demonstrated the moral interpretation they were bringing to the media stories, using media material as resources for their own narratives. The purpose of including the comments messages in my analysis was not to suggest that the vehemence of the comments was representative of a numerical dominance of particular opinions. Online comments on news items are generated by a specific sector of the New Zealand population and should be treated with caution as a discrete data set. My intention was to observe the ways in which stories about feeding children in schools were instigating recognisable narrative formations that were also observable across multiple sets of research material.

In the case of the policy analysis, I approached policy as a cultural product, partially negotiated through media spaces. Policy is presented to the public by people who understand that choices of language can impact on how policy direction is received by the populace (Fairclough, 2001; Wagenaar, 2011). Bacci (2009) highlights the crucial role of defining the problem that is to be addressed by a proposed or existing policy. Incorporating analysis of media and policy ultimately highlights how symbolic power operates across multiple settings to shape which citizens are socially valued. Nevertheless, it is important to note that despite the constitution and promotion of valued neoliberal versions of citizenship, audiences are not passive and respond from their own positions and experiences (Fiske, 1993).

A particular strength of Bacci's approach for my research is the capacity to include silences within the analysis (2009). The individuals and groups that were absent within media and policy material relating to hunger in schools and responses to hunger in schools were a vital component of understanding the narratives within the material. In the case of addressing hunger in schools, an absence of definitive government policy was evident. The silences within government policy were indicative of an ideological stance (Sue, 2015). Moreover, identifying silences within the research material alerted me to the invisibilisation of the parents of hungry children within some media and policy narratives. Silences provoked deeper investigation when dominant narratives required silences in order to constitute the problem of hungry school children in neoliberal terms. In addition, such silences within media and policy material were mirrored within the participant interviews about feeding families on low incomes. For example, participants initially emphasised morally responsible behaviours in their accounts (Skeggs, 1997). The social stigma associated with food insecurity discouraged participants from describing difficulties in providing sufficient food for adults within their households. Hence, participants were most comfortable describing their ability to provide food for their children, regardless of their own nutritional status.

In addition to policy texts and the media reporting of policy, my analysis of political responses incorporated material gathered during election campaigning for the 2014 general election. I attended face-to-face election campaign meetings of four participating political parties during the election campaign period. On two occasions, one in Hamilton and another in the nearby rural town of Cambridge, the meetings included the Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister (subsequently Prime Minister) and the Minister for Social Development, hosted by local MPs for the governing National party (which held power for the period of 2008-2017). In addition to the meetings held by the governing party, I attended meetings held by the leader of the opposition Labour party and meetings convened by The

Green party and New Zealand First (the latter two parties being the next proportionally represented elected parties during this period).

I transcribed as much as practicable from what was communicated in the meetings and made notes concerning my impressions of the experience, the people in the audience and the questions they asked. The note taking was important because the meetings were too difficult to audio-record effectively (ambient noise in the venues made recording untenable). My note-taking took a particular focus on comments politicians made relating to hungry school children and their parents, food insecurity, child poverty and the welfare system. I had interactions with people in attendance and spoke briefly with the Education Spokesperson for the Greens, the leader of The New Zealand First party and the Minister for Social Development. Detailed descriptions of the demographics of each political meeting are not provided in this thesis, since I am not claiming that the political meetings were representative samples of the population. Attendance at political meetings is only going to be appealing and available to some citizens (for example those not in paid work during the time of the meetings and those with the time and interest in politics). Nonetheless, politicians expend considerable time and energy on these face-to-face meetings, suggesting they are important platforms for promulgating and rehearsing their election narratives.

I have included physical attendance at election meetings within my analysis of media and policy for several reasons. Firstly, I determined that attending meetings would result in qualitatively different political data from text sources, facilitating deeper engagement with political narratives. Political speeches provided a different mode of communication for analysis. The meetings incorporated prepared speeches with a persuasive intent but also entailed a live public audience present, reacting in real time. Furthermore, the speeches I observed were followed by questions from the audience that could not be vetted or controlled by the politicians and therefore provided opportunities to witness responses that were less prepared than speeches or media briefs. I surmised that the majority of attendees, although not all attendees, at the election meetings were supporters of the hosting party. The language and nuance that politicians demonstrated at the election meetings was tailored to a predominantly receptive audience, although adaptation was required when the consensus was occasionally challenged by an individual.

There was a tension in the meetings between the hosts building consensus with the audience and the constant possibility for resistance in the form of challenging questions. An example of the concordance between the speakers and the audience I observed was enthusiastic applause and cheering from the majority of attendees when the Minister for

Social Development referred to her determination to take a tough stance with irresponsible parents. Nonetheless, I was also able to observe a challenge to the Minister's comments about parents when a distraught single mother in the audience subsequently described her struggles to attain training and employment opportunities within the income and childcare constraints that policies dictated. The speakers at the meetings were seeking to connect their political imperatives with those of the audience but this was not uniformly possible. Speakers' attempts to repair the discomfort of being challenged from the audience required deployment of narratives that maintained the speaker's political stance while acknowledging individual experiences.

The election meetings also provided narratives that were unambiguously political and therefore ideological in nature. Andrews (2014) argues for the symbolic importance of political speeches because the key task of political narratives is to construct material and narrative possibilities. In seeking consensus with the aims of the audience, the political speeches expressed common-sense boundaries for imagining the social world and what is possible. Attending the four meetings allowed me to identify areas of overlapping agreement between the four main political parties on some issues. From the point of view of establishing a *structure of feeling* about the issues relating to hunger in schools I was particularly interested in elements of consensus between the political parties. Nevertheless, I remained aware of resistance to dominant narratives that was expressed at the meetings by both politicians and audience members.

Category 3: Participants' Everyday Lifeworlds

In order to understand experiences of food insecurity for parents I undertook multiple in-depth interviews and go-along interviews with four parents feeding their families on low incomes. The decision to include narratives from people living with precarity was made on both ethical and academic grounds. It is not ethically tenable to produce academic texts regarding precarity and poverty without input from those people who live with precarity and poverty as everyday realities (Rappaport, 2000). Research *on*, rather than *with*, people who are subject to social stigma risks becoming complicit in further marginalisation (Parker, 2005). In addition to ethical motivations, including the lived experiences of people navigating precarity contributes to robust scholarship. The participant accounts provide fundamental knowledge for this thesis, demonstrating the value of listening to people whose everyday lifeworlds are shaped by social policies. Moreover, listening attentively to the participants' own experiences and understandings grounded the research within knowledge that was not

funnelled exclusively through my own research imperatives. In choosing an interview approach that foregrounded the participants' own stories I gained an additional set of perspectives that were each distinctive (Back, 2007).

An important consideration for conducting participant interviews with a narrative orientation was establishing research relationships with the participants that facilitated in-depth interviews. Recruitment for the interviews was achieved over a period of months through networking, rather than advertising. Participants who are parenting on low incomes and may experience social stigma in addition to the stresses of economic pressures are unlikely to respond to formal recruitment procedures. I was able to establish connections with the four mothers who participated in my research via other contacts who knew them. A level of trust was therefore established through the contacts, who initially vouched for my trustworthiness. The participants were invited to participate on the basis of self-identifying as being a parent or caregiver on a low income. Beyond this self-categorization, no restriction was made in selection on the basis of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, health or disability. The recruitment approach prioritised the agency of the participants and respect for their time. Participants were invited to contact me if they wished to participate in the research. When a participant contacted me, I met with them individually in their homes. The intention of this first meeting was to introduce myself, explain the research process and goals, and allow the participant to ask questions. At the conclusion of this first meeting, I left an information sheet and consent form with each participant (Appendices A and B). Several days after the initial meeting I contacted each participant and if they were happy to proceed with participating in the research, we arranged to undertake the first audio recorded interview at a time convenient to the participant.

After the first meeting, I conducted two interviews with each participant, each interview lasting approximately two hours. I brought a food treat, such as biscuits, to the interview, as an appropriate courtesy when visiting someone's home. In addition to the two recorded interviews with each participant, I had an additional coffee and follow up chat with one participant and took another participant out to a café for a hot pie on a cold day when her car broke down. I also accompanied two participants and a third participant's husband on food shopping excursions for their households. The interviews and shopping trips were audio recorded and then transcribed. In addition to transcribing the interviews I jotted down brief field notes to contextualise the interviews, usually afterwards. I was motivated to note my impressions from the research encounters by awareness of the limits inherent in verbatim voice recording. Back (2012) reminds researchers that a recording device alone does not

convey the socially alive scene in which an interview takes place. Technology provides a spoken record, but the researcher is present in the encounter and can listen, talk and feel in response to what the speaker is saying.

The first interview was semi-structured, broadly guided by topics formulated to ensure that I covered key points necessary for the research focus (Appendix C). In addition, I brought blank paper and pencils to the interview and invited the participant to sketch pictures, diagrams or maps relating to their food practices. An example of a sketch made by a participant in our first interview is below.

Figure 1

Example of Participant Week of Food Sketch



The intention of including the sketching was to facilitate communication and create a shared resource for our interaction (Salmon & Reissman, 2008). The discussions were designed to capture extended accounts in the participants' own words, for the purposes of narrative analysis. Accordingly, the interviews were conversational and informal, particularly by the second or third interaction. My role as a researcher was to remain open within the research context to the participants' own constructions of their experiences, the story-telling processes that rendered experiences meaningful to them (Riessman, 2008).

The participant interviews demonstrate the importance of engaging with experiences of the everyday for understanding the social world. The participants described everyday experiences of food insecurity as routine material and social practices. Nevertheless, close attentiveness to everyday material and social practices allows the researcher to observe ways in which complexities of class, history, culture and biography can find expression within everyday lifeworlds (Back, 2015). Seemingly mundane aspects of everyday life are the place where social processes unfold and find expression. The participant interviews were shaped by my orientation to study the everyday as a site of micro expression of macro processes (Flyvbjerg et al., 2012; Schraube & Højholt, 2015).

One of the ways that I sought to interrogate the everyday was through 'go-alongs' with three of the participants (Carpiano, 2009). The ethnographic method of accompanying participants on outings, the 'go-along,' can broaden the narrative focus by taking the participant into settings where they interact with the physical and social environment in dynamic ways that a sit-down interview does not allow (Kusenbach, 2003). In this case, I wanted the 'go-alongs' to capture strategies and reflections triggered by the activity of shopping for food, a routine practice that is woven into the broader themes of the thesis. The discussions and observations that took place on the 'go-alongs' were therefore unstructured by pre-prepared questions. The conversation addressed the dynamic context and activity of shopping as it unfolded. I accompanied participants as they negotiated food choices within an environment where they had tightly constrained budgets, children with them, and the possibility of their payment card being declined at the checkout. Consequently, the material and psychological processes that emerged during the 'go-alongs' provided different insights to the interviews conducted in the participants' homes.

The interviews, although ostensibly about food insecurity, demonstrated the central role of the self within participants' accounts. The perspective I took on the nature of the self within the interviews was congruent with a narrative orientation and the assertions outlined earlier in this chapter about the social and relational nature of human meaning making. 'The

self' in this thesis is discerned distinctly from locating self within an individual's fixed personality or identity (Gergen, 2006). Moreover, I also chose to be cautious of a tendency within discourse-based approaches to focus on a passive subject, positioned by discourse (Hall, 1997). Instead, this thesis deploys a social conception of self, the self as dialogic and interactional, constructed and re-constructed through narrative processes (Andrews, 2014; Gergen, 2001). In telling his or her story, the narrator is operating not only within the setting of dominant plot lines in society, but also within the immediate social context. Giving accounts of ourselves in everyday life (or in the context of an interview) takes place within a dialogue. The interviews and subsequent analysis of transcripts thus position the self in an ongoing process of creating social intelligibility. Understanding the self in the context of social intelligibility explained why the participants chose to spend considerable time on sharing their biographies with me in our first meeting. In telling me biographical stories the participants were engaging me with the selves they wanted to share, and testing the rapport between us.

The deepening rapport that built up over multiple interviews was a central element of the research approach. A co-constructed account emerged from the interactions between the participants and me. I transcribed each interview before I conducted a subsequent interview. The process of analysis was initiated because of the length of time required to immerse in the interview recordings in order to transcribe them. The transcribing of the first recorded interview with each participant created a list of follow up questions. I was able to bring questions into the second or third interviews that clarified points or invited reflection from the participant on particular narratives. Nonetheless, the participants' own reflections remained central to the conversation. The later interviews with each participant were typically more relaxed and contained more emotional statements, whether anger or sadness. Interestingly, more details about precise financial circumstances, such as levels of debt, also emerged in the last interviews. Reflection occurred between interviews for the participants. I sensed that participants became engaged in an ongoing story, and wanted to share developments with me in subsequent conversations. This feeling was evidenced by phone calls and follow up conversations that two participants initiated with me, in the form of updates on their circumstances (for example, appointments with case managers, employment searches, or housing difficulties) and even offering me recipes discussed during the interviews.

The interviews reflect the fact that participants' stories are socially embedded within relations of symbolic power that may position them in ways they choose to resist, or disavow (Cassiman, 2007). Dominant depictions of poverty can result in low-income people

distancing themselves from perceived less deserving others and emphasising moral worthiness in their own biographies. There is a tension within this thesis between acknowledging material and punitive impacts of neoliberalism and listening attentively to individuals who are attempting to construct viable selves within that punitive context. Back (2015) cautions that although as researchers we are aware of the social injustice and inequalities that constrain low-income people and must attend to them, “the cost is we too often look past or don’t listen to moments of the repair and hope in which a livable life is made possible” (p. 832). A narrative approach proved helpful for incorporating the participants’ own sense of agency, within the acknowledged constraints of material hardship.

Ethical Considerations

The research was reviewed and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology at the University of Waikato (protocol number 14:73). In addition, I conducted the research in accordance with the Code of Ethics of the New Zealand Psychological Society (2002). This code incorporates guidance for protecting participants from harm and ensuring informed consent, as well as cultural considerations. The code also emphasises the responsibility of the researcher to consider the impact of the research not only on the participants, but also its wider social implications. For example, I maintained care in my research with the ways in which those living with precarity are treated and portrayed.

The research focus was on parents on low incomes and their representation in media and policy. Within this group, Māori are over-represented, with a higher proportion of Māori children than children in other ethnic groups attending low-decile schools where food in schools programmes operate (Gordon, 2015). The legacy of exploitative research practices for Māori communities historically requires particular consideration for researchers of European descent. Narrative research methods prioritise participants’ own imperatives, allowing space for culturally situated understandings. I also sought advice in relation to interviewing Māori participants and presented my work at symposiums hosted by the Māori and Psychology Research Unit (MPRU) (<https://www.waikato.ac.nz/fass/research/centres-units/mpru>). Feedback and questions at MPRU symposiums were particularly helpful for sharpening my historical analysis. In addition, the symposiums provided a valuable setting for hearing about research and research methods that are steeped in Māori world views.

Avoiding exploitative models of engaging with participants is important. I therefore also considered the complex role of reciprocity in relation to my work with participants (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Tankel, et al., 2013). In addition to bringing a treat food to

interviews with me, I provided my participants with koha (a gift or donation), in the form of \$20 vouchers. This means that participants received \$60 in total as a reimbursement for participating in the research. This reimbursement or koha was appropriate in the context of researching people on low incomes, who have limited resources, and whose time is often undervalued. The vouchers offered to participants in this research were a token of appreciation and not problematic in terms of being an inducement. I did not inform people about the reimbursements during the recruitment phase. Participants entered into the research on their own terms since they were asked to contact me in order to proceed with the research. The initial meeting with a participant was where I explained the research and mentioned the reimbursement. In terms of building rapport and trust, it was important that I was honest and open with participants at this stage about all aspects of the research.

I sought informed consent from participants and allowed them time for questions and consideration prior to obtaining written consent. The participants were able to withdraw consent at any point in the research process. Pseudonyms were used to anonymise the material collected, when writing up the material, and in the thesis and any subsequent publications. Information which would allow for easy identification of a participant was removed to ensure anonymity. Any transcripts or notes taken during interviews or interactions with participants were kept securely in password protected files, or in the case of paper materials, in a locked filing cabinet at the university.

Another feature of the ethical orientation for this research was a commitment to disseminate the research into settings that could contribute towards making policy and practice more responsive to the needs of those experiencing food insecurity and poverty. I therefore contributed to an online cartoon resource, book chapter, online news article and newspaper article, all relating to food insecurity in Aotearoa New Zealand (Calder, 2017; Graham & Jackson, 2017; Jackson & Graham, 2017; Moorby, 2017). I co-presented with a colleague, Rebekah Graham, at a conference for cardiac rehabilitation medical staff at Waikato hospital. The presentation initiated discussions about how the hospital service could be more sensitive and responsive to patients and their families who are living with food insecurity and poverty. We subsequently attended the cardiac rehabilitation nursing team meeting at their invitation and I prepared a resource to assist the team with accessing food and support for patients in the community. By sharing the research findings beyond academic settings, I was able to situate this research within a broader ethical commitment to de-stigmatise food insecurity and build empathy for people experiencing food insecurity and poverty.

Analysis as Iterative Process

The analysis process, as previously indicated, was not a discrete phase, separate from collecting material. In keeping with the ethnographic orientation of the research procedure, analysis was integrated into collection and writing phases. An ethnographic study typically begins with a wide definition of what may be important for the analysis, moving in an inductive manner towards more refined findings (Flick, 2009, pp. 233-234). The ability to collect and analyse material from multiple sources in simultaneous or overlapping stages of the inquiry facilitated the ability to see connections across different types of material. Narratives that appeared within historical material were still active in my research process while I was conducting participant interviews, for example. The bricoleur position offered possibilities for analysing narrative characterisations relating to poverty, food insecurity and food in schools policies across various symbolic and social spaces.

In addition to overlapping phases of data collection and analysis, effort was made to retain openness to the unfolding stories emerging within the research materials. Thomson (2014) uses the literary concept of ‘negative capability’ to entreat qualitative researchers to slow down the process of drawing conclusions from data. Negative capability expresses a capacity to remain comfortable with uncertainty and draw more nuanced interpretations by embracing ambiguity (Bate, 1939). Thomson (2014, para 10) advocates restraint when determining what is important in the research material early in the analysis, suggesting that: “A focus on negative capability might also encourage a little scepticism about the processes that are used to force data into apparently resolute categories called themes and codes”. Taking the perspective of ‘negative capability’ allowed me to investigate the research material without ironing out complexity or inconsistency in order to fit into pre-determined categories. In the position of the bricoleur I was able to follow lines of inquiry and build up understanding of narratives within the material without recourse to coding. This research strategy created space to examine inconsistencies or contradictions without the temptation to ‘tidy up’ stories (Fiske, 1993).

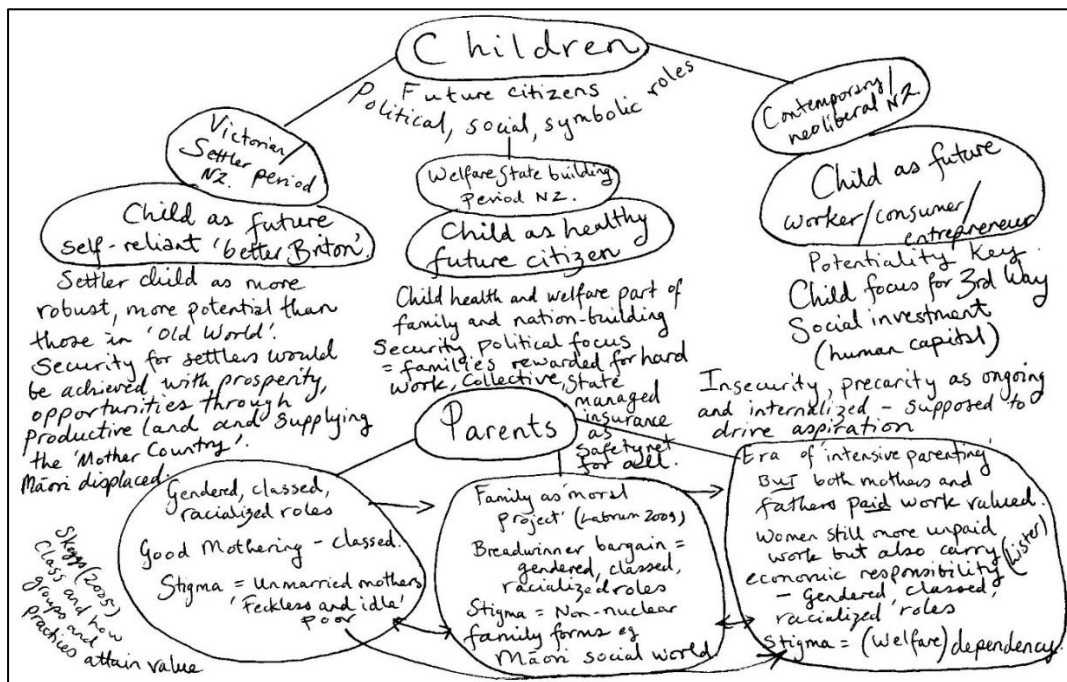
Throughout my analysis, I applied narrative analytical principles rather than rules (Patton, 2002). A period of reading and collecting historical and contemporary media and policy material was followed by participant interviews and transcribing the interviews. I returned to collecting and analysing further media and policy material and the academic literature. Re-engaging with the participant interview transcripts whilst writing the thesis chapter about the participants’ experiences instigated additional analysis, some of which

occurred because of familiarity with the other sets of empirical materials. The collection of research material and analysis was therefore not linear; rather, I conceived it as a gradual accretion of layers. Building familiarity and understanding of different sets of data created a textured story that was built through multiple types of empirical material in relationship with the academic literature. Broad narratives emerging across the material could then be explored within particular materials to establish how different contexts were shaping the dominant stories.

Initial analysis consisted of close reading and identifying patterns, both within and across data sets. The process of identifying narratives was facilitated by informal mind maps as an organising tool. The mind maps were created long hand and took the form of free flow sketches around particular themes, plotlines or characterisations. By arranging findings around specific ideas that I identified across multiple data sets I could begin to see the way narratives arose within different social formations. For example, I created mind maps and annotated diagrams exploring how class was being storied historically in material relating to hunger and then added reflections about how class was being expressed in the participants' talk and contemporary policy. The maps could incorporate greater detail or new insights as I deepened analysis through incorporating more material. Later in the process, once I was writing and had substantial familiarity with the research materials, I also used word tables to organise narratives and identify recurrent patterns. An example of my use of qualitative tables was the organisation of five key narrative tropes relating to feeding children in New Zealand schools. Tables reflected the more fine-grained detail afforded by deeper understanding of the data. Below is an example of a map I created whilst thinking about how children are characterised within dominant narratives in different periods.

Figure 2

Example of an Analytical Mindmap: Characterisations of Children



The concept of building up an account in layers was advantageous with regards to the participant interviews. Transcribing each interview before conducting the following interview was an effective strategy. By definition, transcription entailed listening attentively and therefore initiated analysis. I approached the second and subsequent interactions with participants from the position of having listened in a focussed way to our previous conversation. In practice, transcription was a recurring stimulus for thinking about emerging narratives in terms of what was meaningful for the participants. My familiarity with participants' stories, expedited during the process of transcription, supported more candid subsequent conversations about their circumstances. Narrative analysis of the participant material was thus aided by the interaction between conducting interviews and analysis, allowing me to follow up on emerging narratives (Andrews et al., 2013).

The participants were adept reporters on the particulars of their everyday practices and a key task for me was listening carefully across all of the interviews. Nevertheless, the analysis required me to think about everyday practices as articulations of policy, and beyond that, as situated within macro processes of history, culture and ideology. The use of abductive reasoning facilitated my analysis. Abduction refers to the interpretive process of a researcher using reasoning to make logical inferences as part of an inquiry (Brinkmann, 2012).

Abductive reasoning expanded my analysis beyond individual participant accounts to situate such accounts within larger narrative plotlines and socio-political processes. The analytical undertaking required attention to the particulars of the participants' accounts of their everyday activities and an abductive approach to discerning how such particulars emerged within broader systems (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018).

Situating the participant accounts within a wider context required an analytical strategy of moving between immersion in stories and stepping back to reflect on connections to macro level developments (Back, 2015). Busch- Jensen and Schraube (2019) argue for the application of "Zooming in and zooming out" in order to reconcile everyday lifeworlds with broad social processes. This approach acknowledges the contextual and situated nature of individual lives, preserving agency but cognisant of wider processes and power relations. By zooming in and zooming out, the researcher can move focus between individual biography and macro level processes without privileging either level because the micro and macro remain nested together. It is the researcher who moves perspective in order to trace the ways in which the macro level is expressed within micro level practices.

The concept of negative capability was also appropriate in relation to participants' accounts because the transcriptions reveal idiosyncratic contradictions, dilemmas and negotiations within the participants' talk. Silverman (2013) contends that qualitative research requires "patience, diligence, and caution" (p. 20) in order to avoid drawing premature conclusions. It was a key goal of my analysis to engage with tensions and contradictions that are often hidden due to moral pressure (Cassiman, 2007). One example was frequent deliberations about paid work hours and the cost to parenting that were revisited and re-negotiated within participants' talk, as if they were conversing with themselves rather than me. Such tensions and contradictions prompted me to examine more closely how the mothers were being positioned to constantly question the choices they were making, even when the possibilities for choice were in effect very limited.

To summarise, the analysis strategies reflected my commitment to creating a richly layered, interwoven picture of social phenomena by bringing together multiple types of narrative material. Each set of empirical materials contributes to the thesis as a whole. Narratives at the level of individual biography, communities, policy and mainstream media were analysed in concert with historical material. The incorporation of an historical analysis weaves the past within the findings, situating history as an active contribution to contemporary responses to hunger in schools. Moving between different levels of narrative as well as across different types of research material ensured that the objectives of a

contextualised and situated analysis were met. In other words, the three sets of material were analysed from a position of their relationship with each other, not as discrete sets. Thus, the analysis identifies narratives within particular types of empirical material but brings the materials into conversation with each other to construct a contextualised story.

This chapter has explained the methodology and methods I deployed in order to examine the phenomena of free school milk in Aotearoa New Zealand as a response to hunger in schools. The research aimed to contextualise and situate an everyday practice in schools within history, policy, media, and lived experiences of food insecurity. The two historical periods in which milk in schools was instituted provided exemplars for broader shifts in social and political responses to poverty. I drew on William's (1961) notion of a *structure of feeling* as a guiding principle. Deploying the concept of a *structure of feeling* draws the research towards recognising how hunger in schools is understood socially and why hunger in schools initiates particular responses. Moreover, *structures of feeling* are not static but dynamic and nuanced by different settings. The interdisciplinary nature of the thesis, as well as the diversity of research materials necessitated flexible and responsive methods.

I began this current chapter by laying out the foundations for the research, in terms of how knowledge and the social world are conceptualised within the research. I situate this thesis within a critical and relational psychological tradition, albeit inflected by an interdisciplinary approach. People and their practices are theorised as embedded within social and material relations, constructing their social worlds through connections with others. I did recognise whilst conducting this research that although meanings are a product of social interaction, there are institutional and material constraints that profoundly shape people's everyday lifeworlds. One of the implications for conducting the research from the perspective of social and relational selves is a requirement for researcher reflexivity. Rather than seeking to observe data from a position of hypothesised objectivity, I took an active and acknowledged role within my research. Another issue relating to the ontological orientation of the research was the status of knowledge produced for this thesis. I therefore outlined concepts of generalisability that are congruent with the qualitative approach taken within this thesis.

Next, this chapter explained the narrative approach and its applicability to the research. Building upon the critical and relational orientation for the research, narrative analysis provided coherence across different levels of research material. The importance of stories for human meaning making is reinforced at every stage of the research process,

informing data collection, analysis and writing. I describe how a narrative approach can be applied at different levels of social production, from dominant policy representations to the self as a storied being. Narrative methods are non-prescriptive and I describe the choice of ethnographic techniques that I drew on in order to collect research materials. The first decision reflecting an ethnographic orientation was shaping the investigation with ‘foreshadowed problems’, rather than beginning with a hypothesis. Ethnography also provided an inductive style of research, encompassing collection of a broad range of material and immersive techniques. My own role as bricoleur, an active agent within the research, is highlighted as an important concept within the ethnographic methods. Bricolage proved particularly salient for an interdisciplinary project, allowing the researcher to draw insights from multiple academic disciplines, as well as creatively combine such insights.

This current chapter subsequently provided an outline of each of the three main elements of the thesis, comprising an historical analysis, contemporary media and policy analysis, and interviews with participants. Each of the three parts of the investigation accessed different types of empirical material. Some of the pragmatic and conceptual implications of investigating different types of empirical materials are described. This part of the methods chapter demonstrates that although each type of research material has distinctive features, I retained a focus on narrative analysis. It was also important to consider the diverse research materials as socially produced, both in terms of their immediate dialogical, interactive features, as well as the wider social, cultural and political contexts for their production.

The final part of this methods chapter outlines the analysis process. In keeping with ethnographic methods, analysis is integrated within data collection stages. Central to the analysis process was a continued commitment to the role of bricoleur. The notion of negative capability guided my analysis towards a measured and cautious strategy in relation to drawing conclusions from the findings. Working across different data sets and using mind maps are described as valuable tools for identifying key narratives. The decision not to employ coding techniques commonly used in qualitative research enabled a more expansive orientation to the emerging findings. I describe how taking an approach of gradually accruing layers of understanding without seeking to tidy up the narratives provided me with a more comprehensive account. The resulting thesis reflects the deeply contextualised approach encapsulated within the analysis technique. Each part of the thesis acknowledges the distinctive character of the empirical materials that contributed to it, yet the relationships between the materials is woven through the thesis.

Chapter Three: “Hot Pies for Good Work”: The 1930s and Conditionality as Everyday Practice.

This thesis focuses on two points in history when responding to child hunger came to the fore in Aotearoa New Zealand, the 1930s and the period from 2012 to 2018, exemplified in the case of school milk in both periods. This chapter considers the impetus for New Zealand’s first national free school milk scheme. The policy to provide free milk in schools, initiated in 1937, reflected the widespread hardships endured during the Great Depression years (1929-1935). In order to explain the circumstances which led up to the introduction of school milk, I examine narratives that shaped New Zealand responses to poverty in the early twentieth century.

The first section outlines ideas and debates about managing poverty that were imported to Aotearoa New Zealand by colonial settlers. These ideas had emerged in Victorian Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Class, gender and cultural assumptions that shaped the provision of charity for those unable to support themselves are important themes. Narratives emphasising the growing threat from urban slum populations, and notions of the deserving and undeserving poor were a feature of Victorian Britain.

The second section explores ways in which British narratives were nuanced within the colonial setting of Aotearoa New Zealand. Public assumptions about poverty were shaped by attachment to colonial ideals of a land of plenty, and self-reliance as a venerated national characteristic. Blame was located within citizens’ own failure to display sufficient moral worth, for example, through hard work or appropriate parenting. Aotearoa New Zealand was constructed as a place where land would provide economic ‘independence’ for settlers prepared to work hard. Yet many citizens were unable to capitalise from working the land. Additionally, the concepts of ‘independence’ that were deployed during the Victorian period served to delegitimise Māori social structures and collective practices that had sustained the indigenous people prior to European settlement. Settlers’ attachment to ideals of self-reliance often led to characterisations of those unable to support themselves as either lazy, or the victim of someone else’s laziness. The settler context therefore contributed to the establishment of a minimal safety net for citizens as the nation entered the Great Depression in 1929.

The third section draws from first-person accounts of life during the Great Depression in order to illuminate ways in which experiences of poverty were material, physical, and emotional. The accounts speak to a loss of identity and self-determination, as the ability to care for objects, homes and bodies became severely compromised. Memories of objects and

practices from this period become imbued with emotional meanings, re-connecting the narrators to their deprivation across time. I demonstrate that such experiences can also become ongoing, embodied effects, with particular reference to the example of tooth decay for those living with poverty.

The fourth section investigates the ways in which relief sustenance schemes and charity encounters were experienced by those recounting their memories of the Great Depression. The harms of poverty itself were amplified through interactions that placed people in the role of supplicant (Simpson, 1974). Conditionality and the judgements applied by those providing resources became a daily trial for children and adults. Different modes of charity provision, as well as ad hoc informal help (for example in schools) and government relief schemes were implicated in people's distress. I explore the role of queuing in these processes as an everyday endurance experience. I argue that the queues could operate as sites of both shame and solidarity, confronting those within and outside of the queue with the scale of need. Settings such as queues may have contributed to greater empathy and responsibility for others. In the fifth section of this chapter, the concept of interwoven lives is deployed to further interrogate the ways in which experiences during the Depression facilitated understanding of the lives of fellow citizens.

The chapter concludes by highlighting the changing stories about poverty that contributed to the election of the new Labour government in 1935. Victorian notions of blame towards individuals deemed responsible for their own poverty had moved out of favour and structural causes of poverty were evident. This resulted in a political challenge to the hegemonic norms that framed poverty and insecurity through Victorian concepts of managing 'the poor' as a class of dysfunctional 'others' (Katz, 2013, p. 1). Understandings had shifted for those who had experienced the brutal bad luck of unemployment, but also for some people who had witnessed destitution at close quarters. Rejection of the power dynamics inherent in charity and relief interactions created space for developing state-led approaches to ensuring greater security for citizens.

Victorian Settlers: Charity and Moral Worth from the 'Old World'

Early European settlers in Aotearoa New Zealand had expectations that their new environment would present opportunities for greater independence and prosperity than the 'old world' could provide (Belich, 2001). Nevertheless, the settlers, predominantly from the British Isles, responded to their new setting by deploying some of their established practices and beliefs (King, 2003, p. 175). Debates, preoccupations and solutions developing in the British context

formed the backdrop for social expectations in the settlement. It is therefore helpful to investigate relevant narratives from Britain, in order to understand how New Zealand settlers responded to poverty. Accordingly, this section provides a brief overview of responses to poverty arising in Britain, particularly during the Victorian period.

Historians have highlighted settlers' distaste for the Poor Laws, which were the means by which England and Wales had sought to manage their growing population of urban poor (Belgrave, 2004; Cheyne et al., 2008; Tennant, 2001; Thomson, 1998). The 'Old Poor Law' in England and Wales dated from the 1500s, and was aimed at compelling local parishes to collect and distribute alms for the poor (Seabrook, 2013, p. 46). The Poor Law tended to reinforce and entrench distinctions between the deserving and undeserving poor because help was administered as the parishes saw fit. The approach taken at parish level was embodied in the concept of "God's poor and the Devil's poor", reflecting a distinction between those deemed innocent of culpability for their poverty, and those deemed idle, drunken and immoral (Seabrook, 2013, p. 53).

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 (known as 'The New Poor Law') reflected the findings of a year-long Royal Commission that investigated poverty and the operation of the existing Poor Law. The Commission emphasised the need to regulate and tighten entitlements to help, in order to contain the growing spectre of 'dependent poor' in urban settings (Platt, 2005). The provision of 'hand outs' was viewed as degrading the dignity and work ethic of the poor (Dunkley, 1981, p. 125). The 'New Poor Law' was an important mechanism by which the work ethic of the labouring classes was to be reinforced, by emphasising the punitive force and low provision offered by the alternative: the workhouse (Crocker, 2014).

The 1832 Royal Commission into the Operation of the Poor Laws reflected an intense focus on the urban poor in Britain during the eighteenth hundreds, evidenced by the many surveys undertaken of poverty and urban slums (Chadwick, 1842; Engels, 1845; Rathbone, 1867; Rowntree, 1901). Everyday life in the slums represented a world that was geographically nearby, yet paradoxically unfamiliar for wealthy people. Visiting 'the poor' became a fashionable cause, possibly driven by curiosity and prurience as much as compassion (Koven, 2006). Mort (2000) characterises the nineteenth-century middle- and upper-class preoccupation with the urban poor as "moral environmentalism" (Mort, 2000, p. 13). The term refers to the ways in which poverty and immorality were intrinsically linked, but also how poverty came to be constructed within a model of contagion. The growth of disease within urban slums was constructed as evidence of physical and moral decay, which

could quickly contaminate beyond the morally deficient poor from whom it was seen to emanate. Female sexuality and immorality, in particular, formed a platform for marking the poor out as a threat to health and decency (Carabine, 2001; Finch, 1993; Poovey, 1995).

Marking out women living in poverty as potential moral and physical threats provided a contrast to the purity embodied in middle and upper-class womanhood (Hilton, 2017). In Britain, classed notions of the family in the face of industrialisation and social change contributed to a focus on mothers and their role in shaping children (Finch, 1993). The ability to display valued feminine gentility and to transmit acceptable behaviours and skills within the family were important for maintaining the middle-class position. Interpretations of the behaviour of working-class women and children were shaped around concepts of 'respectable' and 'non-respectable' behaviours (Gunn, 2005). Childhood, as well as parenting practices, were thus class differentiated categories (Thane, 1981). The wealthy could keep their children in education and instil social and cultural advantages. Working-class families still needed their children in paid work as early as possible (Hendrick, 2015). Children who needed to contribute economically to their families were defined as prematurely losing their innocence, rendering them 'non-respectable'. The lowest category of 'the poor' were those whose material circumstances rendered them unable to meet their children's basic needs and were sometimes portrayed as irredeemably choosing to forgo proper family caring (Finch, 1993; Hilton, 2017).

The role of women in the education and formation of future generations made them a focus of charitable attention (Gunn, 2005). Women occupied increasingly central roles in the moral territory of charity, both as recipients and providers of philanthropy. In the British context, sanitary reform and a focus on pollution and hygiene were shaping the charitable work of middle- and upper-class women in slums. Charitable work in the slums reflected the moral environmentalism of the time and often sought to change practices within women's homes which were deemed unhealthy and unwholesome (Mort, 2000). Bashford (1998) identifies the imposition of middle-class 'modes of morality' as a key feature of women's charity roles: "The significance of both the domestic and the moral dimensions of sanitary reform meant that middle- and upper-class women located themselves in the discourse with considerable authority, an authority also dependent on their position within philanthropic culture" (Bashford, 1998, p. 2). Acts of charity were defined as appropriately feminine, when conducted in approved ways.

An example of how charity was characterized as a feminine virtue is illustrated within the writings of The Reverend Joseph Townsend (1739-1816), who was a clergyman,

physician and prominent critic of organised poor relief. The following description from The Reverend Joseph Townsend's 1786 treatise is quoted by later Poor Law reformers and indicates how women were endowed with a presumed natural inclination to relieve suffering:

...nor in nature can anything be more beautiful than the mild complacency of benevolence, hastening to the humble cottage to relieve the wants of industry and virtue, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and to sooth the sorrows of the widow with her tender orphans; nothing can be more pleasing, unless it be their sparkling eyes, their bursting tears, and their uplifted hands, the artless expressions of unfeigned gratitude for unexpected favours. (Webb et al., 1927/1963, p. 17)

The gender of both the giver of charity, and the recipient, is clearly female in this emotive plea to promote charitable giving as a preferred method of relief. The relief of poverty through charitable giving is deified, in contrast to efforts designed to prevent or resolve poverty. The quote above demonstrates how significant objections to the statutory relief of poverty were being promoted by religiously motivated clergy and laypeople in debates about reforming The Poor Law (Webb et al., 1927/1963). The view that such commentators expressed was one of the 'natural order' of Christian almsgiving, whereby charity, and individual acts of kindness to the poor elevated both the giver and receiver of help. In any case, charity was often the favoured response from the wealthy, allowing them to display care but not disrupting the structural advantages that they enjoyed (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017, p. 28).

Although charity and philanthropy were widely viewed as the most appropriate responses to poverty, there were also groups who questioned their effectiveness. It is important to acknowledge that the slums were a focus for those seeking political changes, not solely the charitably inclined (Ross, 2007, p. 5). Alternative narratives were developing, as reformers sought to understand and improve conditions within the expanding urban slums. Groups such as the Fabians, for example, promoted political reform and the need for fairer wages. The Fabian Society was founded in London in 1884, in order to advocate for a measured and gradual implementation of Socialist policies that would lead Britain towards greater economic and social justice (Murphy, 1947). Among other measures, Fabians campaigned for a minimum wage and universal healthcare, and supported the aims of the suffragette movement, which was seeking voting rights for women. Fabian societies

expanded into many countries and in Britain, The Fabian Society was a central influence upon the formation of the Labour party in 1900 (McBriar, 1966).

New Zealand: Poverty and Moral Worth in a Land of Plenty

The attitudes and debates occurring in Britain during the period of intensive settlement by Britons in Aotearoa New Zealand did not result in wholesale transplantation of policies or practices. Ideas about the appropriate management of poverty were contested and there was transnational exchange of ideas (Cheyne et al., 2008). Visiting ‘experts’, such as the prominent Fabian campaigners, Beatrice and Sidney Webb in 1898, were drawn to the utopian possibilities that the colony could represent (Webb & Webb, 1959). The ideas from these ‘experts’ were not always enthusiastically received. For example, in 1899, the management of juvenile delinquency and ‘pauper children’ attracted a high-profile British inspector, F. W. Pennefather (1900) to examine the issue in Aotearoa New Zealand. Pennefather advocates for a clear distinction between children who are merely from poor families, and those who are a criminal class, providing examples of the different ways that children thus defined are being classified in Britain (Pennefather, 1900). The idea espoused was that ‘the poor’ must be appropriately categorised in order to rehabilitate those who may be capable of change, and to avoid wasting resources on intractable cases. Pennefather records his difficulties in challenging New Zealanders’ assumptions that such categorisations were important in Britain, with its slums and industrial cities, but were not required for the negligible incidence of poverty and delinquency cases in the colony. Pennefather concedes that his views on the problem are therefore not widely accepted in Aotearoa New Zealand, lamenting that:

It is to be feared that many people in New Zealand have a hazy idea (or rather are ready to assume) that in England the whole matter is cruelly neglected and that the colonies are far in advance of the mother country. (Pennefather, 1900, p. 5)

Pennefather’s experiences reflect settlers’ assumptions about the ‘old world’, and the possibilities for a more prosperous ‘new world’ that would not be plagued by delinquency or poverty.

A feature of the New Zealand context was the idea that Aotearoa New Zealand possessed a naturally abundant environment (Fairburn, 2013). The gifts of this environment were to be shaped by ideal categories of settlers, who were selected to bring valued skills to

the settlement (Phillips, 2013). The prevalence of “hearty, healthy men and women” initially meant that many settlers were able to carve out greater economic well-being for themselves and their dependents than would have been their lot in Britain (Wilson, 1927, p. 234). The settlers would capitalise on the appropriation and acquisition of land from Māori (Hight, 1903). The availability of productive land was deemed to ensure that poverty, squalor, and the need to alleviate them, should never become the problem they were in other parts of the Empire (Fairburn, 2013). This utopian ideal is expressed in the following passage by prominent New Zealand entrepreneur, merchant and land owner, Josiah C. Firth, in 1890:

With much of the climates of Greece and Italy the intellects of Australasians will not be dimmed, nor their bodies dwarfed by the fogs and the cold of the North. The glorious Southern sunshine will surely enter their souls and gild their lives. We breathe a sunnier and a purer atmosphere. Freedom and sympathy are in the air. We do not, perhaps love ourselves less, but we love our fellows more. Our workmen labour shorter hours, and for better pay, than their fellows at Home. (Firth, 1890, p. 290)

The portrayal of Aotearoa New Zealand as a fertile and clean land aligned with the moral environmentalism of the time. A contrast was frequently made between the pure air and land in the pacific colony and the polluted slums of the overcrowded ‘old world’ (Mein Smith, 2003). These notions are further explored in the next chapter of this thesis, particularly in relation to the role of milk as a quintessentially natural colonial product.

In addition, the Victorian admiration for those who could forge success in the industrial age was burgeoning during the expansion of British settlement in Aotearoa New Zealand. “Self Help” was a book written by businessman Samuel Smiles, originally published in 1856, but re-issued for many following decades, which promoted the fortitude and self-reliance of the British character. The book was very popular in Aotearoa New Zealand (Labrum, 2009). Smiles filled his writing with descriptions of the heroes of industrialising Britain, claiming that:

Practical industry, wisely and vigorously applied, never fails of success. It carries a man onward and upward, brings out his individual character, and powerfully stimulates the action of others. All may not rise equally, yet each, on the whole, very much according to his deserts. (Smiles, 1890, p. 180)

Smiles esteemed those whose wealth was generated through their own efforts, defining their wealth as a just reward. These ideals of self-made men fit well with the image of an inventive and hard-working New Zealand settler. Those seeking to settle from Britain were initially

assured that: “If you are steady and industrious you cannot fail to prosper” (Gouland, 1851, p. 15). The emphasis on hard work and grasping opportunities was also strongly echoed in accounts of self-made wealth and success being reported from America in this period. One of the important ideas inherent in these narratives was the notion that creating *work* for the poor, through business prosperity, was the best way to help them (Brown, 1979, p. 18).

The virtues of individual effort and enterprise were also imposed on the Māori population, and served as a means of disrupting collectivist practices and connections with the land (Moewaka Barnes & McCreanor, 2019). Consequently, the ideal settler was disposed to guide the indigenous people toward the perceived superior cultural values of the British. A justification for such an approach included the view that:

Britain is at the head of the most progressive and most just of modern nations. It is therefore fitting that she should guide and control the destiny of new and infant countries; to her and to no other should be committed the fate of the lower races of mankind. (Hight, 1903, p. 11)

The viewpoint expressed in this extract positions settlement as a “moral emancipation” for Māori, who are characterised as an uncivilised people (Polack, 1840, p. 1).

The impact of settlement on Māori was multi-faceted. One aspect was subjecting Māori social organisation to European assumptions about family and society from the earliest contact (Consedine & Consedine, 2012). The role of Christian missionaries is important, but beyond a full exploration here. The need to summarise for the purposes of this thesis should not create the impression that there was a unified European ‘ruling group’ around the period of the signing of The Treaty of Waitangi and beyond (Bishop, 2005, p. 58). The plurality of narratives of the time reflected different perspectives on the future of Māori, and the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, but the common thread was that of the assumed cultural superiority of Pākehā (Hokowhitu, 2008, p. 20).

The travel writings from this period played an important role in constructing, reflecting and reinforcing the role of British subjects, both within the colonies, and in Britain (Pratt, 2007). The popular travelogue, “Oceania” by James Anthony Froude (1886) was the most widely-read account of travel in Aotearoa New Zealand in the late 1800s (Phillips, 2012). Froude, his artist companion, Lord Elphinstone, and a party of gentlemen, are engaged in a long holiday, exploring the colonies and socialising with eminent locals, such as Governor Grey. Froude’s book features many examples of the ways in which Māori were characterised by the British. Māori were commonly regarded as higher on the prevailing racial hierarchy of

the period than the indigenous people of other colonised nations, notably Australia (Mein Smith, 2012). Although Māori were viewed as more worthy than other indigenous peoples, they were by no means equivalent to Europeans.

Froude describes Māori as a simple and unmotivated people who did not know how to use the land to best profit (Froude, 1886). The colonial gaze could also interpret Māori experiences through a lens that denied their humanity. For example, Froude makes the following callous comment after observing Māori families swimming near thermal springs in Rotorua: “Now and then some small boy or girl falls into a boiling hole, and the parents are relieved of further trouble with them” (Froude, 1886, p. 232). In framing the grief of these Māori parents as insignificant, Froude reinforces the gulf between himself and those he observes, rendering the Māori parents as “less than fully human” (Gaita, 2013, p. 60).

The emphasis on the superiority of Pākehā families, and their desire to exercise autonomy over a family-owned farm, were central in undermining Māori whānau structures in the nineteenth century (Cheyne et al., 2008). Pathologising Māori social organisation formed a crucial means of legitimising Pākehā dominance of the land, agriculture, and commerce. Promises of prosperity for European settlers was predicated on their control of the country’s resources. The idea that communal patterns of living were detrimental to profitable land use and generating wealth was prevalent:

Communitistic holding greatly discourages enterprise among the Māoris, the younger ones especially. Communism among natives means that the industrious man has just gathered his crops when a number of the idle ones come along and eat them, or if sold, borrow the proceeds. Blood ties are so strong that the Māori will share to his last penny. (Wilson, 1927, p. 201)

The imposition of forms of social organisation that favoured the ‘enablement’ of individuals and the nuclear family were thus framed as being better for Māori, as well as ensuring the future profitability of the nation (Dalley & Tennant, 2004, p. 17).

The assumption underlying the colonial settlement of Aotearoa New Zealand, as in other colonised territories in the British world, was that the social organisation and practices already in place within indigenous communities were not legitimate. For example, Tuhiwai Smith (2001) provides the following statement from an 1891 report by James Pope, Inspector of Native Schools. Native schools was the name given to schools being established in Māori settlements. The Inspector of Native schools favours the appointment of married men to lead

these small, predominantly rural schools, because the European teachers and their families can model appropriate family life to the local population, stating that:

It is usually necessary to have for Masters, married men, and the examples set by the daily life of a well-ordered family is one of the greatest benefits conferred on the people in a Native settlement by the establishment and maintenance of a Native school. (Tuhiwai Smith, 2001, p. 35)

A legacy of these attitudes is a continuing deficit approach towards Māori families in many policies and practices, betraying a lingering attachment to the intrinsic superiority of the family models of the colonisers (Shields et al., 2005).

Despite the promise of opportunities for Pākehā settlers, the presumption that poverty could never become common place had been somewhat destabilised in the 1890s. This was a period of economic stagnation, which led to more people needing charitable aid (Thomson, 1998). As is often the case during an economic recession, the demand for relief occurs at the same time as donors retract their giving (Jones, 2004). Importantly, a culture of wealthy philanthropists contributing substantially towards those less well-off (as had developed in Britain and North America) had not translated into the New Zealand context, necessitating government contributions to sustain charitable services (Tennant, 2004, p. 42). A report on charitable relief in Dunedin in 1890 cites low levels of contribution from the wealthy and a dearth of philanthropic spirit as a problem (Torrance, 1890, pp. 194-195). The impetus to consider provision for the elderly grew during this period, resulting in the introduction of a means-tested old age pension in 1898 (Tennant, 2007).

The requirement to institute an old age pension was an admission that not all in the colony could fund support for their old age. Those who may have contributed to society over the lifespan and fell on hard times in old age occupied a position that attracted less judgement than some other categories of 'the needy' (McClure, 2013). Nevertheless, tests of moral character were still part of the process for acquiring such aid, and eligibility was established in a public hearing (Thomson, 1998). Whilst Māori were ostensibly eligible for the pension, the discretionary aspects of entitlement meant that in practice Māori access to pensions was more limited. For Chinese or other Asian residents, the rules were stark: no pension could be granted, consistent with other anti-Chinese rhetoric and policies that denied them citizenship rights (McClure, 2013).

The idea that any younger man who could work hard would be successful was an enduring one and the extension of state provision beyond an old age pension gained little

traction. The Hospitals and Charitable Institutions Act of 1885 had established a legislative basis for poor relief (Tennant, 2007). Regardless of any legislative intent, the resulting Charitable Aid Boards maintained fears around creating dependency, and applied stringent tests of deservedness to distribute their frugal aid (Tennant, 2007). Trades union agitation and demands for workers' rights were coming to the fore also (Roper, 2005). Subsequent legislation protecting workers' rights to negotiate favourable conditions and pay secured Aotearoa New Zealand's reputation as a socially and politically innovative nation (Olssen, 1995). These measures primarily reinforced the rights of wage-earning men. Fundamentally, those who were unable to support themselves through work (or for women, through an economically active husband or relative) were to rely on family, and only in the final instance, churches and charities could save the most destitute (Tennant, 2007).

The position for women in the settlement was influenced by European concepts of moral behaviour and reflected Victorian British ideals of women as the heart of the respectable home. James Belich (2001) has identified ways in which European women in Aotearoa New Zealand were able to experience greater freedom and autonomy than their sisters in the 'Mother country', for example in their access to higher education (Belich, 2001). The success of women's suffrage campaigners in making Aotearoa New Zealand the first country to grant women the vote in 1893 is suggestive of women's empowerment (Mein Smith, 2012, p. 102). Conversely, the roles of women in Aotearoa New Zealand were also nuanced by a 'colonial helpmeet' model that emphasised women's capabilities primarily in relation to supporting men who were engaged in agricultural and 'civilising' practices (Brookes, 2003). The emphasis on motherhood as a duty to the new settlement was another key focus. Healthy white infants were a crucial part of securing and expanding the Empire (Mein Smith, 2002). These imperatives, alongside the privileging of male breadwinners as the foundation for prosperity, shaped women's experiences and ultimately, contributed to their vulnerability to poverty (Nolan, 2000).

The autobiography of Mary Isabella Lee (1936) provides a rare first-hand account of the life of a woman living in poverty in early twentieth century Aotearoa New Zealand, and illustrates gendered and classed experiences not dissimilar to those described within stories from Britain (Lee, 1992). Mary wrote her life story in the 1930s, in response to the popular and controversial autobiographical novel, 'Children of the Poor', written by her Labour politician son, John A. Lee (1934). Mary's story lay unknown within her son's papers for 50 years before it was published (Cooper & Molloy, 1997, p. 36). The story details the everyday struggles of a single mother to protect and care for her children in the face of unreliable income and absent

fathers. Unlike the fiery political interpretation of family misfortunes that was woven through the storyline of 'Children of the Poor', Mary's story refuses victimhood and emphasises her own agency in the face of difficulties.

Historian Annabel Cooper (1992) highlights the need for Mary, as the narrator of her own life, to construct herself as morally worthy. Mary establishes her worth by describing her clean and well-cared for home, and the respect she was accorded by wealthy women who paid her for sewing work. It is particularly relevant what Mary chooses to leave out of her story. Mary never mentions her reliance on charitable aid, despite records demonstrating that she required assistance from The Otago Benevolent Society in addition to her paid work for over twenty years (Cooper, 1992, p. 38). Cooper reveals that Mary portrays herself as a widow to charity inspectors, when in reality she left her violent husband, fearing for her baby's safety. This strategy reflects the fact that widows carry more stable eligibility than other categories of single mother (Carabine, 2000). In fact, an unexpectedly high proportion of women were categorised as widows by benevolent societies in Aotearoa New Zealand, partly reflecting an ongoing problem of high numbers of men deserting their families (Tennant, 1981).

Mary's adult life is defined by her role as the sole provider and protector for her children. In order to fulfil this task, she is required to present herself as a victim with deserving status to those in control of resources. The focus on certain behaviours, such as keeping a clean house reinforced moral articulations of class through philanthropic provision, requiring at least lip-service to certain behaviours. Nevertheless, Mary's story also demonstrates that those subject to such controls can subvert them in numerous ways, disavowing or concealing elements of their lives where necessary. The power dynamics are weighted in the favour of those holding the purse strings, but Mary still views herself as an active agent in her own life.

Crucially, those undertaking charity work could view women less as sinners and more as sinned against, especially when Christian compassion was a motivation. The following extract is from an article written by Ethel Kidd, a member of the Auckland Hospital Charitable Aid Board, a few years prior to the onset of the Great Depression:

Perhaps one of the saddest things in connection with this work is the number of young, and, in many cases attractive women, who come before us with their little ones, having been deserted by their heartless husbands. Many of the children are bonny, smiling little tots and no punishment would be too great for the wretch who leaves them with their poor mother to face a hard world.

Quite a number of these deserted wives are on our books and are deeply grateful when they realise the kindly interest taken in their welfare. The young mother whose husband is in gaol is also another sad applicant, for she too suffers silently for another's sin. (Kidd, 1926, p. 27)

Compassion towards blameless young women is expressed in this extract. The young women described by Kidd have married but have been let down, through no fault of their own, by their husbands. These women are constructed as victims and there is no expectation during this historical period that they should necessarily be in a position to independently provide for their children (Nolan, 2000). The health of the children is crucial in this equation, as they are entirely blameless, and are also victims of their allegedly feckless fathers. The position of unmarried women is not commented on in this article, suggesting that women who succumb to child bearing before wedlock do not attain the status of deserving victims and the charity ensures its donors are not supporting immoral behaviour. The giver of charity frames the recipients as '*deeply grateful*' for '*kindly interest*'. This may, or may not, accurately reflect the feelings of the recipients, who are not in a position to state otherwise when their livelihoods, and those of their children, depend on charitable aid. What is observable is the narrative of kindly compassion that Ethel Kidd has constructed around her own actions. This perspective emerges again in Chapter Four of this thesis, in relation to contemporary charity narratives that position the giver's feelings at the centre of an interaction, leaving space only for gratitude from recipients (Jackson, 2016).

To summarise, the landscape of poor relief in Aotearoa New Zealand before the Great Depression featured definitions of the deserving and undeserving poor that were a continuity of Victorian-era British societal expectations. These Victorian ideas allowed room for notions of Christian compassion toward those perceived as victims. Nonetheless, despite expressions of sympathy by those in control of resources, establishing eligibility for support relied on assumptions about class, gender roles, ethnicity and culture (McClure, 2013). For women, eligibility for assistance was generally contingent upon displaying morally appropriate behaviour and was intended only for the relief of destitution (McClure, 2013). Māori were assumed to culturally and economically disadvantage themselves through living collectively and sharing land and resources (Firth, 1890; Hight, 1903; Wilson, 1927) 1927). Paradoxically, Māori were also often deemed less eligible for help because of the perceived protection offered to them by their communal lifestyle (McClure, 2013). The assumption that Māori required less support from pensions and charity did not reflect the reality for many

whānau who had been dispossessed of their land and could not easily access capital (Wanhalla, 2006).

An additional and significant challenge for those suffering deprivation in Aotearoa New Zealand in the early 1900s lay in the settler society's attachment to an idealised land of plenty. The lack of acceptance that poverty could exist at all had to be overcome before conversations about alleviating poverty could take place, as is reflected in the following passage:

The social gutter, is of every clime and race, of village as well as town, of the New World as well as the Old. There is a broad, deep gutter in the British Overseas Dominions. The Southern Cross witnesses poverty no less cruel than Northern stars and constellations, although until recently, more exceptional. (Lee, 1934, p. 9)

This quote from the autobiographical novel, 'Children of the Poor', written by Labour politician John A. Lee (1934) seeks to convince the reader that there really were slums in the Dunedin of his childhood. His revelations were shocking to many in both England and Aotearoa New Zealand, who assumed such conditions did not, and could not, exist in the colony (Cooper & Molloy, 1997). The belief that the entrenched poverty within 'old world' slums had never occurred in Aotearoa New Zealand meant that the inability to provide for oneself or one's family was assumed to be evidence of personal failure, in the face of bountiful opportunities (McClure, 2013).

Everyday Lifeworlds During the Great Depression

The focus of this section is the experiences of daily life that are captured in first-hand accounts of the Great Depression. The Great Depression hit Aotearoa New Zealand after the Wall Street crash in 1929, on the heels of a slower downturn in export prices (Labrum, 2009, p. 150). The collapse of markets for exports accelerated, leaving the country with a loss of income that swiftly undermined all areas of the economy (Government's Policy and Record 1931-35, 1935). The nation, previously characterised as 'God's own country', was confronted with undeniable and unprecedented levels of poverty (Cooper & Molloy, 1997, p. 36). The government attempted to cope with the downturn by restricting spending, a strategy recognisable as 'austerity' measures (Mein Smith, 2012, p. 151). The political and economic approach taken to the growing crisis came to be seen as exacerbating the problem, rather than alleviating it (Simpson, 1974, p. 6).

The first-person accounts examined for this chapter highlight people's feelings of powerlessness in the face of economic collapse, encapsulated in the comment that: "The Depression was something that was too big for any of us" (Radio New Zealand, 1988). Deteriorating places and objects are vividly evoked within the oral histories, reflecting the toll of economic hardships. Descriptions of homes and objects are recalled in detail, despite being recounted many years after these experiences took place. Domestic environments eventually became permeated with decay and disintegration. Places and objects take on and express growing helplessness in the face of insufficient resources. The accounts recall rusted stove rings, rotted window cords and curtains, bags of flour that are attacked nightly by rats, broken or absent furniture, threadbare blankets, and myriad objects that cannot be kept in working order as the Depression stripped resources from these homes.

Objects that feature in the descriptions reflect the ways in which poverty as a lived experience is bound up with material and emotional experiences in the everyday. Hodgetts and colleagues (2016) unpack the ways in which material objects, and people's descriptions of them, serve as metonyms for anxieties and injustices inflicted by poverty. The material deterioration, which is described in the oral histories, captures the ways in which the structural processes of increasing deprivation manifested within households (Hodgetts et al., 2016). Miro Mitchell, who was a young girl living on her family's farm during the Depression years, describes her mother labouring to make homemade jam and how: "The rats would gnaw through the tops and spill and chew all the jam", expressing the futility of trying to improve their situation (Radio New Zealand, 1988). The inability of the family to even prevent rats from eating precious food becomes a material reference point for their powerlessness.

In the case of farms, the sights, sounds and smells of suffering, diseased and neglected animals contributed to the mental decline of those unable to provide for them sufficiently. Mitchell describes the calls of diseased cows and the smell from maggot-infested pig sheds: "We tried to use disinfectants but they didn't work. The cows were distressed and it was depressing for the family." Descriptions of broken, rotting and uncared for objects, and even animals, contain a sense of lives interrupted and kept in a pattern of bare survival: "They tried to keep going. It was so hopeless. The life just went out of them" (Radio New Zealand, 1988). For farming families, as evidenced in Mitchell's account, it was difficult to maintain motivation when the work on the farm no longer yielded an income.

Hardships permeated many aspects of the everyday. Daily hunger was accompanied by cold, as fires were left unfuelled and unlit, since even dry branches to fuel a cooking stove

could be elusive, as described by George Davies in his account of his family's poverty: "We used all the fence palings for firewood" (Radio New Zealand, 1972). Children grew out of shoes and raincoats that could not be replaced. Babies arrived into homes where no nappies could be acquired and even the bedsheets were too thin to use for this purpose (National Radio (NZ), 1988). Clothing dwindled until leaving the house became an ordeal for some, as Mitchell recalls: "Mother became very isolated. Her clothes were not suitable to go out, off the farm. There was no money for fabric." (Radio New Zealand, 1988). Material realities had an impact on social participation.

George Davies highlights the difficulties in maintaining social networks when poverty eroded a sense of dignity. Davies recounts how he came to confine his social world to his immediate family when he found that: "If you haven't got any money, you haven't got any friends" (Radio New Zealand, 1972). Elaine Peglar recalls her embarrassment when she bumps into friends as she is walking in the rain in shabby clothes with a pram filled with pickle jars. Peglar has unearthed and cleaned the discarded jars from her back garden and is enroute to the fish shop to exchange them for a few coins. The friends discuss the matinee they have just attended: "I could tell from their clothes that their husbands were in work". When the two women notice that Peglar has a pram full of pickle jars, "They laughed hilariously. What was I going to do with them? While they were laughing, I was dying inside" (National Radio (NZ), 1988). Peglar consoles herself with the fact that the jars afford her the ability to buy milk and biscuits for her children, which means for at least one night they will not go to bed hungry.

Daily experiences of embodied deprivation, demonstrate how poverty "gets under the skin and into the minds" of those affected, becoming part of how they experience the world (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Tankel, & Groot, 2014, p. 98). The bodies of those who were living through Depression era poverty became a pre-occupation for them. Unsurprisingly, memories of hunger permeate the stories. George Davies was asked by the interviewer, for example, what might have been a treat for him and his brothers at that time? George replies: "A treat would have been to be able to eat enough, to be able to get up from the table and feel that you had had *enough*...we had a mania for eating" (Radio New Zealand, 1972). Jim Edwards also describes himself as "always hungry" as a child. He drank cocoa provided from a charity vat, which he experienced as: "atrocious tasting...it resembled thick mud in texture and taste. But we drank this muck because we were so hungry" (Radio New Zealand, 1996). The hunger experienced in childhood by George Davies and Jim Edwards remained a vivid memory throughout their lifespans.

The case of Len Bergman illustrates the toll of insufficient food and exhaustion endured by a teenaged boy (Radio New Zealand, 1965). Bergman was living with his sick mother with no income apart from money from the hospital board, which provided rations of bread and milk, and grocery orders for certain essential items. Len remembers meagre meals of rice with milk. Occasionally, they were given a docket entitling them to a meat order, which the butcher filled with the lowest quality meat, “all bones and fat”. Consequently, Bergman became under-nourished. In his last year at school he worked every night as a bellhop in a club. Then when he finished college he added a day job also, of 44 hours per week. By working 76 hours per week the young man could earn 22 shillings and 6 pence a week. This was a bare survival wage at the time. By 18 years old, the combination of long work hours and insufficient nutrition left Bergman physically and mentally unwell: “I had a nervous breakdown and couldn’t work for 15 months” (Radio New Zealand, 1965). The physical and psychological impacts of poverty could not be resolved through hard work.

Bodies were subject to other trials in addition to hunger. In the absence of resources to keep homes and bodies clean, lice, fleas, skin infections and communicable diseases proliferated. Mitchell recalls boils and sores, flea bites, and constant infections in her feet from having to go barefoot amidst thorny hedge cuttings abandoned on the farm (Radio New Zealand, 1988). In common with the present period, the teeth of those living in poverty were also a particular vulnerability. During the Depression many people experienced persistent pain from infected gums and rotting teeth, and lacked access to dental hygiene products (Ross, 1984). In cities, those struggling to feed their families could obtain broken biscuits, cake crumbs, or cereals by queuing outside factories. Jim Edwards remembers waiting outside factories hoping to get to the front of the queue before the food ran out: “For thruppance you got half a pillowcase full of sweepings” (Radio New Zealand, 1996). These foods were supplemented by rotting fruit discarded after markets closed, cheap bread, jam and sweetened tea. Consequently, Jim Edwards and his brothers all ended up sporting mouths full of painfully decayed teeth. One day Edwards fell over and the impact on his chin smashed many of his rotten teeth. After this accident all of his teeth were removed at the hospital. Edwards recalls that: “I stopped smiling. I was hiding my mouth” (Radio New Zealand, 1996). The shame over his appearance after his teeth were removed prevented him from smiling at thirteen years of age.

Miro Mitchell’s whole family also experienced severe pain from infected gums and tooth decay. Her father had to have all his teeth extracted. He subsequently spent many months with only gums until he saved enough from working long hours in a sawmill to pay

for false teeth. Although his teeth could be paid for, the gruelling sawmill work in addition to farming resulted in a stoop and painful arthritic hip that aged him rapidly. Mitchell describes how: “My father’s hair turned white, he was so miserable” (Radio New Zealand, 1988). The trade-off for attaining false teeth, in this case, was to endure other forms of suffering.

Jim and Miro’s memories invite us to reflect on the level of pain they must have experienced, alongside other deprivations, when their teeth were severely decayed. The children and their parents were powerless to prevent tooth decay, since the only food available to them was eroding their teeth, and they lacked the means for dental hygiene. The pain of rotting teeth was therefore a daily reminder of the extent to which the bodies of those experiencing hardship had been abandoned to material inequalities.

Another notable burden on the bodies of those enduring poverty was the (often harsh) physical labour that had to be undertaken by unemployed men in order to qualify for sustenance payments (Simpson, 1974). This work took a heavy toll on undernourished bodies and injuries were not unusual (Radio New Zealand, 1990). One man, who was struggling to cope with relief labour following an illness, was described by his workmates as “looking as thin as his shovel handle” (National Radio (NZ), 1988). Joe Carroll, for example, recalls his relief work at the airport, using a shovel and wheelbarrow to level sandhills. The work was exhausting, but small extra payments could be earned if Carroll “worked very hard” (Radio New Zealand, 1960s). Unfortunately, the trade-off was not simple because the harder he worked, the hungrier he would get.

The everyday circumstances of Māori during the Great Depression are not extensively documented. Evidence suggests very high levels of unemployment for Māori, with one estimate reporting in excess of 40% unemployment for working age Māori men at the height of the Depression (with the figure for Pākehā men estimated at 30-35%) (Rankin, 1994). Importantly, there is considerable variation in estimated and recorded unemployment figures from the late 1920s and early 1930s so the quantitative data can only serve as indicative (Macrae & Sinclair, 1975). What is not in dispute is the fact that Māori had been economically marginalised before the Great Depression (Wright, 2009). Māori hardship in the face of economic downturn may have been mitigated by the fact that a very high proportion of Māori lived rurally, rather than in urban settings during the 1930s (Kukutai, 2013, p. 311). National health data from 1933 reports a higher percentage of European school children suffering malnutrition (5.48%) than Māori children (3.27%) (Department of Health, 1934). Māori who were in a position to access traditional food gathering areas were less dependent on the monetised economy for survival. Rural Māori food practices may have been

disrupted less by the Great Depression than Pākehā food acquisition was. For Europeans, acquiring food required commerce to a much greater extent, although hunting, fishing, and foraging did help to top up some Pākehā diets during this period (Simpson, 1974).

In addition to expertise in food gathering, the more isolated communities of rural Māori were accustomed to sharing resources and reciprocal exchanges of goods and food (Wham et al., 2012). These practices were protective during periods when individuals may have struggled to provide sufficient food for a family. In addition to communities sharing resources, it was reported that in native schools a large pot of hearty soup was prepared each day, using vegetables, meat bones or fish pooled from different families along with the teachers' provisions (Tuhiwai Smith, 2001). This shared pot provided a hearty lunch for all of the children, rather than leaving individual children to remain hungry because their household did not have enough food to provide a meal.

The sound archive recordings revealed one illustration of traditional food practices in the 1930s. Mihipeka Edwards (1990) recalls her childhood spent within her Māori extended family in a rural setting north of Otaki, with little influence from the Pākehā world. From a young age, Mihi participated in gathering and preserving food: "Helping koro (Grandfather) gut eels and spread them out to dry" (Mihipeka Edwards, 1990). The many elders in the group retained and shared their skills in accessing nutritious food from their environment. Mihi reports that preserved food never spoiled before consumption, as their methods were passed down to them over the generations living from the land. Eel, shellfish and shark were all cooked and preserved. For example, pipi (small shellfish) were cooked in seawater and then hung on harakeke (flax) string to dry for later consumption. Sharing resources supported the collective well-being of the hapū, ensuring all members had access to food, and the gifting of food between people also facilitated more variety in the diet.

Despite maintaining sound nutrition during lean times, Mihi's family experienced challenges when the requirement to conform to European expectations arose. Feeding people within traditional communities represented continuity with pre-Depression life but the requirement for cash in order to fulfil other needs presented difficulties. Mihi recalls a school inspector arriving and exhorting Mihi's grandmother to send the children to school. In order to fulfil this instruction, the children had to have 'proper' clothes, which presented a problem for Mihi's grandmother since she possessed no money. Clothes had previously been woven from flax and sacking, with muka twine used to secure them to the body. The children were not expected to be fully covered, since culturally their bodies were not deemed in need of covering for purposes of modesty. Eventually Mihi's elders accessed soft flourbags to sew

into shimmies, edging them with crochet, for the girls to wear to school. Unfortunately, contact with Pākehā culture through the initial medium of the school was the beginning of a painful experience for Mihi of the de-valuing of her language and culture by Pākehā institutions (Mihi Edwards, 1990).

To summarise, the experiences of poverty during the Great Depression situated more people in Aotearoa New Zealand within conditions of material and embodied suffering than in previous periods, creating effects that endured beyond the Great Depression years. Some experiences had become part of them, for example the absence of teeth, stooped backs or memories of cold and deteriorating houses. Through reference to their bodies, and the material objects around them, the time span between ‘then’ and ‘now’ was crossed with little effort in the subsequent oral accounts of these Depression experiences. The oral histories demonstrate how the broader landscape of economic hardship can be understood through reference to what that hardship means for the everyday lived experience of those struggling to sustain their bodies and minds.

Having explored the extent to which deprivation was impacting on people’s bodies and psyches, I now consider the ways in which the escalating level of need was responded to during the Great Depression. The first-person accounts offer detailed memories from the perspectives of those accessing different forms of assistance. I begin this exploration by considering some of the ways that gender roles shaped the different experiences of women and men. I then analyse examples of charity encounters. The rationing of resources takes different forms in these memories, but a common thread is the emotional cost for those requiring help. In addition, the process for receiving help during the Great Depression years often involved standing in queues. I explore how the experience of queuing contained elements of suffering, boredom and humiliation, but also connected people to each other, and rendered the scale of suffering highly visible.

Women: ‘Bearing the Brunt’

Women and men both suffered poverty, but in their stories, women frequently retained their caring identities (Jahoda et al., 1933/1972). Women’s emotional pain is described in relation to situations in which they were confronted with an inability to protect their children from deprivation. For example, Elaine Peglar describes her situation to a woman from the local church who wants her to sign up to participate in self-denial for Lent:

I’m having a baby in May. I’ve got two children out there on the couch crying. They’ve had no breakfast. They’re crying. They’ve got chickenpox. I’ve got

no coal. This is no exaggeration; this is the state we're in. I've got no coal and I haven't got a shilling to put in the gas for them. (National Radio (NZ), 1988)

Peglar's anger towards the church member at her door is fuelled by her children's suffering and her own helplessness to relieve it.

During the Depression years, women tried to maintain homes, grow vegetables, care for children, the elderly, and the unwell, with dwindling resources (McClure, 2013). Women's time was taken up by activities related to sourcing affordable food, accessing charity, as well as undertaking paid work where possible (often sewing or laundry) (Broadcasting Corporation of NZ, 1976). Incomes were shored up with informal exchanges of goods and labour, including the brewing of alcohol, and putting children to work selling homemade products door-to-door (National Radio (NZ), 1996). Caring for those who were succumbing to illness became especially difficult when medical assistance was unaffordable, as Elaine Peglar recalls: "Well we couldn't afford a doctor. That was out of the question" (National Radio (NZ), 1988). Freda Cooke, one of a group of women organising the Christchurch Women's Labour Party movement reported that, "Women were bearing the brunt...so many very hungry people" (Broadcasting Corporation of NZ, 1976). Consequently, work to build more active political roles for women was subsumed by the need for the movement to keep soup pots bubbling with scraps cut from rotten vegetables and distributing leftover food to destitute men.

Single women were in a particular bind. Many women found it much more difficult to obtain paid work in the context of priority being given to breadwinning men (Rankin, 1994). Teaching posts, previously often available to single women, were subject to stringent cuts as part of government attempts to balance the books (Tuhiwai Smith, 2001, p. 17). Women were not entitled to unemployment payments, and could not undertake relief work (McClure, 2013). The attitude to young women who were experiencing hardship is well illustrated in the following description by an unidentified Dunedin woman, who recalls trying to get assistance when she was unemployed and hungry:

I was offered soup. I asked if I could get assistance. They said: "Had I a father? I said, "Yes but he is unemployed, on scheme 13." "Had I a mother?" "Yes". "Did I have a home, was I living at home?" "Yes." Well, there was no assistance that I could get. I had a roof over my head and that was all that was necessary. (Radio New Zealand, 1965)

This lack of provision for a young woman in need encapsulates the predominant belief that women's roles were primarily domestic, affording women no independent rights to either work or assistance (Aitken, 1996). Limited forms of support (organised by a separate women's unemployment board) were introduced after 1932, following objections by women who were subject to an unemployment tax on any wages they earned, without congruent rights to assistance (McClure, 2013).

Men: "Nobody Wants Me"

The experiences of men during the Great Depression provide an important counterpoint to dominant assumptions about poverty prior to the Great Depression, described in the first section of this chapter. The characterisation of some women as victims of male irresponsibility, and able-bodied unemployed men as feckless and lazy, was less tenable in the face of widespread unemployment (McClure, 2013). Suffering engendered by policies such as harsh men's labour camps and relief payments insufficient to support nutrition and housing, felt like punishments. Unemployed men began to question what exactly they were being punished for, particularly in light of their generation's sacrifices during the First World War (Wright, 2009).

The construction of welfare and work around a male breadwinner/female carer model was an enduring feature of New Zealand economic and social relations in the twentieth century (Belgrave, 2004, p. 30). The masculine identities of the time hinged heavily on the concept of men as providers (Cooper, 2008). In the oral histories, men frequently recount a loss of identity and self-worth when they could not find work, a phenomenon also described in other research (Bakke, 1934; Jahoda et al., 1933/1972; Simpson, 1974). Inability to secure paid employment was perplexing to men who saw themselves as capable and skilled, conveyed in the following plea by an unidentified rural man: "It's not fair. Nobody wants me. I can fashion wood with my hands as well as any man in this valley. I have some knowledge of fashioning metal too. Nobody wants me" (Radio New Zealand, 1960s). This extract expresses the sense of rejection experienced by an unemployed man when his previously valued skills no longer provided a route to employment.

The sanctity of hard work and the importance of self-reliance and autonomy were deeply inscribed into men's identities as workers and the material providers for their families (Cooper, 2008). The onslaught of the Great Depression meant that talents and skills, even the ability to work hard, which had formed the foundation for men's social value, were suddenly immaterial. The psycho-social toll of this was profound and confirms such themes that have

been highlighted in psychological research on the impacts of unemployment (Fryer, 1986; Fryer & Fagan, 2003; Furnham, 2013). This feeling of being surplus to society was especially difficult for those trying to begin their adult lives, as A. Nixon, a trainee teacher during the Great depression, describes:

But probably the worst feature was the feeling of uselessness. No matter how good you were, or what skills you had, what your potential talents might be, you just weren't wanted. And for a young man just waiting to take his place in the world, that was probably the cruellest blow of all. (Radio New Zealand, 1965)

Nixon's comment about feeling useless indicates the psycho-social toll for young men whose plans were thwarted by the pressures on the labour market.

The inability to find work was felt across occupational groups. One unidentified farmer recalls that men would walk the roads in rural areas, sleeping in fields or sheds, looking for any paid work that could be found for them. The farmer recounts how:

It was pitiful to see some of those men. Men from all walks of life. Engineers, carpenters, joiners, motor mechanics, all around, trying to get a day's work here and there. Fellows that didn't have a decent pair of boots even to walk with. (Radio New Zealand, 1960s)

This comment illustrates the extent to which some men who had previously held a strong occupational identity were disconnected from the labour market.

Growing levels of hardship during the Depression meant that the Government had to find some way of sustaining unemployed men, and the families who relied on their wages. Despite the unemployment rate, continuing fears about dependency meant that there was a strong attachment to the idea of no pay without work (Lawn, 1931). A debate on the Unemployment Bill proposing the introduction of sufficient sustenance payments for unemployed men confirmed the government's stance:

We wish to indicate quite clearly that we are opposed to any proposal which is in any sense a dole. The principle is wrong and it should not be initiated in this country – indeed, Parliament might very well go further and declare that there shall be no pay if there is no work. (Coates, 1930, p. 402)

The result was work schemes that ensured unemployed men could claim a payment only in return for labour (with the exception of lower subsistence payments for some men unable to undertake relief work for reasons such as physical incapacity) (Wright, 2009).

From the point of view of the men participating in the schemes, the relief gangs compared unfavourably with having a job, for a number of reasons. Many of the schemes were not achieving any worthwhile aim (for example, contributing to the development of necessary infrastructure such as bridges or railways), but instead consisted of labour created solely for the purpose of requiring men to work in order to qualify for relief payments (Mulgan, 1958). The schemes generally consisted of heavy outdoor physical labour, and some men were required to reside in geographically isolated labour camps, enduring bleak conditions in cold, damp dormitories or tents (King, 2003, p. 350). Another prevalent problem was the way in which relief work was allocated so that men could not undertake enough hours to earn sufficient income (Simpson, 1974).

In addition to arduous conditions of work, eligibility for relief schemes included an element of surveillance. Families receiving relief work had to regularly fill out 'U.B.' (Unemployment Board) forms to confirm their circumstances (Unemployment Board, 1931). While men were away on relief gangs or in camps, their wives could be visited by local inspectors, in order to check that nothing in the home conflicted with the information recorded on the 'U.B' form. Joe Carroll characterises this process as: "Snoopers employed by the Labour Department would go round to the wives while we were away working." (Radio New Zealand, 1960s). In the event that there were discrepancies, men were usually laid off from the relief work, rendering their entire families destitute.

Despite the hardships of relief work described above, the foremost story about relief labour is the impact on feelings of purpose, belonging and self-worth. One man described waiting in the relief depot to be assigned work as: "like it was a slave market" (Simpson, 1974, p. 163). Another man found the relief work difficult because of the constant influx of new faces and was repeatedly disillusioned by their stories about being laid off from work: "All you heard was about men getting put off. And I think that having no prospects, no outlook of ever again getting into work, was the most disheartening thing, experience, of all" (Radio New Zealand, 1965).

The purposelessness of much of the relief work, and lack of connection with other workers whilst undertaking it, is captured eloquently in the following extract. Joe Carroll tries to explain his feelings about relief work to the young man interviewing him:

Unemployment, apart from the economic side of it, is a horrible thing, in the sense that when you get up in the morning you've got to feel that you belong and there's someone who wants you, that you're going to go someplace. A relief job is this way, you probably don't understand this and I hope you never will, but Joe Carroll doesn't turn up to work, nobody worries, you know what I mean? You're not missed, there's a thousand other guys there too. But when you've got a job of your own, it might be a poor job, it might only be worth two or three pound a week, but you're part of a team. 'Where's Joe? Where's Tom? Where's Bill?' You're missed. You've got to feel that you're really useful. But an unemployment job, under those schemes, an unemployed man, he loses that feeling of usefulness, his necessity in the scheme of things. Can you understand that? You can, at your age. (Radio New Zealand, 1960s)

I have retained in this extract the comments Joe directs at the male interviewer (for example, "Can you understand that?"). These elements of Joe's account demonstrate his intention to share an understanding of what this loss of identity means with the listener. The storying of his feelings from the period of his relief gang work tries to bridge the distance between himself and the male interviewer, by inviting the interviewer to reflect on how he would feel in these circumstances. The assumed shared understanding of the importance of paid work to a young man's identity suggests the cultural power of these narratives, the enduring need for a man to feel his "necessity in the scheme of things". What is also clear, is that the insecurity and insufficient pay of relief scheme work left many families with no option but to use charity as additional support. The need to access charitable help was therefore widespread, encompassing those with no regular income, as well as families with reduced employment or only relief work to rely on.

Charity Encounters

Tony Simpson's iconic book of oral histories and photographs from the Depression, 'The Sugarbag Years' contains a chapter titled "Charity breaks down" (Simpson, 1974, p. 70). Simpson's chapter title indicates the extent to which the charitable sector appeared overwhelmed by the scale of need. Yet charity was still the only legal option for growing numbers of families trying to survive as the Great Depression prevailed (McClure, 2013, p. 57). The first-person accounts reveal struggles to feed, house and clothe families amidst economic insecurity. The oral histories demonstrate that people accessed charitable help

during the Great Depression when other resources had been exhausted, particularly in order to feed their children or provide them with warm blankets. Equally, the experience of placing themselves within an uneven power dynamic was difficult and shame is evident, despite increasing numbers of families and individuals relying on charity to get by.

One story of accessing charity during the Depression provides a striking example of the conflicted feelings elicited by the need to seek charitable help. Elaine Pegler had endured significant hardship by the time she found herself expecting her third baby in 1932, including evictions, illness and a husband no longer receiving even relief work wages (National radio (NZ), 1988). After visiting the matron at the local maternity hospital, who gave her money to buy oranges, Elaine was advised to go and seek help from a ‘reverend gentleman’ in order to acquire nappies for the expected baby. Elaine’s encounter began when she entered a room where a group of seven or eight “middle-aged women” were sitting. Elaine recounts how these women told her:

How wonderful he was and he’d given them this, and one said, “Ooh he gave me this dress, you know!”, and showed it to me, and I said “It’s nice”, and oh it was horrible! I felt badly about it. It was like begging, to go and ask for something like this. But of course a baby can’t do without napkins, can it?

When it was Elaine’s turn, she was shown into a room where the reverend sat, and he asked her about her circumstances, where she lived and how many children she had:

And he wagged his finger at me, it was a playful wag, you know? And he said, “and what were you doing adding another burden to the already overburdened?” It was the loss of human dignity that was taken for a moment, and things like, remarks like that. I felt my face flaming. I could feel it was burning and I just looked at him, I couldn’t say anything. And he said, “I believe you’re blushing. It isn’t often when a woman blushes these days!”

Elaine explained her need for nappies and the reverend made some notes and said he would see what he could do for her. When he eventually handed her a form entitling her to five shillings’ worth of flannelette to make nappies with, he once again wagged his finger at her and told her: “Don’t be careless next time. No point in having babies you can’t afford.” The young woman sat outside after this encounter and wept: “I felt I was unclean. I felt I had no right to be on this earth. I should have been crawling along the top of it, or underneath it even.” This experience causes her to describe the reverend as: “a little tinpot king with a gold paper crown and a tatty robe, sitting there, thriving on the adulation of middle-aged women.”

The experiences of this young woman demonstrate the potential emotional damage inflicted during face-to-face charitable encounters. In trying to access what she needed for her baby, and in seeing no other means, she is shamed by the interaction with her benefactor.

Elaine's encounter with the reverend is redolent with assumptions about young women requiring moral guidance and demonstrating 'womanly attributes' of modesty, echoing historical characterisations of destitute women (Carabine, 2000). Elaine's evocation of feeling not worthy to even walk on the earth indicates the wound inflicted by the reverend's admonitions. The way in which he sees her undermines her own self-concept. Elaine experiences a bruising feeling of unworthiness, but she is nevertheless able to transform the narrative into anger and to articulate her disdain for this opportunistic "Tinpot King". Her feelings of shame are mitigated by her understanding of his characteristics, and by her imaginative and pejorative description of him.

The portrayal of the reverend by the women at the office, as a generous bestower of gifts, suggests how he may see himself. The ability to remind those seeking his help that he is the one who decides their fate is crucial to maintaining his own role. The 'Tinpot King' has the right to decide who deserves his kindness, and to remind the needy that his kindness is a gift. When Elaine is able to convey how ridiculous this man really is to her, she is shifting the emotional damage outside of herself, reminding herself that he was the problem, not her. Nevertheless, in relaying this encounter, she vividly recalls her humiliation, alongside her anger towards the reverend.

Sometimes the idea of being subjected to scrutiny or judgement was too much to bear, even where need was great. Joe Carroll was unhappy about the level of scrutiny involved when seeking charitable relief. Accessing help with clothes or blankets, for example, often required people coming into the home in order to assess the level of need. Rather than endure what he refers to as "probing by a committee of wealthy old dames" invading his privacy, Carroll decided to do without: "There are certain things you can do and certain things you can't do, whatever your need" (Radio New Zealand, 1960s). This choice, one of few choices left to those living in poverty, is the choice to suffer indignity or to go without. Some people prefer to remain hungry or cold rather than seek help that undermines dignity and social worth. Elaine Peglar's story above illustrates that, while she herself had gone without for a considerable period, the choice not to use charity was not viable for her when it came to the needs of her children. Enduring probing and judgement from individuals and organisations rationing resources was the price for keeping children fed.

Rationing care and rewarding good work.

The provision of help by voluntary groups and Charitable Aid Boards was one mode of support. Individuals also sometimes tried to respond to need that they encountered in their daily lives. The following extract from an interview with student teacher, A. Nixon, describes one of the teachers he was assisting at a primary school where many children were hungry:

The class teacher was a good soul, a sour faced spinster with a heart of an angel, and every now and again she'd reward good work with a sort of hot pie, they used to cost thruppance each. And the way the other kids would hang around the winner and sort of look at him while he ate it would break your heart. (Radio New Zealand, 1965)

The teacher described here is faced with a situation where the scale of need outweighs her own capacity to alleviate it in any substantial way. She cannot afford to buy every hungry child a hot pie, however much they might need one. She must therefore find a way to distribute what she is able to provide. This situation encapsulates a fundamental dilemma – how do we choose who to help when we cannot help everyone? This teacher, surrounded by hungry children, decides to reward achievement in schoolwork. In this localised setting, where need is immediate and overwhelming, the teacher establishes a method to make the choice. The teacher rations her kindness on the grounds of perceived merit (by rewarding morally desirable behaviour). The decision to reward with a pie is a kindness, but also operates as a torture to the other children, who remain hungry but must watch the victor eating their prize.

The stories explored in this section suggest that kindness and cruelty were sometimes close partners as people tried to manage need in their everyday lives. Gratitude could sit alongside anger or shame for recipients of help. Resentment at the loss of dignity could also be tempered by a practical approach if many others were also seeking help. The shame of 'going begging' is as enduring a memory as the suffering of the body, bringing together the brutality of poverty as a physical and psychological experience. I next focus on the way in which processes for helping the poor and unemployed during the Depression frequently required citizens to wait in line. Waiting in line operated as a confrontation with poverty, one's own as well as the poverty of others. Standing in line was also an experience of boredom and inertia. The physical endurance of waiting in line became a routine practice for people in need.

Queuing as endurance

McClure (2013) refers to poverty as becoming a “public spectacle”, in ways which had not previously been apparent in New Zealand: “Long queues of people waiting outside charitable aid offices and city mission halls to fill suitcases and sacks with food were a visible sign of national failure” (p. 56). Pictures of men, women and children queuing have become a familiar trope to illustrate the level of hardship endured during the economic hard times of the 1930s (Simpson, 1974, p. 73). The discomfiting sight of those in need could engender pity and bring home the scale of the problem. From a political perspective there was also fear of dissent or even violence that could lurk within lengthy gatherings of those in need:

...the routine mass treatment accorded the weary, unending, often ‘haggard’ lines can only darken despair already deep and desolate; can only wear down pride and self- respect already endangered; can only lead to bitter, brooding resentment and determination to ‘beat the system’ that allows such things”.
(Berton, 2012, p. 138)

This quote, derived from a welfare system report on Canadian unemployment in 1932 describes both pity and fear of social disorder in relation to the lining up of destitute citizens. The possibility arises, whether or not it is realised, of those subjected to these queues rebelling against their treatment.

Queues, not previously prevalent in Aotearoa New Zealand, illustrated the material hardships people were experiencing, hardships sufficient to overcome some people’s reluctance to publicly display their need. Queuing for food or coal during the Depression was sometimes storied through reference to the ‘bigger picture’ of what queuing represented economically and politically. Waiting in line represents a mediating space between the needs of citizens, the lacks in their everyday lives, and the societal structures that govern access to resources. George Davies, for example, remembers queues he witnessed at the hospital, where those in need could wait to request a ticket allocating them food or coal. Davies describes the queue as made up mostly of women, accompanied by children, toddlers and babies. The queue was there all day, with some women waiting for long periods. At lunchtime:

The clerk would stick his head out the window and say, “come back at one o’clock”, and then slam the window down. And you know none of those women, they wouldn’t move because they knew if they moved, there were

thousands behind them and they'd lose their place. And that day, there'd be no food and no coal". (Radio New Zealand, 1972)

George questions why there was no relief clerk to keep the queue moving over the lunch period, describing the situation as "disheartening" for women made to wait in public view.

Although queues may intensify emotions, queuing could also become routine, dull and repetitious. Jim Edwards recalls that children were the most frequent daily participants in the queues outside factories for cast off food, or at The Salvation Army soup cart in the street: "Some queues stretched a block or two and you were waiting over half an hour. Then there was disappointment when you waited but there was none left by your turn" (Radio New Zealand, 1996). Large families and busy adults meant that children's time was more available for the requisite hours of queuing, but this practice also saved adult dignity.

For adults, the queue could create a pause amidst the struggles of daily life, prompting reflection on their position and what had brought them there. This could be an uncomfortable space to inhabit socially, as well as physically. Waiting in line for food for the first time could be the place where one must fully confront the emotional toll of admitting to need. For instance, Simpson (1974) records the reflections from an unemployed man in Christchurch who recalls his experiences of the first queue:

There was a sturdy independence amongst working people and it was the lack of that that got them down. I can remember myself the first time I went to the depot and getting in the line for my turn and suddenly overcome with emotion and going standing at the door looking at the Port Hills, crying. I thought, how did it come that I should beg for bread? Then I thought, well, who am I?, these others are in the same boat, they're people just like me and I gradually got quite hard of course, but that was my first time. It does take something away from you, not being able to feed yourself. (Simpson, 1974, p. 165)

Conflicted feelings are expressed within this account of accessing help. This unemployed man reflects on his attachment to independence which was culturally embedded in the masculine identities of this period (Cooper, 2008). He shifts from an observation of a general issue for "working people" into a personal and emotional narrative. The feeling of disbelief that he should need to ask for food, and his inability to sustain himself, initiates a tearful moment. He overcomes this by understanding that others are also queueing, these people are experiencing the same suffering, and that he is no better or worse than they are. In doing so, he closes the distance between himself, as an independent worker/provider and the others in

the queue, who are fellow human beings also in need. The physical proximity to others through the queue reminds him that he is but part of a sea of suffering in the face of the Depression. The indignity of having to ‘beg for bread’ is still there (“it does take something away from you”) but his understanding that others are there and also feel this way, means that this indignity is a shared, rather than individual, misery. This is a qualitatively different experience to the ways in which the contemporary precariat must engage with the system. Contemporary versions of rationing typically take place within less publicly visible, more individualised settings, as is demonstrated in Chapter Five of this thesis.

The physical nature of the queue, and its characteristics as a shared experience, contained the possibility for solidarity, or at least less isolation within hardship. Through the regular experiences of literally ‘standing together,’ people were in contact with each other, whether they chose to be, or not. Social distance between the newly impoverished and those who had a longer personal history of seeking help was subsumed within the act of queuing. People had to occupy space with others previously socially separate from them, since unemployment was affecting traditionally secure occupational groups, as well as those with more long-standing income struggles. Even where verbal exchanges were not substantial, queues may have functioned in an atmosphere of “civil inattention” (Goffman, 1959). “Civil inattention” refers to an unobtrusive awareness of sharing space, which is a feature of urban life, allowing us to be physically close to strangers without social imposition. In the case of Depression-era queues, the physical organisation of people waiting defines the scope within which those waiting can act (Schraube & Højholt, 2015, p. 4). Individuals’ responses within this scope can vary, but regardless, they are placed in physical proximity with those in front of, and behind them, in the line. Engagement with others in this setting is not optional, even where that engagement takes the form of deliberate non-engagement, which requires effort and is still a social process. Those in the queue can be in physical proximity, not directly interacting, but being together. The individuals are all positioned (in this case physically) by their relationship to the economic context. They may be responding in different ways to this positioning, but in the queue their need has become a collective experience.

Briefly, queues during the Depression period hold multiple meanings in terms of emotional impact. Waiting in line represents a physical occupation of place but it also becomes a pattern of behaviour for people who need to undertake this activity every day or every week. The activity holds meanings that become mundane, yet can also be humiliating and bound up with people’s identities. Through the mode of the queue, those in need were placed in a relationship of powerlessness. The person who queues is the person marked out as

being in need, eliciting both scorn and sympathy from bystanders. Nevertheless, queuing was also a site of contact with those experiencing similar hardships, and facilitated awareness of the scale of need as a shared reality.

Interwoven lives

The narratives of those who were negotiating hardship during the 1930s demonstrate a need to try and make sense of their own experiences, as they reflect on them. I have argued that they expressed these understandings through reference to the deterioration of material objects and experiences of embodied deprivation. Another way in which people try to make sense of their experiences is through their observations and interactions with others. Everyday life operates in collective ways, as individuals connect with each other within and across many daily settings (Schraube & Højholt, 2015). This means that stories in the oral history accounts do not focus solely on the personal experiences of the speaker, but also describe other people's experiences. The widespread impact of the Depression meant that people were sometimes confronted in their daily lives with the suffering of others. Memories of specific encounters centre on situations where people saw their own position in relation to others, through material differences. The material differences are overlaid in these experiences with empathic connection to other people, a connection facilitated by awareness of one's own vulnerability in the Depression context. Places where people came into contact with each other, for example, queues, churches, or schools contributed to understandings about the scale and depth of deprivation.

School lunches, in common with the present period, made inequities visible. For example, Jim Edwards traces his continuing distaste for jam back to childhood lunches consisting of a piece of bread with jam. The jam came from a large charity depot tin that Jim's mother acquired with a grocery ration ticket. Jim recalled that there were a few children with neatly cut sandwiches in little boxes or tins, containing enviable cheese, Marmite, or egg, in contrast to his own newspaper-wrapped bread. Nevertheless, Jim knew that some children had even less than his bread and jam, arriving at school with no lunch at all. Jim reflects:

At lunchtime, they would sit by the kids that did have lunches and watch them eat, hoping, as often did happen, that some of the really well-fed kids had more than enough. And these kids with nothing would wait for the scraps of those children that had too much and I've never forgotten that because this was a sad sight, to see children hungrily watching others eat because they had

nothing, and then be grateful for the crumbs, virtually the leftovers. (Radio New Zealand, 1996)

Jim's account highlights how schools were, and still are, sites where levels of hunger within homes becomes noticeable. Moreover, child hunger during the Great Depression is evoked in the oral histories within the context of unforeseen (male breadwinner) unemployment and the resulting privation within households, rather than locating culpability with failing individual parents or families (Mein Smith, 2012).

While Jim Edwards reminisced about the disparities between children's lunches as a child himself, others in the school environment recalled hunger from the perspective of an adult amongst insurmountable need. A. Nixon reflected on his teacher training placement in an Auckland school, where he was attached to a class of 65 eight-year-olds. School class sizes during the Depression grew very large, as a result of state spending cuts that froze teacher numbers in an effort to cope with the economic pressures on the government (Thorn, 1937, p. 10). Nixon estimates that at least one third of these children had no food with them for the school day. Pupil teachers, such as Nixon, were not permitted to eat in the staff room. Hence, Nixon describes his daily experience of eating his lunch in the classroom: "The kids would come round me at the table, begging me for bits of bread. You could feed them crusts and they'd come snapping up like ducks in a pond" (Radio New Zealand, 1965). The fact that this young teacher had to eat his lunch amidst hungry children demonstrates how proximity to suffering became an everyday experience for some citizens.

The oral histories also reveal conflicted feelings engendered by keeping one's own head above water amidst high unemployment. Keeping a roof over one's head and food on the table is understood as a product of good luck, as much as effort. Nixon, for example, recalls his feelings about finding work: "Even if you got a job, you were made to feel like you were taking the bread out of the mouth of some poor devil with a sick wife and four kids" (Radio New Zealand, 1965). The need to find his place in the world becomes a source of guilt to Nixon when he sees the level of joblessness afflicting men of all occupations.

A police detective, Frank Brady, remembers his work in Auckland in 1932, searching the homes of those arrested for thefts:

It was pitiful at times, to go to a man's home and find that he had disposed of a lot of his home contents, like furniture and effects like that, to try and keep his family going. You felt ashamed that you had a good set of clothes and had a...a secure job, and this man was up against it. (Radio New Zealand, 1960s)

Brady's account is absent of judgement, despite the men he describes having committed theft. His awareness of the level of distress at a time when thousands were out of work leads him to feel compassion for the unemployed men whose homes he must search.

The extent of suffering caused by economic hardship became increasingly visible to those who were more comfortably off. Although charities were supported by some wealthy citizens, one story from the archives illustrates the *politicisation* of a wealthy woman as a direct result of the Depression. Willow Macky experienced the Depression from a position of relative comfort as the child of a wealthy Wellington family (National Radio (NZ), 1996). Nevertheless, Willow recalls her mother, Edna Macky, becoming increasingly affected by the hunger she witnessed. Willow remembers her mother providing food to people who appeared at her door looking for work. Edna wrote a poem, 'The green shawl', published in a relatively conservative magazine, 'Ladies' Mirror'. The poem was an emotional account of the guilt experienced by the narrator when she realised the scale of poverty and suffering around her after spending a large sum of money on a frivolous shawl. Willow recalls her mother appealing to wealthy friends to have a conscience and her intent for the poem to instigate "guilt amid the need" (National Radio (NZ), 1996). Eventually, when Edna's husband travelled overseas, Edna became active in the Labour movement and Fabian Society, campaigning for Socialist policies within her wealthy neighbourhood. Willow remembers this political work coming to an end at the insistence of her father when he returned home.

Awareness of other people's predicaments found expression in local forms of support. The oral histories, for example, reveal a world where networks of debt and obligation built up. Stories contain statements such as: "The butcher carried us" (Radio New Zealand, 1988). The role of store keepers, butchers, farm stores in shoring up families was extensive. Joe Carroll recounts how: "We helped each other out of course. We battled it out. Of course, we got frightfully into debt, such as rent, store bills, things like that. Store keepers were good enough to carry you through, you know" (Radio New Zealand, 1960s). This informal economy of debt kept some families fed but could cause businesses to struggle (Simpson, 1974). The concept of 'being carried' expresses a sense of interdependence, or an understanding of the extent to which relying on others was not optional. The gratitude for these local mitigations, where informal arrangements allowed people breathing space when money was tight, is less conflicted than the gratitude expressed in relation to modes of charity such as faith-based aid or government sustenance. Dignity was maintained, to a greater extent, within situations where the local shopkeeper could quietly add purchases to the ledger. In contrast, ration tickets that restricted people to specific purchases in public view, or

the charity experiences explored earlier in the chapter, were stigmatising. Not surprisingly, people preferred to try and find alternatives to being marked out and delegitimised as undeserving or failed citizens.

From Interwoven Lives to Political Change.

The personal accounts from the Great Depression period explored in this chapter indicate the disparity between the political rhetoric emanating from government, and the experiences of the wider citizenry. Preoccupation on the part of the State (and some charities) with discouraging laziness and dependency did not align with grassroots understandings of what was happening (Simpson, 1974). The Depression had ruptured the status quo and dominant assumptions about poverty and dependency, revealing structural inequities (McClure, 2013). Nonetheless, whilst moral censure attached to unemployment lessened, the relief required to alleviate it was still notably mired in moral judgement and degrading processes (Katz, 2013, p. 8). For citizens whose lives had been blighted by misfortune during the Depression, calls to austerity were no longer palatable. Such citizens believed that they themselves, and those around them, were: “good men, prepared to work, decent men who wanted to work, wanted enough to live off for their efforts. That’s all they wanted” (Radio New Zealand, 1960s). Likewise, women resented being judged as morally deficient when they were expending considerable effort within adverse conditions (Mein Smith, 2012).

The limitations of charity that the Great Depression had exposed ultimately underscored a need for alternative solutions to poverty and insecurity. Andrews (2014) argues that the narrative imagination can provide ways of envisaging a world that does not yet exist, one that offers possibilities for human flourishing not yet realised (Andrews, 2014). Accordingly, by 1934, politicians were not addressing a perceived audience of comfortable middle-class voters. Political support could not be fostered through rhetoric that promised to minimise taxation or government spending on a dysfunctional, dependent ‘other’. Instead, the Labour Party had to address those who understood the suffering of unemployment, poverty, hunger, and the indignities of relief and charity (Mein Smith, 2012). Indeed, the Labour party at that time, which was soon to sweep into power, featured a leadership team whose members had frequently known poverty, ill health, and even prison, themselves (Cooper & Molloy, 1997; McClure, 2013) The Labour Party appealed to the ideals of: “a decent standard of life”, “the security of all”, and the need to consider it our duty to “render mutual aid” (Election Night, 1935; Savage, 1935). Consequently, the Labour Party’s election campaign emphasised the rights of citizens to a decent life, proclaiming:

The workers today unemployed are our fellow- citizens who are out of work through no fault of their own. They are entitled to employment at a living wage. Failing such employment they should be paid a sustenance wage sufficient to provide the necessaries of life for them and their dependents.

(Lee, 1935, p. 2)

The statement posits responsibility for employment opportunities with the state, signalling the interventionist Keynesian economic model advocated by the Labour Party (Roper, 2005).

Political calls to action were reinforced by some Churches, many of whom were on the front line of charity relief (Tennant, 2004b). There was recognition that compassion had to translate into political action because of the scale of the problem. Church leaders called on the government to address social and economic injustices:

The whole congregation of the Seatoun Presbyterian church rose at its service last evening to signify its support of the following resolution, which was proposed by the Rev, A. A. Armstrong following a trenchant sermon on the unemployment problem and the government's policy in the matter:-'That this congregation of the Seatoun Presbyterian Church regards the growing distress, sufferings and penury of the unemployed with deepest sympathy, and expresses its shame that such preventable evidences of spiritual infidelity, social inhumanity and political and economic injustice and incapacity should be existent in this country, wherein a bountiful Father God has granted more than sufficient for the provisioning of all His children'. The Reverend urges the Government to take its responsibilities for its suffering citizens seriously and enact policies to immediately alleviate poverty. ("Church's protest: Relief policy state's responsibility paramount claim," 1934)

The Church in question was not content to continue attempting to address need through charitable means without demanding action at government level.

A member of the Miramar Presbyterian Church publicly criticised the Minister of Employment, Mr Smith, for implying that men are unemployed through their own fault: "That is as absurd as reproaching Mr Smith for not being Prime Minister. There is only one office of Prime Minister – and there is only a certain number of jobs to go round" (Martin, 1935). The author contends that the answer to the economic crisis is unpalatable because it involves admitting that wealthy citizens will need to have less in order to help the many:

The Auckland clergy can only tell Mr Smith that, but Mr Smith knows it already. Mr Smith and every thinking man knows as an axiom of life that privilege rests on a foundation of human suffering. The cost of motor-cars and fine houses is children crying for bread. (Martin, 1935)

Such critiques demonstrate increasing impatience in relation to the government responses to the crisis. Ultimately, frustration with ineffective solutions to unemployment led to mass protests, and even riots in 1932 (King, 2003, p. 348). The rioting was interpreted as proof of the level of anger building, particularly amongst unemployed men, an anger that was becoming increasingly political and organised (Sinclair, 2013).

The narrative upholding Aotearoa New Zealand as a bountiful land of plenty, introduced earlier in the chapter, re-surfaces within Labour campaigning for the 1935 general election. The Depression is characterised in Labour Party rhetoric as an evil generated by ‘overseas’ financial systems, not through any lack of productivity or diminished natural abundance locally (Lee, 1938). The nation itself still produced food, wool, timber, and other essential goods, just as plentifully as it always had. Yet New Zealanders were no longer able to partake in the bounty of ‘God’s own country’ (Sinclair, 2013). For example, The Labour Party policy manifesto, affirmed in 1934, declares that:

New Zealand, with its temperate and sub-tropical zones, with its potential water power, its timber, coal and iron resources, its fisheries, its holiday resorts, can be made the centre of a new civilisation....We shall determine New Zealand’s standard of life by what New Zealand produces and not by an overseas price level. Human welfare and not financial profit shall be our goal. This policy was made in New Zealand by New Zealand citizens who know New Zealand conditions. It is not exotic, but native to our problems. (Lee, 1935, p. 9)

New Zealand citizens are defined in this extract as suffering an injustice in being unable to access the gifts of their own country. Such an injustice will be corrected by focussing on national prosperity, rather than international financial imperatives.

In 1935, New Zealand’s first Labour government came to power with a significant and unprecedented majority (Sinclair, 2013). Labour’s urban voters had been joined by a substantial shift towards Labour in rural electorates (Roper, 2005). Michael Joseph Savage, the new Prime Minister, gave a speech on election night that confirmed the focus of the work to come:

Wonderful solidarity has been shown, not only by Labour candidates but by the people of New Zealand. It seems to me that they have made up their minds that the purpose of this nation will decide its destiny. There is no power on earth that can stand between us and the product of our toil. (Election Night, 1935)

The 'our' referred to in this speech draws the whole nation within a narrative of consensus, a commitment to prioritise prosperity for the many, not the few. This mandate was to provide a platform for a welfare settlement that continued over many decades (Labrum, 2009). The record of Labour's first year in office confirms their ambitious programme to ameliorate the conditions of those worst off, and to move the emphasis of government activity toward income security, access to healthcare and housing for all families (Thorn, 1937).

Chapter Discussion

The first-person accounts explored in this chapter evoke everyday experiences of material and embodied deprivation. People present themselves and others as resourceful but many struggled to provide for themselves and their families. Hunger, cold, and physical pain form compelling memories from the period of the Great Depression. Further, experiences of seeking help are also narrated as inflicting deep wounds on people's psyches. Encounters with charity, ad hoc provision and unemployment relief schemes served to amplify people's suffering, despite being a means for physical survival.

The difficulty for those impoverished during the Great Depression was that they confronted a model of minimal poverty relief established in Aotearoa New Zealand during the Victorian period. The collective narrative of the settlers was that of sturdy self-reliance within a bountiful land of plenty (Mein Smith, 2012). Meagre assistance subjected citizens to dominant concepts of who deserved help and reflected gendered and classed notions of respectability (Tennant, 2007). The idea that those in need were in danger of developing dependency on aid, and the imperative to hold individuals to blame for their economic misfortunes shaped provision. Additionally, Victorian notions of feckless unemployed men as villains and women as victims required women in need to exhibit morally acceptable behaviour (Carabine, 2001). Charity encounters and relief work were therefore experienced by those subjected to them as a form of punitive conditionality.

Historical characterisations of the deserving/undeserving poor were eventually severely disrupted by the widespread nature of hardship during the Depression. Locating

blame within individual failure was less tenable when the “collapse of opportunity” was so evidently structural (McClure, 2013). A concerted political response was therefore favoured as the crisis deepened. The assaults on bodies and minds, inflicted through the twin indignities of poverty and charity, were to resonate in ways that did not support ‘business as usual’ when prosperity returned. As Simpson (1974) writes:

To live through a community trauma, to walk an anxious social tightrope and see many of one’s fellows fall is not a pleasant thing. It makes one cautious.

Even when one is back on firm ground the habits of careful footsteps remain.

(p49)

Simpson’s reference to “a community trauma” reflects the extent to which people understood their suffering as a collective experience imposed upon them. The generational impact Simpson suggests is one of enduring awareness of human vulnerability to misfortune.

Greater emphasis on narratives of collective national prosperity encompassed ideals of improving employment, housing, nutrition, health and education. In prioritising security through the state, the role of charities was to shift to the margins (Labrum, 2009). Instead of charity, the government became more central in establishing minimal standards for New Zealand citizens (Roper, 2005). The resulting policies included Māori but were framed around the Pākehā family model (Tennant, 2005). Consequently, breadwinning men were to receive fair pay for hard work, and support should illness or misfortune occur. Women’s health was prioritised in their roles as mothers. Children were to be restored to health and strength to ensure the future of the nation (Mein Smith, 2012) Part of this broad and ambitious project was the introduction of free milk in schools in 1937, which occupied both a symbolic and pragmatic role within the establishment of a welfare state. The next chapter begins with an exploration of the introduction of free milk in schools in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Chapter Four: The Birth and Re-Birth of Free School Milk in Aotearoa New Zealand

The previous chapter concluded that by 1935, punitive Victorian-era approaches to poverty were increasingly contested and, instead, narratives emphasising the necessity of improving employment rates, housing, nutrition, health and education for the populace as a whole are evident. Historians note that following the Great Depression, there was rising public support for more substantial government intervention to improve people's quality of life (Belich, 2001, p. 420; McClure, 2013; Roper, 2005; Tennant, 2007). The current chapter contrasts the development of the original milk in schools programme, initiated in 1937, with the contemporary version of free milk in schools, introduced in 2012/13. The two milk schemes, introduced over seventy years apart, demonstrate both similarities and differences. This chapter examines the introduction of the two milk schemes as exemplars for understanding shifting understandings of poverty, hunger, welfare and citizenship that coalesce around school milk in Aotearoa New Zealand. The re-introduction of free school milk in 2013, amidst a plethora of schemes aimed at feeding children in schools, illustrates how stories about poverty recur, adapt, and relate to each other, shaping policy and material responses to food insecurity.

First, the current chapter begins with an account of the introduction of the 1937 milk in schools programme, just one initiative within a welfare and economic transformation occurring at this time. A key focus is on the significance of milk as a unique product, possessing special status as a food for building strong bodies and serving the British Empire (Mein Smith, 2003). This chapter explores the context for the creation of the 1937 milk scheme, a scheme that was built on existing localised initiatives but reflected ambitions for reaching every child in Aotearoa New Zealand. Focusing on this historical example allows me to pinpoint the powerfully entrenched ideas about citizenship that pervade public expressions of welfare in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The second section of the chapter explores the changing context preceding the re-introduction of milk in schools in 2012/13. I examine government responses to growing media attention to "child poverty" and how hunger in schools became a visible edge of food insecurity. In addition, this chapter explores a group of dominant narrative tropes that emerge from analysis across mainstream media and policy. These dominant characterisations of the problem of hunger in schools reflected and reinforced a 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1961) that shaped material responses within schools. The chapter therefore follows analysis of how hunger in schools was being storied with an examination of the prevalent models that developed to provide food in New Zealand schools. I examine the roles of charity, business

sector philanthropy and social enterprise in feeding school children, including within a partnership model. A critical analysis of some of the issues identifiable with each model reveals the complexities and limitations of ameliorative responses to hungry school children.

In the third section, my analysis focuses specifically on the case of Fonterra Milk for Schools, rolled out nationally in 2013. I explore nostalgic elements within the 2013 iteration of school milk. Examining school milk in 2013 illuminates what is recognisable from the past, but what is distinctive or evolving differently. Finally, this chapter concludes with analysis of how milk in schools in 2013 was distinguished from other food in schools initiatives because of connections with the ambitious offering made to children in 1937. Despite resonances with the past scheme, Fonterra Milk for Schools is underpinned by different motivations and rationales.

Free School Milk in 1937

The initial milk scheme in 1937 included kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools, wherever practicable (New Zealand Milk Board, 1978, p. 2). Children were provided with a half pint (284mls) bottle of full-cream, non-homogenised milk (although some rural schools received powdered malted milk where safe local fresh milk supplies were unobtainable). The milk provided during this period of welfare state expansion was intended to be a nutritional *supplement* to meals at home (New Zealand Milk Board, 1978). There were concerns about the need to provide a nutritional boost to children who had not received adequate diets during the Great Depression (Brown, 1992). In terms of hunger in schools, children's present and future security was integrated within the well-being of the family unit, with a safety net for those outside of this (Belgrave, 2004). The broader state goal was to ensure that children were receiving meals at home, and thus the daily dose of school milk served a medicinal role, bolstering the strength and size of children (Mein Smith, 2003). School milk therefore became a symbol of state care but was not intended to fulfil an ongoing need to address hunger.

The introduction of the 1937 free school milk scheme was a celebration of the nation's investment in the health of its citizens, as reflected in the following newspaper item describing the first day of school milk in Wanganui:

The Wanganui East School was chosen for the "official" starting of the scheme. Those present included the mayor (Mr W. J. Rogers), Mr J.B. Cotterill, M. P., Mr C. R. White, Mr G.N. Doulton, and the contractor, Mr Seabrook. To the accompaniment of the school band, the pupils marched on to

the parade ground, and the milk (half a pint each) was distributed, the teachers also sharing in the distribution. Messrs. Rogers and Cotterill briefly addressed the children. ("Free Milk: Wanganui distribution.," 1937)

The children at Wanganui East School in 1937 can have been in little doubt of the importance of their participation in the earliest school milk scheme. The image of pupils marching for their milk to the accompaniment of the school band and important guests, lends a celebratory and slightly militaristic air to this event, underlining the sense of occasion. The drinking of the milk is here part of a ritual that situates the children as future citizens, the embodied future of the nation itself, supported by the adults who distribute the milk. Milk, as the iconic 'body building' food, was valued, especially for those who had endured its absence during hard times (Mein Smith, 2003, p. 80). Prioritising children through this daily ritual helped Aotearoa New Zealand to position itself as a world leader in child and maternal welfare (Labrum, 2009). The following photograph of primary school children drinking their school milk (Figure 3) was taken by an unknown photographer in around 1939. The picture indicates the substantial volume of the daily milk portion in relation to the children's size.

Figure 3

Auckland school children drinking the daily issue of free milk. (ca 1939)



Note. Ref: MNZ-2461-1/4-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand

Milk in schools provided a tangible example of the state prioritising child nutrition, but it was situated firmly within a comprehensive set of policies designed to prevent poverty and hunger in the first place (Castles, 1985). The Labour government, elected in 1935, sought to systematically address the physical health and material living conditions of New Zealand citizens through a broad suite of policies related to housing, healthcare, benefits for mothers, and full employment (Cheyne et al., 2008, p. 31). The emphasis on families being able to support themselves through sufficient earnings from a male bread-winner, supplemented by state provision for mothers, children and the elderly, resulted in what has been deemed the ‘Wage-earners’ welfare state’ (Wilson et al., 2013).

The ‘wage-earners’ welfare state’ reflected the emphasis in Aotearoa New Zealand on institutionalising fair pay and full (male) employment as the key means for increasing prosperity for the population. Historians of social policy have highlighted how this model was based on a classed, gendered and racialised notion of family, which would promote nurturing mothers and breadwinning fathers (Belgrave, 2004, p. 30; Labrum, 2009; McClure,

2013). These scholarly critiques of the assumptions underpinning the policy model during the period of welfare state building are important. A greater focus for this thesis is the extent to which the 1935 Labour government drew on narratives that ceased to locate poverty as an individual moral failing, and therefore sought to locate solutions to poverty within the structural means of the state.

Milk: The First ‘Super Food’

The status of milk itself, and milk’s significant nutritional value, is part of the storying of school milk, in both the past and present. There are many nutritious foods that children can benefit from, yet it is milk that has traditionally held a special place within iconic attempts to prioritise child welfare (Atkins, 2005; Thorley, 2014). The growth of a scientific approach to nutrition in the early twentieth century, which formed the backdrop for milk schemes internationally, merely reinforced traditional attachments to milk as a food possessing special properties (Atkins, 2016; Martiin, 2010). Milk’s elevation as a unique and superior food, ‘nature’s perfect food’, has a long history (DuPuis, 2002, p. 17). Historical and anthropological accounts of human use of cow’s milk reveal centuries of cross-cultural associations of sacredness, kindness, and nurturing with milk, especially for infants and children (McKee, 1997, p. 123). Central to understanding the role of milk historically is its position as an interface between human beings, nature and culture. Valenze (2011) reflects on the symbolic importance of milk:

In establishing a relationship with the product, societies seem to have generated a surplus of imaginative thoughts about milk, at times so thoroughly enmeshing it within beliefs that the actual nature of milk – if we can use that term – was eclipsed by everything else. (Valenze, 2011, p. 5)

The tendency for milk to attain distinctive status, and reflect aspects of specific historical settings, is evident in the New Zealand colonial context. Milk’s status as a superior food for building strong, healthy citizens has been investigated as a product of colonial history by Philippa Mein Smith (2003). Mein Smith explores milk as part of a New Zealand settler identity, an imperial identity, reinforced through proudly supplying agricultural products to Britain (Mein Smith, 2003, p. 79). Customary images of green grass, sunshine, cows grazing in pristine bucolic settings, were (and still are) part of the way in which Aotearoa New Zealand sold its products to the ‘mother country’, representing the Empire’s clean pastures. The triumph of dairy pasture over the wilderness and congruent ‘civilising’ of a new land

were bound up in the production of a food which was filled with goodness (King, 2003, p. 438).

In addition, the settlers themselves were to benefit from these superior, grass-fed products, as they, and in particular their children, were to build a strong ‘race’ of Britons in their new setting. Aotearoa New Zealand, for the settlers, could be seen as a place of refuge for British values and fortitude (Belich, 2001, p. 78). The growth of healthy children in this idyllic setting was a remedy for the growing fears for children raised in industrialised English and European cities (Fairburn, 2013; Firth, 1890, pp. 339-345). The following quote from the Victorian traveller to Aotearoa New Zealand, Froude (1886, p. 8), describes the fear that children being reared in industrialising cities could not advance the best version of English culture:

Here, with no sight of a green field, with no knowledge of flowers or forest, the blue heavens themselves dirtied with soot – amidst objects all mean and hideous, with no entertainment but the music hall, no pleasure but in the drink shop – hundreds of thousands of English children are now growing up into men and women.... was it to be supposed that a race of men could be so reared who could carry on the great traditions of our country?

The connection is made above between physical and moral potentiality, and the future for a once ‘great’ people. The children, who were deteriorating within dirty English cities, could be restored by taking their rightful place as civilisers of the farthest reaches of the Empire. The idea of children of the British Empire being restored to childhoods of fresh air, physical pursuits, nature’s best foods, and a rural idyll, dove-tailed into their parents’ drive to own land (Cheyne et al., 2008, p. 22). The emphasis on opportunity (prefaced on the appropriation of land from Māori) was applicable to adults, but for children it was to become their New Zealand birth-right (Belich, 2001, pp. 21-24). Wilson (1927, p. 235) observed that the descendants of British settlers to Aotearoa New Zealand were uniquely robust:

Under altered conditions, he will adapt himself to circumstances and develop a type of Briton suited to the climate and the work. Already there is a great change in the physical make-up of the fourth generation. ..The boys and girls attending the secondary schools (and naturally coming from homes where food and comfort are abundant) develop into splendid specimens of humanity.

Wilson's comments, from his book titled, 'The Empire's Junior Partner', promoted a healthy new setting for advancing the noble goals of British civilisation. Through access to land, the British could become a superior version of themselves.

Sharply declining Pākehā birth rates between the late 1800s and the 1920s fed into fears for the continuation of a strong white settlement (Belich, 2001, p. 181; Labrum, 2009). The role of mothers as enactors of progress by producing healthy future citizens became part of a narrative of patriotism, which would continue into the welfare state building period (Cheyne et al., 2008, p. 29; Mein Smith, 2002). Milk's established role in building strength for boys in settings where physical strength was important expanded to the promotion of maternal and infant health (Mein Smith, 2003). There was a growth of interest in anthropomorphic surveys in settler countries, which measured the height and weight of children, as well as 'Better baby' competitions to display healthy infants (Daley, 2018; Stern, 2002). Infant growth became a source of competition between Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, each seeking to have the heaviest specimens (Mein Smith, 2003).

These interests, in the production of health-giving agricultural products for Britain, the creation of pastoral scenes in a new land, and the colonisation of that land by a 'race' of physically and morally strong Britons, were all served by the elevation of milk as a quintessential New Zealand product. Milk is therefore embedded within colonial narratives relating not just to nutrition, but also to a certain concept of British informed 'New Zealandness', which gives it an ongoing symbolic importance. This distinctive positioning of milk, evident in narratives from the past, is still evident in the contemporary context.

The Momentum Behind the 1937 Milk Scheme

The introduction of free school milk in 1937, funded by government payments to farmers, arose out of a farming and voluntary led movement that had built up impetus during the Great Depression (New Zealand Milk Board, 1978). Most notably, the 'Smith family' (not an actual family but a nom de plume for a group of farmers and fundraisers) had begun supplying milk to children in the Wellington area, as an act of charity during hard times ("Milk for the schools: Smith family plan," 1934). The children being fed a half pint of milk, many undernourished, were said to have benefited greatly in both health and weight ("Milk for children: benefits derived," 1934). The Smiths fund-raised to help support the schemes, through a variety of means, including parties, and art auctions. Other voluntary groups had also supplied milk to children on an ad hoc basis, including milk provided by a Māori community for children in a 'native school' (Belich, 2001, p. 470). In 1934, the Irish

playwright and socialist, George Bernard Shaw, during a tour of Aotearoa New Zealand, famously recommended that the country supply all children with free milk at school (Belich, 2001; "Echoes of Bernard Shaw: More milk for children.," 1934). He made the plea in a radio interview, drawing attention to the great bounty of New Zealand's dairy produce and the low levels of consumption of such produce by New Zealanders themselves.

George Bernard Shaw's comments were made in the context of a growing campaign for providing milk to under-nourished children in Britain, supported by eminent nutritionists and doctors (Atkins, 2005; Welshman, 1997). One of the most prominent of these experts, Dr John Boyd Orr, published numerous articles highlighting the successful use of milk in improving child health, and some of these were reported in New Zealand newspapers (Orr & Leighton, 1929; Orr, 1928, 1937). Influential studies by Orr and others during the period prior to school milk, built on research from Harold Corry Mann (1926) which had demonstrated the weight gains made in malnourished children by using dairy products (Mann, 1926). The issue of children having inadequate intakes of newly identified micro-nutrients (vitamins and minerals) was gaining attention, although still subject to debate within the scientific community (Atkins, 2005, p. 61). In the UK, the problem of malnutrition was often framed as a lack of understanding on the part of working-class mothers about what constituted a healthy diet. Dr Orr disputed this assumption, claiming instead that cost was the limiting factor for poorer families (Orr, 1937, pp. 8-9). The work of experts such as Dr Orr was promoted in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the possibility for strengthening the next generation through milk provision gained attention locally, as well as abroad (Atkins, 2005; McKee, 1997; "More milk drinkers: Trend of the future," 1934; "More milk: Children's health: Farmers' union discussion," 1934).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the voluntary efforts of the Smith family and others, in organising and finding funding for the largest milk scheme, eventually led to the recognition of the need to secure more reliable funding than public donations could provide (Smith, 1934). In addition, a Royal Commission into the Dairy Industry in 1934 had recommended efforts be made to increase consumption of dairy products within Aotearoa New Zealand (Smith, 1943). A number of meetings began to take place, in which Smith family representatives, The New Zealand Farmers Union, and various political and medical figures discussed possibilities for expanding free milk provision ("More milk drinkers: Trend of the future," 1934). Dr Muriel Bell, an influential nutritionist and medical researcher, became a prominent New Zealand campaigner on the benefits of milk for children, emphasising the role of milk in building strong bones and teeth (Brown, 2018). The emergence of groups and

individuals who sought to establish government support for school milk contributed to public awareness of the possible benefits of a centrally funded milk scheme ("Echoes of Bernard Shaw: More milk for children.," 1934; "More milk: Children's health: Farmers' union discussion," 1934).

A crucial feature of arguments for a state funded school milk programme was the understanding that relying on private donations was insufficient to support the continuing supply of free milk to children ("Echoes of Bernard Shaw: More milk for children.," 1934; "Free milk: Children's supply: A national scheme request to minister," 1935). The ad hoc and insecure nature of provision through means of charity was hampering efforts to improve child nutrition. This highlights an enduring weakness of charity as a solution to poverty, as the need to keep convincing donors to maintain their contribution leaves assistance vulnerable to the discretion and preferences of the wealthy and powerful (Jones & Novak, 2012). Leaving the funding of the milk to private donors was failing to secure reliable delivery of the scheme across the country, meaning inequities continued. A milk scheme that could be withdrawn at any time, and which was offered in a geographically disparate way, could not be seen as addressing nutritional needs for all the nation's children.

The Labour Government, elected in 1935, was able to build on the momentum generated by campaigners, farmers, doctors, and research from abroad to create a scheme that was both practical and expressed aspirations for the nation's future. Dairy farmers had been struggling with a milk surplus during the Great Depression, as a result of lower market demand, and therefore welcomed the government's decision to pay farmers to supply the school milk scheme (Brown, 1992). By attempting to reach all schoolchildren with a milk ration, the scheme was congruent with the promotion of universality and avoided the stigma of charity for the needy (Belgrave, 2004, pp. 28-31). The scheme reportedly proceeded with few difficulties and a high level of public support (New Zealand Milk Board, 1978, pp. 2-3). The twin goods of child nutrition and supporting farmers were deemed worthy of government funding, alongside other policies which took the approach of investing in families (Labrum, 2009, pp. 407-409).

The Smith family had spent years canvassing funds to supply thousands of children in the Wellington area with free milk at school. When the government stepped in, in order to transform their work into a nation-wide scheme, covering all schools and kindergartens, the Smiths did not relax their efforts to the extent one might expect. Instead, the Smiths continued to fund-raise in order to extend the reach of the government's scheme beyond school children. Accordingly, The Evening Post reported that: "Supplies will be provided for

under-nourished children not of school age, old age pensioners in need of additional nourishment, and children who are absent from school because of sickness” (“Free milk: Smith family's work,” 1937). This news report reflects how, at this time, the problem of hungry school children was not separated from the wider context of poverty. Thus, there was an awareness of the extent to which need and vulnerability impacts on whole households.

Social Security as ‘Practical Insurance’

More than 30 years later, the original milk in schools scheme was discontinued. In 1967, school milk was deemed to no longer warrant the state expenditure as child nutrition was not a government priority (New Zealand Milk Board, 1978, p. 5). Employment conditions and affordable housing contributed to low levels of food insecurity during the mid- twentieth century in Aotearoa New Zealand, although Māori were disproportionately subject to economic disadvantage (Belich, 2001, p. 474). In addition to economic growth, the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s have been identified as decades when the welfare state built on the principles of the 1938 Social Security Act with increasingly expansive entitlement and provision for New Zealand citizens (Belgrave, 2004; Labrum, 2009; Tennant, 2007). In the post-war period, the social security system was characterised as a source of national pride (Labrum, 2009). For example, a 1949 film showcasing New Zealand’s bountiful lifestyle for international audiences described the nation’s abundant and healthy homes, generous maternity allowances and support for the elderly. The promotional film describes social security as: “a sort of practical insurance against old age and misfortune” (Forlong, 1949). Social security, in this example, is presented as a pragmatic strategy for protecting citizens from hardship.

In 1972, the Royal Commission of Enquiry into Social Security reaffirmed and extended the role of social security in protecting citizens, stating that:

Everyone should be able to enjoy a standard of living much like that of the rest of the community and thus is able to feel a sense of participation and belonging to the community...[so that] no-one... is so poor that they cannot eat the sort of food that New Zealanders usually eat, wear the same sort of clothes, [and] take a moderate part in those activities which the ordinary New Zealander takes part in as a matter of course. (p. 65)

This quote from the 1972 Royal Commission indicates the extent to which the protections offered by social security during this period were connected with concepts of social

participation and inclusion. The ideal that those requiring state support could sustain a quality of daily life comparable to that of other citizens stands in contrast to the more austere, conditional and ultimately punitive ethos of state provision since the 1990s (McClure, 2013).

As fascinating as the story is, a comprehensive history of the welfare state is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, the following section takes up the story of hunger in Aotearoa New Zealand as it begins to re-emerge in the public awareness from the 1990s. I explore features of the social and political context for the re-introduction of free school milk as a pilot scheme in 2012, which was then followed by nationwide implementation in 2013.

Free School Milk in 2013

This section examines the context for the re-introduction of free milk in schools. In 2012, when the pilot programme for Fonterra Milk for Schools was initiated, concerns about child nutrition had again become salient. Poverty and food insecurity rose steeply from the mid-1980s onwards, as described in Chapter One of this thesis, with resulting impacts on children (Boston & Chapple, 2015). Prior to the 1990s, schools had informally responded to small numbers of children arriving at school without food, and this issue attracted little attention outside of individual schools (Wynd, 2011). From the late 1990s, teachers, principals and charities started to report an increasing number of children turning up at schools without food (Uttley, 1997, p. 85; Wynd, 2011, p. 7). By the early to mid-2000s, capacity to relieve child hunger became a major problem in some schools. (Gerritsen, 2005; Wynd, 2009). School principals and teachers, particularly in low-income areas, began to question publicly why schools were responsible for managing this distressing issue (Anscombe, 2009).

Hunger in Schools: Precarity Made Visible

Despite the reluctance of various governments to engage decisively with poverty reduction, grassroots pressure for action on child hunger grew during the 2000s (Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty, 2012; Dale et al., 2011). The focus on 'child poverty', as discussed in Chapter One, gave anti-poverty campaigners moral authority that could side-step potentially 'undeserving' adults. Hungry school children provided an everyday example of the suffering being endured by vulnerable citizens. For example, in 2012, amidst increasing media attention towards 'child poverty' in Aotearoa New Zealand, high profile investigative journalist, John Campbell, began a sustained lunchbox campaign on his weeknight current affairs programme, Campbell Live. The prime-time television show with high audience numbers featured footage recorded in

schools in different neighbourhoods, where they asked children to leave their lunches on their desks before going outside. The footage of children's lunchboxes provided stark contrast between the absent or very meagre lunchboxes prevailing in low-decile schools with the abundant and varied lunches found in wealthier schools (Clayton, 2012). The principal of the low-decile school featured in the programme, John Shearer, was emotionally affected by the sight of the empty spaces where lunchboxes should have sat on the desks in his classroom:

When you physically see what's on the table that they've got to eat, it sort of hits you pretty hard. It's a graphic illustration sometimes of how little they have...I knew it was little but again, just seeing it as it was on the tables, it – it made me a bit upset. (Clayton, 2012)

This school principal's comments demonstrate the power of visual images to convey material deprivation in concrete terms. Absent or insufficient lunches were displayed in their classroom context, sitting on school desks, a setting that is familiar to the Campbell Live show viewers who have children in school. The images provided a vivid illustration of inequality experienced by children and were subsequently shared widely on social media.

The concerns of teachers, community advocates and principals were given voice in a mainstream media setting by the Campbell Live coverage, which launched a fundraising campaign for charity KidsCan, to provide thousands more children with donated food at school (KidsCan, 2012a). Campbell Live reporters continued to highlight the issue and revisit schools, as well as extending awareness of food insecurity in homes (Campbell Live, 2014). Compassion was central to the campaign, and to prompting people's emotional response to child deprivation in their own country. The charity, KidsCan drew on this increased awareness through partnering with Campbell Live, attracting donations from viewers of the show to fund food in schools. The KidsCan website states:

KidsCan is a voice for children who cannot speak for themselves, bringing into focus what life is like for children living in hardship in New Zealand. We believe our practical approach to alleviating hardship has significantly increased Kiwis' sense of personal responsibility to ensure children 'In Our Own Backyard™' have the opportunity of brighter futures. (KidsCan, 2012b)

In the KidsCan promotional materials, the emphasis is on individual New Zealanders responding to children's immediate needs through personal decisions to donate, based on empathy. The publicity from Campbell Live generated donations for KidsCan, reinforcing the

notion that compassionate individuals should support the alleviation of food insecurity through charitable donations (Mediaworks, 2012).

In 2012, The Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on solutions to child poverty (EAG) recommended that hungry children, especially in low-decile primary and intermediate schools, should be provided with food at school, potentially through partnerships but led by a government strategy (Children's Commissioner's EAG, 2012, p. 60). Treasury undertook its own assessment, advising ministers that the EAG's suggestion of government input into feeding children "seems to have been picked up widely in the public domain, largely in terms of whether breakfast should be provided for some primary school aged children" (The Treasury, 2012, p. 4). Treasury acknowledged the public pressure accumulating around the issue but cautioned against substantive government involvement in alleviating child hunger, highlighting the potential escalating costs of taking responsibility for this phenomenon.

The 2012 Treasury report emphasised the potential for 'scope creep' as an argument against government funding food in schools. 'Scope creep' is the notion that once an intervention is initiated, even in a tightly targeted way, the policy focus can expand and extend its remit. In the case of school children, the fear is that once the government funds any form of food provision for children in low-decile schools, claims can be made for expanding provision. In this setting, Treasury warned the government to maintain a tight focus on parents' responsibility for feeding their children and that any feeding programmes should be characterised as temporary, short-term relief (The Treasury, 2012).

Subsequently, in 2013, government funding was contributed towards expanding an existing school breakfast programme in low-decile schools, Kickstart Breakfast, delivered in a partnership model with food donated by corporations and community volunteer input. The government reiterated its position that parents were still responsible for feeding their children but breakfasts were to be provided for the purpose of supporting children's capacity to learn at school (Backhouse 2013). In addition to not absolving parents of responsibility, the costs to government would be minimised by a partnership model. The then Prime Minister, John Key stated that: "By teaming up with Fonterra and Sanitarium, and deepening our support for KidsCan, we are building on the existing strengths of these organisations, while keeping the costs to taxpayers down" (Key, 2013). The comment illustrates alignment between the government's decision to contribute to an existing philanthropic programme and Treasury's advice to avoid directly providing food in schools (The Treasury, 2012).

Opposition political parties, supported by community advocacy groups, campaigned for a fully funded national food in schools programme for all decile one and two schools (Barclay, 2013). On 8 November 2012, a bill proposing to provide free breakfasts and lunches for all children in decile one and two schools nationally was drawn from the ballot. The Education (Breakfast and Lunch Programmes in Schools) Amendment Bill, known as the "Feed the Kids Bill", was initiated by Māori Party member, Hone Harawira and supported by a broad-based Community Coalition for Food in Schools (Turei, 2013). Despite opposition party support for the bill, it was eventually defeated in Parliament in 2015 by the centre -right National-led government and its allied parties (Burrow, 2015).

Strategies to Story the Causes of Hunger in Schools

Three strategies were prevalent within dominant political storying of the issue of growing numbers of hungry children in schools. Firstly, when denial of growing hunger in schools was becoming untenable (for example, following public reaction to the 2012 Campbell Live show lunchbox feature), minimisation and obfuscation of the *extent* of hunger was deployed. One means of minimising the issue was to favour anecdotal rather than academic evidence, demonstrated in the following exchange between then newly re-elected Prime Minister John Key and interviewer Guyon Espiner on the public broadcast radio station, Radio New Zealand National in 2014:

Espiner: To what extent are children still going to school hungry?

Key: When I go around schools, it's a little anecdotal because it depends which schools you go to.... it pretty quickly shakes down to about 15% of the kids there that are clearly in need, so that's probably the number you're looking at.

Espiner: So you're saying we still have 15% of children going to school hungry?

Key: Yeah. But there'll be a variety of reasons. They may just be taking the opportunity to have breakfast (provided in low-decile schools) because they're unsure whether they're going to get a lot of lunch or maybe a lot of dinner, they may be hungry, maybe a variety of reasons, but that would be my guess, that it's about 15%.

Despite conceding that his estimate is anecdotal, Key states that around 15% of children in schools are clearly in need, based on what he has observed on school visits. Yet, when Espiner reiterates the figure of 15%, the Prime Minister speculates on various reasons that this group of children might seek breakfast at school, implying the children choose school breakfasts for reasons other than household poverty.

Later in the same interview, Key states that government funding for school meals is not necessary because: “the feedback we get around lunch is that the vast bulk of children do come to school with lunch and while there are one or two that don’t, the schools understand that and they deal with that situation very discreetly” (Radio New Zealand, 2014b). This comment appears to contradict both his earlier summation of 15% of children going hungry at school, as well as the evidence from the Campbell Live investigation and reports from school principals ‘on the ground’ (Black, 2017; Clayton, 2012; Clements, 2016). The effect is to reassure the public, who are perhaps more removed from these situations, that poverty and hunger in Aotearoa New Zealand are not as bad as has been reported in media.

The second strategy for storying the issue of growing numbers of hungry school children is to argue that a possible need to ameliorate child hunger does not concede state responsibility for hunger or poverty. Intensifying focus on parental irresponsibility distances the issue from structural factors. For example, in a newspaper article about the growing need to feed children at school, the Social Development Minister Paula Bennett provided the following reasons for child hunger: “...problem debt, substance abuse, poor decision-making, and a history of neglect were common reasons why some parents were not taking full responsibility for their children” (Carson, 2013). Paula Bennett reaffirmed this interpretation of child hunger during an election campaign meeting in Hamilton on the 15th of September, 2014, stating that ‘Poverty is not an excuse for children not getting what they need’. To underpin her statement, Paula Bennett made historical comparisons to appeal to the mainly older audience at the meeting. One of these was the assertion that parents in the 1930s and 1940s looked after their children properly, despite experiencing greater poverty than that experienced by parents in the present period.

The positioning of parenting as a key determinant of a child’s life chances is not new (Crossley, 2018; Jensen, 2018). Nonetheless, Bennett’s comments above reflect an intensified political project to detach parenting from material circumstances and situate parenting practices as a locus for resolving social problems (Dermott, 2012; Gillies, 2008; Jensen, 2010). The resulting policy rhetoric positions parenting practices as a de-contextualised variable that can be altered without the need to alleviate other problems, such as poverty or

educational disadvantage (Beddoe, 2014; Hackell, 2016). Promoting the idea that parenting practices can mitigate the impact of poverty on children, without the need for extensive state intervention or expenditure, is consistent with a neoliberal approach, as outlined in Chapter One of this thesis.

Aside from overt claims that parents are to blame for food insecurity, there is also the more subtle and ostensibly more compassionate assumption that parents simply lack knowledge, skills or common sense in relation to shopping for food and cooking (Graham, Stolte, et al., 2018). Yet, a focus on families' assumed skills deficits is often another means to direct blame on individuals living with precarity (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017). Emphasising the inadequacy of parents' budgeting and cooking skills, particularly by comparing them with frugal previous generations, reinforces the notion that structural change is unnecessary. For example, a media article claimed that anyone can eat well if they learn effective food budgeting: "For generations, scrimping mums and struggling students have lived off low-cost, healthy fare, rather than splashing out on tasty takeaways and crying poor" (Meadows, 2014). Researchers have noted a significant preference in New Zealand policy for nutritional education and information programmes, rather than initiatives that address the prohibitive costs of providing a nutritious diet (Pluim et al., 2018; Rey Vasquez, 2013). There are undoubtedly families that struggle with budgeting and cooking skills, some of whom are wealthy and some of whom are on low incomes. Frequently, attributing child hunger to parents' lack of cooking ability serves to distract from the realities of how meagre some people's food budgets actually are, and this assumption also reinforces the idea that food insecurity can be resolved through low-cost 'educative' means.

In addition to obfuscation and focusing on parental deficiencies, a third key strategy evident in the storying of hungry school children was an emphasis on redistribution of resources already allocated to those in need. The idea that the share of resources cannot be increased overall for vulnerable citizens has been spurred on by international 'austerity' rhetoric following the global financial crisis (Clarke & Newman, 2012). Such austerity thinking has become a taken for granted feature of the New Zealand political landscape. Accordingly, the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) responded to The Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group's report on solutions to child poverty (2012) with briefing papers later revealed under The Official Information Act, supporting the view that no additional money should be spent, despite the poverty revealed in the report (Edwards, 2014). The MSD advised no additional funding, no increase in support for beneficiary families (the poorest households) and suggested that family tax credits for families in paid work should be reduced for older

children and the money re-directed towards younger children. The Prime Minister John Key agreed with this, telling RNZ political editor, Brent Edwards that: “In fact there’s been quite a number of reports that have made the case that probably too much money is put into older children and not enough put into younger children” (Edwards, 2014). The Children’s Commissioner from 2011-2016, Russell Wills, appointed to advocate for children’s wellbeing across governmental and non-governmental settings, expressed agreement for taking money away from older children in order to target the youngest children. Wills stated that: “If you’re thinking about this in terms of bang for our tax-payer buck, we want that money to go where it makes the biggest difference, and that is for the youngest children living in severe and chronic poverty” (Radio New Zealand, 2014a). These trade-offs being made between the hunger of younger and older children reflect the extent of acquiescence to neoliberal austerity rhetoric. Subsequently, other priorities are excluded from the discussion, as are the consequences of failing to meet the needs of older children.

This section explored dominant political approaches to children going hungry in Aotearoa New Zealand during the period from 2000 to 2018, identifying core strategies of denial, minimisation, blaming individual parents or targeted groups for their ‘dependency’, and emphasising constraints on resources allocated by the state. The next section considers the ways in which hunger in schools was being conceptualised beyond the political sphere, shaping structures of feeling around what should be done to alleviate the problem. Media attention on school hunger created an important focal point for New Zealand citizens’ concepts of poverty and how it should (or should not) be addressed.

Feed the Children?: Narrative Tropes and Responses to Hunger in Schools

Once news media had revealed the extent of hunger within schools, the issue instigated responses from numerous groups and individuals. Some of these responses to hungry children challenged dominant explanations for poverty. For example, The Green Party and some advocacy groups highlighted growing inequality and precarity as drivers of food insecurity, advocating redistribution of resources towards low-income families (Barclay, 2013; St John & Wynd, 2008; Wynd, 2011). More commonly, politicians, groups and citizens located the issue of hunger in schools within prevailing dominant narratives about the causes and consequences of poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Dominant narratives built around decrying welfare dependency and concurrent assumptions about plentiful availability and accessibility of food in Aotearoa New Zealand, formed the backdrop for core narrative tropes coalescing within media and policy. Such

tropes function within broader ideological narratives about poverty, serving as a type of rhetorical shorthand that appeals to common-sense understandings about poverty (Morrison, 2019). Comments from politicians earlier in this chapter (for example quotes from John Key and Paula Bennett) draw on some of these characterisations through their denials of need and framing low-income parents as beneficiaries who require strict management in order to save them from ‘dependency’. The power of persistent tropes lies in their historical and cultural resonance and status as common sense, as well as their overt promotion by supporters of neoliberal policies (Hall & O’shea, 2013; Morrison, 2019). Core characterisations of children and parents, as well as assertions about food insecurity, are recognisable and often co-exist within source material, forming dominant or subordinate tropes within existing poverty narratives. Although the tropes identified in this section often occur in relation to each other, they each apply a distinctive lens to the problem of school hunger, foregrounding particular interpretations of the phenomenon. I have encapsulated their key elements within the following titles: ‘responsibilisation’; ‘taxpayer sovereignty’; ‘communitarianism’; ‘virtuous benevolence’; and ‘Third Way pragmatism’. I identify characteristics of each trope and provide examples from legacy media, social media, and policy contexts.

Responsibilisation

The concept of responsibilisation was initially recognised in Foucault’s work on governmentality, and subsequently developed further by scholars investigating state/citizen relations within neoliberal contexts (Foucault, 1975/1991; Peters, 2017; Rose, 1999). Trnka and Trundle (2017) highlight the extent to which calls to responsibility often signify a disinvestiture of state or collective responsibility, instead favouring the location of responsibility within an empowered and enterprising individual, who exercises freedom of choice. In the case of hungry school children, responsibilisation is applied to parents, locating child hunger as solely a consequence of parental failure or wilful negligence.

Examples of the responsibilisation of low-income parents were evident in a national television network debate in 2013, entitled, “Our kids, the problem’s not poverty, it’s parenting. Do you agree?” The live televised debate featured high profile/populist commentators on social issues, and invited the viewers to vote on whether parents or poverty are to blame for children’s material hardship. The following example is an exchange between a reporter moderating the debate, Linda Clarke, and Christine Rankin, a socially conservative politician, commentator and former head of the MSD (1998-2001).

Linda Clarke: Can I just come back to the question of poverty, and Christine maybe this is a question for you. If you are talking about feeding children breakfast, how much does it cost to feed a child a bowl of Cornies?

Christine Rankin: Something like 37 cents per serve. And you know, it is pathetic to say that families can't do that. If their children are their first priority, they're going to spend that 37 cents a day and put that food in their bellies". (3 News, 2013)

Rankin contends that the cost of breakfast is so trivial that only parental neglect would impede it. In emphasising the small amount of money and effort required, there is no acknowledgement of others within the household requiring resources, nor what the cost of breakfast means in relative terms in a household where every dollar is being counted.

The logical argument that follows this diagnosis of parental neglect is that feeding children in schools will not solve the underlying problem of parental irresponsibility, and could in fact worsen the problem by further removing responsibility from parents. Parents are characterised as choosing their circumstances, which means that they are seen as perpetrating suffering for themselves, their children and even future generations. The following extract from a newspaper column about the introduction of breakfasts in low-decile schools, states that providing children with food:

.... means ignoring the almighty problem of parents who are failing to feed them in the first place. In a country like New Zealand you have to be doing an extraordinary number of things wrong not to be able to feed your child a piece of toast in the morning. The government has essentially given those parents the green light to maintain their poor habits, which will no doubt be passed on to their children. (Henson, 2013)

The comments above suggest that it is unacceptable to feed children at school because doing so does not hold their parents sufficiently accountable. Such an approach would sit comfortably with a Malthusian framework, which posits that it is better to let 'the poor' die out than to help them (Malthus, 1803). Instead, those deploying this trope largely advocate for the application of punitive legal or social service sanctions in order to compel parents to improve their "delinquent behaviour" (Craig, 2012; Harkins & Lugo-Ocando, 2016).

The appeal of responsabilising low-income parents lies partially in its capacity to juxtapose characterisations of irresponsible, feckless parents with responsible parents who

‘make good choices’ and prioritise their children. The contrast between responsible and irresponsible parents appears comparable to the Victorian-era (and earlier) characterisations of the deserving/undeserving poor (Katz, 2013). Emphasising a moral binary between irresponsible and responsible parents serves to deny collective social responsibility, embodying the concept of amoral familism, a recognised trait within neoliberal societies where economic independence is valued (Layton, 2010). Amoral familism posits responsibility for a family’s economic security solely with the individuals making up the immediate family, denying any sense of solidarity with others outside of their own family unit (Reay, 2014).

The following reader’s comment below a news article about feeding children in schools encapsulates the position of amoral familism: “other people’s children are not another parents’ responsibility. I don’t feel responsible for other children at my son’s school. I am only obligated to look after my son so don’t go trying to pull the guilt trip on people” (Steencamp, 2019). This commenter resists the idea that they should feel any sense of responsibility for other people’s children, allowing them to avoid moral culpability for other children going hungry at their child’s school. The focus on delineating responsibility to one’s own children provides justification for blaming parents who are perceived as not performing their duties towards their children.

Responsibilising parents provides considerable fuel to pejorative depictions of low-income parents that are deployed during discussions around hunger in schools. Stereotypes of work-shy, profligate, lazy and sexually promiscuous ‘welfare queens’ tend to emerge (Cassiman, 2007; Jensen, 2014; Tyler, 2013). Further, a racialising/cultural element is evident in the New Zealand context. The tendency to position low-income parents as a deficient ‘other’ group finds ready expression through characterisations of Māori and Pacific parents that reinforce negative cultural stereotypes (Beddoe, 2014; Martin et al., 2021). In 2013, there were depictions of families who were unable to afford children’s lunches that stigmatised Pacific or Māori parents, for example, in cartoons published in newspapers and comments made during the previously referenced television debate (3 News, 2013; Dally & Daly, 2013). Whilst there was public resistance expressed to racist characterisations of parents experiencing food insecurity, for some sectors of New Zealand society, such characterisations were justified and fuelled through a focus on perceived parental irresponsibility.

Taxpayer Sovereignty

A second prevalent trope also stresses parental responsibility but foregrounds the position that the government/state (therefore taxpayers) should not pay for ensuring that children are fed. The state should have minimal involvement in this issue. At one end of the spectrum are those who reject the idea of taxpayer funded food in schools because providing food is viewed as completely unnecessary in the first place. The comments below are from Muriel Newman, an MP in the right-wing ACT party from 1996-2005 and founder of conservative think-tank, New Zealand Centre for Political Research. Echoing assumptions discussed earlier about the trivial cost of breakfast, Muriel Newman states:

Long-suffering taxpayers know that child poverty on a scale touted by the activists is a con. It only costs a few cents a day to give a child a bowl of porridge and some milk for breakfast, and a sandwich and some seasonal fruit for lunch. (Newman, 2015)

Newman claims there is no ‘real’ poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand and therefore no justification for (“long suffering”) taxpayers contributing towards feeding children.

An emphasis on minimising costs to the state nuances the binaries between the deserving/undeserving poor and responsible/irresponsible parents, by contrasting ‘hard working taxpayers’ with presumed ‘dependent’ recipients of government money (Hackell, 2013; Wiggan, 2012). Whilst Newman’s comments deny that there is any need to feed children in schools, other commentators concede that hunger in schools should be addressed, but ought to be funded with as little input as possible from taxpayers. The blogger, market researcher/pollster and media advisor, David Farrar explains:

The cost of a breakfast at home is almost trivial. But until those parents are feeding their kids properly, I’d far rather have an initiative involving the community, charities, businesses with some Govt resources – than merely saying the Government should be held responsible for feeding all school children”. (Farrar, 2013)

Farrar recognises the need to take some kind of action regarding the issue of children going hungry. Nonetheless, the state needs to remain in the background and instead philanthropic input from businesses, charities, social enterprises and partnerships should form the primary remedies to hunger in schools. Those who care about this issue are free to respond by choosing to support initiatives, but should not be compelled to contribute financially through the mode of state provision. Citizens who are taxpayers are deemed to have earned the right

to make choices, suggesting individuals should be able to decide whether they contribute money towards the issue of child hunger or not (Weiss, 2001).

Communitarianism

The preference for non-state responses that is expressed within the taxpayer sovereignty trope above, is also a feature of recurrent appeals to ‘community’. Advocates of ‘communitarianism’ argue against state-led solutions, but do so primarily on the basis of a moral, rather than economic argument (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Etzioni, 2014). The optimal means for helping hungry children are deemed to lie within community responses. Consequently, hunger in schools should be addressed through empowering individuals, families and communities to develop self-reliant strategies. Centralised state responses to hunger are seen as perpetuating dependency and situating solutions away from the people who need to develop localised solutions. The following extract is from an article published on the Maxim website, a pro-business organisation that funds reports into New Zealand policy:

So what happens when you replace community initiative with government handouts?.... These things have to come organically through communities, tended by people like my friends in South Auckland and allowed to grow by the whānau and neighbours who make up those communities.....It should be communities at the heart, not schools. And definitely not the state. (Silloway Smith, 2014)

The argument that the problem of state dependency must be resolved through communities developing innovative solutions, sits comfortably with many citizens in Aotearoa New Zealand (Larner & Craig, 2005). The communitarian narrative resonates with dominant historic settler attachments to concepts of resourceful and capable individuals and neighbourhoods taking responsibility for improving their local conditions (without recourse to state interference) (Cheyne et al., 2008, p. 17). Material needs are often connected with other pro-social goals, such as involving families in their child’s learning (Moir, 2015). Calls for backyard or school vegetable gardens, cooking and ‘healthy eating’ classes, and citizens taking an entrepreneurial approach to generating their own local funding or food donations are prevalent in mainstream media and social media settings (Bekhit, 2016; Good Neighbour, 2019; Graham & Jackson, 2017; Wynne Lockhart, 2021). The localised responses favoured in Aotearoa New Zealand therefore find ready expression in calls to community

empowerment, despite some tensions and complexities with how contemporary communities are conceptualised and defined (Clarke et al., 2000; McClure, 2013, p. 4).

In addition, communitarianism can appeal to groups who feel historically disadvantaged by state governance and seek greater control over their own solutions. The following comments were made by National Party MP, Claudette Hauiti during the Parliamentary debate about introducing state funded food in schools, in which Hauiti appeals directly to Hone Harawira, the Māori member of parliament who originally introduced the ‘Feed the kids’ bill. Hauiti opposed food in schools by arguing that greater dignity lies in community capability:

I do not believe that that background, that life, that education, and that teaching from our parents back then in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s was so that we could then turn round and tell the State to feed our children. I do not think that when we marched in the “Not one acre more” protest against land confiscation with Whina Cooper—and Hone and his whānau were the absolute leaders of that, as well—it was about us then turning round and telling the State to feed our children. (Hauiti, 2014)

Hauiti’s concern in this comment is the disempowerment of Māori when the State takes centralised control over a role traditionally undertaken within their own communities. Although on one level, Hauiti is espousing the stance advocated by her governing party, Hauiti also appeals to past campaigns for Māori rights, characterising food in schools as a backward step in Māori self-determination. Whilst the concept of devolving power to communities has been welcomed by various groups, in practice such devolvement has often initiated complex and conditional contractual relationships between the state and non-governmental organisations (Grey & Sedgwick, 2013). In addition, devolvement to communities does not represent empowerment if resources are not sufficient to address historic and substantial underinvestment issues (Masters-Awatere, 2017)

Virtuous Benevolence

A fourth recurrent trope echoes the sentiments expressed above regarding the need for responses to child hunger to reflect local engagement. Benevolence is particularly emphasised, grounded within the historical imagination of the deserving poor and the moral value of compassion (Kidd, 1996). The argument is made that responses from individuals, charities and social enterprises that are motivated by compassion are a force for good in our

communities and reflect an essential kindness in our national character. The focus of action that this narrative supports is often personal engagement with charitable giving on the basis that: “The essence of private charity is voluntariness, individuals helping one another through love of their neighbour.... There is no compassion in spending someone else’s money – even for a good cause” (Tanner, 2003, p. 97). Charitable giving is therefore elevated above political responses, because there are positive benefits of reaching out to those less fortunate than ourselves, including the value of relationships forged through charitable responses. The notion of choice in relation to philanthropic giving is also encapsulated in this trope, as it promotes individual choices about philanthropic giving, based on feelings of personal connection with particular causes (Mohan & Breeze, 2016).

The ‘virtuous benevolence’ trope is evident within materials promoting the satisfaction of volunteering, especially the connections that can be made between people helping and those who are recipients of help. In addition to helping charity recipients, volunteering is promoted as a source of happiness for volunteers (Dean, 2015; Piliavin, 2003). For example, the following comments on a company’s website following a staff collaboration day, making lunches for low-decile schools: “The feedback about how people feel afterwards is incredible, and explains the 3-month waitlist to volunteer. You will feel something you won’t doing anything else in NZ” (Stoyanof, 2018). In this extract the opportunity to help feed children is positioned as a positive experience for those participating as helpers.

Third Way Pragmatism

Calls to pragmatism endorse various responses that ensure school children’s immediate needs are met, regardless of who is responsible. This approach is also congruent with the Third Way inflection of neoliberalism that was influential from the late 1990s in Aotearoa New Zealand, as discussed on pages 25-28 in Chapter One of this thesis (Cheyne et al., 2008). The resulting trope in relation to hungry school children is the claim that debating the causes of the problem will not get children fed and we should care that innocent children are going hungry, more than we care about why. David Shearer, a Labour party politician from 2009-2016, explains in a news media interview:

I hear people argue that this is the responsibility of parents. We can debate that endlessly but it won’t change this reality: tomorrow morning kids will still turn up to school hungry. And a hungry kid is a distracted kid who can disrupt an entire classroom. (Hartvelt, 2012)

There are three rationales commonly discernible within Third Way pragmatism arguments. Firstly, children's rights may be a key obligation, emphasising the moral imperative to prioritise children's needs because they are vulnerable and not responsible for the position they are in (Cockburn, 2013). The following statement, made by New Zealand First MP Tracey Martin during the 'Feed the kids' Bill parliamentary debate, illustrates this children's rights perspective:

If we have children showing up at schools without food, let us have a conversation about, one, feeding the children appropriately and, two, fixing the cause. If we ignore this issue, if we do not have a conversation about putting the children first in this issue—not again talking about the adults when it is the children who are paying the price. (Martin, 2014)

Martin's comment does advocate for addressing the cause of child hunger, suggesting a systemic solution is necessary. Nonetheless, she constructs her argument around the moral priority of feeding children in the present and putting their needs first. The idea that children should be helped as a matter of fairness is one feature of the Third Way pragmatism trope. The innocence and vulnerability of children is often emphasised (Jackson, 2014).

A second inflection of Third Way pragmatism is framed more specifically around thwarted educational opportunities and consequent damage to children's future aspirations (demonstrated in the comment above from David Shearer) (Anscombe, 2009, p. 81). Concerns about behavioural impacts from hunger in classrooms can encompass the idea that such impacts might cause educational disruption for others in the learning environment, either directly or through excessive demands on teachers' energy. An example is the following comment by the organiser of a charity event in Christchurch aiming to raise funds to provide breakfast in a decile one school: "When they have something to eat, they are more attentive and the bullying stops" (Lee, 2012). The behaviour of children who are hungry is thus framed as a problem with implications for others in the school, as well as a problem for the child who is hungry.

A third means by which Third Way pragmatism characterises the problem of hungry children is by appeals to its present and future economic costs. In addition to the future costs implicated in significant numbers of children being unable to reach their educational, and therefore economic, potential, the overall costs to health, the justice and welfare systems may be cited (Lister, 2003). For example, The Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on solutions to child poverty (2012) argued that alleviating child poverty is not simply

morally justifiable but also economically prudent: “Currently, the economic costs of child poverty are in the range of \$6-8 billion per year and considerable sums of public money are spent annually on remedial interventions. Failure to alleviate child poverty now will damage the nation’s long-term prosperity” (p. vi). A cost-benefit analysis approach to child hunger justifies expenditure on children in terms of preventing future liabilities (Kjørholt, 2013).

Regardless of the motivation for action on child hunger, concern for children’s thwarted potential does not necessarily extend to compassion for their parents, whānau, or communities. For example, the following reader’s comment was posted online in response to a national newspaper’s request for views on why children are going hungry:

I would rather these children get fed and learn all they can at school, then make something of themselves. If they aren't tired and hungry they could be eager to learn, go to university or become what they wish. Then hopefully they don't grow up to be useless losers like their parents. (“Your Views”, 2007)

The comment demonstrates that expressions of compassion and fairness in relation to feeding hungry children can accommodate notions of the ‘deserving and undeserving poor’ that condemn their parents to harsh judgement.

The narrative tropes explored in this chapter provide resources for citizens’ understandings about hunger in schools and its causes, but they are also resources for determining social and material responses to hunger in schools. The following subsections explore some of the activities undertaken within schools to address hunger. There are three predominant models for providing food in schools in the period from 2000 to 2018. First, I examine the role of charity and some of the features of a charity or NGO model for addressing hunger in schools. Secondly, the provision of food in schools by corporations is explored in the form of donations, and partnerships that combine corporate, NGO and government resources. A third model for feeding school children is the more recent development of social enterprise, an attempt to combine business strategy with social goals. After examining the key features of these three models for providing food in schools, I return to the case of Fonterra Milk for Schools and its role within the landscape of contemporary schemes.

Charity: “Feed the Kids Heroes”

New Zealanders’ actions in response to the crisis of child hunger are shaped by the cultural, historical and political languages available to them (Kidd, 1996). Neoliberal explanations of

poverty, parenting and blame that were explored earlier in this chapter form part of a *structure of feeling* in relation to hunger in schools (Jensen, 2018; Jensen & Tyler, 2015; Shildrick et al., 2016). Nevertheless, such discussions about responsibility for the problem do not alleviate children's immediate hunger. The esteem afforded to virtuous benevolence, identified earlier in this chapter, demonstrates ongoing attachment to historical idealised notions of the moral value in charity (Devine, 2014, p. 997). Likewise, narratives built around communitarianism hold enduring appeal within a settler society that values community capability (Cheyne et al., 2008, p. 132). Accordingly, a relatively "hands on", pragmatic approach to getting food into schools reflects a version of compassion congruent with dominant New Zealand norms and values. Consequently, charitable and community responses to hunger in schools have proliferated, ranging from small grassroots local initiatives to nationwide large-scale offerings.

Individuals or small groups who initiate help within schools are often depicted in mainstream media items through a lens of heroism, that emphasises actions making an immediate difference to children. One example of a local person responding to school hunger was Steve Farrelly, a retired policeman, who began to offer hot chocolate, then breakfast to children in a Manurewa school in Auckland in 2010 (Breakfast Club, 2019). A media story about Farrelly emphasises his "larger than life" character and sense of humour. Farrelly's focus is children's nutritional and social needs, "From the first day I saw them, I knew I didn't care what their stories were, or that I was culturally very different to them. I just knew I had to show them love and consistency" (Santamaria, 2013). The original feeding scheme initiated by Farrelly has been supplemented by sports programmes, parenting classes and donations of furniture and household items for school families. Farrelly's breakfast club and other initiatives also expanded to other schools in his region, attracting corporate sponsors and donations. The media story does not state that Steve Farrelly is also a leader in an evangelical religious group, Zion Ministries, through which donations for the breakfast clubs are administered (Zion Ministries, n.d.). The extent to which Farrelly may be religiously motivated is not examined, instead Farrelly's energy and hard work are emphasised. The following remark by Farrelly is included in the story: "My biggest learning has been that if you see a need, don't worry about how you're going to fill it, just get on and do it" (Santamaria, 2013). In presenting this example I make no claim to know Farrelly's motivations, nor to dispute the value of what he is providing. The story illustrates how individuals who show initiative are socially valued for taking action.

An example of a ‘feed the kids hero’ with a more controversial edge is that of the Tribal Huks gang providing sandwiches to hundreds of children in Waikato schools (Cronin, 2014a). In this case, the figure of a practical hero, rolling up his sleeves when and where he sees hardship, is gang leader, Jamie Pink. The sandwich provision began locally in Pink’s small hometown, Ngāruawāhia, and the gang expanded its scheme to other schools in its region. Media coverage of the sandwich making made front page headlines in the Waikato Times, and by 2015 the gang was reported to be supplying 50 schools with sandwiches (Kerr, 2015a). Given the reputation of the gang as an organisation associated with violence and with generating profit from illegal activities, there were concerns about the implications of a gang feeding children. Pink himself did not deny the incongruity of his gang taking on the task of feeding children:

I wouldn't say we're the greatest role models 'cause we're gang members. A lot of us come from bad backgrounds and are pretty violent, to be fair and honest. But this is more important. I think we're bad people in a way, but we're not doing bad things at the moment. I wouldn't say we're great people, but we do good things, aye. (Jesudason, 2014)

Despite disquiet over who was giving out the sandwiches, the imperative of children being fed took priority. Ngāruawāhia Community house manager, Anne Ramsey, is reported as saying that: “although she has apprehensions about Pink’s gang ties – his heart and his commitment to the children are true” (Kerr, 2015b). Schools accepted the sandwiches as a generous contribution in the face of the growing numbers of children arriving without lunches, as described by a school principal in Hamilton:

I couldn't believe that anyone would bring 30, 40, 50 sandwiches without wanting anything back. He's doing everything he can to feed the Waikato”. He says the empty sandwich container at the end of each day is testament to the fact there is a need for the support they get from the Tribal Huks. (Cronin, 2014a)

The emphasis in such commentary is on the necessity of children having something to eat during the school day.

Despite Pink’s assurances that feeding children was not about recruiting for the Tribal Huks, the extension of the gang’s generosity to funding a Christmas party revealed how ‘Uncle Jamie’ and his associates were being idolised by local children:

Early in the day, an 11- year- old girl in a pink t-shirt cries out, "I don't wanna be here for the presents no more, I wanna t-shirt!" There's a collective "Yeah!" from the other kids and they go on to explain what type of t-shirts they mean. "Tribal Huks, they cool!" says a 10 year old boy. "They make sandwiches for us - ham and egg ones". (Cronin, 2014b)

At the same Christmas party Pink tells a journalist about the process for becoming a 'patched' (full) member of the gang: "To get a patch, you've gotta do more than make sandwiches. We don't just give those out,... You gotta fight four patched members for a minute. No booting anymore, that's dangerous, just beat them up and pick them up". Subsequent to the initial media attention on the gang's sandwich making, Pink appeared in court for violent offences and weapons charges, culminating in a jail sentence (Wilson, 2020). Acceptance of Pink and the Tribal Huks in the role of "feed the kids heroes" underscores the extent to which schools have had to accept help, wherever it originates.

A further point in relation to individuals going into schools to feed children, is that Aotearoa New Zealand is a setting in which the experience of 'mucking in' with a tea towel or butter knife in a makeshift kitchen, feeding people communally, is a familiar and valued social practice. Aotearoa New Zealand has a strong tradition of hospitality emanating from rural communities, sports clubs, and churches. Perhaps, more importantly, the Māori custom of Manaakitanga, is an important cultural principle that shapes social practices, especially sharing food (Wehi & Roa, 2019). As a result of both Māori and settler cultural customs, informal styles of entertaining and shared meals are commonplace (Park, 1991). Consequently, many New Zealanders are accustomed to undertaking practical tasks as part of sharing communal meals. The camaraderie and conviviality generated by taking part in feeding schemes provides emotionally rewarding social connection, whilst 'mucking in' and completing practical tasks in the service of others is satisfying. This is aptly expressed by the co-ordinator of a community garden and school meal programme in a Lower Hutt primary school: "It's so joyful to come together and cook with other people" (Wilkes, 2018). The emotional rewards and feelings of capability experienced through localised schemes responding to child hunger are important for those who are motivated to deal with the problem. In contrast, the experience of paying more tax in order to fund a more substantial social safety net does not operate as a direct social reward in the same way. Our choices about helping others can therefore be considered an affective-political process, in that the

feelings we experience are shaping which responses make sense to us (Ahmed, 2014; Berlant, 2014; Burford, 2015).

The less ‘hands-on’ end of the charity spectrum requires volunteer labour, but also access to substantial funds in order to address school hunger through ongoing charitable means. Large charities expend considerable resources on marketing, since it is necessary to ‘sell’ the cause of child hunger in Aotearoa New Zealand to donors. Donors, whether individuals or corporations, can choose where to allocate their finite charity budget. Schemes designed to address hunger in schools must therefore compete for funding, with other charitable causes, but also with each other.

There were three notable strategies evident in national campaigns designed to attract donations to fund initiatives for hungry children. Firstly, the focus of action was creating equality of opportunity within the school setting. Hunger was located alongside other lacks (for example stationery and shoes) that impact on a child’s ability to participate effectively at school. For example, the following extract from KidsCan’s website:

KidsCan is focused on education and helping kids learn, which is why we work with schools to remove the barriers by providing the basics. This means that our support is provided in the school environment, during the school terms. We understand that children may go hungry in holidays and hope that other groups or food banks are able to provide for them and their families.
(KidsCan, n.d.)

Removing barriers to education is positioned as the key goal for the food in schools provider. Schools are not the site of food provision purely on the basis of practicality (the fact that it is where children are gathered daily), but schools are a preferred site because it is schooling *itself* that is being supported.

A second feature of larger scale NGO schemes is the use of child actors and models to depict suffering children in promotional material. In order to motivate donations people must feel sufficiently moved by the plight of vulnerable children (Nickel & Eikenberry, 2009; O’Dell, 2008). The website of national charity Variety, provides an apt example of how NGOs promote their offerings using images. The website displays photographs of children, including some staring into the camera while standing in rain trying to shelter under a bag in the absence of a coat, or exhibiting pale skin, sores and a runny nose. Some of the children’s stories, describing untreated asthma, eczema, hunger, cold, lack of shoes or school stationery, accompany the pictures. The children form part of a campaign inviting citizens to ‘Sponsor a

New Zealand Child', for \$45 per month. Donors are reassured that the money they donate is strictly monitored to ensure it is spent in relation to the specified child and does not become subsumed into the general household expenses. The following statement is from the Variety website:

Variety manages your funds on behalf of your sponsored child's family to ensure that, where possible, the money goes straight to the provider (like the school) to directly benefit your sponsored child and can't be used for other household expenses. (Variety, n.d.-c)

Variety sponsors can choose their sponsored child from children displayed on the website. If choosing a specified child is not a preference, a child can be chosen by Variety, using a filter to choose the geographical region, gender and ethnicity of the child (Variety, n.d.-b). By directly arousing pity for individual children the potential donor occupies the role of saviour. The website allows a donor to decide which of the featured children appeals most as they enact their consumer choice in a market of suffering.

The tactics of larger charities also filter down into the ways in which smaller organisations need to promote their offerings. A trust delivering around 80 school lunches each school day in South Taranaki, 'The Kai kitchen trust' experienced a backlash when it advertised for a child to appear on its website and social media. The community trust was accused by some locals of racial profiling when it requested a boy, aged 8-10 years to feature in its material and stated:

These need to show poverty. Broken shoes, bare feet walking to school, eating a kai kitchen lunch...that type of thing. The boy we are wanting preferably will have dark hair and brown eyes, hasn't had a recent haircut and doesn't mind having his photo taken and consent from his parents (Persico, 2019).

A board member for the trust claimed that there was no intention to cause offence. Instead, what the trust intended was to adopt strategies successfully employed by World Vision and Kids Can: deploying images of children to 'tug at heartstrings' in order to compete in the charity marketplace (McLachlan, 2019).

A third strategy that larger NGOs demonstrated in relation to attracting donations is fostering relationships with the business sector. Attaining sponsorship and food donations from companies provides the basis for ongoing funding and access to products. Promoting charitable causes to businesses is an important focus for NGOs who seek to expand and extend what they can offer in schools. In order to appeal to business donors, charities must

style themselves to appeal to the business sector and provide promotional opportunities (Eikenberry, 2009).

The examples of charity initiatives in this section illustrate important shortcomings in using a charity model to address hunger in schools. In the case of small-scale responses to hunger, local offerings are naturally ad hoc, which militates against reaching all children who may be going hungry (Gerritsen, 2005; Wynd & O'Brien, 2014). Schemes that rely on the capacity of individuals or small groups to maintain provision are also vulnerable to withdrawal because they require ongoing energy and work from a limited number of people. For example, one Christchurch chef was providing thousands of lunches in schools until he had to end the service because he was struggling financially and emotionally:

It's been a long time to devote to a personal passion and a personal interest. I've put a lot into 'Fill Their lunchbox', I quit my job and just jumped headfirst into doing a thing I had no idea how to run. (Sherwood, 2018)

This particular lunchbox scheme depended on the personal commitment of the chef and it was not sustainable for an individual to provide that commitment indefinitely. Relying on grassroots initiatives does not ensure that children's needs are met beyond the short term.

In addition, the tendency to depict individuals feeding children as heroes distracts from questions about what messages children may be receiving alongside their nutrition. Schools, communities and volunteers emphasise the positive feelings associated with providing children with food. As the Tribal Huks example demonstrates, schemes that attend to children's hunger within schools are difficult to critique, on the basis that they are doing an important job and everyone involved in providing school food feels that they are contributing to something morally uplifting. Williams et al (2003) name this phenomenon of associating feeding schemes with positive feelings as 'wonderfulness'. The researchers conclude that: "the perception of children's feeding programs as 'wonderful' was largely unconditional, based largely upon proposed merit and sympathy for a worthwhile effort, and not readily subject to evaluation" (Williams et al., 2003). The measure of effectiveness becomes the level of commitment and good will on the part of those engaged in providing food.

A further issue with local initiatives is how storying food insecurity through a lens of heroic activity within schools shapes how the public conceptualises poverty (Raine et al., 2003). The problem that is presented in stories about "feed the kids heroes" is the immediate crisis of children going hungry. Parents and families of the children are usually absent from the stories. The impression that is created is that of poverty as a kind of natural disaster

requiring charitable assistance, rather than a consequence of political decisions that benefit some and not others (Livingstone, 2015; Tester, 2001). De-politicisation of poverty is embodied within the figure of a humble, hard-working kiwi who mobilises help for a practical problem within the school. Compassionate responses by “feed the kids heroes” suggest that someone is remedying the issue, ameliorating the need to examine broader processes driving hunger within communities.

In the case of larger scale charities operating within schools, organisations are able to reach more children, but are still ad hoc in terms of only being able to provide what donors will support. While more children can be fed by larger NGOs, the level of need is not the deciding factor in provision, rather NGOs do what they can with the funding they can attract. Hence many food in schools providers were running lengthy waiting lists of schools seeking help during the period 2012 to 2018 (Broughton, 2019; Harris, 2017). Incorporating additional schools within the remit of charity food required appealing to sufficient numbers of donors. In addition, the food that could be offered in schools was largely dictated by corporate donors, rather than reflecting the preferences of schools and parents, or prioritising nutritional quality. The ad hoc nature of charity food offerings extends to different ways in which schools choose to distribute donated food within the school. For example, some schools took care to minimise stigma associated with the food distribution, while others positioned teachers as ‘gate-keepers’ for the food in ways that left children feeling uncomfortable with admitting they needed free food (Gerritsen, 2005; Wynd, 2009).

Further, the positioning of children (particularly through visual images) as suffering victims within NGOs’ promotional materials raises ethical questions. Sentimentalised depictions of suffering may well instigate sympathy but such sympathy can remain at a relatively superficial level (Berlant, 2014). Jackson (2014) refers to a ‘deficiency imaginary’ in relation to positioning children as subjects of pity in order to prompt donations. A deficiency imaginary places the focus on specific lacks that can be alleviated, rather than instigating questions about the broader conditions in which children are living as a result of structural inequities (Jackson, 2014; Zembylas, 2013). Instead, charities are left to define a particular and practical issue to be resolved through campaigns for school lunches, a raincoat or pyjamas. The notion of a ‘fixable’ problem is appealing. Moreover, placing young children at the centre of emotional appeals raises questions about recognising and responding to hardship suffered by those who no longer invite uncomplicated compassion. Faulkner (2010), points out that, “the affective investment in childhood leads to their abrupt devaluation at the outset of puberty” (Faulkner, 2010, p. 204). There is consequently a notable paucity of

activity to address the hunger or deprivation of adolescents. Very few food in school schemes are targeted at older children, despite the crucial developmental and social consequences of hunger in adolescence (Utter et al., 2012; Utter, Izumi, et al., 2018).

The Business Sector, Investment, and Partnerships: Kiwi Kids are Weet-Bix Kids™

The contemporary voluntary sector has been described as ‘a loose and baggy monster’ (Kendall & Knapp, 1995) and the sheer number of charity food schemes for school children in Aotearoa New Zealand supports that observation. In effect, the ‘loose and baggy monster’ of food in schools must now stretch to incorporate a plethora of businesses entering schools. For NGOs, businesses can offer both financial support and in-kind food donations, products that serve as the staple offerings for schemes feeding school children. Creating links with the business community is presented as a win-win configuration by large NGOs, for example children’s charity, Variety, encourages businesses to become sponsors: “Sponsorship is a proven and highly-effective marketing tool, helping Variety to achieve our mission whilst meeting your corporate social responsibility aims” (Variety, n.d.-a). The trend for businesses to publicise their philanthropy through reference to ‘corporate social responsibility’ practices dovetails with charities seeking larger donations in order to expand their offerings to more schools.

In addition to charities forming links with companies, The Office of the Children’s Commissioner issued guidelines for schools setting up food programmes, encouraging schools to seek partnerships with businesses:

If you communicate the aims of your school food programme and its potential benefits for business, then local businesses are more likely to appreciate the benefits of supporting you. Ultimately, they will want to know what’s in it for them. Businesses always appreciate good (and free!) press. Approaching a local bakery, for example, not only creates goodwill within a community, but can also offer a business the opportunity to build customer loyalty from the sponsorship of such a programme. Being known as ‘that bakery’ that donates bread to the local school is great ‘press’. (Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2014, p. 13)

The guidance for schools promotes the notion of local businesses sponsoring food for children, much as they may previously have sponsored sports teams, thereby fostering

community goodwill towards their businesses. Here, addressing child hunger is marketed to businesses as a positive public relations opportunity.

Partnerships are a mode for delivering food schemes that combine funding from multiple sources. The largest example is Kickstart Breakfast, previously delivered by food companies, expanded by the addition of government funding in 2013. The contribution by the government of \$9.5 million over five years was to be delivered in conjunction with food companies Sanitarium and Fonterra, and community volunteer input (Backhouse, 2013). The Kickstart programme is heavily branded with traditional New Zealand breakfast products of Weet-Bix cereal and Anchor milk. Brands form an important feature of partnerships, which may explain why Sanitarium does not donate funds, only products. The following comments about breakfast in schools by Johnathan Young who was a National MP from 2008-2020, illustrate the way products and corporations are lauded by supporters of partnerships:

We have some great examples of organisations stepping in to do their bit to support families. We applaud companies like Sanitarium, like Fonterra, that step up and give back to Kiwi kids in our communities. Since 2009 Fonterra and Sanitarium have been providing, as I said, Weet-Bix—that great breakfast sustenance that probably most of us grew up on—and milk. (Young, 2014)

Young's comment could be mistaken for an advertisement for Weet-Bix and dairy products, reflecting the importance placed on relationships with corporations providing food in schools.

A key difference between charity models and businesses, including within partnerships (such as Kickstart) is that where charities must use a victim to mobilise compassion, businesses need positive associations with their products and brand. Therefore, the presentation of corporate offerings tends to feature images of happy, smiling children enjoying the products (Anchor, n.d.; Fonterra, n.d.-a; Sanitarium, n.d.). The emphasis is on the consumption of nutritious products by children, avoiding the stigma of poverty in the promotional material. The parents are absent within the promotion of such schemes. The other advantage of not emphasising hunger is that in the event of discontinuing any such scheme, no claims have been made to be responsible for the problem. Therefore, even the Kickstart breakfast scheme, introduced initially to target feeding children in low-decile schools two mornings each week characterised its purpose as promoting breakfast consumption so that children would eat breakfast at home more frequently (Wynd, 2011, p. 19). Government funding expanded Kickstart, but the programme still avoided associations with poverty, preferring to emphasise social factors. Instead of a lack of income, the reason

for hunger was attributed to: “busy families and commitments mean breakfast is often missed” (Kickstart Breakfast, n.d.). Presenting Kickstart as a feel-good story is congruent with corporate partners’ goals, and also supported political aims. Politicians saw the political potential of a positive news story to associate the National-led government with initiatives promoting child wellbeing. Thus, the Prime Minister, John Key, and Minister of Social Development, Paula Bennett, were pictured serving Weet-Bix to smiling children to celebrate the expansion of the Kickstart Breakfast programme (Kickstart Breakfast, 2014)

An additional point in relation to companies donating products, is that the provision of free food in schools can herald arrangements that allow the sale of food, closing the circle in the creation of consumers. Low-decile schools that were accessing Kickstart breakfasts were offered the option to also install vending machines selling the Sanitarium liquid breakfast product, Up and Go. Up and Go is marketed as a convenient breakfast alternative, containing fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals within a single serve drink that comes in flavours such as chocolate, strawberry and vanilla. Schools receive a percentage of revenue from machines vending Up & Go cartons.

The TV current affairs programme, *Story*, ran an investigative item concerning this placement of machines, after being contacted by parents who were angry about the pressure they were getting from their children to provide money for the machines (Harper, 2015). A company spokesperson from Sanitarium admitted on the programme that the product, Up and Go, was not necessarily nutritionally suitable for children, deeming it a ‘sometimes food’, despite children often purchasing it from the machines daily. Parents campaigned for the removal of the machines from their schools (Piper, n.d.). Some schools argued that the revenue they were able to generate was crucial in light of their funding shortfalls, despite nutritionists’ advice that the product was a poor choice for growing children and the sugar content was similar to soft drinks (Harper, 2015). Sanitarium, by providing products for the free breakfast scheme, achieved a foothold for products for purchase. While this example demonstrates that parents can potentially resist such marketing, the consumers who are being targeted are children from low-income neighbourhoods.

Social Enterprise

Social enterprises have entered the school food space, contending that they can combine philanthropic goals with business goals, and mobilise profits towards social goods. Social enterprise is promoted as an approach that can use the skills and strategies of the business world to create funding for worthwhile social causes (Nicholls & Teasdale, 2017). An

example is ‘Eat my lunch’, set up by restaurateur, Michael Meredith in 2015 (Eat My Lunch, n.d.) The model is that of a ‘buy one, give one’ option, where consumers can buy a lunch for themselves and the scheme will then provide a lunch to a child in need. In many respects, this model promotes the idea of individuals feeling good about helping others, as is discussed in the previous section in relation to charity. Social enterprise extends the ‘win-win’ experience for consumers by allowing individuals to make purchasing decisions that benefit themselves whilst also feeling good about helping others (Budabin, 2017).

Social enterprise represents a more complex arrangement than a traditional NGO offering because although children are fed, other business goals require input. In the case of ‘Eat my lunch,’ the children’s lunch provision featured in promotions of Meredith’s restaurant, and extensive media coverage about Meredith himself and his restaurant occurred because of the scheme (Dixon, 2015). Positive publicity generates business profits through a ‘buy-one-donate-one’ model. While customers may assume that the lunch they purchase is mirrored in the lunch provided to a child, in fact ‘Eat my lunch’ does not provide the children with a lunch of equal quality to that of the paying customer. The food for the children’s lunches is predominantly donated and the cost of the lunch appears high in relation to what children receive (Stock, 2018). The social enterprise, which attracts donations of food, money and volunteer time, is connected with the generation of profits in ways that are ambiguous. Consequently, concerns have been raised about the lack of transparency about financial arrangements within ‘Eat my lunch’ (Stock, 2018). The model demonstrated by ‘Eat my lunch’ highlights issues with defining and regulating what social enterprise is, and how it operates (Nicholls & Teasdale, 2017).

The following developments indicate the way that social enterprises can inadvertently become wedded to a paradigm of acceptable inequity through their vested interest in maintaining the status quo. In 2019, ‘Eat my lunch’ sought \$2 million funding through an equity crowdfunding campaign in order to fund the launch of physical retail spaces and initiate international expansion of the brand and concept (Shaw, 2019). Lisa King, director of ‘Eat my Lunch’ told the media that she had met with the CEO of Walmart in the USA, who showed interest in the project. Yet, Walmart is a market–dominant retailer with well documented low rates of pay for its employees and anti-trade union policies (Vidal, 2012). The Walmart CEO expressed his confidence that ‘Eat-my-lunch’ would be successful in the USA. King affirmed her enthusiasm for expanding the enterprise beyond Aotearoa New Zealand, stating:

This model can work anywhere in the world because you will always have people who can't afford food and a bunch of people who can. What I'm really excited about is we're actually giving New Zealand the opportunity to own a share in the company. (Shaw, 2019)

This example reflects how the entrenchment of food insecurity and inequality is taken for granted, suggesting the 'successes' of social enterprise lie in its ability to prosper within the fissures created by inequality (Gerrard, 2017).

There are significant implications when relying on corporations to feed school children. At the time of Fonterra re-introducing free school milk in 2013, businesses were intensifying their presence within the school environment by increased participation in feeding children, directly, or through partnerships, sponsorships or donations. Some of the issues with feeding school children through business philanthropy mirror the limitations previously highlighted in relation to feeding children through charitable means. For example, provision of food remains ad hoc and at the behest of the giver. Companies' offerings are driven by their own imperatives, rather than a requirement to be accountable for addressing the level of need:

Sanitarium general manager Pierre van Heerdan says the Kickstart breakfast programme is about partnership. It is not a "general feed everyone programme". Rather, it targets those who need it. Currently, about 10 per cent of children at just over half of all decile 1 to 4 schools are regular attenders. Forcing schools to take up the programme would create dependency and take away from parental responsibility. (Chapman & Moir, 2013)

The comment situates decisions about providing school breakfasts within the remit of the company providing the products.

In common with charities, companies have focussed on decile one to three schools, those schools situated in low socio-economic areas (Wynd, 2011, pp. 18-27). The focus on providing food in low-decile schools reflects the logistical advantages of taking food to the schools with the highest concentrations of need. The additional value in this is the avoidance of offering food where there is low perceived need, and offerings that could be framed as wasteful. For charities, and the government, such accusations could be detrimental. Therefore, the children who are living with food insecurity in high-decile schools receive very little in the way of food provision (Wynd & O'Brien, 2014). Children going hungry in schools situated in more affluent areas are more likely to hide their hunger, or are subject to

ad hoc provision by individual adults in the school who try to meet their needs ("Hunger hits middle-class students too," 2016).

An additional similarity with NGO schemes is that corporate provision can be withdrawn, regardless of the level of need within the community. For example, a Red Cross food in schools programme funded by supermarket chain, Countdown, was heralded by the Red Cross at its launch in 2007 as "a modern day Robin Hood Partnership" (Bridgeman, 2011). In 2011, despite the reported rising numbers of hungry school children, the Red Cross announced the discontinuation of its food in schools programme, after Countdown decided to re-prioritise its sponsorship arrangements and withdrew funding from the programme (Binning, 2011) Countdown subsequently sponsored the 'Masterchef' television competition as part of its renewed publicity focus (Collins, 2011). The withdrawal of the Red Cross programme demonstrates the risks when NGOs rely on companies to fund their activities. The partnership between the Red Cross and Countdown supermarkets is a partnership where one of the parties can withdraw when its marketing priorities shift.

Partnerships are often promoted as the ideal solution for addressing school hunger, given their ability to minimise taxpayer input. The National-led government's decision to adopt a partnership model for Kickstart Breakfast manifested Treasury's advice to avoid becoming directly involved in providing food in schools (The Treasury, 2012). Partnerships are presented as an opportunity to engage the community, encourage philanthropy and reduce costs to taxpayers (Moir, 2015). Policy scholars (Clarke & Glendinning, 2002; Larner & Butler, 2005; Ling, 2000) regard the preference for 'partnership' as a means for promoting the notion that the private sector deploys greater efficiency and creativity than the state, and crucially: "the rise of partnership reflects a genuine shift in the idea of what the appropriate purpose and limits of the state should be" (Ling, 2000, p. 99). The choice by the government to provide funding for school breakfasts in a partnership model, alongside input from both the private and voluntary sectors, was strategic and ideological. Powell (2018) found that partnerships played a central role in legitimising private sector incursions into New Zealand schools, facilitating product placement and marketing practices. Ultimately, partnerships provide a justification for companies to enter schools and shape students' relationships with market consumption (Powell, 2018).

The example of Sanitarium selling 'Up & Go' in low-decile schools underlines the extent to which a corporation, the government and schools can end up complicit in marketing a product that generates profits at the expense of school children and their parents. Schools explicitly teach children, through government funded initiatives, about healthy eating choices

and avoiding high sugar beverages, of which ‘Up and Go’ is one. For schools, the dilemma is how to address funding shortfalls. Primary school principal Vaughan Franklin comments: “Schools are trying to find the right balance between morally what is right, with regard to healthy eating options and how we can raise money” (Leaman, 2017). Children’s role as consumers is reinforced when schools require the largesse of food companies to address hunger, and even to fund classroom resources (Powell, 2019).

An additional problem with the preference for partnerships is the requirement for schools and communities to still continue to source and retain volunteers and resources. The following comments are reported from the principal of Cannon’s Creek school:

Teachers are busy and "here to teach children, not feed them ... We're one of the poorest schools in the country, so, yes, we'll tap into the five days of breakfast eventually, but my question is who is providing the bowls and spoons, the storage for the food and milk, and who is doing the washing up? I can just imagine having 200 kids in the school hall having breakfast - you would need half the staff there to control them and it would end up a three-ring circus". (Chapman & Moir, 2013)

This school is still faced with the logistics of managing a food scheme with little access to additional community resources. Again, the companies donating their products to the schemes are not responsible for ensuring that children’s needs are met. Schools have different capacities, increasing the ad hoc nature of what children are offered (Young, 2014).

Food in schools schemes that are supported through corporate donations often form part of corporate social responsibility activities. Corporate social responsibility is a concept deployed according to strategic priorities and has been characterised as “slippery in definition, character and praxis (Rana, 2015, p. 117). Corporate social responsibility sections and personnel within organisations not only signify a commitment to philanthropic giving, but also portray the business sector as supporting the wellbeing of citizens (Sadler & Lloyd, 2009). Neoliberal governments can espouse the role of businesses responding to need in the community as a means to outsource state responsibilities, thereby positioning the market as a solution for social problems (Shamir, 2008). For companies, corporate social responsibility appears altruistic and can diffuse critiques of corporate behaviour. Crucially, both corporate social responsibility and partnerships uphold the role of the private sector and are used to create the impression that the state does not need to take responsibility for the consequences of policy decisions that result in food insecurity. For example, during the parliamentary

debate on the ‘Feed the kids’ bill, sitting government MPs made reference to the fact that there was no need for the state to provide food for hungry children because the issue was being addressed already, through philanthropy and partnerships. National MP Johnathan Young lauded the efforts of Sanitarium and Fonterra, and argued that the contributions of such companies, alongside NGO and community efforts, alleviated the need for increased state responsibility for hunger in schools:

More than 1.5 million breakfasts have been served by people in our communities—not just teachers, but parents, people from NGOs, people who care, and people who get out there and make a difference. ... We do not need legislation to launch a Government-funded programme to support the delivery of food for schools when it is already happening through community effort, through corporate sponsorship, and through the work of this Government.

(Young, 2014)

The role of the government is presented as that of only a player within a set of responses, diffusing the need for more substantial changes.

Milk for Kiwi Kids: 2013

The case of free school milk occupies distinctive territory within the landscape of corporate responses to hunger in schools. Fonterra, the dairy co-operative that is New Zealand’s largest company, had donated its Anchor brand milk as part of the Kickstart Breakfast partnership since the breakfasts were established. Nonetheless, Fonterra Milk for Schools heralded an ambitious promotion of milk as a stand-alone offering for school children. All primary schools (serving children aged 5 to 11 years) could eventually opt into the scheme, with 70% of primary schools participating by 2017 (Fonterra, 2017). The following extract from a press release on the Fonterra website describes the nationwide rollout of Fonterra Milk for Schools in 2013:

Fonterra Milk for Schools launches today, marking the beginning of a nationwide rollout that will bring nutritious milk to kiwi school kids daily. There was an air of celebration in Invercargill this morning, as a convoy of tankers and tractors paraded through the streets towards an official launch event hosted by Invercargill Mayor Tim Shadbolt. Local schools have been receiving the free 180ml cartons since the start of last week, and Myross Bush School’s principal, Tim Lovelock, is delighted by the programme: “When it

comes to good nutrition, you can't look past dairy, it's an investment in the health of our future generations. (Fonterra Milk for Schools, n.d.)

In an atmosphere reminiscent of the description of the first day of the 1937 scheme, this launch in 2013 demonstrates how much is invested in the cartons of milk being distributed. The use of tractors and milk tankers as a parade heralds the arrival of the milk, and connects the product to the farm and those distributing the gift, the dairy farmers. The reference to investing in a future generation, connects the symbolism of this contemporary milk scheme to the investment made in an earlier period of New Zealand history. Dairy products are characterised as a wholesome food with special nutritional value, especially for children.

Nostalgia: Keep Calm and Drink Milk.

Fonterra Milk for Schools was promoted partly through reference to narratives recognisable from the introduction of school milk in 1937. The following quote from Invercargill mayor, Tim Shadbolt, introducing milk in schools to his community in 2013, characterises school milk as a statement of values, rather than simply food:

I know it's about nutrition and I know it's about health, but I still believe it's more of a statement. What we are saying to the next generation is: we appreciate you; we want you to thrive; we want you to be strong; we want you to be future leaders of this country; we are prepared to make that sacrifice as farmers, and as a community, to help you on the road to your future. (Fonterra Milk for Schools, 2013)

Children are portrayed in the above quote as the nation's future, their health is connected to their future role as leaders of the nation. Shadbolt's comment sustains the relationship between children and farmers, maintaining a link to a pastoral heritage. The sacrifice is that of one generation to another, the gifting of nutrition from the community to children, who are the standard bearers for our collective future. All of these themes are encapsulated within the material object of the milk, and all connect to the ideals that lay behind the original milk scheme in 1937.

Positive feelings evoked by the celebration of children receiving milk were further enhanced by advertising connecting dairy products with patriotic and nostalgic images. For example, an Anchor (milk) advertising campaign featured the slogan 'Filled with the strength of a nation' in vintage styled images. The pictures and styling referenced early 20th century dairy promotions (Anchor NZ, 2015). The use of vintage styling and iconic imagery connects

with what has been deemed ‘austerity nostalgia’ (Lewis, 2012). In complex times when economic insecurity is prevalent, the appeal of earlier periods when citizens seemed to achieve simple collective solutions can seem comforting. Anchor’s ‘Filled with the strength of a nation’ campaign was also built around sponsorship of the national rugby team, the All Blacks, and emphasised the farming background of many successful New Zealand rugby players historically

In Aotearoa New Zealand, rugby, and its associations with positive national identity have been characterised as a form of ‘security blanket’, signifying comfort through the ideal of national unity (Nauright & Chandler, 1996). The association between dairy products and the All Blacks, including the promotion of Fonterra Milk for Schools by a feted All Blacks captain, Richie McCaw, connect with powerful narratives of national pride. McCaw’s role as the ambassador for Fonterra’s Milk for Schools included his endorsement of the role of dairy nutrition in maintaining his own physical strength and performance, and flying a helicopter to selected schools to deliver school milk in person (Fonterra, 2013; “Ex-All Blacks captain delivers milk”, 2018). Richie McCaw is depicted in a national advertising campaign visiting his sister and brother-in-law’s dairy farm at dawn, chatting over coffee after early morning milking, emphasising the pride that hard working farmers feel about producing New Zealand milk (Fonterra, 2016). Farmers are upheld as caring and generous members of the community.

The advertising placement of a heroic All Blacks captain within the setting of a working dairy farm highlights another important nostalgic feature of the promotion of Fonterra Milk for Schools. School milk reinforces and sustains the role of colonial landscapes within a settler culture. The historical construction of milk as a healthy product of fresh green pastures that was described earlier in this chapter is not located solely in the past. Holmes et al. (2008) highlight the extent to which settlement in colonised countries is an ongoing project, incorporating physical and imaginative landscapes (p4). Settlement continues to shape the meanings being brought to landscapes, although these meanings are not fixed. The creation of pasture in the New Zealand context was not something that happened in a defined and completed period, rather the continued economic success of farming rests on maintaining legitimacy for the ‘productive’ landscape (Brooking & Pawson, 2010). For example, the following extract from the Fonterra website is accompanied by visual images of green, sunlit pasture: “This land is blessed with an abundance of sunshine and rainfall. Lush grass for our cows to graze on grows year-round. We’ve always farmed in this natural way. It’s an ideal climate for growth and abundance” (Fonterra, n.d.-b). Milk is portrayed as a product of

unique ‘natural’ attributes of the New Zealand landscape, despite growing awareness of the environmental impacts accruing from the expansion of dairy farming (Baskaran et al., 2009).

At the time of the introduction of Fonterra Milk for Schools in 2013, dairy production had been steadily intensifying. Dairy cattle numbers in Aotearoa New Zealand nearly doubled during the period from 1990 to 2012, (from 3.4 million cows to almost 6.5 million cows) and land being used for dairy farming increased by 46% (Foote et al., 2015). Dairy farming once occurred primarily in areas where pasture required low inputs to maintain year-round grazing. Subsequently, the profitability of New Zealand dairy internationally instigated (environmentally degrading) expansion of dairy pastures into areas requiring significant irrigation and nitrogen fertilisers (Hall, 2018). At the same time, higher animal stocking rates impelled supplementary feeding, requiring imported feed in addition to the fabled green pastures (Ma et al., 2019). Consequently, dairy production has become subject to scrutiny and critique, for example the following quote from New Zealand Geographic magazine: “Not long ago farms were considered the lifeblood of communities, crucial suppliers of local produce as much as they were businesses that supported the local economy. More recently, however, farmers have been cast as industrial-scale polluters and corporate profiteers” (Frankham, 2015). The extract suggests that perceptions of dairy farming have become more negative, as public awareness of its environmental impacts have increased.

In addition to environmental concerns, high milk prices internationally had resulted in price increases for dairy products in the local market (Fox, 2012). While New Zealand families were finding it increasingly unaffordable to provide milk to their children, Fonterra appeared to be reaping high profits at the expense of the local environment. One newspaper article posited that: “Donating milk to schools would also help hose down public perceptions of Fonterra as a major contributor to “dirty dairying”” (Fox & Brennan, 2011). Providing free milk to children therefore represented an opportunity for the dairy industry to re-assert and sustain narratives that position farming as a ‘natural’ and beneficial industry, narratives that were dominant during the period when school milk was first provided in schools.

Fonterra’s ‘Strategy not Charity’: Creating Consumers

The 2013 school milk scheme avoided stigma by offering milk to all primary school children, in contrast to most other food schemes. It is evident that Fonterra Milk for Schools attempted to avoid geographical disparity of provision, ensuring milk could reach every primary school in Aotearoa New Zealand that requested it, stating:

From the farm to the class, Fonterra farmers across the country are working together to bring healthy, nutritious milk to kids across New Zealand through Fonterra Milk for Schools. It's free, and it's for all Kiwi kids in any primary school that would like to take part. (Fonterra, 2012)

This extract from the Milk for Schools website recollects the universal ethos of school milk from 1937-1967. Nonetheless, the decision to offer milk in primary schools does not necessarily reflect an absence of hunger in kindergartens/ECE centres or high schools. Hungry parents were also clearly not within the scheme's remit. Fonterra shaped the scheme to fulfil its own objectives.

In terms of the narratives relating to hungry school children explored earlier in this chapter, Fonterra Milk for Schools was able to accommodate many of the concerns encapsulated within core understandings of how to address hunger in schools. The lack of compulsion on taxpayers to fund the milk somewhat diffuses critiques from those who hold parents solely responsible for child hunger. The choice to provide milk is Fonterra's, requiring no government input. Narratives of virtuous benevolence and communitarianism are supported by Fonterra's emphasis on farmers stepping up and giving back to their communities. The goals of Third Way pragmatism are met by the milk reaching the majority of primary school aged children, while creating little extra work from schools or teachers.

Fonterra's philanthropy is woven into decisions that relate less to the level or nature of need, more to strategies that sustain and build a market for products. The following extract is from a paper presented at an international school milk conference in 2005, attended by Fonterra delegates:

From the point of view of the milk industry as a whole, however, school children must be considered as tomorrow's adult consumers, who if they do not develop the habit of drinking milk and eating dairy products as children, are certainly not going to develop it later on in life. Therefore, programmes which encourage children to choose milk and milk products should not be viewed only in the light of the actual volume of milk sold, but as an investment in the future demand for milk. (Griffin, 2005)

Fonterra's decision to provide milk across all primary schools reflects these tactics, and the co-operative's CEO, Theo Spierings was frank about the essential purpose of milk in schools: "It's a business decision. I don't believe in charity. You need to do things which are (your) own strategy. Dairy nutrition for us is our own strategy." (3 News, 2012). Spierings'

comment indicates his understanding of the role of Fonterra Milk for Schools as an investment in future dairy consumption.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the packaging and presentation of the milk is an important part of how Fonterra Milk for Schools is delivered. As explored earlier, farming is an important component of the presentation of the milk scheme. In weaving a shared New Zealand story about milk into the promotion of school milk: the kind farmer, ‘nature’s perfect food’, heroic and strong rugby players, there is a conflation of these things with the Anchor brand. The story serves to obscure the fact that the product is promoted and placed in schools under a brand. Pictures of smiling children drinking their daily milk featured on the Anchor website and social media promotions, creating a cross-over between the philanthropic offering and advertising (Anchor, n.d.; Anchor NZ, 2014).

A large fridge and recycling bins were installed in all participating schools. The fridge sits within a school space –usually the staff room, sometimes a storage room, with instructions that it must not be used for any purpose other than school milk. The fridge and bins, like the cartons, are branded with the logos of Fonterra and Anchor (Smith, 2013). Each time teachers or students take milk from the fridge they are interacting with the brand and become part of the message, which is conveyed in the composition of the offering but also in the organisation and mode of delivery. The place of the brand within a school becomes taken for granted (Powell, 2020).

In 2013, the milk portion is smaller than that offered in the half pint glass bottle in 1937. The carton, in contrast to glass, affords the opportunity to convey the source of the milk as Anchor, with colourful lettering and logo, as evident in the picture below (Figure 4). Popular competitions revolve around children flattening their cartons successfully (for recycling) at the fastest speed (Fonterra, 2014a). Participating in competitions involved children spending extended periods of time interacting with the cartons and branded website. The activity does not involve the milk itself. The carton becomes an important ‘object’ for the children in its own right.

Figure 4

NZ School Milk Carton 2017 (author's own picture)



Activities relating to school milk often feature farming themes. For example, the one-year anniversary of Fonterra Milk for Schools was celebrated with farmers bringing calves and cows along to selected school playgrounds for children to pat and feed (Fonterra, 2014b). Through participating in Fonterra Milk for Schools, children are learning to drink milk and that farmers care about them. These are woven into an identity of kiwi kids, who are part of a story about the land and its bounty. Through the routines they are part of, children become ‘milk drinkers’ and ‘kiwis’. The stories that I have explored here in relation to Fonterra Milk for Schools situate it within the landscape of corporate philanthropy in schools, but also illustrate the distinctive position of school milk in the New Zealand context.

The Past in the Present: School Milk in Two Periods

Despite similarities between the original school milk scheme and its 2013 iteration, Fonterra Milk for Schools is not a re-creation of the 1937 scheme. At first glance, the 2013 scheme

appears similar as it focuses on child nutrition and has arisen in a period characterised by increased poverty and hunger. Nevertheless, as this chapter has demonstrated, the role of school milk in 2013 was woven from narratives that rendered it more complex than the original scheme.

Similarities between school milk in 1937 and the 2013 version relate to the role of dairy production and dairy products within each period. Both schemes reinforced the importance of farmers, and in particular, pasture farming, affirming settler control of land and profits generated from land. In 2013, dairy farming required redemption from growing environmental and profiteering critiques that were not a significant consideration for farmers in 1937. The 1937 scheme was conceived at a time when farmers had lost overseas markets for produce owing to the Great Depression. Regardless, school milk in both periods promoted milk as a uniquely nutritious food, rendered especially valuable because of its perceived natural production from the grass and sunshine of Aotearoa New Zealand. Both of the milk schemes sought to restore milk consumption to New Zealand children, affirming milk as a daily food for children at a time when the affordability of milk was an issue for families.

Because school milk in 1937 and 2013 both promoted dairy consumption for all children, the milk schemes both eschewed targeting based on need. In 1937, school milk was launched with an ethos of universal provision, attempting to reach all children, including kindergarten, intermediate and secondary school children, where practical. School milk in 2013 was available to all primary schools, in contrast to other Fonterra donations to low-decile schools for ameliorating child hunger. In 1937, the stigma associated with charity was an important reason for avoiding targeting of school milk to those most in need (McClure, 2013). In 2013, creating future milk consumers was better served by gifting milk to every child in a primary school, than by targeting hungry children specifically. In both cases, school milk was ostensibly an offering that was available to every child within a classroom, regardless of their circumstances. In both cases, providing milk without targeting poverty specifically provided school milk with a mantle of child-centred generosity, elevating school milk to a project that supported the future of the nation itself.

Although there are features shared by school milk in 1937 and its 2013 iteration, there are important differences, particularly in relation to the position of each scheme within its broader social and political context. In 1937, the visible manifestation of care in the provision of milk each day to children became a symbol of welfare building, but was only a small part of the overall project to eliminate poverty (Mein Smith, 2012, pp. 154-158). The universality of school milk was crucial in 1937, not solely to avoid stigma, but as part of a commitment to

principles of universality more broadly. The government committed to paying farmers for milk for children, reflecting political recognition that state level intervention could be deployed for lifting the nutritional status of all children (Department of Health, 1937). The policies being instituted in 1937 were policies of increased government intervention in the economy in order to meet goals of security and prosperity for families (Cheyne et al., 2008, p. 75).

In contrast, school milk in 2013 took place within a context of retreating state intervention. An absence of government responsibility for food insecurity resulted in a proliferation of targeted ameliorative responses to hunger in schools (Wynd & O'Brien, 2014). The targeted nature of most charity and corporate schemes, alongside government reluctance to address hunger in schools, reinforced the impression of universality for Fonterra Milk for Schools (Spray, 2020). Despite avoiding stigma by storying school milk as being for 'all kiwi kids', the scheme supplied primary school children only, with a small serving of low fat milk, and was therefore less comprehensive and nutritionally significant than the 1937 school milk scheme. The priority was to promote dairy consumption.

Chapter Discussion

School milk was reintroduced in 2013 amidst a landscape of complex, diversified and contractual responses to hunger in schools. The plethora of schemes to feed children in schools created an impression of compassion and pragmatism, serving to cement the view that child poverty was best addressed by downstream mitigation. School milk in 2013 was a strategic business decision by a corporation that connected with nostalgic elements of the national imaginary, such as the 'natural' health giving properties of grass-fed dairy and investing in children's potential. Features of school milk in 2013 therefore echoed the original milk scheme, notably the decision to provide the milk without narrow targeting of low-income groups or geographical areas. The re-introduction of school milk in 2013, while part of a number of corporate food initiatives within schools, occupied a symbolic role that encouraged positive associations with a caring initiative from the past. Instead of representing the role of the state in caring for all children, school milk in 2013 represented a market-based initiative taking place in the context of welfare retrenchment.

This chapter began with an examination of the introduction of milk in schools in 1937, heralded as a symbol of the Labour government's commitment to child health (Mein Smith, 2012, p. 156). By offering school milk as a universal scheme, the government expressed the ideal of supporting the nation's children and thereby the nation's future. Milk

itself, as a product with a distinctive historical and cultural history, was identified as being central to the symbolic role of free school milk (DuPuis, 2002). In the New Zealand settler context, milk was a food that embodied the goodness of sunshine and pasture, affirming a role as supplier of superior ‘natural’ products to Britain (Mein Smith, 2003). Further, this chapter explored narratives that connected notions of New Zealand’s environment of natural bounty with the restoration of the British race itself, narratives characterising New Zealand children as physically and morally robust children of the Empire (Froude, 1886; Wilson, 1927).

This chapter next analysed the momentum that lay behind the creation of the 1937 milk scheme. International and local attention to the concept of providing all children with milk had grown in the wake of the Great Depression. The motivation to create a scheme for all children reflected awareness of the limitations of ad hoc charitable provision and the consequent willingness to use state economic interventions for social ends (McClure, 2013). The four decades following the introduction of free school milk in Aotearoa New Zealand were characterised by Keynesian policies and expanding the social security safety net. Free school milk was discontinued in 1967, mainly because a nutritional boost for children was deemed no longer necessary in light of sufficient provision occurring in the majority of homes (New Zealand Milk Board, 1978).

The next section explored the context leading up to the re-introduction of school milk in 2012/2013. Poverty and food insecurity rose sharply from 1990 onwards, reflecting the consequences of neoliberal policy shifts in Aotearoa New Zealand. Despite the government’s denial of poverty in the period 2000-2017, hunger in schools became a visible manifestation of growing food insecurity. Media advocates and schools drove public awareness of children going hungry (Anscombe, 2009; Wynd, 2009, 2011). Political responses to the problem of hunger in schools sought to minimise and obfuscate the numbers of children involved. Crucially, the focus on blaming parents intensified, reinforcing parental responsibility rather than state solutions. There was also a tendency to discuss resources for children in terms of a finite existing funding pool, requiring redistribution rather than any additional support.

Nevertheless, beyond the words of politicians, the visibility of hungry children in schools became a touchstone for a broad range of assumptions about food insecurity, parents and children. I identified five common narrative tropes that emerged through analysis of media and policy materials, characterised as responsabilising; taxpayer sovereignty; communitarianism; virtuous benevolence and Third Way pragmatism. Each narrative constructs the problem of hungry school children in distinct ways, thereby suggesting

appropriate responses. Having identified multiple and complex narratives about hungry school children, I examined some of the multiple and complex activities taking place in schools across Aotearoa New Zealand to ameliorate hunger.

The first example of responses was the local “feed the kids heroes”, who were favoured in media stories and reflected a cultural preference for “roll your sleeves up” direct action. In the case of larger scale charity activities, I examined the extent to which such organisations need to shape their activities around attracting donors, including the use of images of children suffering in order to instigate pity. Some enduring issues with charity were apparent, for example the ad hoc and unsustainable nature of much of what was offered. Perhaps a more troubling observation was how charity was serving to de-politicise food insecurity through stories that depict heroic responses within schools as a solution to inequality.

The second example of responses encompassed corporate activity within the school food philanthropy arena, through donations but also partnerships with other sectors. The concept of corporate social responsibility within the business sector abetted the growth of partnerships for school food schemes. Partnerships promoted positive images of children consuming branded products. Social enterprises also entered schools to feed children, promoting their model of business achieving social aims. I identified shortcomings with using corporations to address hunger in schools, many of which were similar to concerns about charity, such as the ad hoc nature of provision. Further, corporate incursions into schools raised additional questions in terms of legitimising the role of business, reinforcing children’s role as consumers, and furthering the retrenchment of state responsibility (Powell, 2019).

The final section returns to the exemplar of milk in schools, exploring the role of Fonterra Milk for Schools in 2013. Nostalgic connections to narratives relating to school milk in 1937 were still apparent. Milk itself retained symbolic importance and its relationship with a national imaginary of New Zealand identity, notably farming and farmers as custodians of New Zealand’s natural bounty. Fonterra Milk for Schools was initiated within the context of rising local milk prices and deleterious environmental impacts accruing from dairy farming (Foote et al., 2015). The chapter concludes with a comparison of key features of the exemplars of school milk in 1937 and its 2013 counterpart. While the symbolic role of free school milk was important in both periods, the 2013 scheme emerged as a product of its neoliberal context. The following chapter explores neoliberalism from the position of those navigating precarious lifeworlds, through the stories of parents who are feeding their children on low incomes.

Chapter Five: “As Long as I’ve got my Daughter’s Lunches”: Contemporary Precarity and Conditionality as Everyday Practice

In the previous chapter, I documented how implicit and explicit pejorative characterisations of low-income parents were, at the time of this research, a prominent feature of dominant narratives within media and policy focused on hunger in schools. Evident within the materials explored in the previous chapter is the dominant storyline that parents struggling to keep children fed are unproductive and inactive, especially when they are not in paid work. Lister (2006) refers to ‘the universal breadwinner model’ as being dominant (p.319). Here, the privileging of paid work extends from the traditional male breadwinner to include both single and partnered mothers. Single mothers are particularly subject to judgements in the context of neoliberal welfare dependency narratives (Cassiman, 2007; Grahame & Marston, 2012; Lister, 2006; Martin et al., 2021). Not only are low-income and “welfare dependent” mothers stigmatised, they are also frequently excluded from public discussions about feeding children in schools. As was shown in Chapter Four, this absence is exemplified in materials promoting contemporary school milk. The current chapter moves the focus from dominant narratives to instead explore experiences of precarity and parenting from the standpoint of parents who navigate these challenges in their everyday lifeworlds.

In this chapter, I examine the experiences of four mothers who struggle to keep food on the table in their low-income households. The participants included in this chapter are subject to both the material inequalities and moral judgements that are the outcome of neoliberal processes. The narratives explored in this chapter therefore illuminate ways in which precarity shapes the everyday, taking form through material and social processes (Dreier, 2015; Gregg, 2004). This chapter challenges portrayals that situate human endeavour within market relations and depict low-income parents as victims of their own misdoings and lack of enterprise. Instead, I present the participants as *narratable selves*, constructing unique stories in relation to social, symbolic and material conditions (Cavarero, 2000, p. 40). This brings participants’ own understandings of their lifeworlds to the fore. Accordingly, the parents featured in this chapter demonstrate ways in which they sustain their own agency within difficult circumstances, whilst laying bare the psychological costs that can be exacted by precarity.

This chapter underlines the pivotal role of food expenditure in the lives of those on insecure, insufficient incomes (Parnell et al., 2001). Money allocated towards food is often the only flexible element left in the budget for low-income households (Tarasuk, 2001; Wynd, 2009). Once rent, bills, school costs and debt repayments are paid, there is nowhere

for unexpected or uncontrollable costs to come from, apart from squeezing the food money further. Parenting amidst insufficient resources for all household members requires relentless attention to expenditure in order to ensure children have lunch for school every day, but also to provide other meals, shoes to wear and a warm bed to sleep in.

I begin the chapter with brief summaries of the household circumstances of each of the four parents who participated in my research. The household summaries cannot fully capture the biographical details and complexities of participants' lives, but they do offer a window into some of the circumstances that contribute to their food insecurity. After introducing the participants and their families, the analysis of participant narratives is presented with two broad areas of focus. The two sections are firstly, 'Endurance' and secondly, 'Resistance and Salvaging the Self'. The choice of labels for these two sections reflects a critical approach towards WEIRD psychology's emphasis on individualised resilience traits or the requirement to cultivate a proactive, empowered self (Adams et al., 2019; Ratner, 2019; Rose, 1999; Sugarman, 2015). The concept of 'Endurance' instead captures the ways in which the participants cope within the social and economic location they inhabit (Berlant, 2007). Endurance describes the effort of maintaining a steady course in the face of insecurities, but also the onus to adapt to changing circumstances. The second section, 'Resistance and Salvaging the Self' emerges from the participants' need to resist dominant constructions of social worth in order to establish and maintain the value of what they do (Couldry, 2010).

The chapter begins the section titled 'Endurance' by acknowledging that the need to endure is predicated on economic circumstances that have not been intentionally chosen and represent poverty traps (Standing, 2011). I provide examples of how narratives of humour or optimism help the mothers to negotiate their constrained circumstances. Participant narratives are then situated within interwoven processes of welfare, paid work, and care that operate in concert to sustain precarity. Relationships with children are central in the lives of the participants. The participants' accounts illuminate the ways in which their time and energy is not valued, which is reflected in the low economic value assigned to both their paid and unpaid roles (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2012).

'Endurance' is next explored in relation to the organisation and provision of food. Participants reveal the constraints and boredom of eating and providing food with limited resources, as well as the creativity this can sometimes occasion. I explore material practices and pragmatic strategies as invoked by participants. The role of school lunches and providing a sufficient evening meal encompass more than solely nutrition. The practices related to

feeding the family are entwined with social and emotional goals, reflecting the role of food in concepts of ‘good mothering’ and driving the distribution of food within the households (Woolhouse et al., 2019).

The final subsection of ‘Endurance’ explores the narratives from participants that expand further on the idea of children missing out. Using the concept of an idealised ‘Kiwi kid’ childhood introduced in the previous chapter, I highlight the emotional damage exacted on mothers who cannot meet accepted norms of childhood in this time and place. As outlined in chapter one, poverty research in Aotearoa New Zealand often focuses on children’s lacks. In giving space to mothers’ pain and anger, the chapter reveals children’s lacks, but within the context of families that strive to fill these lacks, and the toll that takes on adults.

The second section of the chapter, entitled ‘Resistance and Salvaging the Self’, begins by analysing a central conundrum expressed by participants in relation to their roles. The conundrum is the ongoing process of attempting to live up to neoliberal worker ideals without compromising competing intensive parenting norms (Dermott & Pomati, 2016; Faircloth, 2014). In seeking to establish worthy selves, the participants’ narratives negotiate competing, and often contradictory, claims on their sense of worth. The difficulties in reconciling their different roles in this social context are evidenced with particular reference to narratives relating to participant interactions within Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ), the social security (welfare) institution.

The concept of salvaging the self is next explored through two key features from the participants’ narratives. Firstly, participants seek out less conditional social spaces or communities where their unpaid roles may be socially valued. Such spaces prioritise caring for others and parents’ financial struggles are met with empathy or solidarity. Secondly, at the heart of the attempt to provide security for children is the participants’ commitment to a concept of ‘being there’. ‘Being there’ is unpacked as a notion of significant value for the participants in shaping their lifeworlds, encompassing activities and an emotional orientation that reflect their unique relationships with their own children (Boyd, 2002).

This chapter concludes by highlighting how the precarious everyday lifeworlds that the participants inhabit are inflected by multiple pressures. Traditional gender roles are salient, yet layered within the context of neoliberalism and individualised aspiration. Demands on parents have intensified and precarity is placing whole families under stress (Boston, 2014; Craig et al., 2013). Participants are shown to respond to precarity partly through placing children at the centre of the distribution of material and social resources *within* their households. The chapter conclusion underscores the incongruity between

dominant narratives about low-income parents and the participants' own core priority of agentive 'being there' for children amidst precarity.

Participants and their Households

The research participants were each feeding their families on significantly less expenditure than that recommended by The Department of Human Nutrition at the University of Otago as a minimum amount to achieve healthy nutrition for each family member (Gray et al., 2015). Importantly, the constraints on food spending for these parents were long-standing and ongoing (lasting years rather than weeks or months). The ability to withstand short-term, temporary or occasional periods of highly constrained food expenditure must be distinguished from food insecurity as a way of life (Garthwaite, 2016a). Although the money available for the participants to buy food does vary from week to week, it is most likely to fall below what is sufficient for all household members, rather than to rise significantly.

The following participant summaries outline the circumstances that the participants faced at the time I commenced my research:

Carys (Pākehā) is a 43-year-old mother of two boys, who are ages six and seven. Carys is a stay-at-home mother and experiences health issues. Carys's husband was previously a fork-lift operator in a warehouse but is now studying full-time at university in the hope of moving into white collar employment. The period of time spent studying has been longer than expected (entering the fifth year of study at the commencement of my interviews) due to life disruptions and extra responsibilities relating to the sudden death of Carys's father-in-law. The Student Allowance is the sole source of income for the household, apart from during the university summer recess, when the couple are transferred to a temporary Jobseeker Support benefit. Carys, her husband and two boys live in a rental house with a male flatmate to help with the costs. Unfortunately, at the end of my interview period with Carys, the family ended up homeless for approximately seven weeks as a result of their landlord increasing the rent to a level that was unaffordable. They were eventually allocated a state house in a rural town.

Sophie (Pākehā) is a 24-year-old single mother to one seven-year-old son. At the time Sophie gave birth to her son, his father was serving a prison sentence and there was no contact between father and son until recent introduction of supervised visits. Sophie is a hairdresser and has worked part-time since her son was a baby, with the help of child minding from her parents. She receives partial benefit payments from WINZ and a Working for Families (WFF) tax credit payment, alongside her paid work. During the period of our

interviews Sophie sought to increase her work hours and cease receiving the benefit top ups. Sophie and her son live in a private rental flat. Sophie pays higher rental costs for a specially ventilated property because her son suffers from eczema that is exacerbated by damp living conditions.

Kandi (Māori), aged 40, is the primary caregiver for her six-year-old daughter. Kandi's daughter is court mandated to spend some days with her father. This is an arrangement that Kandi worries about, since she separated from her child's father because of his illegal drug use and emotional instability. Kandi has worked part-time since having her daughter. Kandi works as an in-home care assistant, employed by an agency to travel to the homes of elderly or disabled clients to help them with household tasks. The work is during school hours and she is unpaid for travel time between clients, and loses paid work hours when the clients go into hospital or no longer receive services. The unpredictability of income requires Kandi to top up her income with a WINZ benefit, and she also receives a WFF tax credit payment. Kandi and her daughter live in a privately rented flat.

Jo (Pākehā) is a 29-year-old married mother of four. Jo has a six-week-old baby when I begin the interviews with her, along with a two-year-old, a four-year-old, and a six-year-old. Jo's husband supports the household through full-time paid work and the family have received WFF tax credits since having their children. The tax credits are causing stress, owing to inconsistent pay and other financial complexities for Jo's husband that make it difficult to establish the correct payments. The couple have been told they now owe a substantial repayment. Yet, the family is facing a reduced income in the current year because Jo's husband is receiving lower commission payments. Jo and her family live in a private rental house with relatively low rent compared to the other three households featured in this research. The family's affordable rent is attributed by Jo to the landlord being a compassionate person.

The participant summaries above provide a snapshot of the varied circumstances that result in food insecurity for households in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand. The households represented in this research demonstrate different economic and social circumstances, in terms of the sources of income and family and household composition. Despite differences between the households, a common feature is that the low incomes of the households have resulted in each of the families carrying forms of debt. Debt is acquired primarily to weather costs of everyday living or more infrequent necessities that cannot be met out of their regular income (examples given by participants included car repairs, dental treatment, school expenses, rental bond). In addition, two of the participants, Sophie and

Kandi, are repaying student loans and sometimes have to repay money to WINZ if there are minor miscalculations between their earnings and benefit payments from week-to-week. Jo's household is required to repay money to WFF (Working for Families) and holds credit card and bank debt due to unpredictable income. Carys's household is in a cycle of borrowing and repaying money on utility bills due to the loss of income during the university summer recess. This situation arises every year because there is a two-week stand down between changing over from Student Allowance to Jobseekers Support benefit. These examples typify the extent to which household debt is both a necessity and a drain for many low-income families (Hodgetts et al., 2015; Williams & O'Brien, 2003).

Endurance

This section explores arduous elements of everyday life on a low income that become routine. The material, social and emotional stresses associated with poverty are well-documented (Boston & Chapple, 2015; Howden-Chapman et al., 2012; McKenzie, 2013; Wiggan, 2012), but often come to attention only when people's coping capacities have been exceeded and the ability to endure breaks down in the face of sustained stress (Bauman, 2005; Berlant, 2007; Cattell, 2012). In this context, the break-down in continuing to cope is too frequently defined in terms of individual failure to demonstrate resilience or other desirable traits (Parker, 2007; Peacock et al., 2014). The participants' narratives demonstrate frustrations of living on a low and/or unpredictable income, particularly the relentless lack of ability to control living conditions and the way the situation tends to worsen over time. The austerity of life on a low income requires strategies to protect children from some of the insecurities that adults are dealing with. In the context of low food budgets, for example, providing lunch for school each day is an achievement that requires nutritional compromises from the adults in the household.

Enduring precarity often means enduring entrapment – the inability to find a way forward through circumstances that do not improve (Standing, 2014). For example, the following quote from Sophie demonstrates her difficulty in creating any kind of buffer of savings to avoid acquiring debt:

Wisdom teeth and your car battery and it's just oh my God! It just seems like every time I get sorted, something has to come up and you're like 'Dammit, I'm back to square one!' And you have to start all over again".

Sophie's quote expresses her wish to make progress in her life, to feel that things may improve and her choices are expanding. Instead, Sophie repeatedly slips further behind financially, through unavoidable costs. Sophie's capacity to feel in control of her own life-story becomes compromised by years of limited opportunity to change her living conditions.

In light of the stresses imposed by insecurity, participants develop coping strategies. Carys uses fatalistic dark humour in order to provide emotional relief. The following quote from Carys illustrates the extent to which poor housing conditions contribute to her troubles:

Just the little things are starting to really get frustrating, you know? It's starting to really become, when do we get to the end of this, please? This is just insane! You know we've got a hole in our shower, yeah, in our shower floorboards? You know, it rotted! And for three months I have been pestering him, saying, 'look if you do not fix this, someone's gonna fall through the floor!'

This quote from Carys expresses her powerlessness in relation to the family's living conditions. The family struggle to find any housing they can afford and Carys showed me a dinner plate-sized hole directly outside the shower cabinet, broken through a floor that is disintegrating with rot. There is additional wet rotting wood in other parts of the house, including window frames rendered insecure and draughty. Yet Carys has to get up every morning, keep the household functioning and give her children a childhood that is not defined by harmful aspects of living in a home for which the landlord has abdicated responsibility.

One of the ways Carys copes is through frequent doses of black humour. For example, the housing conditions described above lead Carys to refer to the place as "Roach Motel", and she jokes that they killed off a rat and mouse infestation, but that seems to have resulted in an explosion in the cockroach population: "Oh dear! We've upset the circle of nature by getting rid of the roaches' predators!" Carys used humour to forge rapport between us, drawing me into a shared narrative that is one step removed from personal struggles and instead based on her bleakly comic interpretation of her lifeworld (Gray, 2017). Carys defies shame or defeat, instead inviting shared amusement based on acknowledging that the house is derelict and openly mocking it.

Laughing about aspects of her living situation that cannot be changed allows Carys to acknowledge what is not ideal without feeling like a victim but it also reinforces bonds between the family members. Carys positions herself as an amused observer of the conditions and cultivates this attitude in her sons also. For example, the whole family now call the house

'Roach Motel'. Another focus for dark humour is a succession of difficult flatmates Carys has had to deal with over the past few years, some of whom she has had to evict when their eccentric behaviour tips over into destructive. Carys reports that her husband comforts her by saying: "You've got to remember that anyone that wants to live in our Roach Motel is gonna be a loser!" Humour shared about flatmates reinforces solidarity between Carys and her husband.

In addition to black humour, Carys uses conscious attempts to lighten the mood for her two young sons, such as temporarily colouring her hair in rainbow colours:

The hairchalk I bought at the chemist a while back – it's fun putting the hairchalk through my hair and the boys hair, it's fun. We just like doing it for shits and giggles!...'Cos I've sort of come to the conclusion that if I can't do something for shits and giggles then that's it, I quit! (*laughing*) I have got to be able to do something, you know some sort of release 'cos otherwise I'll just go no, no more, can't do this!

Cary's encouragement of a light hearted activity for the sake of laughs with her sons is explicitly defined here as a coping mechanism. Small acts of silliness ("for shits and giggles") distract the family from larger worries.

In contrast, Kandi's approach to coping with the frustrations of life on a low income differs from the fatalistic humour deployed by Carys. Endurance for Kandi is supported through being able to narrate her life in terms of positive achievements. Kandi's narratives exhibit a high level of energetic optimism, preferring to emphasise what is functional in the present moment, veering conversation away from worries: "Yeah. But! I'm alive, we're alive. We're living in a nice place, got nice things. We eat, you know? So, you gotta look at it that way? You know?" Kandi's comment demonstrates how her focus is on her capacity to provide positive experiences for her daughter through her own efforts.

Kandi emphasises the work she applies to every aspect of her life: "I take pride all round, I think. I take pride in my daughter, I take pride in my house, I take pride in myself, I take pride in my work." Kandi disavows dominant media depictions of 'lazy solo mums' and makes frequent reference to the cleanliness of her home in our conversations. Skeggs (1997) notes the importance of claims to respectability (such as cleanliness) in her research with working-class women. Despite not agreeing with how single mothers are portrayed in the mainstream media, Kandi also differentiates herself from some low-income mothers at her daughter's school who she views as not making enough effort to help themselves. People

living with precarity can minimise the stigma associated with poverty by perpetuating deserving/undeserving distinctions between themselves and others (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2013). Identifying as an appropriately ‘effortful citizen’ (Gibson, 2009) can be achieved by contrast with readily available stereotypes (Jensen & Tyler, 2015). For Kandi, enduring an insecure income entails working hard to maintain whatever scope of control is available to her. Emphasis on personal agency helps to counter the shame engendered within settings such as welfare interviews, where negative judgements prevail (Walker & Chase, 2014).

Carys and Kandi represent different approaches to similar circumstances. Carys uses humour as a means of entertainment, but also as a form of resistance in a situation where she lacks control. Characterising deprivations as being outside of her control by rendering them absurd provides psychological relief. Humour thereby mitigates shame and maintains morale for Carys’s whole household. Kandi instead positions herself as an enterprising and empowered individual who is providing a good start for her child. The prominence Kandi places on appropriate mothering and her work ethic are provided in contrast to the behaviour of both her ex-partner and other mothers who do not prioritise their children (Skeggs, 1997). In situating herself as a morally worthy individual, Kandi emphasises her individual choices. The strategies identified within the participants’ narratives differ but both highlight the considerable psychosocial effort necessary for retaining a sense of agency within the constraints of precarity (Cooper & Whyte, 2017; Walker & Chase, 2014; Wilson & Yochim, 2017).

Enduring Precarious Lifeworlds: Welfare, Low-Paid Work and Caring for Children

The interplay of low paid-work and welfare, not in the traditional dichotomy of ‘beneficiary versus worker’, but as connected pillars of precarity in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand is evident in participants’ accounts. Precarity is not a state of temporary insecurity, rather it becomes a state of being for those experiencing it as an entrenched lifeworld (Cooper & Whyte, 2017; Neilson, 2015; Standing, 2014). The participants’ narratives demonstrate how the WINZ system reinforces and promotes the idea of insecurity through emphasis on the conditional and contingent nature of welfare support (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Groot, et al., 2013; Wiggan, 2012). WINZ policies are predicated on an assumption that paid work is always the route to a desired independence (Kahu & Morgan, 2007; Lunt, 2006). Instead, the participants’ stories reveal how the benefit system, care responsibilities, and paid work operate in concert to sustain ‘poverty traps’ (Standing, 2014).

The participants consistently emphasise ways in which the economic position of their households is bounded by the time and resources they need in order to care for children.

Nevertheless, constraints on participants' economic activity, and pressures associated with accessing state assistance, do not negate the emotional rewards of having children. For example, the following comment from Kandi expresses how much she enjoys having her six-year-old daughter in her life: "I let her put lots of colour stickers all over her wall, because I love her. And I just love cuddling her and kissing her and she's just so yummy! Just so yummy!" Carys tells me how much she likes spending time with her energetic sons, even when they can be a handful at times: "They're little shits but I do love my boys so much! (laughing) I love my boys, you know?" Such spontaneous expressions reflect the unconditional affection that Kandi and Carys feel for their children, affection they deem unique to the parent-child bond.

Nevertheless, the requirements of caring for children profoundly shape the participants' position within the labour market and necessitate support from the state in various forms. Jo tells me that financial difficulties only became an issue for her when she became a mother and could not control her income level in the way she had previously:

I found it quite difficult. I'd never been in that situation before. I've always had a nine to five and before having kids I worked in a job where overtime was offered a lot. So I would often work 60 hours a week, with 20 of that being at time and a half.

Although Jo's employment in a call centre before she became a mother was not highly paid, she was able to work enough hours to maintain a comfortable standard of living. The ability to work longer hours as a remedy for increasing living costs is not a solution available for Jo's current circumstances, given her responsibility for four small children.

Participants express gratitude for state assistance, defining it as necessary, yet each of the participants also at times expresses frustration and dislike of the system on which they are economically reliant. For example, Sophie expresses feelings of being controlled whilst receiving WINZ support: "You're so tied to a benefit, I reckon. You know, like even your personal life, and stuff. You're tied to this benefit". Sophie is in a position where her benefit supplements her income from paid work and is contingent on her being single. Single parents are under scrutiny because being in a relationship threatens their eligibility for support, regardless of whether or not their relationship provides any financial support (St John et al., 2014).

In the following interview extract Sophie reflects on her limited prospects of being able to earn more income, given the position of single mothers in the labour market:

So, like it's mostly part time, eh? How do you? You could, if you worked a nine to five job, that would be fulltime, I guess. But actually, finding that job and being able to do that job is a different story. And I guess, employers too, like if there's a single mum wanting this fulltime job, or like just a normal person without kids, they'd probably more likely go with the one without kids because, what if their kid's sick, they can't come to work. So they're more likely to take that person.

Interviewer: When you've been getting your various jobs, have they known your circumstances?

S: Yeah. And they always ask that, too. They always ask about childcare and whether or not you'd be able to come to work and what happens if they're sick, and like they ask you all those questions. So they must look at the whole thing before they hire you.

In the extract above, Sophie contrasts the position of a single parent like herself when competing for employment opportunities, with "just a normal person without kids". Sophie's experiences reveal the extent to which the labour market can operate to reinforce neoliberal conceptions of the 'ideal worker', a worker without dependents or responsibilities beyond the workplace (Pocock, 2003, pp. 100-101). The 'normal person', who does not have to take into account the inconvenience of sick children, is revealed as the 'rational economic man' of neoliberal orthodoxy (literally a man in many cases) (Read, 2009; Rustin, 2014).

The interplay of work, welfare and childcare create an ongoing need for welfare benefits, regardless of whether the participants want to cease the pressures, illustrated in this quote from Sophie:

I'd rather be out working, and making my own money, than getting it from them. But, when you actually weigh up you know, the extra help you can get from them and your weekly income, you're sometimes better to stay on the benefit. Like it is actually scary being off it because you don't have that back-up, 'cos you can't save enough money to have that back-up if you do leave. It's that pressure with a job.....So if something happens to your job, and you lose your job, it's like a six week stand-down, you can't get back on it.

This example highlights the extent to which single mothers can find themselves trapped within the welfare system because of their need for financial security, however austere and

limited that security may be. Sophie struggles with whether to take on the risks of relying on insecure paid work alone, because these risks would impact on her child, in particular the ability to pay rent and maintain a stable home. In contrast to the prevalent rhetoric of ending welfare ‘dependency’, the stand- down periods before people can access support after job loss make it difficult for parents to risk moving fully into paid work (Cotterell et al., 2017).

Both Sophie and Kandi are engaged in a constant struggle to secure and keep paid work hours. The interviews with these two mothers reveal a constant refrain of “hours, hours, hours”. Paid work hours vary from week- to- week for Sophie and Kandi. The WFF tax credits Sophie and Kandi receive require a fixed minimum of paid work hours within the household (Cotterell et al., 2017). Case managers at WINZ focus on the women attaining over 20 hours of paid work. Single parents need to try to fit the paid work hours they attain with childcare arrangements, given that these hours may not fit within school hours, or even fall on weekdays.

The issue for Kandi is that she can sometimes achieve 20 hours in her care work, but this can change at any time and without notice, if she loses a client. In the following comment, Kandi explains how at a job interview she is asked why she cannot increase her current nineteen hours work per week in order to come off the benefit:

But I need permanent hours to get off the benefit, ‘cos, my job, in this industry, as you’d know, people, it’s the twilight years, and they pass away, or they go into rest home care and then I’ve, my hours get down, they go up and down. Or they’re on respite, so if I don’t have a client, I don’t work, I don’t eat, you know?

Kandi is trying to move her employment from the home care work to establish more reliable hours in the retirement home sector. The rest home work she is seeking has the drawback of being rostered shifts that do not fit within school hours, necessitating both before and after school care expenditure and less time with her daughter.

Further complexity is revealed when Kandi explains that the care home shifts would vary from week to week but the after-school childcare requires booking further ahead: ‘If it’s shift work, ‘cos after-school care works like, you can’t have it, you can’t book her in a week before you need it? You know, you have to book them in as regular’. The result of trying to combine these work shifts with childcare is thus going to result in Kandi paying for care not required. The greater number of work hours for this new job may end up with virtually no financial advantage to Kandi, and less time to spend with her daughter. In attempting to find

work with greater security than her irregular homecare work, Kandi is negotiating what the trade-offs between time and money will actually mean for her daughter.

A key point in relation to the pursuit of 'hours' is that it occurs in an environment of competition (Crowley & Hodson, 2014). Sophie and Kandi need to compete firstly with others to obtain employment, but once they have a job, the competition can intensify. This competition is instigated by the need to attain sufficient work hours, hours that another staff member will consequently not be able to work. The situation is illustrated by Sophie's description of working for a chain of budget hair cutting bars that use a pool of hairdressers rostered to work according to the unsystematic behest of the salon manager:

There were some girls that would come to work and on the rosters, their hours would be gone and they'd only be working one shift that week. And then the next week they'd have twenty hours, and then the next week they'd only have ten. So, it was all over the place. And then, she was always moving the rosters around and changing people without even asking them, like didn't inform them before they changed them. I would come to work some days and it would say that I'm working Monday. And I didn't work Mondays. And then I was working that Monday. And people wanted more hours but she kept hiring new people and then telling them that they would eventually get more hours, but there'd be people there that'd been there for years that still hadn't got more hours.

When Sophie decides she has enough work to free herself of the need to remain on the benefit, she goes to tell her case manager at WINZ:

I was so excited that I got twenty hours from my old job, I was like 'yay I'm gonna finally get off the benefit!' So I went to have my appointment to get off it and I was like, 'I've got twenty hours, you can cut me off now!' And he looked at me and he said, 'Do you work at *****?' And I said 'Yes.' And then he was like, 'If I was you I wouldn't get off the benefit.'

Sophie's WINZ case worker is admitting that the continuing safety net of the benefit is necessary because of the inconsistent nature of employment at the lower end of the labour market. This awareness amongst some frontline workers at WINZ of the need for continued benefit support sits alongside a dominant institutional narrative emphasising the dangers of 'benefit dependency' (Cheyne et al., 2008; Clarke et al., 2000, pp. 181-185). In effect, a workplace such as that described above by Sophie, is 'dependent' on WINZ acting to

subsidise particular employment practices. The employer is able to rely on the benefit top-ups that its pool of workers receives in order to ration work hours as an ad hoc management tool.

In keeping with a shift toward precarity as a state of being, the freedom that Sophie yearns for is revealed as freedom from benefit restrictions but not freedom from economic vulnerability. Sophie has worried about how to keep herself and her son fed and housed on a low income for many years but despite her desire to increase paid work, she does not see paid work as a solution to her position as a citizen whose income barely maintains her household:

But like this isn't how it should always be! You should be able to get ahead, not always worrying!

I: So you don't see yourself advancing economically?

S: No! No! Even if you work forty hours a week you'll still probably get the same amount of money, as ...I am now. Unless I got a real well paid job, but...where the hell do you get that from?

Sophie's comments above illustrate that she understands her position within the labour market (constrained by her domestic responsibilities, single parent status and training) creates boundaries around what her future might look like. She cannot tell a story of her life at this point that will feature greater security and prosperity for her and her son in the future. For Sophie *'this isn't how it should always be'* and yet it is not easy to imagine how it could be different in light of the likelihood of continuing insecure and low income (Baker & Tippin, 2002).

Endurance: Everyday Scarcity in a Land of Plenty

The extracts explored above highlight participant experiences of an environment that sustains precarity for these low-income parents. We now turn to the material and practical strategies that the participants deploy in order to keep their families housed and fed. The participants must accommodate an ongoing low food budget, as well as periods of more extreme austerity when food money needs to be re-purposed. Considerable energy goes into decision making and strategising in relation to food shopping and preparation. Only through keeping a close focus on expenditure can the participants ensure that their children are fed. Practices that stretch scarce ingredients are a material necessity but occasionally create a sense of satisfaction when they represent a successful meal achieved within tight parameters.

One of the issues in participants' narratives about food is the role of income payment intervals in household budgeting. For example, Sophie and Kandi receive payments on three days each week. The multiple payments are the result of the benefit being paid on one day, their wages from part-time work a different day, and WFF credits on a third day. Not only is the total income low, it is paid in small increments. The result of this situation is a requirement to manage the budget around multiple payments that can each cover costs of only a few days at a time. When I asked Sophie about her shopping practices, she responded:

So, I'll go on a, 'cos I get paid ninety dollars on Tuesday. So, I have to get my gas and enough food to last 'till Thursday. And then Thursday, I'll do like another shop. And then it depends, if I need another shop or I need to top my phone up or I need extra gas or I've gotta go out and do something, then the food gets less on that week. And then I have to make up for it on Thursday. So we just have to buy like a few things we definitely need to last, till Thursday...I mean it costs extra gas too.

While Jo's family can sometimes bulk purchase items like tinned tomatoes in order to stockpile staples at a reduced price, Sophie empties the cupboards completely between payments. The situation creates extra expense for Sophie because when food runs out she doesn't have time to get petrol and groceries from the cheapest source and instead has to spend more to ensure her son has breakfast and lunch. Sophie shows me her bare cupboards on the day before a payment is due, revealing that the last slice of bread went into her son's lunchbox that morning:

One loaf lasts a week. Lucky, 'cos tomorrow's payday and we just ran out of bread today. And we ran out of milk last night. So it just lasts 'till Wednesday. But tomorrow he'll have nothing for lunch so we'll go and he always orders it. But that's like ten dollars that comes out of the food money.

Managing multiple paydays requires considerable organisation in relation to maintaining payments for rent, utilities and living costs, necessitating strong budgeting skills. Sophie's situation illustrates the challenges of managing a tight budget when the allocation of resources places no value on the time of parents who have to maintain a household (Lister, 2004, pp. 58-60).

Despite the participants demonstrating a range of practical skills in relation to sourcing and preparing foods, it is challenging to provide three meals a day. The need to keep costs down often manifests in a repetitive and limited diet, something reported in many

studies relating to food insecurity (Buck-McFadyen, 2015; Graham, Stolte, et al., 2018; Rush et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2013a). Part of the monotony of such diets relates to the narrow range of foods that are affordable for feeding a family. The participants cycle through a routine of basic foods, many of them low cost carbohydrate- heavy foods to satiate hunger. I discuss the role of school lunches within the organisation of household food provision later in this chapter but first, I consider the importance of the evening meal within participants' accounts.

A core focus for the participants is the provision of an evening meal which resembles what they define as a socially and culturally accepted 'plate of dinner' (Bugge & Almås, 2006; Murcott, 1982). I ascertained that the evening meal is the only full meal most of the adults in the participating households eat. For example, Kandi describes the focus for her food shopping:

As long as I've got my daughter's lunches, that's all that matters. I don't buy lunch stuff, for myself...like, it's always been, even when she was at kindy (*kindergarten*) it was always just kindy lunch food and dinner food. And that was it. That's what I shop for.

An evening meal that features meat, vegetables and carbohydrates when possible is a goal for participants. The parents restrict their own food intake during the day in order to provide a family dinner. Cost limits the variety and quantity of vegetables on the dinner plate. For example, Sophie weighs the price of fresh produce against other items: "But then sometimes we don't buy salad, 'cos it's real expensive. Like only if we're having a good week. The week that I don't have to buy cleaning products, we'll get more food". Sophie's comment about salad often being unaffordable is echoed by other participants, and frozen vegetables are favoured because of the lack of waste.

The participants' evening meals are typically their only daily meal featuring meat or measurable protein from sources such as lentils, or eggs. In addition to providing protein, meat also acts as a signifier of a substantial hot 'main' meal for the families. Meat continues to occupy an important cultural and nutritional role in the food practices of Anglo countries, such as Aotearoa New Zealand despite greater diversity in eating styles (Fiddes, 2004). When asked about what they would purchase with a larger food budget, better quality meat for the main meal is a priority for participants. For example, Jo tells me: "We eat a lot of mince and sausages!" Jo views processed meat products as not ideal but a practical necessity for feeding the family.

Sophie is clear that lean red meat would be preferable nutritionally to what she can currently afford. Sophie and her son both take medically prescribed iron supplements, which she describes as necessary because of their diet: “The meat I guess is, the meat isn’t very good for him. All that crumbed meat stuff is...well he’s eating it, which is better than not eating”. Sophie’s comment highlights the additional issue of trying to ensure children are fed well, a particular worry for Sophie because her son often will not eat.

Creating a meal that is enjoyed is important in terms of ensuring adequate nutrition for children, but especially important in a setting where any waste is unaffordable (Graham, Stolte, et al., 2018). Participants adapt their practices according to their household size and circumstances. For example, frozen pre-portioned products minimise waste for Sophie. In contrast, for Jo’s household of six people, stretching small quantities of beef mince in bulk cooking (using lentils, tinned tomatoes, grated vegetables or gravy mix) is more economical.

Producing an evening meal requires ingenuity when resources are stretched (McCabe & de Waal Malefyt, 2015). Carys derives satisfaction from being able to create meals when ingredients are limited. In the following extract Carys explains how she makes a simple crustless quiche:

It’s essentially, I do an egg per person and then throw an extra egg in. Because eggs are cheapish. And then you do, flour, um you know like, yeah self-raising flour. And then I end up putting, if I’ve got any bacon, or any meat that I have, I put some of that in, a cup of frozen vegies, milk, mix it all up, shove it in the oven, there it is.

Carys is demonstrating a flexible way of providing low-cost protein for her hungry household, which includes herself, two adult men and two boys. Importantly for Carys, serving this quiche accompanied by inexpensive pasta is greeted with enthusiasm by her diners. Carys feels that her sons miss out on many material and recreational resources, but she is a keen cook and mealtimes are a respite from stress. Attention to this description reveals the fact that one cup of frozen vegetables will be the vegetable portion of the meal between five people. Regardless, this quiche meal is a plate of dinner that is achievable and enjoyed by the family so Carys’s primary goals are met.

Sometimes creativity is not enough to maintain all of the preferred features of the evening meal if money becomes even tighter. Inexpensive staples take centre stage when necessary, for example, when a bill needs paying Jo’s household relies on: “a lot more lentils

and rice and beans in our diet”. Alternatively, families may cut the portion size, but maintain some key elements of the meal, as Carys discusses below:

Well I like to make sure that we’ve got at least the basics, at least that. You know it might mean that, sometimes it won’t necessarily be as big a meal but we make sure that everybody has got that, that basic stuff going on.

This quote expresses Carys’ commitment to keeping the evening meal in place, despite constraints on the quantity of food available.

The evening meal is an important focal point for the families’ efforts to provide adequate nutrition, a positive routine and sense of normality. The symbolic importance of the evening meal relates to the status of evening meals as shared family experiences (Le Moal et al., 2021). Drawing the family around the table or onto the sofa, and giving children foods they like affirms that home can be a nice place, even if other things are not achievable. Regardless of variations, the routine of the shared household evening meal is a ritual that creates social continuity, connecting families to patterns of behaviour that are intergenerational, traditional, or simply comfortable, and this reinforces family bonds (Utter, Larson, et al., 2018). Next, I explore the role of school lunches within the participants’ accounts, highlighting the different characteristics of a meal eaten by the children outside of the home.

The participants identified the school lunch as an important element of planning food for the family. As discussed in Chapter One, the provision of an individually made lunch to send to school has been the standard practice in Aotearoa New Zealand, rather than a communal meal provided at school (Gunderson, 2003). It is likely that the absence of any routine school-based meal provision has intensified the role of lunchboxes in displaying household class and ethnic distinctions (Pluim et al., 2018; Rey Vasquez, 2013). Research confirms that the contemporary school lunchbox occupies a key role in establishing and displaying a classed notion of ‘good mothering’ (Harman & Cappellini, 2015; Perrier, 2013; Rey Vasquez, 2013). Awareness of the lunchbox being viewed by others in the school setting is now reinforced by the flow of commentary about lunches and nutrition that comes home, via school notices and educational resources for parents (Pluim et al., 2018). The participants know that teachers, teaching assistants, other children, or even other parents may have cause to view the contents of their child’s lunchbox.

In addition to the display element of school lunches and their consequent potential to expose the stigma of poverty, two other aspects of the school lunchbox emerge in parents’

accounts. Firstly, the school lunch is important in terms of a child's ability to cope and perform within the school setting across the day. Parents want their child to be able to behave well and learn. Secondly, this importance is amplified by the fact that the meal is consumed away from home so can represent an extension of parental nurturing into a place where a child does not have a parent to call on, whatever the day brings. The lunch has a care element, as it demonstrates knowledge of that child as an individual, in a setting where their needs are subsumed into the aims of the school (Albon, 2019).

The school lunches that participants provide follow a recognisable pattern, described here by Jo: "Lunches for the kids are sandwiches, something like a jam sandwich or a Marmite and cheese sandwich with one or two pieces of fruit and sometimes a treat like a muesli bar". Carys has time for baking so includes inexpensive homemade treats instead of a muesli bar. Participants try to accommodate preferences within the small range of what is affordable, for example offering a choice of inexpensive sandwich spreads.

Sophie struggles to get her son to eat and there have been medical concerns about his nutrition and weight in the past. This means that for her, there is a compromise to be struck between her wish to feed him healthily and her fears for him not eating sufficiently. Sophie's son's eating during the school day is a focus, as behavioural and educational issues are accruing, and a day without food is not helpful. She has to negotiate with his school for supervision to ensure he eats at lunchtime, and has allowed some foods she thinks are unhealthy into the lunchbox: "Like I'd rather he has something that he wants so that he actually eats at school. 'Cos he wasn't eating for a while and he'd come home starving and it would be uneaten in his school box'. This comment shows Sophie attempting to extend her care for her son into the school setting.

Kandi also demonstrates her investment in maintaining maternal care during her daughter's school day. Kandi often goes without lunch herself but her daughter's lunchbox is revealed as containing twice as much food as one six-year-old can possibly eat. Despite the financial strain, Kandi prefers to provide her daughter with too much food than for there to be any chance of there not being enough: "I do like to give her a lot. I just can't stand the thought of her going hungry". After spending time with Kandi, I realised that her own childhood shapes her desire to make sure that her child always has abundant food during the school day. Kandi's family circumstances meant that she did not always have what she needed. Kandi's food practices are therefore bound up with her narrative of being a good mother and ensuring her daughter does not experience the hardships Kandi herself experienced (Graham, Hodgetts, et al., 2018).

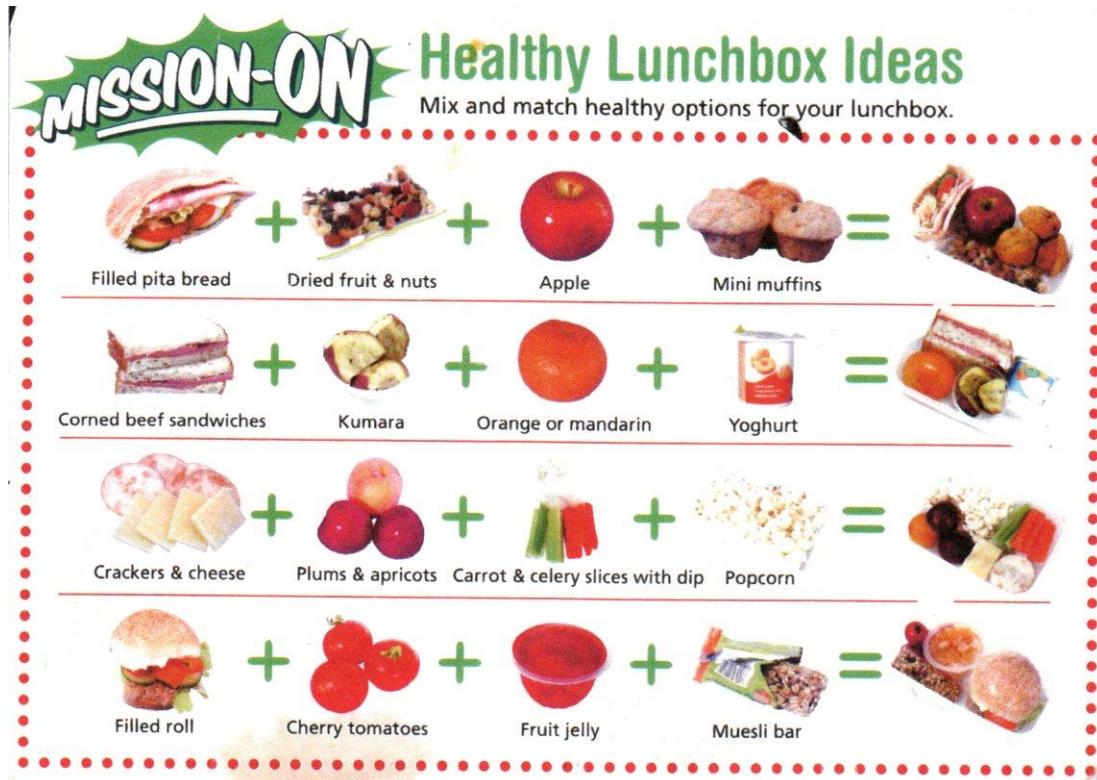
Fruit occupies a central role in planning the lunchbox. Fruit is defined as very important for children, and the parents like their children to have fruit, evidenced in this quote from Jo: “My husband and I are both firm believers that kids should always have fruit as much as possible”. Jo’s comment demonstrates the distinctive place that fruit can occupy in parents’ narratives about feeding children well (Harman & Cappellini, 2015). The role of providing fruit forms part of how Jo and her husband parent – they are believers in fruit for children and try to live up to this parenting ideal.

The importance of fruit for children (the adults rarely eat it and reserve it for their children) is particularly emphasised in school lunches. For example, Carys tells me: “And I will always make sure that there is some sort of fruit in there. You know? I: Is that tricky sometimes? Carys: Yeah. If I can’t do it I feel like stink. I hate that”. Carys is expressing her feeling of having failed if she has not been able to include fruit in the packed lunch. The everyday struggle to ensure an apple for the lunchbox is an act of physical care for a child, but also demonstrates awareness of prevailing health and nutrition messages (Branco, 2020; Harman & Cappellini, 2015).

Health information leaflets and magnetised ‘healthy food and drinks’ lists and recipes come home from school regularly (an example, Figure 6, is provided below). The educational materials often focus on obesity prevention and promote the idea that knowledge of nutrition and cooking skills are the key factors shaping parents’ provision of healthy and appropriate lunches (Biddle, 2017). These educational resources deny significant material differences between New Zealand families, focussing on ideas for healthy lunches that are frequently beyond the budgets of low-income parents. Nutritious lunch ideas that are ‘fun’ for children are advocated, for example, pita breads filled with chicken and salad, or dried fruit and nuts. When these are suggested as low-cost options, it further marginalises parents for whom these ‘budget friendly’ options are still unaffordable. For example, Carys shows me the following magnetised lunch guide sent home with her children from school.

Figure 5

Picture of the lunchbox ideas fridge magnet



Note. This fridge magnet was produced by the government as part of “Mission-On”, a package of health and education initiatives aimed at reducing obesity in children and young people set up in 2006.

Carys went on to express her frustrations about the difficulty in meeting the goals set out on the fridge magnet:

This one here right, (reading) ‘filled pita bread, plus dried fruit and nuts, plus an apple, plus a muffin, equals a healthy lunch, right? And you sort of look at it and go (sigh). Like, filled pita bread right? Filled pita bread, right, apart from the fact it’s telling you what, suggesting what to buy to fill it OK, well pita bread itself is ‘this amount of money’. For the mini ones, six I think were about three dollars, something like that, right? And then ‘dried fruit and nuts’. Again, you know, some of these things I’m looking at and thinking, these people are on a different planet!’ Um, you look at this one, with the

muesli bar and the fruit jelly and I'm like, I look at it, I know how much these things are and I just don't think, I can't possibly justify ten dollars, just for lunches, and that will only feed one child!

Carys's observation about the authors of such materials being 'on a different planet' summarises the issue effectively. Nutritional education with a focus on 'healthy choices' denies the realities for families who have to make fine-tuned calculations to ensure that anything at all can go into the lunchbox. In this context the provision of fruit and a jam sandwich is a success. Reminders that a chicken and salad pita bread might be even better forms an additional stressor (Pluim et al., 2018). The educational materials provided to parents reflect an emphasis on education instead of provision, which is a notable feature of policy in Aotearoa New Zealand in relation to food insecurity (Clelland et al., 2013; Powell & Gard, 2015; Wynd, 2009). Parents struggling to provide sufficient food must navigate and respond to such material, and rarely have a voice in what would be useful for their own families (Smith et al., 2013b).

Below, Sophie summarises the problem with *knowing* what is an optimally healthy diet, and the reality of providing that in the contemporary food landscape:

You can buy...you can just have way more food with shit food, than you can with healthy food.

I: So it's the quantity?

S: Yeah. Like, you can spend forty bucks just on vegetables and stuff, whereas you could, if you bought, and there's just like a few, and if you bought forty bucks worth of junk food you've got like nearly a whole trolley full, of crap!

(Laughs)

Sophie's comments encapsulate the dilemma for parents with limited resources who are expected to make 'healthy choices' for their children. The participants are well-versed in nutritional ideals, as evidenced by the emphasis they place on providing fruit, but keeping the family fed requires nutritional compromises to avoid people going hungry.

Unlike the educational materials schools offered parents, Fonterra Milk for Schools was viewed as a positive nutritional initiative by the participants, who each stated that they appreciated their children being provided with milk during the school day. The fact that the milk was for all the children in the class and did not target children deemed 'in need' was important to the participants. In contrast, breakfast at school schemes (unlike school milk)

were characterised as charity for deprived children, particularly children whose parents neglected their needs, intimating a risk of stigma for parents whose children attend these schemes.

The material explored here demonstrates that the organisation and distribution of food within the participating households prioritises children's nutritional needs. When I ask Carys about her own consumption of foods like dairy products or fruit, she tells me that her and her husband both give their sons the more nutritious foods first: "Just give it to them, 'cos it wouldn't be fair otherwise! I mean, we've already grown up, they haven't yet, so it wouldn't be fair to sort of, not let them grow up properly". Carys's comment shows her commitment to providing food to support her children's growth and future development. Nonetheless, Carys's experience of parenting with constrained resources extends beyond providing a packed lunch. In addition to nutrition, children require access to education and activities. Participants are concerned about their children's access to opportunities, especially when children cannot participate with their peers, or when future prospects may be curtailed.

Beyond Food: Parenting in the Shadow of the 'Kiwi Kid'

This thesis has argued that the assumption that Aotearoa New Zealand is a 'great place to bring up children' relates to the role of healthy children in a settler society and the persistence of particular societal myths (Belich, 2001). In Chapter Four I have shown that an idealised notion of the 'Kiwi kid' connects with historical narratives emphasising imagined egalitarian access to physical and material opportunities. The 'Kiwi kid' trope situates childhood as a relatively carefree time to cultivate robust physical health through outdoor play and organised sports, alongside educational opportunities that are deemed available to all children (Burrows, 2010). Parents and schools have primary responsibility to facilitate access to this healthy, active childhood, for example through provision of outdoor spaces, equipment, and appropriate nutrition. The previous chapter demonstrated how the focus on restoring a child to the 'Kiwi kid' ideal in charity initiatives can result in fleeting and simplistic responses to deprivation. In addition, the idealised childhood arises in the context of parenting on a low income. The social damage of being excluded from customary experiences is significant for children and parents (Frost & Hoggett, 2008).

A core feature of the 'Kiwi kid' trope is an assumption of egalitarianism: that all children in this place have equal access to education and healthcare, to sports, cultural opportunities and outdoor spaces (Seve-Williams, 2013). The participants instead experience an environment that presents their children with many possible, but unaffordable activities. The

following quote from Carys illustrates the difficulties when I ask her whether her sons play any sports:

Quite a lot of times, I just...can't. Like (my son) was saying to me the other day that he wanted to play rugby. 'Dude! I just can't do that. I could get you into the team, but I can't pay your, buy your boots!' You know? 'Cos I was looking at how much the boots were. And I'm like 'Oh mate! I just can't do that.' And the sad thing is, I think the thing that just almost made me cry, is where he just shrugs his shoulders and goes *'I don't mind'*. I'm like, 'No! You're not meant to be like that, you're meant to be like crying and cracking the shits and getting all hissy at me! But you don't, you just go (*sigh*) 'Ok. *Fair enough'*. Oh, I hate that! I hate the fact that he already knows that if I say I can't do it, he just accepts it.

This quote reveals that Carys is especially upset by her son's passive acceptance of being told he cannot play rugby. Carys's son is becoming conditioned to his exclusion from participating in activities and rugby is another team experience he will not be part of. The fact that the sport Carys cannot afford for her son is rugby, is particularly notable, given it is one of the cheapest children's sports available. Rugby in Aotearoa New Zealand has traditionally been characterised as a game open to anyone physically tough enough to play (Falcous & Turner, 2021; Nauright & Chandler, 1996). Despite the mainstream promotion of rugby as a quintessential New Zealand experience, assumed to be available to all boys (and to a lesser extent, girls) there are costs associated with participation. For Carys' family the costs are prohibitive, rendering the egalitarian mythology problematic. The 'Kiwi kid' trope sustains a hegemonic silence around the inability of some groups of children to access the opportunities on offer. While the opportunity to play sports *appears* available to children, for Carys's children such opportunities represent lost capabilities to participate in the society they should feel part of (Nussbaum, 2011).

Missing out is not confined to sports or after school activities. Sophie is particularly concerned about her eight-year-old son's educational progress and behavioural issues. The school told Sophie they thought her son could have specific learning problems that require special assistance at school. After nine months the school established that the threshold for funding extra help at school cannot be met for Sophie's son. Sophie's son does not fit into any of the categories of learning difficulties that qualify for state-funded assistance at school. Nevertheless, significant learning challenges remain and Sophie is advised by the teacher to

seek a private educational assessment: “You have to pay for it. And I was like, ‘How much will that cost?’ She said ‘It depends on how far you go with it, it could be hundreds of dollars, or something’....Oh my God!” The school also suggests that Sophie employ a tutor, at the cost to her of forty dollars per half hour of assistance. Sophie knows that private assessments and tutors are routinely accessed by parents at her son’s school who can afford them.

The unfairness of being told that her son is not progressing educationally, but the school will not provide necessary help is a source of frustration for Sophie. Sophie undertakes a parenting course and engages daily with her son’s reading and homework, but feels let down by the school:

But for his teacher last year to tell me that he needs extra help, and that I should do it, during the school holidays, and then for the school to not help him, doesn’t make sense to me. Like they should be doing something, that’s kind of their job, and they have stuff, resources for that.

Sophie’s experiences illustrate how schools can become a site for reproducing and reinforcing inequalities, rather than providing learning for all children (Apple, 2005; Reay, 2009). Children who struggle academically or behaviourally at school who have well-resourced parents fare better because they have support available to them. When the system is not resourced sufficiently to address the needs of all children, regardless of their parents’ ability to pay, children from low-income homes become further disadvantaged (Devine, 2004, p. 8).

In the absence of organised activities taken for granted by wealthier families, participants rely on free or cheap activities within the home or neighbourhood. There is an emphasis in all four participating households on children having friends or family over to play for entertainment, physical exercise, and social development. For example, during the summer holidays, Carys looks after a friend’s son and the three boys create their own games together in the garden: “The boys like playing army out the back”. Carys even helps the boys build a pirate ship out of scrap wood. In many ways, the informal play or projects that the participants’ children spend their time on echo a simpler, more independent version of childhood favoured in nostalgic representations of how children were before adults provided more formal activities (Burrows, 2010; Karsten, 2005).

Critically, the nostalgic lens must be applied with caution since the ability to leave children to play (while ensuring they are in a safe and appropriate location) is also contingent

on resources that are differentially distributed. In the context of precarity, having access to a back garden or safe outdoor space, or having a parent who is home and able to supervise creative play, are not circumstances available to all families (Egan-Bitran, 2010). For example, while Carys describes her boys enjoying playing outside, the family subsequently experiences over-crowded temporary accommodation with little space to play. In Sophie's case, maintaining paid work requires flexible childcare that extended family provides. Nevertheless, Sophie worries about the amount of time her son spends on computer games or watching television while he is being babysat by his grandmother.

In summary, the 'Kiwi kid' ideal tends to locate children's opportunities within a narrative emphasising inclusion and freedom to participate. In contrast, the participants' experiences illustrate the market-based provision of many childhood opportunities. Many childhood experiences and activities are conditional on parents having the resources to become consumers (Powell, 2019). Even the choice to allow children freedom for safe informal play is increasingly contingent on parents' capacity to resource the time and space necessary amidst the pressures of precarious lifeworlds (Leadley et al., 2020). An additional concern is the assumption that parents can supplement schools' resources by paying privately to address deficits in the state funded system. The middle classes have always bought advantages for their children, but Sophie's experiences highlight the extension of inequalities into the right to a basic education (Nash, 2016). Ultimately, the participants' narratives express the difficulties for low-income parents in meeting parenting norms and expectations that are characterised as universal, but in fact require middle-class incomes (Featherstone et al., 2014).

Resistance and Salvaging the Self

In addition to the practical, material efforts required to sustain precarious households, participants need to create and sustain a viable concept of self when dominant narratives define successful citizenship primarily in terms of individual economic accomplishments (Layton, 2010). Despite dominant narratives emphasising the primacy of paid work, the participants show an orientation toward motherhood and family as their most vital responsibility. Situating themselves within social relationships and bonds is a core feature of how the participants present concepts of self within their accounts (Layne, 1999). This section explores how the participants' stories navigate disjuncture between their own values and those of the neoliberal society that they inhabit. 'The self' emerges within participant accounts as idiosyncratic, uniquely adapted to the individual biographies of the mothers and the children they care for. For example, the personal circumstances of Sophie, who became a

mother as a teenager, are very different to those of Carys, who was told she could not have children but unexpectedly became pregnant in her late thirties. Participants' biographical idiosyncrasies intersect with diverse narrative resources in order to create meaningful selves.

Participants attempt to construct coherent and inhabitable lifeworlds whilst engaged in ongoing and sometimes fraught calculations about their time, economic situations and domestic responsibilities, which include primary care for the health and emotional wellbeing of family members. For example, Kandi knows that working in retail gave her more paid hours than her current care work, but retail sector work is untenable when Kandi has no-one to care for her daughter if she is off school:

In retail, the mall hours are this to that, you gotta work, you know? ...And when I was in retail, the amount of times my daughter has had a tummy ache and I've had to stay home and look after her. Or I'm sick over the winter. I would have been fired if I was working in retail!

Kandi needs her work to accommodate her daughter's sick days because she does not have other people who can care for her daughter at short notice. The issue of how to deal with children's inevitable days off sick from childcare or school is a recurrent focus in the participants' stories, and forms both a practical and emotional challenge (Cunningham-Burley et al., 2006). Prioritising children contributes to the participants' sense of moral worth (they fulfil the role of good parent) but the dilemma of maintaining income intensifies.

The decisions that participants have to make about how they allocate their time and energy in some respects echo the ubiquitous contemporary notion of women's search for elusive 'work-life balance' (Duncan, 2006). 'Work-life balance' is more accurately associated with a greater range of choices about time and money than the participants are able to claim. I contend that a more precise summary of the position that the participants find themselves in is that of a conundrum. The conundrum is the frequent mismatch between parents' own priorities, and the dominant narratives (and associated structures) that delegitimise caring roles (Baker, 2009; Carroll, 2018). Paradoxically, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the de-valuing of care is accompanied in the present period by a focus on individual parenting as a key to children's future success (Faircloth, 2014; Gillies, 2013; Jensen, 2010). Participants value their own role as mothers, but their income insecurity challenges dominant narratives that emphasise the right to motherhood as contingent on being able to afford children without recourse to state assistance (Pulkingham et al., 2010). Attempts to create a workable balance between earning money and caring for the family are

further challenged by the low value often ascribed to part-time paid work (Baker & Tippin, 2002). The participants negotiate a space where neither their paid work nor their parenting are valued within dominant narratives.

Interactions between WINZ and the participants provide insights into the disjuncture between the participants' priorities and policies that seek to lift mothers out of the assumed inactivity of caregiving. WINZ is a setting where managing the risks of income insecurity is framed as primarily an individual endeavour, regardless of other responsibilities (O'Brien, 2013). The clash of priorities is illustrated by Carys's experiences when she is required to attend an employment workshop at her local WINZ office. Carys spends several hours in a group session where WINZ staff instruct beneficiaries about the advantages of undertaking paid work, and how to find a job:

How to get a job interview. The fact that the benefit is not a, a lifestyle choice!
Wow! And then they were saying about your self-esteem. If you get a *job* it's better for your self-esteem. And, um, if you get a *job*, think of all the wonderful things you can have, if you get a *job*!Oh, we can all help you get a *job*. And don't you worry about this um, unemployment problem, 'cos there's lots of *jobs* out there if you know what sort of *job*, you know! Every second word is job, job, job, you know? I know, someone put their hand up and said 'What if we want to do some training for a job?' 'We can help you with training for a *job*, don't you worry!

Carys completes the education session and finds that she is then expected to participate in an individual interview with a WINZ caseworker, designed to provide tailored advice for her own job seeking:

After the group thing you have to go along to a one-on-one thing. And I'm like, looking at my watch, going 'I have to go! I've got to get my kids. Can I go first? Would people be upset if I just went first?'I had to, I had to go get the boys! I was there for the whole bloody day, it seemed! You know, going on and on about this *'job'*, 'get a *job*'!

These extracts demonstrate that Carys does not connect with the job seeking imperatives of WINZ. Nevertheless, she attends the required workshop and sits through the presentation of information that she finds irrelevant to her own life. Eventually, the time she is spending on being told that she needs a 'job' begins to interfere with Carys' own responsibilities because she has to leave in order to pick up her children from school. The 'job' Carys defines herself

as having at this stage in her life is the job of looking after her sons. Despite pressure to remain at the workshop, Carys would also be judged negatively if she did not meet her responsibility to collect her children (Jensen, 2018).

Carys's experiences illustrate the conflict between her own commitment to parenting as her occupation and the low value WINZ attributes to the activity of parenting. Conversely, single mothers who supplement paid work with their WINZ payments can also find a misfit between their own sense of achievement in managing paid work and the expectations expressed during encounters with WINZ. For example, Kandi's role as a mother is largely ignored by her WINZ case workers, but her paid work is not deemed sufficient either. Kandi initially tells me that she does not suffer the same judgement or pressure from WINZ case managers as mothers who have not been in any paid work because she exhibits a strong work ethic: "Because they can see that I'm motivated, you know? And that I, 'cos I'm already working, I go to work every day, and I'm not, the type of person that will call in sick". This comment shows the importance for Kandi of presenting herself as a person who is reliable and hard-working (Allen, 2013).

Nonetheless, despite Kandi's comments that situate her as a motivated worker, she also expresses disquiet about the extent to which WINZ tends to ignore her paid work and continue to focus on her as a 'jobseeker'. Kandi's self-storied or felt identity conflicts with the identity imposed on her by WINZ, where she is being characterised as workshy and passive. The pressure to increase her paid hours is intensifying because her daughter is now school aged:

But they don't acknowledge that you work. 'Cos I always get a letter, saying to, you've got an appointment at this time or something, to discuss work options? So, that's not really saying that..They're pretty much saying that..?...I feel like I'm not, that I'm not, not good enough, but yeah, but no, that what I'm doing isn't good enough. There's a... I feel like there's an unspoken pressure? Yeah. But I'm not...

I: Do you think that pressure is around it not being fulltime and you going off benefit, or is it about the pay?

K: Yeah. No it's got nothing to do with the pay, it's just 'get off the benefit'!

The message Kandi is encountering during these communications with WINZ is that she is not meeting the expectations of the system because she does not work full-time. The care of

her child is not acknowledged as a factor influencing Kandi's capacity to work enough hours to cease receiving a benefit. The binary of 'beneficiary versus worker' is being promoted in this setting, despite its increasing irrelevance in an era of insecure work and the prevalence of single parents trying to sustain a living through combining state support with paid work (MacDonald et al., 2014; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2012). Kandi attempts to increase her paid work hours yet she is also aware of her own capacity to manage motherhood alongside paid work and wary of getting the balance wrong:

Well, I wouldn't want to do 40 hours. 20 to 30. I just don't want to get run-down. I don't want to get too tired and then I'm useless for my daughter, or I'm stressed out and yelling the house down because I can't handle the stress, the tiredness.

Kandi's experiences, like those of Carys described above, demonstrate that the welfare system favours a type of citizenship deemed sufficiently aspirational, ignoring the realities of lives and identities as they are actually being lived and felt (Allen, 2013). At the heart of the conundrum for the participants is therefore their feeling that they alone prioritise their children within a social and economic context that does not account for their children's needs. The multiple insecurities of precarity have to be met by households with less support from the state or from other citizens, since their presumed choices are deemed deficient (Gillies, 2008). The experiences of the participants described above highlight the extent to which it is difficult to salvage the self when neither motherhood nor low-paid work appear to provide a socially valued identity.

Resistance: Seeking out less Conditional Spaces

In light of the stigma associated with economic disadvantage in neoliberal regimes, it is challenging for low-income parents to maintain self-confidence (Allen & Taylor, 2012). Participants demonstrate interpretations of dominant narratives that help them to avoid the role of supplicant, a de-valued self with limited control (Gibson, 2009). For example, Kandi expresses anxiety around trying to meet neoliberal aspirations when her paid work is not prestigious:

I used to run myself down about it and be like 'Oh I'm just a lowly paid minimum wage support worker and no-one's gonna want me' but, um, but I'm actually very proud of my job, because I make a difference in these people's lives, everyday. You know?...and that's, I think that's massive. It should be

massive, you know?....Plus I, you know, I do my housework every week, and I look after my daughter, as best as I can, and that, so I think I have a lot to be proud about, really.

Kandi shows her awareness of the low status of her job but claims her self-worth by asserting the social value of her work with disabled and elderly clients. Kandi also includes her unpaid activities in her description of how she ascribes value to her lifeworld. Maintaining her home and caring for her daughter are sources of pride in Kandi's sense of self. Kandi's need to argue that her roles as both a worker and a mother are valuable illustrates that maintaining her sense of self-worth requires negotiation with dominant characterisations of people in similar situations to her (Carroll, 2018; Patrick, 2016). Nonetheless, sometimes it is necessary for participants to seek out alternative settings where their self-worth is affirmed by others in defiance of dominant definitions of economic and social value.

In contrast to narratives that prioritise paid work, the following example demonstrates how Jo's faith-based community affirms her unpaid role within the family. The value placed on parenting within Jo's community is evidenced by both practical help provided and the sense of companionship described by Jo in relation to motherhood. Jo describes the practice of providing meals for families when they have a new baby:

Because we've just had a baby, I have very very wonderful friends who are occasionally dropping off meals to us.... They've organised it amongst themselves to make sure there's no double ups and we don't need to worry about when things are going to go bad.... They're an amazing group of ladies and I'm very very lucky to have them as my friends.

I: Have you done the same thing for other people, in the past?

J: Yes. Yes. Um, one particular friend who organises this group, I have done meals for a few ladies that she's organised them for. As well as women at church who've had babies and things.

Jo is describing a practice of mutual support. Cooking for each other represents one of many ways in which this community help each other through non-monetised co-operation. Jo's evident appreciation for the friendship that underlies the meal provision demonstrates that the practical help is bound up with important psycho-social support. The practice of providing meals for a busy new mother affirms the value of family and celebrates a new baby, whilst also acknowledging the extra work that ensues. Jo's role as a stay-at-home mother is

endorsed within the localised setting of her church and community. The neoliberal promotion of paid work and consumer choices are therefore narratives that do not connect substantially with how Jo experiences her own lifeworld.

Informal networks formed through family, church and neighbourhoods are now complemented by virtual communities that connect citizens in ways that are less geographically situated, although do not preclude face-to-face connections (Wilson & Yochim, 2017). For example, Carys is an enthusiastic participant in a local online Facebook group, *The 'Pay-it-Forward' community* (Facebook, n.d.). The concept of paying it forward is an international trend that is rooted in the idea of small acts of generosity in everyday life, without expectation of recognition or reward. The group is primarily used to share low-cost items and source food when people find themselves without resources. Carys describes her engagement with the group:

Last night, classic example last night, up on the Pay it Forward community: *'We have a family who need some food to last till then, has anybody got anything?'* And people will, you know, it's two adults, two children. People will then say, 'I have this', 'I have that'. They do this big food drive.... Or someone will say: 'well what do you need?' 'I've got a couple rolls of toilet paper; do you need that?' And people will just, this is something that I've really smiled at! You know, you're in a hard spot because you've had to pay rego (car registration), or whatever, and oh crap, I've got no food. There's all these people who turn around and say, 'I've got a can of this or a spare of that'.

I: So the people who are giving these things don't have a lot either?

C: No. I mean they're people just like me. You know? And I'll turn around and say, look I've got a couple of cans of spaghetti or baked beans, does anybody want any of those, sort of thing. Or if I can do it, I'll have a spare loaf of bread. I'll say I've got frozen bread if anyone wants one of them.

Carys shows in her comments above the importance of reciprocity for the group. The emphasis on membership through sharing distinguishes the group from the traditional charity model that is based on a wealthier benefactor and a needy recipient. Although contributions can be minimal, the ability to participate in this group is still contingent on having a certain level of access to resources.

The group's online means of connecting people is fast, and provides the choice of anonymity. As Carys explains: "Particularly people who just don't want to go out of their house and let everyone know that they're stone broke with nothing. You can still be anonymous if you like, in a way. You can keep your dignity." Despite some people choosing to interact with the group without identifying themselves, face-to-face interactions are also facilitated by the group. Carys describes the gardening resources that the group provide in her neighbourhood:

I mean this community's set itself up now so that there's gardening tools, there's a lawnmower, someone there with a lawnmower you can borrow, you know to borrow. We've even got someone who will mow lawns for you. Just for a cup of tea, if you know what I mean? It's really nice that there's these things around that people will do, not for money.

The online community connects people locally, through access to shared resources. In addition, Carys tells me about a barbecue that the group organise, where members each contribute what they have available. An important feature of this occasion is the shared understanding of people's limited means so that social pressure to provide an impressive or expensive dish is absent:

Everybody will turn up like um, they sort of worked out, what can we all bring? Last year, I said, look I've got more packets of cordials than I can poke a stick at, I'll bring some of those. Oh yeah, that'll be good. So we did that.... And it's just really, the people are really nice!

Carys's descriptions illustrate how she values engagement with a group where notions of sharing and kindness prevail. The group allows Carys to participate with what she has to contribute, in this case a few dollars' worth of cordial mix. Through the emphasis on inclusion the barbecue becomes a setting that reinforces Carys' own intrinsic social worth.

The *Pay-it-Forward* group provides Carys with social connection, but also operates as a safety net, both materially and psychologically, revealed in a comment about being able to access help if desperate:

But just to know, um, if I ever am in this situation, where I'm like 'what am I going to do?' I've got like three cents to my name. I can, there is this little group of people that I can, even if I don't have um the internet here, I can go to the library and I can just put a 'help!' and people will do it. And people

don't know me from a slice of bread. But they'll still go 'yeah come on, I'll give you a hand'.

Two important elements are worth highlighting from Carys' quote. Firstly, in a situation of need, Carys sees herself turning to this community of people rather than expecting resources from any formal social agency such as WINZ or from a charity (for example a foodbank). Secondly, Carys is an active member of another community, that of her children's school, but the school parents are predominantly more affluent and even friends within this setting may not understand Carys' circumstances. For Carys there is social risk in being open about economic hardship with school parents because their empathy cannot be relied upon. The ethos of the *'Pay-it-forward'* group reinforces the importance of whānau and caring for others, regardless of why people are in need.

Connections between the participants and communities that are disengaged from dominant definitions of social worth can therefore help the participants to feel good about themselves and the activities they prioritise. The support experienced outside of formal systems that are supposed to help people in need is provided within a framework where people feel valued, instead of shamed (Garthwaite, 2016b). Rappaport (2000) refers to narratives that support solidarity between marginalised citizens and communities as 'tales of joy' that defy dominant definitions of social worth. Settings where deserving and undeserving distinctions are not salient allow people to disavow neoliberal concepts of social value that prioritise economic success (Clarke, 2004; Meese et al., 2020).

Despite the positive experiences described by Carys and Jo, the capacity for reciprocity is not a given within communities where resources have been low for significant periods of time (Gazso et al., 2016). When reciprocity is a feature of networks there is the potential for people who are most in need to avoid participating and thus become more socially isolated (Lister, 2015, p. 149). In this context growing reliance on informal networks, particularly for something as basic as food, is evidence of a failing social safety net (Garthwaite, 2016a, 2016b; Kingfisher, 2002). Informal networks trying to meet the challenges of precarity are resourceful, creative and supportive but ultimately cannot overcome sustained material deprivation.

Resistance and Salvaging the Self: Being There

In light of the pervasive sense of insecurity that the participants are subject to, the concept of 'being there' stands out within their narratives. Research by Boyd (2002)

identifies ‘being there’ as an important notion for stay-at-home mothers. The participants’ narratives demonstrated shifts in traditional gendered notions of parenting, alongside significant continuities in assumptions about motherhood (Baker, 2009; Wilson & Yochim, 2017). Jo explains that ‘being there’ for her is not about assumed gender roles, rather it is shaped by her commitment to her children: “I, ... it’s not that a woman’s place is in the household bla bla bla. But, I think, it’s that I want to be there for my kids when they need me (*Jo’s emphasis*)”. Jo states her commitment to her children, placing their need for her at the centre of her decisions. Kandi expresses a similar idea: “Available. I want to be available for my daughter”. The concept of being available for her daughter does not preclude paid work for Kandi. The key idea for both Jo and Kandi in these comments is their ability to be responsive to children’s needs, as they arise. Women’s experiences of material hardship are frequently affected by their need to be responsive to children and other family members (Graham, 2014; Lister, 2006, p. 58).

Kandi and Sophie are single parents and cannot share responsibilities for either wage earning or domestic tasks. Commitment to ‘being there’ for their children requires Kandi and Sophie to calibrate their paid work capacity around motherhood. The WINZ system has thresholds that increase pressure on mothers when their children reach certain ages, for example when children reach school age their parents are required to prove they are seeking full-time employment. The ages dictated by WINZ policies are not necessarily meaningful to the participants, who evaluate their capacity to undertake paid work in relation to the individual needs of their children and their family circumstances. For example, Sophie is keen to earn enough to come off the benefit but feels her son still needs her during the day sometimes:

It’s just building up, and getting more and I still feel like I need to be there for my son too. Like I don’t want to have too many hours, that I can’t...like still while he’s at primary school, it’s nice to work part-time. And you can still go to like athletics days, and if he has a bad day you can pick him up...I don’t want to miss out on too much. He does get sick a bit too.

Sophie’s decisions take into account the reality of raising her son, rather than the idea advocated by WINZ staff that she is now ready for full-time work (Grahame & Marston, 2012).

Carys is subject to WINZ involvement in her parenting decisions because of her husband's student allowance. When Carys' sons were younger, she explained to a WINZ case manager the decision she has made not to seek paid work:

I hate childcare and I wouldn't let someone else raise the children, so I was quite adamant about that. We worked it out that all the money I would be making would just go straight into childcare, so we may as well just leave them stay at home. I wouldn't see a cent of it anyway, so I may as well stay home with the boys.

Carys' decision to care for the boys herself makes financial sense for her family, as well as making emotional sense to Carys. Over the past few years Carys has repeatedly defended her decision to be a stay-at-home mother at the WINZ office, a setting where she feels judged for wanting to spend time with her sons:

When you say to them, 'I'm staying home to give the children a good grounding, to be with their mum, or their dad, so they know what, you know, just so that they can, from my own personal opinion, if they need their mum or their dad, we're able to do something, we're able to be there..... Most of them are just so judgemental and they're so, 'you should be doing this and you should be doing that, you should, you should, like you know, you should!

In this quote, Carys places value on 'being there' in terms of providing the key influence and support in her children's lives. Carys thus embeds childcare within the emotional bonds of family, resisting the preferred characterisation within WINZ policies of childcare as transactional and pragmatic. Carys asserts her right to be important in her own children's lives (Pulkingham et al., 2010).

The concept of 'being there' incorporates the ability to adapt time and energy directed towards one's children, depending upon circumstances. Different times during a child's life require different levels of parental input. For example, Sophie becomes worried about her son when he is having behavioural and learning issues at school and wants to spend more time with him. Sophie's mother helps with childcare, allowing her to work varying rostered hours. After years of working Saturdays, Sophie is clear that she needs to have more input with her son and take control of how he spends his weekends. Sophie hopes her manager will accommodate her need to spend more time with her son:

With finding out all this stuff that the school had said.... so I just wanted to be home for my Saturdays. And I said to my boss, 'Can I work, oh I told her that

it was too hard for childcare and that I couldn't be working because I've got a lot going on with my son, and can I keep my days during the week and not work Saturdays? And she said, 'if you do not turn up to your shifts on Saturdays you won't have a job anymore'. And I had worked every single shift that she had ever asked me to do.

The quote demonstrates how Sophie has to navigate her choices within circumstances that may not accommodate 'being there'. Despite the financial risks, Sophie decides to leave the hairdressing job, in order to foreground her son's issues.

Participants demonstrate the idea that 'being there' is a crucial platform for their children's future well-being. For example, Kandi describes why she has not worked full-time since having her daughter:

I want to be there for her, you know? Because I want to be there for her. And... you've got to be there for them, when they're little! Plant those roots now. Put that foundation now. 'Cos when they grow up as a teenager, that opportunity is missed, you know? I wanted to be there for her. Like, be there for her. She needed, I've held her hand throughout her first year at school.

Kandi is speaking here about the investment of time she sees as necessary to provide a good start for her daughter. Participants are aware that childhood is time-limited and view themselves as responsible for fulfilling children's needs not only in the present, but in terms of future potential.

In referring to the concept of 'being there' the participants uphold parenting as an activity that requires time and energy. It is about being in the background, until you may need to be in the foreground. The participants are the caretakers for their children's well-being and do not view WINZ nor employers (nor necessarily their children's fathers) as reliable arbiters of what their children need. Participants demonstrate their irreplaceable love and knowledge of their child, through making themselves available and adapting to shifting circumstances. 'Being there' thus forms a way to narrate their own lives in terms that value both their paid and unpaid labour. The participants' relationships with their children, the quality of their relational bonds, are integral to creating and maintaining a viable self within the punitive context of neoliberalism.

Chapter Discussion

To summarise, the participants' accounts demonstrate difficulties in exercising control over their external circumstances once they become parents and the consequent need to endure insecurity and tightly constrained incomes. Endurance is sometimes facilitated through applying a lens of optimism and empowerment, or alternatively, by using black humour in order to diffuse the stresses of living with precarity. Participants engage with the welfare system reluctantly, but have few other means to maintain their families. Even if they are in paid work or have a partner in paid work, the household income is unreliable. The precarity the participants experience is therefore shaped by a combination of parenthood and domestic responsibilities, low and unpredictable wages that do not reflect the cost of living, and a complicated system of welfare top-ups from the state.

In terms of feeding the family, the previous chapter demonstrated that dominant narratives about children's food insecurity define parents as the problem. In contrast, the accounts explored in this present chapter demonstrate how the participants apply effort and skills to maintain meals for their children, often at the expense of their own nutrition. Providing a socially appropriate evening meal and school lunches are prioritised by participants, and achieving these two goals requires planning and discipline.

A preference for 'nutritional education' in school communications about lunches denies the depth of inequality between households and does not resolve the problems of precarity for the participants. The additional pressures of trying to provide their children with the opportunities presented by a 'Kiwi kid' childhood further underline the participants' unequal position in relation to opportunities available in a land of plenty. While Aotearoa New Zealand holds out the promise of access to sports and educational opportunities, the participants must instead navigate the emotional costs of their children missing out.

The participants' narratives reveal the conundrum of trying to achieve social worth as mothers, aspirational citizens, consumers and workers. In the context of neoliberalism, the participants encounter narratives that position both their parenting and their paid work as low status. Concepts of good mothering are conflated with having resources sufficient to provide a 'Kiwi kid' childhood through individual family incomes. Paradoxically, participants' paid work may also be disregarded by WINZ staff, despite the energy and organisation required to maintain it, particularly for single parents. The WINZ office, as a site for state interaction with low-income and vulnerable citizens, materialises within participant narratives as a setting where caring for others occupies low value and this stands in direct contrast to the participants' own priorities.

In light of the difficulties participants encounter when trying to attain social worth within dominant neoliberal definitions of success, salvaging the self entails finding social settings where care and family are valued. Participants connect with positive collective narratives at community level. One example of Rappaport's (2000) 'tales of joy' (narratives that can counter characterisations of low-income neighbourhoods as degraded and dysfunctional) is Jo's church-based community that reinforces the role of motherhood through practical and emotional support. Another example of solidarity outside of neoliberal definitions of social worth is Carys's '*Pay-it-forward*' community. Social support from groups who share the values and stresses of participants themselves provide a material and emotional safety net. Self-worth is strengthened because membership of these groups includes reciprocal activities of giving and receiving. Participants' activities of sharing within the groups they feel part of offer respite from institutional control and instead support feelings of capability.

The final significant feature of participant narratives explored in this chapter is the concept of 'being there', as a foundation for participants' relationships with their children and decisions about their time. 'Being there' emerges in participants' narratives about the practical demands of parenting in the context of precarity. Further, 'being there' also encapsulates the need to be a central figure in children's lives in order to provide a good start in life, or 'putting down strong roots'. 'Being there' ultimately disavows neoliberal characterisations of childcare as transactional and transferrable, instead claiming the relationship between parent and child as the essential building block for creating a healthy adult. Participants seek to be responsive to their individual children's needs, as they understand them, not in the ways prescribed by WINZ or their employers. 'Being there' therefore involves participants asserting their own value in the irreplaceable role of parent.

The narratives explored in this chapter highlight the interconnected lifeworlds of parents and children, as well as the ways in which such lifeworlds are nested within wider social processes. Participants attempt to create security within precarious lifeworlds and in so doing, position themselves not as victims, but as active agents forging a legitimate experience for their families within material and social constraints. It is noteworthy that participants express their agency as being situated within relationships with others, representing not individual choices, but agency contextualised within emotional bonds. Consequently, within households, decisions are made to prioritise and protect children in times of constraint and the participants undertake this duty without hesitation or complaint. Despite these rationing measures, over the longer term, making decisions about who gets enough nutrition within a

family will inevitably take a physical toll on those who miss out (Olson, 2005). In addition to compromised nutrition, low-income parents often carry the emotional weight of trying to protect their families from the material and psycho-social threats arising from precarity. Moreover, parents living with food insecurity undertake their roles within a context of systemic refusal to even acknowledge their right to food, since state benefits and low wages are not sufficient for every household member to maintain a nutritious diet (Grahame & Marston, 2012). Such lived realities for the participants indicate the extent to which the state social safety net has become more contingent and conditional, increasingly resembling tenuous charity arrangements recognisable from the pre-welfare state era explored in Chapter Three.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusion

In this thesis I have explored the context for the introduction of free school milk in 1937, and the context for the re-introduction of free school milk in 2013. Deploying the exemplars of school milk in Aotearoa New Zealand in two periods provided a focus for investigating empirical materials relating to responses to hunger in the 1930s and the 2000s. Examining two periods where food insecurity came to the fore highlights how more recent approaches to hungry children echo aspects of historical poverty narratives, but also reflect changes and discontinuities. In particular, I identify the ways in which an ongoing neoliberal project has co-opted and inflected historical narratives within dominant common-sense assumptions about hungry children in schools and their families.

The phenomenon of hungry children in New Zealand schools is analysed within three findings chapters in this thesis. Each of these three findings chapters explores a distinct category of empirical materials, and each offers a distinct lens on the issue of food insecurity. Chapter Three explores accounts of everyday lifeworlds during the hardships of the Great Depression, including how people fed their families and sought assistance. The charity encounters during the 1930s illustrate Victorian-era morality towards the deserving and undeserving poor, a legacy of colonisation. Chapter Four begins with the story of school milk in 1937, demonstrating its symbolic importance within a political project built around collective social security. Nonetheless, Chapter Four finds that dominant approaches to hungry children in the period from 2000-2018 were shaped by neoliberal notions of parental failure and dependency. Alongside a myriad of other school feeding schemes, the 2013 Milk for Schools initiative is often portrayed as compassionate and child-focused, despite the shortcomings of attempting to ameliorate food insecurity by such means. Chapter Five returns this thesis to the everyday lifeworlds of people living with insecurity and the worries associated with keeping a family fed and housed with insufficient resources. The stories from participants about current experiences of everyday precarity, reveal that they are subject to moral judgements recognisable from the pre-welfare era explored in Chapter Three.

This chapter ties together the findings from each previous chapter and draws key arguments from analysis of the thesis as a whole. The implications of taking an interdisciplinary approach to a community psychology project are highlighted. There are four core areas of discussion in this chapter. First, I discuss the methodological importance of the historical analysis. The history section argues for the salience of history itself within the study of social phenomena, as part of a scholarly project to reclaim the past and render visible multiple experiences that are often marginalised within WEIRD psychology accounts of the

social world. More specifically, I demonstrate the value of ‘zooming in and zooming out’ within historical analysis, in addition to contemporary material, as a means to navigate the relational nature of micro and macro level phenomena (Busch-Jensen & Schraube, 2019). The use of exemplars also formed a valuable tool for historical analysis, with implications for future research. Second, this chapter explores the role of precarity within the thesis, differentiating contemporary precarity from the collective crisis poverty that the Great Depression occasioned (despite similarities in some respects) (Standing, 2011). Precarity is further explored in relation to gender, specifically the ongoing impacts of historical gender roles that operate in conjunction with neoliberal expectations for mothers, evidenced in the participants’ accounts (Allen, 2013; Baker, 2009; Carroll, 2018; Grahame & Marston, 2012). The intersectional nature of precarity is also discussed in relation to class and ethnicity (Basso, 2021; Beddoe, 2015; Stubbs et al., 2017). The section highlights the extent to which precarity is entrenching existing inequities while people navigate precarious lifeworlds that are frequently invisibilised or stigmatised within dominant narratives, such as those relating to hungry children in schools. Community psychology has a critical role in bringing to the fore the anxieties and material burdens generated by living with precarity (Hodgetts et al., 2020; Riemer et al., 2020).

The third core area of this discussion chapter addresses the investigation of Williams’ (1971) concept of *structures of feeling*, in relation to the thesis findings. Social understandings about the issue of hungry children in New Zealand schools are viewed as both creating and created by, *structures of feeling*, within a dynamic and historically situated context. Tension between dominant political rhetoric and how people respond to social issues emerges. While there are various elements of how responses are structured, this discussion focuses on the key roles of a land of plenty narrative, and the unique status of children in relation to *structures of feeling* about food insecurity. Children are demonstrated to bear a central role politically, partly because of the compassion people feel towards them, a compassion that can be mobilised for various purposes but does not necessarily extend to their families. Fourth, this discussion chapter situates this thesis within work that seeks to examine neoliberalism ‘from the ground up’ (Back et al., 2012; MacDonald et al., 2014; McKenzie, 2015; Peck & Theodore, 2015; Wiggan, 2012). The exploration of the exemplars of milk in schools in two periods informs analysis of how contemporary approaches to responding to hungry children in schools reflect a neoliberal context. The nostalgia inherent in the re-introduction of free school milk in a local context serves to distract from the commercial interests becoming naturalised within schools. This thesis joins other research

that examines how neoliberalism articulates within everyday practices and co-opts other cultural narratives to attain power (Berlant, 2007; Hall & O'shea, 2013; Lewis, 2000; Powell, 2020). Chapter Six concludes by briefly reflecting on how this thesis can provide avenues for future research, particularly in light of continuing precarity and food insecurity in Aotearoa New Zealand. I highlight the value of deploying historical findings within the dissemination of poverty research, which suggests that a historical perspective supports broader social justice goals of community psychology.

History

In terms of methods, the present study avoided deploying a pre-determined set of tools or categorisation techniques and was instead guided by analytical principles discussed previously in Chapter Two. A key feature of the methods was a commitment to incorporate complexity and to contextualise social phenomena by analysing a broad range of empirical materials. The decision to incorporate a historical analysis was fundamental to meeting the aims of a deeply contextualised investigation. This thesis demonstrates the value of taking a more comprehensive approach to history than is typical in a thesis situated within the discipline of psychology, reflecting an interdisciplinary orientation. Although community psychologists have highlighted the importance of historical contexts for understanding social issues (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2017; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010) this thesis went further than an overview of relevant historical points. In particular, the historical analysis investigated primary materials in conjunction with approaching secondary materials as historically situated artefacts that reflect the historical and social context for their production.

There are several important implications that emerge from the approach to historical analysis taken in this thesis. Firstly, the analysis of responses to hungry school children in the 2000s is strengthened because it is informed by historically relevant findings. The thesis shows how milk in schools in 2013 is storied not solely by what is happening at the moment it arises, rather it is part of long-standing and ongoing stories that weave meaning into a social and material practice (Foucault, 1975/1991; Garland, 2014; Watson, 2000). Engaging with historical accounts illuminates the ongoing nature of some stories about poverty and responding to poverty, and how these find expression in the present period. Such stories adapt and evolve through social processes, and a historical perspective reveals both continuities and discontinuities in how poverty is conceptualised (Carabine, 2000; Katz, 2013; Seabrook, 2013).

Beginning an analysis of a social phenomenon through attending to its historical roots is also an approach that challenges a tendency within WEIRD psychology towards presentism (Rimke, 2016). Whilst situating social issues within a historical context provides richer understandings of the issues in question, avoiding presentism is also an acknowledgement of the cultural limitations of WEIRD psychological approaches to human experiences. History is necessary as a means for psychology, as a discipline, to connect with diverse psychologies beyond WEIRD understandings of human practices (Groot et al., 2018; Reid et al., 2014). Within indigenous psychologies, the deep roots of history are often fundamental to the experience of the present and how the present is understood. History, for many cultures, is experienced as alive within the present, at a broad cultural level, but also in the storying of communities, families and self (Anderson et al., 2015, pp. 414-418; King, 2019). For example, for Māori, the self is deeply connected with the historical lines of whakapapa, or genealogy that is passed from one generation to the next and contains vital stories that ground the self within lines of descent and ascent (King, 2019). This thesis locates the issues of hungry school children, and how they are responded to in the present, within a genealogy that renders visible some of the historical antecedents for food insecurity. In doing so, the dominant narratives in the 2000s are understood within the thesis as part of an ongoing negotiation with different accounts of the past.

History: 'Zooming in and Zooming out'

The technique of “zooming in and zooming out” was deployed not only in the analysis of precarity in the 2000s, but also proved effective for application to historical materials (Busch-Jensen & Schraube, 2019). The analysis examined materials from the period 2000-2018, at different levels of narrative. Similarly, I endeavoured to incorporate multiple levels in the historical analysis, from personal accounts to media, political narratives and literature. Sociologist C. Wright Mills entreated scholars to interrogate the relationship between “Public issues of social structure” and “personal troubles of milieu” (Mills, 1959/2000, p. 8). The concept expresses a distinction between the large scale events that contextualise people’s lives (for example, an economic depression and accompanying high unemployment rates) and what such events mean for people within their own everyday lifeworlds. Mills’ commitment to exploring the connections between “public issues and private troubles” reflects abiding questions about the relationship between structure and agency, questions still salient within psychology as well as other social sciences (Schraube & Højholt, 2015). An approach to history that incorporates multiple layers of material and levels of analysis supports nuanced

analysis of social issues (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Watson, 2000). Importantly, “zooming in and zooming out” provides a conceptual means to explore historical materials, including first person accounts that illustrate how ‘big events’ take form within people’s everyday (Back, 2015; Busch-Jensen & Schraube, 2019; Dreier, 2019).

Narrative theory provides this thesis with a conceptual link between public issues and private troubles since stories evolve at different social levels, as well as in relation to each other. The three findings chapters demonstrate that stories give form and provide normative structure for people’s understandings of complex social issues such as food insecurity, both at the level of dominant narratives and individual biographies. However, ‘zooming in and out’ on public issues and private troubles, situates these as interrelated, rather than separate (Dreier, 2019). My analysis shifts perspective between the macro and micro but recognises that everyday experiences of frustration, endurance and even ‘being there’ for family members *are* ‘public issues’. Zooming in and out results in an historical chapter that treats history not as a series of important big events, nor a set of individual biographies, but instead these are understood as interrelated and dialogical (Billig, 2018). Everyday lifeworlds and broad economic and social processes are in constant dynamic tension with each other. This thesis supports the contention that the presence of public issues within people’s everyday is examinable historically, as it is in the present (Perks & Thomson, 2015; Thomson, 2013).

It is important to acknowledge that one challenge of investigating history through narratives at different levels of production, particularly personal accounts, is the practical task of accessing materials for analysis. The availability of material was a factor in which stories are explored in the historical analysis. The oral histories that I could access within the confines of my research process reflected the archival collection of predominantly Pākehā (European New Zealanders’) accounts historically. The material within national archives inevitably reflects the historical and cultural context in terms of which stories are collected and preserved (Craggs, 2008). A dearth of more diverse accounts indicates the invisibilisation of some communities within the characterisations of historical events, and congruent privileging of the experiences of dominant groups.

In particular, public understandings of the Great Depression in Aotearoa New Zealand are influenced by the pre-eminence of Pākehā male experiences of unemployment (Cooper & Molloy, 1997). I highlight some stories from women’s accounts. Māori scholars may have the capacity to work with stories from sources that I would not be able to access, nor should access, as a Pākehā researcher. An additional observation is that accounts from Chinese New Zealanders (a group who began arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand in the 1800s) are typically

absent from historical narratives (Ferguson, 2003). Chinese experiences of poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand are not well documented. Given the hostility toward Chinese New Zealanders' claims on welfare or charity within state-level historical narratives, it is probable that some of these citizens suffered deprivation during and beyond the Great Depression that remains unacknowledged and unexplored (McClure, 2013). Avenues for future research could fruitfully investigate the experiences and understandings of marginalised citizens who remain obscured within 'official' data sources.

The Past in the Present: Exemplars

The research approach of zooming in and zooming out is facilitated by the use of tangible exemplars in two historical periods. Broader social, political, and cultural processes are grounded within the cases of milk in schools within each period, and the empirical materials that arose from these phenomena. The decision to focus analysis around the exemplars of milk in schools reflects the initial 'forshadowed problems' concerning the re-introduction of school milk in 2013 (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). The exemplars initially provide an advantageous focus for collecting empirical material for analysis when studying a broad historical context. In addition, collecting empirical material relating to the exemplars highlights how they act as lightning rods for groups and individuals who are invested in building stories around them. The thesis finds that milk in schools in both periods embodies more than a pragmatic response to children's nutritional needs. The exemplars provide situated moments where aspirational versions of citizenship are discernible.

The exemplars of milk in schools are revealed in this thesis as everyday practices that connect citizens to aspects of nationhood (or imagined nationhood). Billig (1995) describes such everyday experiences as an 'unwaved flag' that reinforces people's connection with concepts of nationhood through shared rituals and routines. These symbolic moments partly attain their status through common-sense cultural assumptions, such as the notion that milk is a quintessential nutritional gift for New Zealand children. The exemplars highlight how social phenomena gain symbolic power through eliciting an emotional response, placing children at the centre of a national nutritional initiative. During both periods, milk in schools demonstrates the social value of children and their place within narratives that characterise the nation as "a great place to bring up children" (Burrows & Wright, 2004; Mein Smith, 2012). Moreover, examining the exemplars also reveals the contradictions and hegemonic silences inherent within attempts to exercise assumed compassion toward children without acknowledgement of upstream causes of poverty. In terms of future research possibilities, the

use of exemplars is a worthwhile tool for investigating social phenomena, and for providing insights into how specific rituals or routines are constructed and sustained through historically situated processes.

Precarity

A focus on precarity in this discussion reflects the observation that economic insecurity and its attendant hardships form an overarching refrain across the thesis findings. Whilst the notion of insecurity is nuanced in distinctive ways within each set of empirical materials, there are characteristics of experiencing insecurity that are recognisable across historical periods. The first-person accounts of experiences during the Great Depression bear many similarities with some of the stories about life in the twenty-first century for the parents in Chapter Five. Worrying about whether rent can be paid and consequently whether children can be kept housed, for example, forms a source of stress for the contemporary participants, just as it did within the oral history accounts. Similarly, the need to salvage the self within circumstances of material hardship that undermine social worth is demonstrated in both the historical accounts and the contemporary participants' accounts.

The oral history stories about charity encounters indicate how such experiences of abjection contributed to public support for constructing a state safety net after the Great Depression (Simpson, 1974). The undignified supplication frequently required by charity recipients was evoked as a dreaded experience. Unfortunately, for the contemporary participants, the dreaded supplication is required when interacting with WINZ staff, reflecting the transformation of a state institution conceived as rights-based social security into a setting reminiscent of condemnatory Victorian-era charity for some citizens (Cotterell et al., 2017; Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Groot, et al., 2013). In addition, charities are once more a growing sector, required by many economically marginalised people in order to ensure their children are fed or have access to school supplies. In practice, low-income people are often required to prove themselves deserving to the state and multiple other agencies, striving to stitch together sufficient resources for their families (Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Groot, et al., 2013).

On one level, the observation that people find living with economic and other insecurities difficult is unremarkable. Nonetheless, the dominant narratives explored in Chapter Four indicate that the difficulties of living with insecurity are not necessarily understood by well-resourced commentators. There is also a tendency for discussions about poverty to become mired in disagreements about measuring poverty and distinctions between

absolute and relative poverty in the New Zealand context (Boston & Chapple, 2015). Some politicians and vested groups reinforce the notion that there is no ‘real poverty’ in a wealthy country such as Aotearoa New Zealand, and claim that inequality is not a concern (Rashbrooke, 2014). In addition, the emotive issue of ‘child poverty’ is shown in Chapter Four to instigate plotlines that focus on assigning individual or community culpability for children’s hunger. Whilst such debates continue, the damaging psycho-social impacts from precarity often remain unrecognised.

The historical analysis illustrates the harms of insecurity that were felt by people during the Great Depression. High levels of public support for creating a social security system after the Great Depression suggests the political value in the late 1930s in addressing people’s fears of economic insecurity (McClure, 2013). The ‘breadwinners welfare state’ was predicated on the objective of secure, fairly paid male employment as the foundation for families’ well-being (Cooper & Molloy, 1997). The principle underlying social security was collectivising both contributions and risks through the state. Institutionalising social security ‘from the cradle to the grave’ therefore necessitated the inclusion of all social classes in both the costs and the protections of social security (Belich, 2001). Following the collective crisis of the Great Depression, citizens more readily understood that the value of social security required the participation of all members of society: “‘universalism’, despite its costs, was essential to binding the richer sections of society into collective forms of welfare” (Hall, 1998, p. 12). Citizenship itself was supported through the collective nature of social insurance.

In contrast, the more recent dominant narratives examined in Chapter Four do not typically problematise the prevalence of insecurity. Precarity is instead afforded ‘taken for granted’ status, suggesting that security is not a realistic expectation. In neoliberal contexts, security is frequently portrayed as a luxury afforded only to those deemed successful (J. Clarke, 2005; Wacquant, 2010). This thesis suggests that parents on low incomes endure psycho-social burdens generated by precarity, in concert with the material difficulties inherent in their austere lifeworlds. Importantly, despite dominant attempts to ‘normalise’ precarity as a way of being, the participants in Chapter Five express their own aspirations for security and emphasise the value of security in multifarious forms for their children. Giving space to the participants’ own priorities situates this thesis within scholarship that acknowledges not only poverty, but the injurious nature of ongoing insecurity itself (Broussard et al., 2012; Lister, 2015; Pollack & Caragata, 2010; Wilson & Yochim, 2017).

Before discussing the implications of gender, class and ethnicity for the thesis findings I am mindful to acknowledge that traditional social categories or definitions are subject to challenge from multiple perspectives. For example, expectations of gender roles do shift in certain respects, but further, dynamic and more fluid definitions of gender itself are gaining visibility (Lindqvist et al., 2021). In the New Zealand context, it is also the case that many people are of mixed ethnicities, and hybrid cultural identities are increasingly commonplace (Rocha & Webber, 2017). Having signalled these points about the dynamic nature of identities and social roles, this present study nevertheless demonstrates that class, gender and ethnicity continue to significantly shape people's social and material circumstances in patterned ways (Groot et al., 2017; Rashbrooke, 2014). I first examine some ways in which gender shapes accounts of precarity in the thesis, before examining the connected and critical role of class and ethnicity within the findings.

Precarity: Women “Bearing the Brunt”

The comment that “women were bearing the brunt” was made by activist Freda Cooke remembering her experiences during the Great Depression, when, alongside fellow women in the Labour party, she found herself busy cooking soup to feed the unemployed (Broadcasting Corporation of NZ, 1976). Political ambitions for these women temporarily gave way to the need to ameliorate the crisis on their doorsteps. This small window into how meeting everyday needs imposed upon broader political aspirations for one group of women, illustrates how gender can locate women within wider structural processes. Cooke's account, in common with other women's accounts from the historical analysis, orientates her responsibilities towards the immediate needs of those within her everyday orbit. Whether attending to hungry unemployed men, babies, children or elders, the women's stories frequently locate them in relation to their immediate responsibilities towards family and community. The stories in the historical analysis illustrate interconnections between women's own everyday lifeworlds, which were saturated with the daily physical and psycho-social needs within their households, and the social and economic conventions that valued them primarily within caring roles (Aitken, 1996).

The analysis highlights the intersectional nature of how gender operates within the settler context of Aotearoa New Zealand, since European women were required to provide the domestic support for settlement, as well as to produce healthy future settlers (Cooper, 2008; Mein Smith, 2012). Socially ascribed roles for women in Aotearoa New Zealand are demonstrated within dominant narratives from the 1800s and early 1900s explored in the

historical analysis. On page 87 of this thesis, I identified how motherhood formed part of a colonising, British imperial project (Belich, 2001). European women were positioned in settler contexts as ‘civilisers’ through classed definitions of domesticity and ‘good mothering’ (Hall, 2003). Settlers’ class aspirations also positioned women within the domestic realm and reified maternity within Victorian-era ideals of genteel motherhood as a marker of upper middle-class status. In turn, such morally worthy maternity was to provide a civilising model for the indigenous population (thereby reinforcing notions that Māori family forms were inferior) (Tuhiwai Smith, 2001; Wanhalla, 2007).

One result of these characterisations of appropriate behaviours was a gendered bargain, whereby settler women who followed the prescribed practices and aspired to respectable motherhood were supported economically and socially, acquiring social value through their role in producing healthy future citizens (Mein Smith, 2003). Women were positioned as economically dependent on men and their behaviour and activities were circumscribed by men in many respects. Nevertheless, women who followed the social rules could expect a measure of security while they undertook their duties in the home (although this was never guaranteed) (Park, 1991). The position of women was inseparable from the health and success of children within such a system, something further underscored by the emphasis on supporting mothers within the breadwinners’ welfare state after the introduction of the Social Security Act (1938) (Cooper & Molloy, 1997).

In the contemporary participant stories, biography, culture and economic imperatives interact to shape the mothers’ everyday lifeworlds. Notably, their orientation toward care and responsibility for unpaid labour (including emotional labour) remains deeply patterned by traditional gendered expectations. Situated intersections of class, gender and ethnicity echo historical roles, particularly in terms of economic outcomes (Cheyne et al., 2008). What is also demonstrated in this thesis is that low-income women historically, and in the present period, are routinely required to prove their worthiness in order to acquire resources for their children and themselves. Such worthiness for mothers has historically been constructed around displaying appropriate parenting, domesticity and sexual morality (Carabine, 2001). In contrast, in the 2000s, dominant narratives tether children’s wellbeing to their parents’ performance of paid work (Lister, 2006; St John, 2014). Single mothers in receipt of welfare benefits, in particular, are a focus for neoliberal market rationality and are encouraged by Work and Income case managers to pursue paid work, regardless of other responsibilities. Dominant media and policy narratives indicate that single mothers attain greater social value if they demonstrate sufficient commitment to seeking and retaining paid work (Cummins &

Blum, 2015; Grahame & Marston, 2012; Wiggan, 2012). The historical emphasis on establishing women's moral worth when they seek assistance is therefore nuanced in the contemporary period by neoliberal imperatives.

In light of the historical findings, the mothers' accounts in Chapter Five tell a recognisable story in some respects. The participants' accounts reflect the economic and social toll of unpaid labour and care responsibilities. The invisibilisation of care and denigration of 'dependency' (in denial of the interdependency of all human beings) have long sustained gender inequities (Hoggett, 2000; Timmins, 2019). Nevertheless, the narratives that have been explored in this thesis point to the extent to which, in the 2000s, neoliberalism has intensified the 'privileged irresponsibility' of citizens who are in a position to invisibilise care and domestic labour (and by extension, invisibilise parents who are raising children in material hardship) (Tronto, 2013). Lister (2006) argues that the emphasis on a dual breadwinner model in neoliberal societies that characterises both mothers and fathers as primarily paid workers serves to entrench women's poverty. Political rhetoric about empowering women economically has not resulted in a substantially greater share of domestic and care responsibilities being taken up by men, and instead neoliberal societies demonstrate persistent gender inequities (Cheyne et al., 2008; Davies et al., 2018).

The thesis findings accord with Lister's observations about the invisibilisation of caring labour as a contributor to women's poverty in neoliberal contexts (Lister, 2006). Despite political emphasis on a dual breadwinner model, those who continue to provide care and domestic labour are predominantly women and even when such tasks are monetised (as in the case of the care work one participant undertakes) they are amongst the lowest paid and most insecure forms of employment (Mila, 2013). Deeply inscribed gender regimes are amplified and extended through contemporary precarity, requiring the participants to maintain individual responsibility for domestic and intensive parenting expectations. In addition to the domestic and low-waged service work that underwrites neoliberalism, the participants must constantly adapt to the economic and affective work that precarity demands, continually shoring up encroaching threats to their families' wellbeing (Wilson & Yochim, 2017).

In addition to gendered inequity in relation to incomes and the burden of unpaid labour, gender is also central to the distribution of resources *within households* (Lister, 2000). The resources in question include money and nutrition, but also time. In terms of this thesis, previous research has identified a continuum, capturing how food is allocated within food insecure households, that is recognisable within the participants' accounts of managing

household resources (Parnell, 2005; Radimer et al., 1990; Reid, 1997). The quality and quantity of food within low-income households must be carefully surveilled and adapted to accommodate scarcity. A continuum captures how mothers, most commonly the stewards of household food provision, manage food insecurity by initially adjusting the quality of food purchased, in order to maintain quantity. Eventually, deepening and ongoing food insecurity results in women cutting back on their own nutritional needs, while trying to maintain food for other family members. Children typically go hungry only after their mothers, and then other adults in the household, have already compromised their own nutrition (Martin & Lippert, 2012; Parnell et al., 2001). The participant accounts demonstrate this continuum of managing food insecurity, evidenced in how the mothers prioritise an evening meal and school lunches, minimising their own needs and emphasising their role of providing for others. Such findings contribute to ongoing scholarship that examines how food insecurity is patterned by gender, both at macro and micro levels. Further, visibilising the efforts required within low-income households to try to maintain nutrition highlights the hidden anxieties parents are subject to. The stress generated by managing food insecurity that is confirmed within this thesis provides stark contrast to dominant tropes that characterise increasing hunger in schools as a manifestation of mass parental neglect.

Precarity: Class and Ethnicity

Class and ethnicity shape people's lifeworlds in concert with their gender, particularly in the context of a settler colonial history. Having discussed aspects of how gender shapes the thesis findings, I identify several additional points that arise from the findings in relation to class and ethnicity. Firstly, while experiences of economic insecurity historically and contemporary experiences of precarity share some characteristics, the two periods are illustrative of different prevailing social conditions. Notably, individual responsibility is emphasised politically in the period 2000-2018, in contrast to more collective responses to the crisis of the Great Depression. Consequently, precarity tends to generate individual anxiety that is challenging to endure, with fewer social supports (Bauman, 2005). Secondly, while the everyday lifeworlds of low-income parents may centre around 'being there' for children and attempting to improve living conditions and opportunities, dominant narratives reinforce classed and racialised tropes that ascribe low moral and social worth to parents experiencing food insecurity (Beddoe, 2014; Gray & Crichton-Hill, 2019).

The findings from the period of the Great Depression support the argument that people's understandings of their insecurity as a collective experience imposed by large scale

economic events, strengthened working-class movements politically (Roper, 2005). The ascendancy of working-class organisation during the 1930s, and for several subsequent decades, suggests class provided a platform for identity. Nonetheless, class formations in Aotearoa New Zealand, although ostensibly mirroring some of the characteristics of the British class system, reflect two key features relating to local conditions. Firstly, white settler narratives often situated the colony as a utopian society in the making, where able, hard-working settlers from any social class could advance themselves and would not be disadvantaged from progressing economically or socially because of their class position at birth (Fairburn, 2013). It is important to recognise that such ‘classless society’ rhetoric related to perceived egalitarian access to opportunities, not necessarily to equitable outcomes. In addition, as this thesis shows, settler society did retain attachment to aspects of British class structures, particularly in relation to middle class displays of social ascendancy (Hatch, 1991).

Secondly, access to land was a formative resource that nuanced class structures in Aotearoa New Zealand. For example, Pākehā farmers and their families became wealthy and could exercise freedoms and ‘gentlemanly’ pursuits (such as hunting) that would not have been available to any but the wealthiest land-owning classes in the UK (Belich, 2001). The aspirations of Pākehā took precedence over Māori claims to resources and positioned Māori below Pākehā in class terms. Māori were eventually positioned as predominantly working class, occupying roles that their Pākehā employers may have been destined for, had they remained in Britain. Cultural solidarity became a feature within some workplaces where Māori collectivism contributed to Trade Union capacity to improve and maintain workers’ pay and conditions (Boraman, 2019). In the wake of neoliberal restructuring, Māori and Pacific people have been in the frontline of occupational groups whose pay and job security have declined (Groot et al., 2017).

Given the historical and cultural context, there are complexities and tensions in understanding how the Māori precariat is situated within broader (and international) characterisations of the precariat more generally. While the concept of an emergent precariat class that Standing (2011) identified remains relevant for comprehending many of the economic and social changes resulting from global processes, there are clearly cultural distinctions that are unique to Aotearoa New Zealand (Groot et al., 2017). The propensity toward individualised struggles and a lack of solidarity between members of the precariat may be less pertinent for Māori who sustain cultural connectedness through traditional relational networks and spaces (King et al., 2018). Equally, the impacts of racism and socio-

cultural inequities (for example intergenerational loss of language and cultural resources) are significant additional stressors that texture Māori experiences of precarity (King, 2019). Scholars are now engaged in developing Standing's work on the precariat from an indigenous Kaupapa Māori perspective, investigating how Māori are located within the emerging class position of precarity, but with divergent experiences culturally from other groups within the precariat (Rua et al., 2023). While an examination of the issues for the Māori precariat are not the focus of this thesis, such Kaupapa Māori informed research offers important pathways for future investigations of how 'actually existing neoliberalism' shapes precarious lifeworlds in the setting of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The endurance required by parents living with precarity in the twenty-first century reflects decades of neoliberal policies that have operated in a stepwise fashion to shape their everyday lifeworlds (Hackell, 2013). Precarity was identified in Chapter One of this thesis as the outcome of processes that generate insecurity for low-income citizens, but also processes that discourage solidarity with others. Despite the political and social priority given to security after the Great Depression, attachment to notions of security is subsequently problematised in narratives promoting neoliberal policies from the 1980s in Aotearoa New Zealand. The neoliberal project characterised security as an outdated and unachievable goal for many citizens (Culpitt, 1999). Further than unachievable, successive neoliberal governments actively denigrated the pursuit of security, characterising people's wish for security as a threat to business and economic progress (Barnett & Bagshaw, 2020). Instead, citizens are encouraged to prioritise their availability for labour above other responsibilities, demonstrating ability to respond at short notice to the requirements of their employers (Morrison, 2004). Consequently, wages in low-paid work are not aligned with the costs of living, especially housing, while the welfare system provides only meagre capacity to keep a family housed and fed. Yet, the participants' accounts in this thesis express a desire for some measure of security, even if they characterise this as an unrealistic goal.

My findings demonstrate that narratives about insecurity in Aotearoa New Zealand are illustrative of tensions between individualism (the successful, hard-working, independent individual) and collectivism (supporting each other, community and neighbourliness). Both of these characterisations of New Zealand's social context are identifiable within the findings. One factor is that Māori had long understood the protection and resilience offered by collective and reciprocal use of resources (Anderson et al., 2015). In contrast, settlers who came to Aotearoa New Zealand to make their fortune and found their circumstances unpredictable did not necessarily have extended family or neighbourhood ties in the colony to

provide a safety net (Tennant, 1989). These local conditions contributed to the apparent paradox of national narratives that socially value both individual self-reliance and the necessity for shared management of risk. Rather than argue that either the individual or the collective provide a durable focus within dominant narratives, the contours of history suggest that individualism and collectivism are in constant dynamic tension.

Crucially, whilst tensions between individualism and collectivism are in constant flux, they are also each co-opted within political agendas in different historical periods. The findings relating to dominant narratives decrying welfare dependency, for example, indicate how neoliberal governments have reinforced the precedence of individual self-reliance, hailing it as culturally cherished (New Zealand National Party, 2007; Trevett, 2011). Nonetheless, it is not the case that narratives drawing on collective notions of fairness disappear, even at times when collective or universal policies are little in evidence. Indeed, the thesis findings indicate that the public appeal of Fonterra Milk for Schools in 2013 was partly constructed through nostalgic connections with a previous collective response to food insecurity. The corporate sector is adept at mobilising nostalgia within the promotion of market solutions. Public appeals to community are also indicative of continuing attachment to ideals of shared social responsibilities (Clarke & Newman, 1997).

There are clearly significant complexities nuancing how class and ethnicity are storied within the settler colonial context of Aotearoa New Zealand, both in the past and more recently. Of additional importance is how Pākehā control of resources is legitimised through symbolic power that privileges Pākehā narratives, notably in mainstream media and policy settings. What emerges in this thesis is the observation that class is typically assimilated into narratives that emphasise opportunities for social and economic mobility. While class is subsumed into notions of egalitarianism, culture and ethnicity are more visible and have shaped people's social locations significantly, including their communities and social practices (Mein Smith, 2012; Nolan, 2007). The lack of overt references to class in the empirical materials examined does not indicate an absence of class in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand. Rather, class is 'packaged up' within cultural and racialised conjectures, or class is marked by labels that have developed to reinforce dominant assumptions about social status. Terms such as 'beneficiary' or 'solo mother' may have neutral origins but now operate as signals within stories that characterise low-income people as morally deficient. While discussions referring directly to elites, the middle or working classes are not prevalent in New Zealand media and policy, terms that insinuate personal culpability for poverty are deployed

to position the precariat as ‘other’. Class is not labelled as class directly, but appears in the materials in coded terms that audiences understand.

Structures of Feeling

In terms of the *structures of feeling* in relation to hungry school children in Aotearoa New Zealand, multiple layers emerge within and across the empirical materials analysed for this thesis. One important observation is how governing politicians and their allies reinforce and promote particular dominant narratives and de-legitimise others. Symbolic power (explained in Chapter Two) operates partly by shaping *structures of feeling*, particularly in terms of characterisations of low-income citizens (Couldry, 2003; Skeggs & Wood, 2011).

Maintaining a neoliberal milieu is aided by recognising emotional responses and channelling them within neoliberal definitions of social problems and solutions. Simultaneously, community-level narratives are shaped by diverse experiences and people’s connections with each other. Within their own lifeworlds, people can incorporate, nuance or disavow aspects of the narratives available to them. These processes contribute to the *structure of feeling* around a particular issue, but also need to sufficiently reflect elements of emotional consensus in order to sustain dominance (Hogget et al., 2013). The media and policy analysis in Chapter Four demonstrates political activity intended to maintain the balance between continual ‘roll out’ of neoliberal policies, and public acceptance of the consequences of some of these policies (Peck, 2010). Consequently, seemingly contradictory policies emerge, such as state contributions to a school breakfast programme, without any acknowledgement of the reasons why feeding children at school is necessary.

Briefly, this thesis demonstrates that dominant narratives connect with overarching common-sense interpretations of the social world, otherwise they lose power and alternative narratives can attain status. In fact, rather than being overturned by new stories, the likely outcome of a dominant narrative losing credibility is an evolution or adaptation of that dominant narrative into a form that can maintain hegemonic power (Hackell, 2013). Chapter Four examined a radio interview with the then Prime Minister, John Key, broadcast in 2014, that provides an example of this process of adaptation through an evolving narrative (Radio New Zealand, 2014b). The interview demonstrates how Key concedes that anecdotally, a tiny number of children do arrive at school hungry in Aotearoa New Zealand (Key, 2014). Key claims that the breakfasts that will be partially funded by his government in low-decile schools are a measured, compassionate and sufficient response. Yet Key’s ambiguity about the numbers and avoidance of linking hunger in schools to poverty serves to downplay both

the extent and causes of children going hungry in schools. The resulting story is about salving the consciences of New Zealanders who can be assured that ‘something is being done’, moving the focus away from any systemic causes of economic hardship. The dominant narrative of welfare dependency and individual failure as the causes of economic insecurity remains intact, despite Key’s admission that children are arriving at schools hungry.

The example of the then Prime Minister conceding that there is hunger in schools shows how adept governments that adopt the Third Way style of neoliberalism can be at accommodating and responding to public *structures of feeling*. Key’s government maintained sufficient alignment with *structures of feeling* about ‘child poverty’ by inflecting their own narratives, highlighting the ongoing and insecure nature of maintaining neoliberal tenets (Clarke & Newman, 2012). In turn, dominant media and political stories provided an ongoing infrastructure for people’s understandings about particular issues. In the case of responding to hungry school children, individuals and groups expressed ideas that rested substantially on assumptions about New Zealand society that were influential historically and retain common-sense status. In particular, characterisations of Aotearoa as a land of plenty and the symbolic significance of children and childhood remain persuasive stories. The following subsections suggest that the *structures of feeling* around responding to hungry children in New Zealand schools demonstrate lingering cultural attachments to a land of plenty imaginary and expressions of compassion towards children and their future potential. The historical antecedents of shared common-sense assumptions about poverty and children now serve to amplify neoliberal imperatives.

A Land of Plenty

The historical analysis confirms that European settlers characterised Aotearoa New Zealand as a place where anyone hard working would thrive because of the abundant gifts of the land. This thesis demonstrates how a temperate and bountiful land of plenty was constructed in contrast to unhealthy industrialised cities in the ‘Old World’ (Beattie, 2008). Dominant narratives positioned the colony as a place to restore superior British values (by civilising the land through productive farming and civilising the indigenous inhabitants into these superior values) (Firth, 1890; Hight, 1903; Wilson, 1927). The binary of civilised/uncivilised was a justification for settlers to make productive use of nature’s ideal farming land. Attracting and retaining settlers rested partly on the opportunities they were promised and a perception of more egalitarian access to land than in the ‘Old World’. The utopian possibilities afforded by

the assumed land of plenty therefore significantly underpin class and ethnic social formations in Aotearoa New Zealand (Belich, 2001).

Although the narrative of a plentiful land, with ample opportunities for settlers to thrive, is historical in origin, it is a notion that continues to find expression. Consequently, discussions about food insecurity in Aotearoa New Zealand remain permeated by the perception that food is locally abundant and, frequently, that people should be able to grow their own food (Graham & Jackson, 2017). Positing the use of backyard gardens, community gardens, and school gardens as a solution to food insecurity is a familiar refrain within material examined for this thesis. In common with some of the activity taking place to feed children in schools, teaching people to grow food holds appeal on the basis of pragmatism and community capability. Further, teaching the skills of growing and preparing food are promoted by many commentators, including some working within organisations alleviating poverty, as a route to valued self-reliance and social worth. Understanding the ongoing salience of the land of plenty narrative highlights how characteristics such as ‘independence’ become inflected within a local context. Accessing resources from the land, whether firewood, hunted meat, fish, or home-grown vegetables, still contributes towards social worth in Aotearoa New Zealand, in both rural and urban settings. Despite the social value placed on accessing food through such means, clearly contemporary food insecurity cannot be resolved through activities that are increasingly impractical for the majority of citizens. Yet land retains symbolic importance not simply as the source of national wealth, but as a solution to individual material and social ills.

More broadly, the continuing characterisation of Aotearoa New Zealand as a place where everybody has egalitarian access to *opportunities* intensifies stigma for people experiencing food insecurity. In 1937, the project of building the welfare state incorporated the notion of a land of plenty within narratives of fairness and more equitable distribution of the expected abundance (within certain caveats) (Lee, 1935). The nation’s perceived abundance still contributes to arguments for fairer distribution of resources, for example when some groups lamented the high cost of milk locally because of the profits dairy products could attract on the global market when many New Zealanders live in proximity to dairy farms (Frankham, 2015). It is possible to mobilise arguments in favour of more equitable distribution of plentifully produced food. Nonetheless, Chapter Four finds that a land of plenty narrative is most evident within common-sense characterisations of parental failure as the cause of food insecurity. The notion of a land of plenty becomes a means of censure for those who fail to obtain the rewards that are deemed so plentifully available.

Recognising the ongoing symbolic power of the land of plenty highlights how such formative stories evolve and adapt but retain significance.

Children

As the introduction to this thesis in Chapter One stated, it is no accident that children have become the focus of public debates on the extent of, and responses to, poverty. Children hold a special place culturally and socially, and perhaps most pertinently, emotionally. This thesis shows how children are socially valued and are characterised as innocent and vulnerable victims of poverty. Correspondingly, children are also politically important in Aotearoa New Zealand. The historical analysis indicates the role of children in settler societies as future nation-builders and bearers of British civilisation (Mein Smith, 2003). The welfare state, alongside other initiatives including free school milk, further solidified the political and symbolic importance of childhood after the Great Depression. The assumptions, previously discussed, which characterise Aotearoa New Zealand as a land of plenty, connect with idealised notions of prioritising the health and welfare of children. One example of how these residual stories are expressed in the contemporary period is within a ‘Kiwi kid’ trope that characterises childhood as a stage replete with opportunities and freedoms (Burrows, 2010).

In light of children’s social value, the media attention on hungry children in schools during the 2000s provokes public responses that have not been evident in relation to food insecurity suffered by adults. Children engender compassion, since even amongst the most ardent neoliberals there is an acknowledgement that individual self-reliance is a somewhat problematic expectation of children. Most people understand that babies and children are particularly reliant on caregivers for their day-to-day survival and their development into adults. This tension has opened up one of the few spaces within neoliberal societies for discussing and addressing the poverty and hardship faced by citizens today.

The phenomenon of hungry children in New Zealand schools, and its visibility, creates a potential rupture point for dominant neoliberal narratives. Because children’s dependence is socially sanctioned and appropriate, they cannot be blamed for their lack of food. The compassion that hungry children induce has the potential to activate critical questions about the economic model that results in children going without necessities. This thesis shows that maintaining neoliberal common-sense narratives required concerted efforts politically between 2000 and 2017 in order to reinforce the supremacy of market rationality and individual responsibility. ‘Child poverty’ could no longer be denied, but the relational and interdependent nature of children’s lifeworlds remained unacknowledged. Instead,

children's innocence and dependency on adults was sanctioned and legitimate, justifying alleviation of their hunger within schools. In contrast, the parents of hungry children were frequently characterised in terms of their unsanctioned 'dependence' on the state and remained a focus for punitive approaches (Beddoe, 2014; Cotterell et al., 2017; St John et al., 2014). Consequently, the media and policy analysis illustrates intensified focus on the moral failings of parents in dominant political responses to the visibility of hunger in schools during the period from 2000-2018.

Despite political attempts to downplay poverty and blame parents for children's food insecurity, the visible problem of hungry children in schools required the government to display compassion. The *structures of feeling* discernible in this thesis support the view that it is regarded as ethically untenable for children to routinely go hungry in a land of plenty. Nonetheless, an emotional response to innocent children suffering is shown to accommodate or even incite anger and blame towards their parents for failing to care sufficiently for them. By the time of the Fonterra Milk for Schools roll out in 2013, the government was subject to media scrutiny and schools were attracting considerable attention as a focus for 'child poverty' interventions (Carson, 2013; Wills, 2013; Wynd, 2011). It was politically expedient for the government to pursue an arrangement that signaled compassion towards children but did not absolve parents of their responsibility, nor make significant demands on taxpayers. Neoliberal governance demanded avoiding any implication that the State bears responsibility for food security but pragmatism and the public structures of feeling required placation. The resulting ameliorative token of announcing partial funding for the Kickstart Breakfast partnership in 2013 represented the minimal contribution calculated to meet the objective of diffusing public concerns and scrutiny.

The political necessity of repairing potential threats to the underlying neoliberal ethos reflects the broader dominance of Third Way inflected neoliberal governance in Aotearoa New Zealand during the 2000s. The introduction to this thesis identified how a shift to Third Way rhetoric positing a 'softer' and more socially responsible form of neoliberalism became politically salient after the aggressively pro-market governments of the 1980s and 1990s (Humpage, 2016). The case of hungry school children in Aotearoa New Zealand illustrates features of Third Way neoliberalism. Firstly, expressing sympathy for children signifies care towards citizens who are blameless, implying that policies will ameliorate any social damage inflicted by continued roll-out neoliberalism. Crucially, in the 2000-2017 period, political rhetoric about children's wellbeing was not accompanied by significant support for children's

parents and families, support that would improve the lives and health of children as well as others (Boston & Chapple, 2015; St John, 2014).

A second feature of Third Way neoliberalism is the tendency to situate children within a social investment approach that emphasises their potential future liabilities (Lister, 2003). Feeding children can be justified, in a social investment model, if it prevents further costs in the future. This thesis finds that, congruent with a Third Way social investment model, concerns about children's future potential shape structures of feeling about responding to child hunger. The concern for children's futures can articulate an extension of compassion into preventing their needless suffering as adults, whose opportunities have been blighted by childhood deprivation. In addition, concern for children's futures can also centre around the burden of such thwarted adults on others, particularly economically (Lunt, 2008). Although as children they have a legitimate dependency and vulnerability, supporting them is storied around preventing their illegitimate dependency as future adults. Accordingly, feeding children in schools is often justified on the basis of providing opportunities for school achievement as a route to future economic participation. Although such a justification appears benign, it can rest on assumptions about the presumed low aspirations of children's families of origin (Jensen, 2010; Reay, 2013). The principle of education and nutrition as basic human rights, and therefore issues of social justice, is superseded by pragmatic attempts to ameliorate hunger in schools in order to support educational and economic aims.

Children also occupy a key role within non-governmental materials examined in this thesis. The political context necessitates a burgeoning charitable sector to address food insecurity, including hunger in schools. Chapter Four of this thesis demonstrates how the NGO sector mobilises the emotional reaction that children inspire by constructing appeals around the figure of a deprived child (Jackson, 2014). In addition, children's value as future consumers makes schools an attractive site for the placement and promotion of products, activities that are facilitated by the need to feed hungry children. The encroachment of corporate promotion into schools as a result of schemes addressing hunger in schools is illustrative of neoliberal logic. Promoting products through school feeding schemes indicates corporate interests can exploit inequality while creating future consumers (Powell, 2020). Proponents of neoliberalism are shown in the thesis findings to advocate market-based solutions to problems created upstream, by neoliberal policies.

The final and related point about the role of children and childhood that emerges in this thesis is the broader sustained political and public preference for characterising poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand in terms of 'child poverty'. The cultural and emotional value of

children, and children's lack of culpability for their poverty influences people's responses to hungry children in schools. Despite tactical value in the 'child poverty' focus, there are significant issues with attempting to delineate the problem in this way. Campaigners and charities have focused on children in order to highlight the injustice of those most innocent having to suffer. Granted, this can be seen as a practical necessity in a neoliberal context. Nevertheless, positioning children as sentimentalised victims appears to encourage declarations of caring without corresponding recognition of the socioeconomic inequalities that cause poverty (Berlant, 2014; Zembylas, 2013). A focus on children for intervention does not account for the structural inequities experienced by whole households living with insecurity. Attempts to address children's poverty as somehow separate from the poverty of their families only makes sense when a distinction between the deserving poor (children) and undeserving poor (adults) is the underlying logic.

Fundamentally, the separation of children's poverty from that of their families and whānau is difficult to sustain, both morally and logically. Devine (2014) points out that for children living in poverty:

Their condition can be separated from that of their parents and wider families only at enormous social cost – that of another grand relocation of children, perhaps not out of their cultural context, but certainly out of their nuclear family context, and the abandonment of their parents. (Devine, 2014, p. 998)

This quote from Devine indicates the carelessness of simplistic attempts to aid children but punish parents. Even if we were to accept the worrying proposition that only children's suffering is important, children's well-being is completely entwined with that of their households.

Concluding Comments: Narrow Targets of Compassion

The case of milk in schools in 2013 is illustrative of the capacity for the ongoing project of neoliberalisation to maintain the status of common-sense by incorporating many cultural resources. This thesis demonstrates that diversified non-state responses to hunger and increased targeting in the contemporary period are expressions of neoliberal narratives of the deserving/undeserving poor (Devine, 2014). Dominant characterisations of the parents of hungry school children reflect historically based gender, class and ethnic social formations that contribute to structures of feeling in relation to hungry children. Longstanding social and cultural narratives are inflected by neoliberal definitions of social worth during the period of

public attention on hunger within schools from 2000 to 2017. For example, the notion of a land of plenty where opportunities abound for the motivated, and the congruent assumption that Aotearoa New Zealand is an ideal place to raise healthy children, are both narratives that evolve, but persist. Such historical stories stem largely from settler colonisation, and are readily co-opted within neoliberal narratives relating to contemporary food insecurity. One result is that while children are characterised as deserving and innocent victims, their parents are blamed for failing to meet their responsibilities.

Fonterra Milk for Schools, along with other myriad schemes in New Zealand schools that feed thousands of children every weekday, do indeed help to alleviate hunger and indicate compassion towards a vulnerable group. Structures of feeling about hungry school children situate their hunger as worthy of ameliorative measures on the basis of compassion. Critically, feeding children does not address the underlying drivers for the re-emergence of hunger in schools in the current period. At the time of the re-introduction of school milk in 2013, low-income families frequently live with sustained insecurity, in relation to employment, income, housing, and the ability to meet household outgoings (St John, 2013). The resulting food insecurity suffered by the precariat becomes visible when hungry children disrupt classrooms, while the multiple deprivations endured by precariat citizens who are not school children are less visible.

Parents who must navigate precarity may resist the binary definition of their worth based on neoliberal ideals, affirming social value from their communities and their roles within their families. The participant accounts in Chapter Five demonstrate the ongoing efforts required to maintain a worthy self in the context of how low-income parents are constituted within dominant narratives. The everyday conflicts between caring roles and pressures to prioritise paid work are evident. In contrast to the ‘carrots and sticks’ approach to work and welfare that is advocated within dominant narratives, the mothers’ accounts in this thesis express more complex circumstances and motivations. The material and social disadvantages that the participants reflect on are constantly weighed against the potentially greater losses they envisage for their families if they do not meet their caring obligations. In this respect, the participants position their children’s needs above their own needs, which is congruent with wider *structures of feeling* about the importance of children. The children that the participants centre their narratives around are not abstracted objects of pity, but deeply loved dependent human beings with unique characteristics and needs. The decisions that the participants make in relation to their households are rooted in these relationships with their children and therefore sometimes conflict fundamentally with neoliberal narratives that seek

to position such mothers as failures when they do not demonstrate sufficient commitment to paid work (Devine, 2014). Overall, the participant accounts highlight the psycho-social stress generated by living with precarity, despite the social supports participants engaged with.

Incorporating an historical analysis highlights how the historical, cultural and social particularities of Aotearoa New Zealand reflect both local and transnational influences. While *structures of feeling* are shown to connect with the conditions of settler imperialism, the transnational imperatives of neoliberal ideology have co-opted aspects of localised common sense. For example, the post Great Depression period of welfare state building still forms a source of nostalgia, including in relation to the social value of infants and children and supporting families (Tennant, 2004a). Maintaining the common-sense status of neoliberal tenets requires negotiation between such historically situated examples of collectivism, and neoliberal portrayals of responsibility located primarily within individuals. The potential hegemonic rupture represented by growing numbers of children going hungry at schools mobilises multiple narratives, as is evidenced in the media and policy analysis in Chapter Four. One such narrative identified in Chapter Four is a retreat into amoral familism within some of the arguments about children going hungry (Layton, 2010; Reay, 2014). The assumption encapsulated in amoral familism is that responsibility for children going hungry is confined to their immediate family, avoiding broader conceptualisations of collective and structural responsibility. Amoral familism arguments are shown in this thesis to accommodate expressions of compassion for children without disrupting underlying commitment to free-market ideology. Positioning responsibility within individual households remains largely unchallenged by charity, which is defined as a philanthropic choice to respond to child suffering that does not negate parents' culpability.

The application of Third Way pragmatism emerges in Aotearoa New Zealand as a dominant framework for ameliorating hunger for school children without conceding a failure of market economics. The influence of transnational Third Way political formations are reflected in policies that are presented as both economically dynamic and enabling citizens to access opportunities (Fairclough, 2001; Lister, 2003). Parenting and education are promoted in terms of children's future social mobility (Peters, 2017). In addition, locally nuanced narratives that value pragmatism, community and responsibility all inform how hunger is responded to in New Zealand schools. Accordingly, the return of milk in schools in 2013 is shown to re-territorialise multiple narratives as part of a local formation of what is a global neoliberal project (Peck, 2010).

In terms of future research, this thesis indicates the value of studying the impacts of neoliberalism from a perspective that incorporates both fine-grained qualitative analysis at the level of everyday lifeworlds, and a broader engagement with macro level developments. The ability of neoliberalism to adapt and incorporate multiple narratives within a localised setting to sustain dominance emerges within analysis that accommodates complexity. The use of exemplars is a valuable tool for moving the research perspective between historical periods, but also for examining how cases articulate broader social and political developments (Peck & Theodore, 2015; Schraube & Højholt, 2019).

An additional contribution that this thesis makes relates to the interdisciplinary nature of the research. Essentially, the thesis findings highlight the point that neoliberalism is an interdisciplinary phenomenon. The implications of neoliberal common sense in Aotearoa New Zealand, as in many settings, are not confined to politics and policy. This thesis demonstrates that neoliberalism shapes the everyday lifeworlds of citizens, through close reading of the accounts of low-income parents themselves. Psychology as a discipline has an obligation to acknowledge and examine the operation of neoliberal power (Parker, 2007; Ratner, 2019; Rose, 1999). I argue that part of examining the ways in which neoliberalism is felt within people's everyday lives (in addition to how it constrains them economically) is remaining open to how the extension of neoliberal ideology shapes meaning making at multiple social levels. The ethnographic orientation, most evident within community psychology, provides an iterative approach that captures numerous types of human meaning making. This thesis benefitted from this open approach to empirical materials, which also facilitated qualitative analysis that was not constrained by a singular methodological 'recipe'. Future research in community psychology could further develop my layering approach to analysis, drawing together diverse materials and identifying multiple storylines.

Reflecting on the thesis findings, I recognise how the exploration of history, undertaken as part of this thesis, opens up the concept of context in ways that I did not anticipate. The words and emotions contained within oral history accounts resonate with haunting and recognisable stories about salvaging the self within austere circumstances. As this thesis shows, I do not present a nostalgic or uncritical view of the welfare state nation-building period, particularly its role in perpetuating assumptions about women, the family, and Māori (Labrum, 2009). Nonetheless, the assertive and ambitious political project initiated by the Labour government in 1935, seeking to restore employment, incomes, houses, health and ultimately, dignity, provides a stark contrast to the political abdication of responsibility evident in the contemporary period.

In conclusion, food insecurity in Aotearoa New Zealand shows no signs of abating (Beavis et al., 2019; Ministry of Health, 2019). My research contextualised one visible manifestation of food insecurity by unpacking high profile responses to hungry school children. The exemplars of school milk highlight how responses to poverty are shaped by history, and situated within both local and transnational conditions. Stories about citizenship, nature's bounty and 'practical insurance', encapsulated within school milk in 1937, are still discernible within the 2013 iteration of school milk. Such stories are readily co-opted to obfuscate and extend the reach of a broader neoliberal project. Despite nostalgic connections to a time of prioritising children after the Great Depression, the return of school milk serves as an 'unwaved flag' (Billig, 1995) for diversified non-state responses to poverty and for the retrenchment of state responsibility. In the context of precarity, the re-introduction of school milk in 2013 signifies both a return to ad hoc pre-welfare state charity, and an expansion of business opportunities.

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Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet



'The Milk of Human Kindness?': Families and Food

Information for Participants

The Study

My name is Kimberly Jackson and I am undertaking this research as part of my PhD in Social Psychology at The University of Waikato, under the supervision of Darrin Hodgetts, Otilie Stolte and David Neilson.

The research will explore policy and media relating to hungry children and free milk and food in schools programmes. I am interested in the role of these programmes in shaping particular views of parents and caregivers on low incomes in Aotearoa/New Zealand. I would like to include the perspectives of parents and caregivers who are on low incomes, to help build a picture of the impact of child poverty policies on people's everyday lives. It is important that the research is informed by the everyday experiences of parents or caregivers who are feeding their children with limited resources.

What will be involved in taking part?

I would like to meet with you twice for interviews, each taking approximately 1-1 ½ hours. These interviews can take place at a time and place convenient for you. I would like to audio-record the interviews.

I may also ask you if I can come with you on a trip to the supermarket, or other food shops. This is so I can learn about what you do when you are shopping for the family. During the shopping trip we would discuss some of what is happening and I would audio-record the outing.

The choice to let me accompany you on a food shopping outing is entirely yours, and you may change your mind at any point. The outing would take place, if you agree to it, after the two interviews, at a time that is convenient to you.

What will the questions be about?

I will be interested in your everyday experiences of feeding your family and the impact of policies on your everyday life.

The focus of the interviews is on your own stories about food and other aspects of life on a low income that are important to you. For example, I will ask about how you manage your food budget and how you cope with getting food on the table every day. I will ask about free milk and breakfast or other food in schools programmes that your family might use. You can choose to leave out any topics you do not wish to comment on.



'The Milk of Human Kindness?': Families and Food

What if I change my mind about participating?

You are free to refuse to answer any question and can withdraw from an interview at any time.

You can request any information relating to you be removed from the study.

You can ask to see the transcript of your interview and ask for parts of it to not be included in the study. It would be best to request that information be removed within two weeks of an interview because after this it gets difficult to remove from the analysis.

Will I be identified?

No, you will be anonymous. I will not use your real name, or the real names of anyone connected to you, in any part of the study, either in my own notes or in the final thesis, or in any publications or presentations arising from the research. I will be the only person who will know your real name and details.

Will I be able to find out about the findings of the study?

I will send you a summary of my research findings. You can choose to have this on paper, or I can e-mail it to you. I will also invite you to a presentation of the research findings, to take place after completion of my PhD.

Who can I contact about the study and any concerns I have?

You can contact me, or my supervisor.

Contact details:

Kimberly Jackson: *Ph:* 0220 669 460; *Email:* kmj30@students.waikato.ac.nz

Professor Darrin Hodgetts: Massey University, Albany, *Email:* D.J.Hodgetts@massey.ac.nz
Ph: 06 350 5701 Ext 43758

Thank you for your time.

Appendix B: Consent Form



CONSENT FORM

A completed copy of this form should be retained by both the researcher and the participant.
Note: you may delete or reword any items that are not relevant to your research and add items that are relevant to your research]

Research Project: _____

Please complete the following checklist. Tick (✓) the appropriate box for each point.	YES	NO
1. I have read the Participant Information Sheet (or it has been read to me) and I understand it.		
2. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether or not to participate in this study		
3. I am satisfied with the answers I have been given regarding the study and I have a copy of this consent form and information sheet		
4. I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty		
5. I understand that my participation in this study is confidential and that no material, which could identify me personally, will be used in any reports on this study.		
6. I have the right to decline to participate in any part of the research activity		
7. I know who to contact if I have any questions about the study in general.		
8. I understand that the researcher wishes to digitally record the interviews, but that I can refuse to be recorded at any stage.		
I wish to view the transcript of the interview		
I wish to receive a copy of the findings		
I wish to view the summary report of my interview		

Declaration by participant:

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Professor Michael O'Driscoll, Tel: 07 838 4466 ext 8899 and email: m.odriscoll@waikato.ac.nz)

Participant's name (Please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Declaration by member of research team:

I have given a verbal explanation of the research project to the participant, and have answered the participant's questions about it. I believe that the participant understands the study and has given informed consent to participate.

Researcher's name (Please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Initial Questions

'The Milk of Human Kindness?: Families and Food

Themes for Initial Interview

1. Food for the week

(Use drawing/mapping to explore this).

'Take me through a typical week of food for the household:

What is there to eat - what types of food do you like?'

What food is absent – what food would they like to eat but are unable to?

Where does the food come from?

Who is involved in feeding the family?

2. Resources to provide food for the family.

How much is there to spend?

How do they juggle food costs with other costs (eg using money meant for food to pay other bills)?

What about food that isn't bought, for example, food from family and friends, foraging, gardens, or as swaps?

Food grants, food banks, or community meals?

3. The role of parents

Food 'management'- the job of feeding the family on a limited budget.

What specific skills and strategies do they use to stretch resources?

Reflect on the *quantity*, *quality* and *variety* of what people have to eat.

(link this to their drawing and reflections in theme 1).

4. Children and food

School and kindergarten lunches and rules about lunches.

Any difficulties providing food for school or kindergarten/daycare?

School communication with parents about lunches and food?

Free milk, fruit, or breakfast, or 'KidsCan' provisions at their school?

How that affects the budget.

Thoughts/opinions on these services?

5. Food and well-being

The impact of limited food and resources on socialising, celebrations, family relationships?

Different experiences of this within the household?

Cultural understandings around food and hospitality – cultural practices affected by a shortage of food?

Anything else participants would like to add/topics they would like included that are not on this list.