Moral Selves and Mean Welfare

Responsibility and Vulnerability in Multicultural Sydney

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Contents

Abstract

Responsibility and vulnerability are morally potent yet contested concepts in contemporary welfare politics and policy, through which the issue of dealing with cultural diversity in the Australian welfare state is refracted. This thesis is about the lived experience of culturally diverse welfare users at the sharp end of Australia's residual welfare system. Taking responsibility and vulnerability as conceptual frames, the research explores how diverse moral and material economies of support interact with the cultural politics and institutional cultures of the welfare state. I draw on a combination of ethnographic methods and in-depth interviews based in the highly multicultural south-west of Sydney, an area targeted as disadvantaged under recent place-based welfare interventions. In this way the thesis brings cultural diversity to the centre of an empirical exploration of how welfare users experience and relate to the welfare state, where it has previously been peripheral or focused on a single ethnic group.

The theoretical framework prioritises the micro-politics and social relations of everyday life, allowing the thesis to draw out the cultural frames and practices that animate expectations and experiences of welfare state provision. It endeavours to keep in view both the messiness of everyday lived existence and wider conditions in which it is placed. By combining fine-grained empirical analysis with empirical and theoretical insights from race and ethnic studies and social policy studies, this thesis offers a thick account of individual lived experiences of welfare embedded in histories and structures of racial and socio-economic injustice and inequality. An overarching argument that ties together the different themes in each chapter is the need to grapple with the dominant cultural lexicon of agency in both policy and scholarship, which affirms agency as a value that is antithetical to claims of victimhood.

Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis, entitled *Moral Selves and Mean Welfare: Responsibility and Vulnerability in Multicultural Sydney*, has not been previously submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that this thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance I have received in my research work and the preparation of this thesis have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee approved this research project (ref. 5201300645).

Emma Mitchell

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Introduction: the moral and material economies of welfare and multiculture

> 'I was like if they gave me [welfare] it's a bonus, if they don't give me, that's life. That's what support should be like' (Jasmin, Single Parenting Payment and employed part time, early 30s, raised in Hong Kong)

> 'I think it's okay to ask for help and then that's how you learn to help yourself. I've always told the boys, "Don't be ever afraid to ask for anything." Otherwise people don't know – you're just sitting there suffering or whatever when there is help out there for whatever you may need' (Kat, Disability Support Pension recipient, late 40s, Aboriginal)

> 'How do you say to a person who works every day of their life and pays tax that someone else deserves not to work and still get paid? That man working over there has to pay for my dinner […] What gives us the right?' (Monica, single parent on unemployment benefits, early 30s, Anglo)

'The age of entitlement is over,' then opposition-treasurer, Joe Hockey,[1] warned in his 2012 speech to the London free-market think tank, the Institute of Economic Affairs (Hockey, 2012). 'The social contract between government and its citizens needs to be urgently and significantly redefined.' Citizens of western democracies had grown too accustomed to state-funded payments and entitlements, and their overblown expectations were unrealistic and unsustainable. Australians had become used to a lifestyle beyond their means; households and governments alike needed to be more disciplined. Hockey pointed to Asia and the Confucian model of filial piety and sound work ethic as 'the very best and most enduring guide for community and social infrastructure'. Political journalist Laura Tingle (2013, p. 32) echoed the polemic in her lengthy Quarterly essay, arguing that 'the idea of state paternalism is embedded in our relationship with government'. She mused that Australia was an angry nation, and that anger stemmed from our confused expectations of government: Australians turn habitually to the government for help but are cynical about government interference and authority. We are insatiably expectant and perpetually disappointed.

While neither Hockey nor the aspiring Prime Minister Abbott campaigned on that message in the following election (Carney, 2014), it resurfaced in their first federal budget as the incumbent government in May 2014. As Treasurer, Hockey announced the government's intention to introduce time-limited benefits for the unemployed, make unemployment payments and disability pensions for

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[1] Liberal-National Coalition federal MP

young people more conditional on participation requirements, introduce a co-payment for Medicare (Australia's universal health care system), tighten pensions and family payments, withdraw industry assistance, and deregulate university fees. The epochal tone heralded a new era of personal responsibility, sacrifice and contribution that would sustain a welfare system reserved for 'those in genuine need', 'the most disadvantaged' and 'the most vulnerable' (Hockey, 2014). It was a matter not just of financial prudence but moral obligation. 'We must always remember that when a person receives an entitlement from the government, in comes from the pocket of another person,' Hockey chided.

This thesis is about how culturally diverse welfare users navigate the practical and ideological terrain of the Australian welfare state. My first interview coincidently took place a matter of days after the controversial and unpopular 2014 budget was announced, and it was against this backdrop that I asked people living in or on the edges of hardship to reflect on their experiences and expectations of informal and formal social support. The thesis explores how diverse frames and practices of social obligation interact with the cultural politics and cultural logics of the welfare state. It takes as its point of departure 'vulnerability' and 'personal responsibility' as hegemonic cultural tropes in contemporary social policy. There has been much analysis of the logic of personal responsibility underpinning the restructuring of welfare to prioritise mutual obligation and conditional entitlement (Moss, 2001; Rose, 1996; Wright, 2012) and increasing analysis of the emergence of vulnerability as the dominant framing of disadvantage associated with the appearance of the concept of risk (Best, 2013; Brown, 2015; Furedi, 2008). Both tropes are associated with the re-moralising of social welfare, which revives distinctions between deserving and underserving recipients of support and the regulation of individual behaviour (Brown, 2012; Rodger, 2008). Given the moral hue and power of these concepts and the welfare measures they animate, how do they interact with the diverse moral and material economies of support that constitute Australian multiculture, particularly for those who are typically identified as vulnerable and compelled to be responsible in contemporary social policy? I explore this question by drawing on a combination of ethnographic methods and in-depth interviews with people living at the sharp end of Australia's residual welfare system and in the community

welfare sector in the highly diverse south-west of Sydney. My theoretical framework prioritises the micro-politics and social relations of everyday life, allowing me to draw out the cultural frames and practices that animate expectations and experiences of welfare state provision.

I use the concepts of responsibility and vulnerability to ground the wider question of how minority groups relate to welfare within the milieu of contemporary welfare politics and policy. As conceptually rich terms they provide substance to flesh-out how diverse expectations and experiences of need and support interact with the cultural politics and institutional cultures of the Australian welfare state. This primary question, then, is driven by a number of sub-questions: what does it mean to be self-responsible in multicultural Australia and how is responsibility practiced differently by different people? How are assumed and ascribed responsibilities negotiated by people differentially positioned in family, community, national and transnational spheres? How does welfare enable and constrain cultural practices of giving and receiving support? What ideas of person-hood are embedded in vulnerability and individual responsibility and do they conflict with diverse ways of living the social? What experiences of vulnerability and modes of responsibility fall outside the purview of dominant frames of need and obligation? What kinds of demands does the politics of vulnerability make on groups categorised as vulnerable? How does the idiom of vulnerability enable or constrain claims of social rights or demands for social justice? While these fertile questions defy a comprehensive or conclusive answer, this study contributes to addressing them by foregrounding culturally diverse expectations and experiences of welfare for those at the sharp end of the welfare system.

Culturally diverse perspectives of welfare are here understood in relation to how cultural difference is made to matter in welfare politics and policy. Responsiveness to and regulation of cultural diversity are competing principles in the Australian welfare state. Culture and cultural pluralism are an integral feature of the contemporary social policy terrain in multicultural, '(never quite post) colonial' (Haggis, 2004) Australia. Public discourse on welfare often crudely references culture. For example, former Treasurer Hockey invoked national character to justify welfare cuts, infamously characterising Australians as 'lifters not leaners'. Racialised discourses of cultural dysfunction are used to justify

increasingly directive and supervisory welfare provision most intensely targeted at Aboriginal people. The redefinition of citizenship and realignment of welfare to prioritise behavioural obligations refocuses attention on 'the cultural dimension of conduct and belonging' and 'extends the risk of subversion to include incivility and cultural difference' (Flint, 2009, p. 92). Meanwhile, at the organisational level cultural sensitivity is prioritised as a principle of responsive service provision that aims to accommodate the needs and preferences of increasingly diverse welfare users. However, while there has been considerable analysis of how cultural diversity is defined and managed in contemporary welfare politics and policy, there has been relatively little attention to how culturally diverse subjects interpret and experience the complex symbolic and material regimes that constitute the welfare state. The presence of cultural diversity tends to be peripheral or focused on a single ethnic group. This thesis contributes to addressing that gap by foregrounding a nuanced account of culture in an empirical and theoretical analysis of how diverse welfare users experience and relate to the welfare state both as principle and practice.

'Vulnerability' and 'responsibility' are key frames of analysis in this study. Vulnerability and responsibility are morally potent concepts and keywords in contemporary social policy. According to Raymond Williams, keywords are 'problem-laden words' in general usage that have variable meanings across different domains, functioning as sites where meaning is negotiated and contested (Bennett, Lawrence, & Morris, 2005, pp. xvii–xviii). Keywords often 'carry unspoken assumptions and connotations' that imbue them with the quality of 'common sense' (Fraser & Gordon, 1994, p. 310). Their meaning is contingent on and constituted in relation to other words in 'semantic clusters' (Shore & Wright, 2000, p. 51). Vulnerability and responsibility are closely linked and share resilience and risk as conceptual cousins. The concept of vulnerability has traction in public discourse about welfare, figuring in both justifications for increasingly targeted welfare, and also in push back against reforms that undermine entitlement. For example, at the same time as Treasurer Hockey (2014) justified a raft of proposed cuts to welfare as ensuring the sustainability of a safety-net for 'the most vulnerable', critics accused his government of 'attacking the most vulnerable' through harsh welfare reforms (Siewert, 2014). But the influence of the term in Australian social policy extends beyond

rhetoric. It informs the definition of need at the level of policy and the assessment of need by welfare agencies. For example, it is a key category in income management measures that quarantine at least half of cash welfare payments onto a card to exclude the purchase of items like cigarettes and alcohol – a measure that was initially imposed on remote Aboriginal communities but was later extended to non-Indigenous welfare recipients and other trial sites. Different orientations of vulnerability imply divergent conceptions of responsibility – from an emphasis on personal responsibility and limiting the role of government, to the principle of social justice secured by the state, to placing responsibility for prevention and intervention in the community and generalist services such as schools. Social policy is characterised by the fluctuation of holding individuals and holding structures responsible for social problems depending on how they are conceptualised. The currency of vulnerability as a way of conceptualising disadvantage speaks to its potency as a 'malleable' concept that can emphasise both individualist and structuralist understandings of social problems (Brown, 2011).

Vulnerability and responsibility are also conceptually rich phenomena in social analysis that strike at the core of human sociality and our condition as social beings. The language of responsibility pervades social life, suggesting causality but also 'questions of duty, accountability and morality' (Hage & Eckersley, 2012, p. 1). Responsibility has different meanings and orientations: it can refer to a state of being (for example, young children are deemed incapable of assuming responsibility for their behavior); it can denote future (and change) oriented duty; or it can refer to past oriented blameworthiness and liability (Kowal, 2012, p. 45). Responsibility is integral to social identity and belonging, as Hage (2012, p. 112) articulates: 'claims of responsibility are claims about the degree and the nature of one's social and emotional enmeshment in the collectivity one feels responsible to.' According to Barnes (2000, p. 8), 'all societies as are systems of responsibilities.' It is not surprising, then, that responsibility has been a foundational problem of the social sciences and the analysis of the relationship between individual actions and social forces (Hage & Eckersley, 2012, pp. 3–4), explicitly dealt with by Durkheim and his contemporaries and reworked by contemporary social theorists like Giddens. The language of vulnerability is also increasingly prevalent though less

pervasive in ordinary language, while in public discourse it has proliferated to become 'the dominant frame through which social problems are communicated to the public' (Misztal, 2011, p. 3). It can denote both a present condition of insecurity and an unrealised threat. The term is associated with the zeitgeist of modern life characterised by risk, uncertainty and insecurity in the face of globalisation, global terrorism, climate change, and economic precarity. The concept has increasing resonance in scholarship grappling with these conditions – as both an object of critical analysis and theoretical potential. Like the concept of responsibility, vulnerability is 'fundamentally social and relational' in character; as interdependent beings humans are susceptible to the actions of others and forces beyond their control (Mackenzie, Rogers, & Dodds, 2014, p. 6) . Therefore, the concept of vulnerability likewise brings the relationship between individuals and the wider forces that condition their lives to the center of analysis.

This thesis shows how the framing of social problems and social policy in terms of vulnerability and responsibility come to bear on the lives of people living in hardship and the practice of frontline workers who animate policy on the ground.[2] It is concerned with how they experience themselves, their circumstances, and their relationship with the welfare state. Jasmin's stoical complacency, Kat's comfortable pragmatism, and Monica's deep-seated shame in the quotes that open the chapter signal different moral inflections about the rightful modes of claiming support that are entangled with the differential relationships to citizenship and the welfare state that they inhabit.[3] This thesis explores the practical and subjective dimensions of being on welfare for people from diverse cultural backgrounds – ranging from those who just need an extra hand through to those who live in entrenched poverty – in light of the moralising weight of cultural scripts of responsibility and vulnerability.

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[2] This approach resonates with scholarship on policy enactment that conceives of policy as 'performative, relational, and as producing multiple effects' that relationally constitute citizenship and the state (Fortier, 2016b, p. 5).
[3] All the names of participants in this research are fictional to protect their anonymity.

Cultural diversity and the welfare state

Recent global debates about both welfare and multiculturalism have been characterised by the theme of crisis in the face of significant social, economic, and demographic change. The view that 'the pendulum has swung too far' and 'permissive' state policies need to be retrenched resounds in both the politics of welfare and multiculturalism in the Anglophone liberal democracies and across Europe. In recent decades nation states have had to accommodate intensified ethno-cultural diversity and manage the challenge it poses to (dominant) social, cultural and institutional arrangements, including that of social policy. While this gave rise to multiculturalist policies in many nations, including Australia, the last two decades have been marked by an official retreat from multiculturalism amid revived anxiety about social cohesion and national identity (Kymlicka, 2010; Lentin & Titley, 2011; Poynting & Mason, 2008). Meanwhile, the principles and institutions of welfare states have been publicaly scrutinised and transformed. Alongside the tightening of eligibility, not least for migrants, there has been a simultaneous shift to welfare 'activation' policies designed to curtail a purported culture of dependency on state support (Billings, 2011; Cortis & Meagher, 2009; Macintyre, 1999; Mendes, 2009). Immigration and welfare remain compelling and divisive issues in wedge politics (Wilson & Turnbull, 2001), which trades in anxieties about bloated welfare rolls and porous borders. During this time, political discourse about both multiculturalism and welfare has become linked to citizenship and the entitlements and responsibilities it confers. Meanwhile, the sustainability of Western welfare states is dependent on 'international migrations and transnational welfare provisioning' (Williams & Johnson, 2010, p. 2). Wider narratives about the threat ethno-cultural minorities pose to resources and solidarities, then, mask the ways in which migration is implicated in welfare state restructuring, not simply by challenging the assumptions that underpin the ideal of nation-state citizenship, but by reconfiguring the material economies that sustain it (Stasiulis, 2008).

Australia's welfare state has traditionally been classified as a liberal regime characterised by low and targeted spending (Esping-Anderson, 1990), as well as a 'wage earners' model with relatively generous protections attached to employment (Castles, 1985). Castles defined the state-regulated

'breadwinner' basic wage as the foundation of the distinctive antipodean 'wage earner' welfare state. Others have argued that 'the scale of public investment' rather than 'protectionism' was the distinctive feature of the Australian model, as large-scale government investment in infrastructure, utilities and state enterprises played a key role in stimulating the economic growth on which wage-earner provisions depended (Deeming & Smyth, 2015, p. 300; Smyth, 2008, p. 651). As the conviction that full employment and fair wages would substitute for a welfare state evaporated, there was a steady expansion of social provisioning from the 1960s to the 1980s, including means-tested social support and universal healthcare (Smyth, 2008, p. 654; Wilson, Spies-Butcher, Stebbing, & St John, 2013). Market driven reforms across the 1980s and 90s 'hollowed out' previous protections to wages and working conditions (Wilson et al., 2013, pp. 638–9) and reduced welfare to an income 'safety net' designed to protect or compensate those disadvantaged by reform (Deeming & Smyth, 2015, p. 300). In the last three decades both major parties have backed an increasingly conditional and punitive benefits system accompanied by expanding family assistance in the form of a Family Tax Benefit system, childcare subsidies, and a paid parental leave scheme.[4] However, while family assistance for 'hard working families' has achieved bi-partisan support, contestation remains over the model of the family it should endorse and the extent to which payments should be means-tested to target lower-income families or should encompass middle-income earners (Mendes, 2009, p. 108; Wilson et al., 2013, p. 633).

In Australia, the shift against 'permissive' state policy has held particular sway in Indigenous affairs, where decades of federal policy have yielded little progress in health, education or employment outcomes for Aboriginal people and reports of violence have increased (Kowal, 2012, p. 43). Aboriginal dependence on the social security system has particularly troubled policy makers since the transition from the exclusion to inclusion of Aboriginal people in the Australian welfare state (Altman & Sanders, 1991). While such concern was present throughout the period of Aboriginal inclusion in

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[4] Family Tax Benefit (FTB) Part A is a means-tested benefit for families with a dependent child under 15 (or 19 if they are engaged in full-time study or training) that particularly targets lower-income families undertaking paid work. The supplement has had child immunisation requirements attached since January 2016, alongside the Child Care Rebate and Child Care Benefit. FTB Part B is a supplement for single income families, either single parents with a child under 16 or couples with one wage earner and a child under 12 (https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/family-tax-benefit).

the welfare state (Altman & Sanders, 1991, p. 12), it has gained traction in recent decades with the ascendancy of the new paternalist model of welfare in Indigenous social policy. The publication of Noel Pearson's influential critique of the pernicious effects of passive welfare on Aboriginal communities in 2000, *The Right to Take Responsibility*, heralded the new paternalist shift that culminated in the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) in 2007. [5]

The implementation and subsequent expansion of income management – a cornerstone of the NTER and one of its most enduring provisions – epitomises the new paternalist orthodoxy in mainstream social policy framed by vulnerability and individual responsibility. Income management is the compulsory quarantining of a portion of income support payments, usually 50% but up to 70%, onto a basic card which can only be used to buy 'essential' items at government licensed stores, usually the larger retail chains. While it was originally targeted exclusively at remote Aboriginal populations in the Northern Territory (NT), which required the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act, it has since been extended to the wider Northern Territory and other national trial sites and reframed as a welfare rather than Indigenous policy issue.[6] The Rudd Labor Government created several income management categories to enable the continuance of compulsory income management; it continues to apply to those defined in the legislation as 'disengaged youth', 'long-term' or 'vulnerable' welfare recipients, or if referred by child protection authorities. To be eligible for exception from the first two categories, applicants must satisfy the legislative criteria to assess financial vulnerability. As Bielefeld (2014:699) articulates, 'the definition of "vulnerability" [thus] has great significance for welfare recipients in each of these categories.' Despite the official removal of race-based provisions,

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[5] The Commonwealth Government launched the NTER in response to reports of child abuse in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. In contained a raft of measures including alcohol bans, the quarantining of welfare payments, and the compulsory acquisition of Aboriginal lands, and reforms to governance of Aboriginal organisations (Watson, 2011).

[6] A primary justification for the expansion of compulsory income management beyond the 'prescribed' Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory is to make the measure comply with the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) and thus enable the RDA's reinstatement while maintaining the measure. Introduced by the Howard government, the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007 (Cth) deemed all the measures contained within and relating to the Act as special measures for the purposes of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (RDA), while simultaneously excluding the provisions from the operation of the RDA. The Labor government initiated the extension of compulsory income management to non-Indigenous welfare recipients in the NT, with a view to nation-wide expansion to designated communities, to enable the restoration of the RDA.

compulsory income management still disproportionately affects Aboriginal people, comprising 90% of income managed recipients in the NT (Bray et al., 2012, p. 254).

The classification of individuals and families as 'vulnerable' is used to justify corrective interventions targeting individual behaviour. The stated aims of the measure are: reducing immediate hardship by prioritising spending on basic needs, curbing spending on alcohol, gambling, tobacco and pornography, promoting budgeting, limiting harassment of benefit recipients by peers relating to their payments, and promoting 'socially responsible behaviour' (Arthur, 2015). Mendes (2012, p. 1) argues that income management 'represents a fundamental shift in Australian income security policy from structural to individualistic explanations of social disadvantage'. The cultural dimension of behavioural obligations has been a key point of contention in public and academic debates about the Intervention. Critics were quick to argue that the government was pathologising Aboriginal culture and communities as dysfunctional and targeting Aboriginal ways of life and forms of land tenure. Proponents of the Intervention, however, argued that corrupted Aboriginal culture had entrenched social breakdown and dysfunction in Aboriginal communities. Academic debate about the Intervention, particularly within Indigenist anthropology (Langton, 2008; Lattas & Morris, 2010; Merlan, 2010; Sutton, 2009), brought to the fore the divergence of Indigenous moral and material economies and the imperatives of the (neo)liberal welfare state.

The diverse moral and material economies that social security enables and constrains was further brought into relief when, from July 2012, income management was further extended through a place-based trial in five designated 'disadvantaged areas' across Australia, including Bankstown in the multicultural, metropolitan south-west of Sydney, where my research project took place. The area is often described as one of the most ethnically diverse in Australian and was targeted for its concentration of 'disadvantage' and 'vulnerability'. There was vehement and vocal opposition from the outset from a coalition of community groups and organisations, trade-unions and activists (Say No to Government Income Management Coalition, 2011). While some saw the placed-based rollout as a smokescreen for ongoing racial bias against Aboriginal people, others felt Bankstown was being targeted for its bad reputation as an enclave of ethnic conflict, as Randa Kattan, a spokesperson for

the Coalition and the head of the Arab Council of Australia voiced at protest rallies and in interviews: 'We are an easy target – we already had a tarnished reputation' (Marks, 2012, p. 16). Another concern was that the measure would restrict migrant communities' access to traditional foods and ingredients only available at specialist grocers and markets (Marks, 2012, p. 16), or hamper the ability of refugee and humanitarian entrants to send remittances to support family overseas (Refugee Council of Australia, 2012, p. 5).

The extension of income management to Bankstown brings into relief not only the diverse economies that welfare enables and constrains, but the diverse motives and mechanics of the various institutions that comprise what we call 'the welfare state'. Here the welfare state is defined as 'state-protected minimum standards of income, health, housing, education and personal social services' (Mendes, 2008:2). The purpose and implementation of government policies is neither uniform nor coherent, but rather animated by various conventions and commitments and enacted and contested by the agents who 'people' bureaucracy (Lea, 2008). The ambiguous and conflicted purpose of government policies is exacerbated by the 'mixed economies' of informal and formal, public and private provision that constitute the welfare state (Billis, 2010). In Australia non-profit organisations play a major role in social service delivery in the marketised terrain of social care and provision (Industry Commission, 1995). In this context community welfare organisations must negotiate the balance between being responsive to the local communities in which they are embedded and complying with the objectives mandated by statutory funders (Trudeau, 2008). Gupta (1995) shows that the purposes and processes of 'the state' and 'civil society' are not so easily distinguishable. For example, the push for democratisation of welfare bureaucracies by social movements and the marketisation of those same bureaucracies converge in the ambiguous and conflicted principle of empowerment (discussed in chapter 2). The fragmented terrain of social welfare therefore signals the dispersed sites, scales and institutional interfaces that unevenly constitute social citizenship.

The ambiguous and conflicted purpose of government policies plays out in the cultural politics of the welfare state. For example, it is evidenced by the fact that while the Federal government has

retreated from an official policy of multiculturalism, the mantle has been taken up by state and local governments and the community sector (Koleth, 2010). Likewise, while the idea that 'corrupted' traditional culture is holding back the advancement of remote Aboriginal communities has gained traction in public discourse and policy (Altman, 2011; Martin, 2011), extensive funding from federal, state, and local government and private industry is channelled to Aboriginal projects, particularly in the urban south-east, based on the premise of cultural development and revival 'as a valuable social therapy' for the generalised damage inflicted by colonisation – a process Cowlishaw calls 'state sponsored culture' (Cowlishaw, 2010a, p. 221, 2011, p. 172). Moreover, these cultural projects and performances offer stints of employment that supplement meagre welfare benefits, while community representative and liaison jobs in community and state institutions offer a more regular source employment for some (Cowlishaw, 2011, p. 173).

Addressing culture

The massive increase in the flow of people, information and goods across local and national borders with the globalisation of economic and cultural life exacerbates a fundamental tension deriving from the link between citizenship and the liberal nation-state: 'citizenship is meant to be universalistic and above cultural difference, yet it exists only in the context of a nation-state, which is based on cultural specificity – on the belief in being different from other nations' (Castles & Davidson, 2000, p. 12). Responding to heightened tension between specificity and universalism, theorists of State multiculturalism have focused on how nation-states ought to manage cultural difference in the face of accelerated migration and mounting demands for cultural rights, reimagining a plural or 'multicultural citizenship' in an effort to dismantle (Young, 1990) or recuperate (Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994) its liberal tenets. Social capital scholars have debated whether multiculturalist policies or cultural diversity undermine moral commitment to the welfare state (Banting & Kymlicka, 2006b; Kay & Johnston, 2007; Portes & Vickstrom, 2011; Putnam, 2007). Policy-oriented analysis tends to focus the persistent disadvantage faced by minority groups and ameliorating barriers to service access by promoting cultural sensitivity and responsiveness. However, there has been comparatively

little attention to how people from ethno-cultural minorities perceive welfare state provision or indeed manage the rhetorical and material impositions or opportunities of welfare policy.

Attention to cultural difference has been peripheral to studies of welfare users' expectations and experiences of social welfare that is not concentrated on barriers to service access (Dwyer, 2000; Murphy, Murry, Chalmers, Martin, & Marston, 2011; Saunders, 2011). This is in part due to a warranted emphasis on common experiences of deprivation and exclusion. For example, despite the ethno-cultural diversity that characterised all three suburban settings of Mark Peel's (2003, p. 7) portrait of poverty in Australia, he argues that 'what really mattered was poverty'. This sentiment was echoed by one young Aboriginal man I interviewed when I crudely explained the aim of my research was 'to see how people from different backgrounds experience life on welfare', to which he replied, 'pretty much the same I would think'.[7] Cultural difference figured more prominently in research from the 1990s responding to claims that an 'underclass' of welfare dependents was perpetuated by deviant cultural norms and practices, sparking empirical attention to the different 'moral repertoires' that animate benefit recipients' decision making (Edwards & Duncan, 1997; Jordan & Redley, 1994). However, Lamont and Small (2008, p. 76) argue the need for nuanced understandings of culture in poverty and inequality studies literature aiming to understand racial and ethnic disparities in poverty, which has tended to rely on 'thin understandings of culture' broadly conceived as 'a groups norms and values, as its attitudes towards work and family, or as patterns of behaviour.' Such conceptual imprecision, they argue, is inadequate for either challenging the cultural stereotypes that frame policy or as an analytical lens for explaining the causal relationships between race, ethnicity, and poverty.

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[7] The Indigenous population includes the combined groups of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. 'Aboriginal people' is often used to refer to Indigenous people of mainland Australia. However, these terms fail to capture the distinct and diverse range of Indigenous cultures and nations belonging to specific lands (Maddison, 2009, p. 243). In this thesis I follow participants' lead and refer to them as Aboriginal. In the context of family and community life and welfare in south west Sydney, being 'black' was often expressed as more salient than specific relations to Country. Indeed, the legacy of Government Child Removal policies meant that kin and/or Country relatedness was severed for some people but they found alternative terms of participation in local Aboriginal culture and community (see Yamanouchi, 2010).

The conceptualisation of culture that one takes as a point of departure is crucial for a nuanced analysis of cultural diversity, even more so given the crude cultural politics of welfare and multiculturalism in public discourse. Despite ongoing conceptual debate, cultural sociology, cultural studies and anthropology now commonly conceptualise culture as a dynamic and complex *process* of creating shared understandings, customs, and codes of behaviour (Appadurai, 2013; Couldry, 2000; Lamont, 2000). Moreover, there is now a degree of consensus that 'dissensus' (Appadurai, 2013, p. 181) and 'disorder' (Couldry, 2000, p. 102) are a part of shared culture and that the boundaries of cultural formations are provisional and porous, prioritising movement and exchange in favour of assumptions of coherence and unity (see Couldry, 2000 for a discussion). In practice oriented approaches, culture refers to the meanings that animate interaction with the social world, foregrounding 'how practice knits together structure and agency, meaning and material conditions' (Calhoun & Sennett, 2007, p. 7). Rather than 'imputing a shared culture to groups' the empirical emphasis is on 'how individuals make sense of their lives' (Lamont & Small, 2008, p. 79) and 'the conditions under which people's stories of themselves are constructed' (Couldry, 2000, p. 52).

This conceptual framework is significant given the multi-ethnic context of the research and the well-rooted critique that multiculturalism oversimplifies and reifies ethnic-cultural group identity and difference (for an overview of this critique see Berg & Sigona, 2013; Fox & Jones, 2013). These critiques have precipitated the emergence of diversity as an analytic lens that insists on the wider range of factors that condition and differentiate experiences of migration and settlement in an effort to displace the overlapping of diversity and ethnicity (Berg & Sigona, 2013; Vertovec, 2007; Wessendorf, 2014).[8] This study aims to foreground multiculture – the complexity and diversity of contemporary cultural formations – arising from the legacy of colonisation and globalisation as a condition of the contemporary welfare state. This requires an approach that is 'sensitive to ethnicity in the empirical world, but does not impose it where it is not' (Fox & Jones, 2013, p. 394). While

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[8] The concept of 'super-diversity' to describe the ever-more complex social configurations arising from more variable pattern of migration has gained particular traction in policy and academic circles (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015; Vertovec, 2007). However, it has also been subject to critique for sidelining the persistence and legacy of racism (Back & Sinha, 2016) and not addressing the discrepancy between diversity as a set of social processes and the persistence of ethnic categories as a way of making sense of social reality in everyday life (Boccagni, 2015).

cultural difference is a key frame for this study, it is approached in a way that is attentive to the various factors that differentiate expectations and experiences of social welfare.

I employ 'cultural frames' and 'cultural scripts' as conceptual tools to grasp the hegemonic cultural formations of welfare policy and politics, how they are constituted by over-lapping policy, bureaucratic, activist, and stakeholder sub-cultures, and how these interact with the situated outlooks and experiences of people encountering them 'on the ground'. Conceiving of culture as frames foregrounds the particular lens through which people interpret the world. It stems from the idea that 'individual perceptions of the social world […] are filtered through cultural frames that highlight certain aspects and hide others' (Lamont & Small, 2008, pp. 80–81). Crucially, cultural frames are sensory-affective as well as discursive, as Amin (2010, p. 8) illustrates in his explanation of how racial categories infuse embodied interpretive schemas:

> The details of colour, shape, smell, behavior, disposition, intent, picked out by racial scopic regimes as tellers of human grouping and social standing – etched over a long historical period across a spectrum of communication media – come to frame the thoughts, actions and feelings of the condemning and the condemned, as Fanon so acutely observed, through their progressive naturalization and internalization.

The concept of frames allows for the heterogeneity of orientations and outlooks both within groups and at the level of the individual, and depends on the specificities of past experiences and present context. The idea of cultural scripts refers to the institutions – understood loosely as the taken-for-granted expectations, rules, routines and schemas – that orient shared ways of thinking, feeling, and acting (Lamont & Small, 2008, p. 89). Paying attention to cultural scripts 'requires paying attention less on individuals and more on structures and institutions, including the cultural and social mechanisms that maintain classification systems' that delimit how need and disadvantage are interpreted and addressed (Lamont & Small, 2008, p. 90). This approach foregrounds the contextual and contested politics of needs interpretation identified by Fraser (1989), drawing attention to the conditions under which certain definitions are given prominence and authorised in public discourse.

Another key theoretical frame in the thesis is the micro-level focus on the social relations and material cultures of everyday life. In particular I am influenced by turn to the sensory, affective, and material dimensions of everyday life in studies of migration and multiculture, which are underpinned

by longer traditions of studying everyday life in anthropology and sociology (Back, 2009; Ho & Hatfield, 2011; Wise & Velayutham, 2009). A key asset of this approach is its capacity to push the focus away from 'discursive worlds' and bring into view the mundane and seemingly inconsequential routines and orientations that underpin wider narratives and processes (Ho & Hatfield, 2011, p. 708 following Thrift 1999:300). Moreover, as Back (2009, p. 209) articulates, 'Not being limited to what people say explicitly enables us to train a kind of attentiveness to what remains unsaid and tacit forms of recognition and co-existence' (Back 209). Far from being divorced from broader structural contexts, focusing on the everyday requires paying attention to the micro-political relations of everyday life in which mundane forms of existence and state policy and power become entangled (Wise & Velayutham, 2009, p. 15). This involves drawing out the structural patterns working within the details of individuals' lives by drawing on empirical and theoretic knowledge of social circumstances from other sources to make sense of their specific situations (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006, p. 494).

As a project that deals with vulnerability as a way of framing disadvantage and engages marginalised people often described as vulnerable, Eve Tuck's (2009) critique of 'damage-centered research' addressed to fellow Indigenous communities and other disenfranchised populations speaks to the aims and challenges of this study. Tuck points to the cost of imagining entire communities as invariably damaged and depleted, which arises from a research strategy of documenting harm and injury in order to achieve reparation. Quoting bell hooks, she argues that damage-centered research 'invites oppressed people to speak […] "but to only speak your pain"' (Tuck, 2009, p. 413). Tuck (2009, p. 416) advocates desire as an alternative research frame that foregrounds the 'complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives'. As she articulates, 'Desire, yes, accounts for the loss and despair, but also the hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities' (Tuck, 2009, p. 417). This thesis likewise aims to be attentive to complexity, contradiction, and vivacity that characterise the lives of the people it involves; to neither turn away from the damage expressed in their stories nor reduce their stories to damage. The motives and approach of the research are inevitably tied to my own experiences of growing up in a poor, 'welfare dependent' family and social

network unsettled by addiction, gambling, and violence, but likewise characterised by intimacy, comradery and love. However, I signal my personal experience only fleetingly throughout the thesis and the diversity of backgrounds and experiences this study foregrounds thwarts any simplistic identification with the participants in the research.

Methodology

This thesis employs qualitative techniques as they lend themselves particularly well to the micro-level approach attuned to the material and corporeal aspects of everyday social life (Wise & Velayutham, 2009). I draw on fieldwork using a combination of ethnographic and interview methods that I undertook in the Bankstown Local Government Area (LGA) over two years in 2014-2015. Ethnography befits the objects and frames of the study. Prolonged involvement in a setting lends itself to a closer understanding of the routines and orientations that make up everyday life and the exploration of culture as a process rather than an object (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008, p. 14). In-depth and open-ended methods can be more 'attuned' to the voices and perspectives of research participants, allowing them to explain their feelings and experiences in their own words (Liamputtong, 2007, p. 7-9). Though as Back (2012, p. 24), following Steedman (2000), observes, giving voice to marginalised perspectives can also take the form of mining and reifying participants' stories of suffering. This qualitative approach, then, involves negotiating the 'tension between give and take' (Back, 2012, p. 24).

Bankstown is known for its concentration of ethnic diversity and socio-economic disadvantage and this informs the local welfare landscape in the area. The LGA is often described as one of the most multicultural areas in Australia, with one in three people born in a non-English speaking country and more than half who speak a language other than English at home.[9] The Bankstown-Canterbury area is known for being a centre of Lebanese settlement since the 1980s (Collins, Noble, Poynting, & Tabar, 2000). Lebanese remains the second largest self-identified ancestry group in Bankstown (17.5%), behind Australian (17.9%) and ahead of English (14.7 %), Vietnamese (8.5%), and Chinese

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[9] According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2011 census data, accessed via http://profile.id.com.au/bankstown.

(7.4%). The largest nominated religions in the Bankstown area Western (Roman) Catholic (25.2%) and Islam (19.1%). Bankstown has a marginally smaller percentage of identified Western (Roman) Catholics and a substantially larger percentage of Muslims than Greater Sydney (27.5% and 4.1% respectively). A larger number of people identify as Buddhist (7.3%), and Greek Orthodox (5.1%) compared to Greater Sydney (4.1%, and 2.7% respectively).

Bankstown is located in south-west Sydney, which has figured in the popular imagination as the heartland of cultural diversity since the post-World War II immigration program to provide lower skilled, low-paid labour transformed the region with large-scale resettlement of immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) (Collins et al., 2000, p. 106). Many immigrants started small businesses – altering the landscape of the main streets – or entered the manufacturing industries that sustained the region. The decline of manufacturing in south-western Sydney has left Muslim Lebanese in particular, who were more likely to be employed as unskilled workers,[10] exposed to unemployment (Collins et al., 2000, p. 106). Employment in the region continues to be concentrated in industries vulnerable to economic downturn, such as Manufacturing, Retail Trade, and Construction (DEEWR, 2010). While Bankstown, like larger south-west Sydney, continues to have a higher proportion of Technicians and Trade workers than Greater Sydney (the third most popular occupation at 15.4% compared to 12.2%), Community and Personal Service workers and Professionals experienced the biggest change in the period 2006-2011 (+ 2,048 and +1,030 persons respectively (id. consulting, n.d.-a). In the year 2008-2009 a higher proportion of the working age population was receiving Centrelink benefits in the Bankstown-Canterbury area (23%) compared with NSW (18%) and Australia (18%) (DEEWR, 2010).

The cultural diversity of south-west Sydney is not only the result of immigration but also the long history of Indigenous occupation that predates invasion by tens of thousands of years. The Bankstown area was a transitional region originally occupied by the Dharawal and Darug people (Rosen, 1996, p. 9). The area was one of the first frontiers of European occupation and the original Aboriginal population was decimated by violence and disease (Yamanouchi, 2010, p. 219). However,

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[10] While Christian Lebanese are more likely to work in small businesses.

as Morgan (2006, pp. 1–10) describes, Aboriginal people maintained a presence in Sydney, building camps in and around European settlements. They were often refugees of the frontier wars or evading the control of the colonial authorities. Numbers grew from the 1920s as people were evicted from Aboriginal reserves under dispersal policies to free up land for agriculture, and again with a major wave of migration from the 1940s as many Aboriginal people moved to the inner city to find work and escape the intense racism of rural towns (Morgan, 2006, pp. 44–48). From the 1960s the establishment of the government housing program, Housing for Aborigines (HFA), created a massive increase in the number of Aboriginal people living in suburban areas (Morgan, 2006, p. 62). Today the majority of the Indigenous metropolitan population lives dispersed in suburban housing rather than in inner city communities. The result of this history is that 'there is no single unified Aboriginal community in western Sydney' but rather 'there are groupings, nodes and networks as well as isolated Koori families' (Cowlishaw, 2011, p. 179). According to 2011 Census data, only 0.8% of the Bankstown population identified as Indigenous, a smaller proportion than the neighbouring Blacktown (2.5%) and Campbelltown City (3.2%) areas and Greater Sydney (1.3%) (Blacktown City Council, 2013; id. consulting, n.d.-b). Despite the comparatively small proportion of Indigenous residents in the Bankstown area, many maintain kin and social ties stretching across neighbouring LGAs, greater Sydney, and between regional towns in NSW and beyond (Cowlishaw, 2011, p. 179; Yamanouchi, 2010, p. 220).

 While there are suburbs with varying levels of disadvantage in the LGA, overall Bankstown scores low on the SEIFA Index of Disadvantage, an area based index that ranks relative socio-economic disadvantage using indicators such as low income, low educational attainment, and high unemployed and unskilled employment (id. consulting, n.d.-a). Bankstown has a greater concentration of unemployed people (7.6%) and low income households earning less than $600 per week (almost ¼) compared to Greater Sydney (5.7% and 1/5 respectively). It also has comparatively low educational attainment, with a higher proportion leaving school at year 10 or below (38.6%) and a smaller proportion staying on to complete year 12 or equivalent (46.5%), compared to Greater Sydney (31.2% and 55.0%) (id. consulting, n.d.-a). Social housing makes up 9% of all housing in Bankstown,

the third highest proportion of public housing of local government areas in Greater Sydney (see 'Public Housing Heat Map', 2016). This socio-economic profile has meant that the area has been targeted by a number of place-based welfare programs targeting 'disadvantaged' and 'vulnerable' families. Since 2012 Bankstown has been targeted as a 'disadvantaged area' for the trial of place-based income management. According to the Department of Social Services (2015c), Bankstown was 'chosen based on a number of factors including unemployment levels, youth unemployment, skills gaps, the numbers of people receiving welfare payments, and the length of time people have been on income support payments'. It was also targeted under the Teenage Parent and Jobless Family Measures from 2012 that required teenage parents receiving welfare payments and parents without income for more than two years to fulfil additional participation requirements such as interviews with Centrelink and training – converted into ParentsNext projects in 2016 (Australian Government, 2016). The associated Communities for Children (C4C) program has also targeted the area, funding non-government organisations to 'develop and facilitate a whole of community approach to support and strengthen local service networks that contribute to child safety' (DSS, 2015b).

I conducted my fieldwork over 18 months between January 2014 and June 2015. It was during the stunted rollout of income management, when the local community sector had an influx of federal funding from the Communities for Children initiative aimed at bolstering early intervention child and family services.[11] Fieldwork included in-depth interviews with twenty-five residents and eleven interviews with front-line community welfare staff, as well as participant observation in community welfare organisations and more limited time spent with a small number of families. I spent more time with some of the people I interviewed, conducting follow-up interviews with a few, seeing some regularly at family support programs run by local community organisations or at local community events, and accompanying a handful as they ran errands or invited me to their homes. However,

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[11] Income management did not take hold in Bankstown to the extent policy makers expected, which activists attributed to their organised opposition, including Public Service Association union bans on income management referrals through Child Protection ('CARDLY ANYONE', 2012; Stop the Intervention Collective Sydney, 2012). A new 'vulnerable' category with an automatic 'trigger' for youth deemed to be 'at risk' was implemented from July 2013. As of May, 2013, only 423 people were subject to income management across the 5 trial sites, 92% being voluntary. By December 2013 the total number had jumped to 2204, the majority being mandatory. 72% were young people placed on IM due to youth triggers introduced in July 2013 (National Welfare Rights Network, 2014).

accessing the private world of the family as key locus of social support brought me up against the ethical and practical limits of an in-depth qualitative approach. The limits of observing the routines of everyday life was best illustrated by Christina, who after a first interview agreed to let me join her one day while she ran errands, but later cancelled after her grandmother said it was inappropriate to have someone 'follow you around all day.'[12] Ethnography was combined with in-depth, semi-structured interviews to provide an insight into how people frame and narrate their experiences, albeit after the fact and inevitably told with the researcher as audience in mind. Nonetheless, interviews are also interpersonal encounters and I have tried to be attentive to affective cues and material traces in my interviews, particularly where participant-observation was limited.

Interviews with residents elicited information about networks and practices of support, experiences of social security and support services, roles and duties in the family, civic, national and transnational spheres, and perceptions and expectations of government responsibility for support. Interviews were limited to people who spoke proficient English. I spoke to seven men and eighteen women of Lebanese, Pakistani, Chinese, Aboriginal, and Anglo backgrounds. These groups were purposively selected to include more established and emergent migrant populations in the Bankstown area and varying lengths of residency in Australia. My Lebanese-Australian interview participants were all Muslim and second-generation migrants while my Pakistani interviewees were also Muslim but newly or recently arrived residents in Australia. All of my Chinese participants were born in China (or Hong Kong) but had lived in Australia for between 10-30 years. The mix of groups also aimed to reflect the character of diversity arising from Australia's settler-colonial and immigration history. Selected groups were targeted instead of the broader category of people from culturally and

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[12] Back argues that the incorporation of new audio-visual technologies holds potential for developing sociological methods attentive to the texture and detail of contemporary social life. Significantly, he argues that they open up possibilities for collaboration that 'renders explicit iniquities that are passed over in silence' (Back, 2012, p. 37). This may be a productive avenue for future research not limited by the time and resources constraints of doctoral research, though as Back's point about collaboration rather than simply incorporation suggests, it demands renewed sensitivity and reflexivity in research with people whose everyday life is already subject to bureaucratic and policy scrutiny and intervention, let alone the scrutiny of the research gaze.

linguistically diverse (CALD)[13] backgrounds to allow for different welfare cultures and family models as a common point of reference. However, these ethnic and national categories were approached 'reflexively' to avoid naturalising either their existence or their salience, which involves 'not prematurely assigning common cultural traits and other commonalities to the category [of people] in question' (Amelina & Faist, 2012, pp. 1711, 1717). The mix of groups also reflected the initial comparative approach of the research, though this shifted once I was in the field in response to challenges accessing comparable numbers of participants. In the end the spread of people I spoke to from each of these categories was varied and uneven. While this reflects the challenges of engaging people in in-depth research, it also follows the grain of the 'intensive' rather than 'extensive' approach of qualitative research, which 'scrutinizes the dynamic qualities of a situation rather than its constituents and the proportionate relationship among them' (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006, p. 489).

The focus on the expectations and experiences of people living at the sharp end of the welfare system also emerged out of my fieldwork. I use this phrase to encompass people who rely on social security benefits to stay afloat, people for whom family benefits supplement income from paid work, as well as people struggling to get by who refuse or are ineligible for assistance. I initially intended to compare the perspectives of people who rely on benefits and better-off residents with little contact with the benefit system. However, most of the people I encountered had a degree of proximity to and familiarity with welfare benefits and support services and were not strangers to periods of hardship. Nonetheless, the scope of people I spoke to was broad enough to differentiate between the most marginal welfare claimants typically associated with 'welfare dependency' and people whose main source of income was paid work, even if it was supplemented by welfare. Culturally diverse outlooks and experiences are here situated in concrete experiences of privation and provision, inflected by social divisions such as gender, ethnicity, class, religion, age, education, and length of residency. Narrowing the scope in this way limits analysis of the wider class divides that

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[13] This term is typically used in research and practice in Australia to 'distinguish the mainstream community from those in which English is not the main language and/or cultural norms and values differ' (Katz & Sawrikar, 2008). It generally refers to people of migrant backgrounds from countries where English is not the primary language, and therefore includes people who are not of Anglo-Saxon-Celtic or Indigenous descent (Sait, 2009, p. 10).

inflect expectations and experience of social support, particularly relevant given the changing make-up of migration intake favouring skilled-entry and the changing socio-economic profile of the 'multicultural' population (see Colic-Peisker, 2011). Nonetheless, the thesis contributes to literature offering a so-called 'view from below' of the welfare state that favours the perspectives of those who have experienced the brunt of welfare restructuring.

I spoke to people primarily of working age between 20 and 64, except for three aged pensioners. The majority of people I interviewed were parents of younger children. The Bankstown population is composed primarily of families; 52.6% of the population consists of couple families with children and 19.3% are lone parent families, significantly higher than the NSW average of 45.5% and 16.3% respectively (id. consulting, n.d.-a). I interviewed five single parents and thirteen partnered with children. Most of them received either Parenting Payment Single, Parenting Payment Partnered or Newstart Allowance (unemployment payments) depending on the age of their children and their partnered status.[14] One was ineligible for income support as a newly arrived migrant and another seeking asylum worked and refused to apply.[15] I also interviewed two young men with no dependents, one on Youth Allowance[16] and the other unemployed but refusing benefits, one woman surviving on the Disability Support Pension and another who worked and received no benefits.

I also interviewed frontline workers engaged in family support and community development from a handful of non-profit community welfare organisations, employed as either therapists, case managers, youth workers or community development officers. Respondents tended to be either qualified in the human services professions of social work or therapies, or had general qualifications such as a social science degree. Their experience in social services ranged from a few months to a

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[14] Single parents must care for a child under eight years and partnered parents a child under six years to be eligible for parenting payments. Once their children pass this threshold they parents are transferred to the Newstart Allowance, which has a lower payment rate and job search requirements attached (https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/parenting-payment).

[15] There is a waiting period of two years for most newly arrived migrants applicable to most benefits except family assistance payments (https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/newly-arrived-residents-waiting-period).

[16] Youth Allowance is paid to people between 16-24 years of age if they are a student, apprentice, looking for work or sick. Youth Allowance for jobseekers attracts a lower rate of pay than Newstart Allowance but still has mutual obligation requirements attached (see https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/youth-allowance).

couple of decades. Most were women except for two men, reflecting the strong predominance of women in the community services sector (Meagher & Healy, 2005). Their cultural and linguistic diversity mirrored the area in which they worked, contrary to the profile of the wider sector, which is less culturally diverse than both the Australian community and the broader workforce (Meagher & Healy, 2005).

Participant observation included ongoing volunteer work in one of the organisations between January 2014 to March 2015, which gave me first-hand experience of various family support programs, and access to some of its internal documents and administrative processes. It was small and eclectic organisation housing a range of sector programmes with different funding channels, including child and family support programs and ethno-specific community groups. Volunteering with the organisations allowed me a degree of immersion while also lending my skills and time to the organisations and enabling me to contribute practically to the local communities I sought to engage. The volunteering involved an intensive period of 6 months working 2-4 days a week in various roles, including menial tasks like filing and auditing assets, lending my research skills to a policy audit, and helping set up and run playgroups and other family support activities. As Garthwait (2016, p. 63) observes, volunteering 'provides space to form relationships that are not solely focused on the researchers' needs and objectives', which embeds reciprocity in the research design. However, it also involves an ongoing negotiation and maintenance of boundaries. In practice, this meant making sure all staff, 'clients', and partner agencies were aware of my identity as a researcher. It also involved maintaining a critical lens in the final analysis despite my feelings of attachment to the people I had worked alongside (see also Gilmore and Kenny, 2015).

 Alongside ongoing participant observation as a volunteer, I regularly attended and participated in local community activities and events, and observed two days of Emergency Relief when the opportunity arose. The welfare service sector in Bankstown is made up diverse range of non-government community service organisations (NGCSOs). These include ethno-specific community organisations, religious affiliated organisations, and general community service organisations, each of which often houses dispersed sector-specific programs and survives on piecemeal funding from

local, state and federal grants, user payments, and private industry. My efforts to engage ethno-specific organisations and government agencies were less successful, contributing to a somewhat uneven and piecemeal view of an anyway dispersed field.

Ethnography is challenging in a diverse suburban context and a fragmented welfare landscape. As Berg and Sigona (2013, p. 347) articulate, 'increasing urban diversity poses a challenge to ethnographic ideals of 'immersion' and wholeness.' This meant a degree of opportunism shaped my research. I began my fieldwork by volunteering at a local youth arts organisation precipitated by an informal contact (from November 2013 to August 2015), which in turn led to me volunteering at the community welfare organisation, through which I met a number of my interview participants and snow-balled from there. Volunteering in the organisation facilitated contact with an inter-agency network of frontline workers, opening up opportunities to participate in other activities and programs. The fragmentation and adaption that characterised my fieldwork is reflected in the structure and analysis of the thesis, which is based around thematic flashpoints where the driving issues concentrate and converge.

Interview transcripts and observation notes were manually coded and thematised. This was an iterative process that began by identifying larger themes and questions, which were narrowed down with each sweep of the data (see Bryant and Charmez 2007). Analysis of interview transcripts included discourse analysis of participant accounts but also looked out for signs and examples of more material routines and practices. Notes about the emotional response and tone of interviewees were included in the margins of transcripts, and I re-listened to the audio recordings a number of times to ensure the affective dimensions of the interviews were not abstracted out of excerpts and that quotes weren't decontextualised from the interview as a whole. I also drew on my field notes, where I had recorded reflections about sensory-affective aspects at the end of each interview. The key frames of 'responsibility' and 'vulnerability' oriented the analysis and the generation of concepts from the data.

The thesis prioritises fine-grained analysis and conceptual development, refining existing theoretical perspectives by bringing them into conversation with the empirical nuances gleaned from my fieldwork. This approach leans into a humility that may pale against the grand questions it addresses, but which is perhaps all the more vital given the conclusive claims that social scientific inquiry compels (Back, 2012). Detail and nuance are particularly warranted here given the fraught political terrain this thesis intervenes in and the overdetermined imagining of disadvantaged everyday lives as the object of bureaucratic fantasies and policy desires that 'occlude and hide what is at stake in the detail' (Back, 2012, p. 25).

Roadmap to the thesis

Chapter one establishes vulnerability and responsibility as hegemonic cultural scripts in contemporary welfare by drawing on existing analysis to contextualise the key welfare paradigms and reforms over the decades spanning the turn of the century. While much of the relevant literature is reviewed in the substantive chapters that follow, the conceptual frames and empirical aims of the thesis are situated within existing scholarship on cultural diversity and the welfare state. Chapter two examines how culture figures in the tension between responsiveness and austerity in community service provision. Drawing primarily on interviews with frontline staff in the community welfare sector, it argues that they deploy 'deserving vulnerability' and 'empowered responsibility' as ideal scripts to negotiate the principle of access as a key problem and goal of community service provision. The focus on conditions of access sets the tone for the following two chapters. Chapter three examines the modes of reciprocity that my interview respondents drew on to frame and justify their expectations of welfare, placing them in register against existing studies of welfare users' views of the welfare state. It uses Ghassan Hage's (2003) concept of the social gift to foreground the material and affective infrastructures in which diverse expectations and experiences of welfare are embedded, and how different modes of access condition and curtail how social citizenship is engendered and enacted. Chapter four examines the interplay of vulnerability as a material phenomenon and cultural script by foregrounding the experiences of the most marginal welfare claimants in my study. I use the concept of 'everyday emergencies' to make sense of disruptions and

challenges that unsettle yet settle into life in poverty, and question their intelligibility within authorised idioms of vulnerability that govern access to welfare. I argue that welfare users are compelled to 'perform vulnerability' (Brown, 2014b, p. 380) but this creates susceptibility to subjective injury in a system where welfare is increasingly conditional on proof and disclosure.

The exposure and indignity that performing vulnerability can induce speaks to the theme of shame that recurs in empirical and theoretical scholarship on poverty and inequality. Chapter five takes the implicit relationship between shame and agency in existing literature as its point of departure, identifying attention to the crippling effects of shame and strategies to respond to shaming as two key focal points. I argue that an elaborated conceptualisation of shame and agency can help make sense of the messy entanglement of shame, dignity and agency that fine-grained empirical analysis illuminates. It contributes to existing literature by refining our understanding of the plural and simultaneous ways that shame enables and disables subjects to act in the multiple social worlds they inhabit and traverse. Chapter 6 likewise returns to the well-rehearsed theme of 'getting by' in poverty and inequality studies, but reorients the focus to the material and affective investment in making life livable. I argue that the generative dimension of getting by is suggested but submerged within the instrumental orientation of a coping and resilience framework, which tends to focus on the reactive agency of welfare subjects but overlooks the encounters and activities that exist *in excess of* this framework.

A common thread running throughout each of these chapters is the treatment of agency in both policy and scholarship. Both vulnerability and responsibility as theorised in academia and operationalised in social policy foreground the matter of agency, generally defined as the capacity to act in a given environment and exert influence on the course of events – implying a degree of independence and impact (Dahl, 2009, p. 397; Harrison & Davis, 2001, p. 6) The study of agency is generally concerned with 'motivations, decisions, and the causes and consequences of personal action of inaction' (Wright, 2016, p. 239). The revival of interest in personal agency in policy debates is matched by a parallel resurgence of individual agency in social theory, though analysts point to limited dialogue and compatibility of different conceptualisations of agency in policy and scholarship

(Deacon & Mann, 1999; Wright, 2012). An overarching argument of the thesis that ties together the different themes in each chapter is the need to grapple with the dominant cultural lexicon of agency in both policy and scholarship, which 'affirm[s] agency as a value' that is antithetical to victimisation (Dahl, 2009; Elliott, 2013, p. 87; Stringer, 2014). This thesis wrestles with the cultural conviction in agency as a value, not only as an object of study, but as a force that creeps into my own analysis and conclusions – a point to which I return in the concluding chapter.

This thesis endeavours to keep in view both the messiness of everyday lived existence and wider conditions in which it is placed. As Alexander, Kaur and St Louis (2012, p. 4) argue, empirical work focusing on cultural identity and diversity 'has been used importantly to render the lives and experiences of people, communities and minorities visible in all their richness, complexity and humanity'. But 'such rich tapestries need to also examine, and place themselves within, a broader set of economic, political and social contexts and transformations – to (re)place culture and identity as a site of struggle, constraint and resistance.' The following chapter sets up the context and frame of the thesis through a review of the literature. It establishes the conditions that provide the backcloth for the empirical and conceptual analysis that follows.

Chapter one – A review of the literature

> I believe that the Australian government's obligation to the vulnerable indigenous children of the Northern Territory is clear, compelling, and paramount […] This is not laissez-faire liberalism or light touch government by any means. It is a sweeping assumption of power and a necessary assumption of responsibility (Coalition Prime Minister Howard, 2007, pp. 70–71)

> I cannot walk away from my responsibility as a minister to protect women and children in the Alice Springs town camps. I cannot turn my back on the vulnerable and the voiceless, on those who have no say in the negotiations but will suffer if the government does not act (Jenny Macklin, 2009 as Labor Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs).

The origins of income management in the 2007 Federal Intervention into remote Aboriginal communities is the most public and politicised site where the politics of responsibility and vulnerability and the 'problem' of cultural difference in the Australian welfare state converge. While income management and the Intervention are not the focus of this thesis, this example powerfully illustrates the shifting policy paradigms that contextualise this project and the tenor of academic analysis prompted in response. The Intervention sparked fractious public and academic debate about the cultural roots of welfare dependency, the explicitly racialised operations of the welfare state, and the tension between equality and difference in the contemporary welfare state. These debates revived familiar moralist explanations of poverty on the one hand, and well-established critiques of neo-liberal logics of governance on the other. This chapter establishes the contextual and theoretical frame of the thesis, drawing together literature on the socio-political and scholarly terrain it addresses. I begin with a general description of the broad policy shifts that have characterised welfare reform in the last three decades and the tone of analysis of these changes. This is followed by a brief overview of how the Australian welfare state has dealt with cultural difference as a settler-colonial and multicultural nation. I then review two threads in the literature addressing the nexus of social welfare and cultural diversity – accommodating cultural diversity and controlling cultural diversity. This returns me to a discussion of the Intervention that brings into relief the questions about responsibility and vulnerability that frame the thesis. The chapter establishes the context for a deeper engagement with literature on these key concepts in the findings chapters that follow.

From safety-nets to springboards

As in other Anglophone liberal democracies at the end of the twentieth century, successive Labor and Liberal governments since the 1980s have promoted the transformation of the welfare state from the principle of rights based entitlements to one of obligations and duties (Macintyre, 1999; Mendes, 2009). While in practice social policy development has not been uniform or coherent, the prioritising of work and the emphasis on individual obligation, reciprocity and responsibility have been defining features of welfare reform. Following the logic of mutual obligation, eligibility for social security has tightened and receipt is increasingly conditional on a range of participation requirements accompanied by penalties for failure to comply, such as withholding benefits. Mutual obligation involves completing tasks in return for benefits, such as keeping a diary of job-search activities, attending work-ready training, participating in community service work, or conforming to family behaviour like school attendance. Welfare-to-work programs are now firmly established and have expanded to include single parents and the disabled, fuelled by concern about welfare dependency and the premise that work is the best form of welfare. Compliance measures have been imposed most radically in Indigenous communities through the various incarnations of the Intervention, removing discretion over a portion of payments (Bielefeld, 2014b; Mendes, 2012) and introducing more intensive work-for-the-dole requirements in remote Aboriginal communities (Jordan & Altman, 2016). Welfare paternalism was fiercely extended by the Howard Liberal-National Coalition government (1996-2007) at the same time as it privatised employment services and increased the role of charities in welfare delivery. The Rudd/Gillard Labor government (2007-2014) maintained and strengthened the paternalist policies it inherited as it revived a social investment platform in the name of social inclusion (Deeming & Smyth, 2015). But while welfare benefits targeted at lower-income recipients have become increasingly meagre and conditional in the last three decades, particularly for the unemployed, single parents and the disabled (Cortis & Meagher, 2009; Grover & Soldatic, 2013; A. Morris & Wilson, 2014), there has been a simultaneous rise in expenditure on generous subsidies and concessions for families (Stebbing & Spies-Butcher, 2010; Wilson et al., 2013). Government expenditure on welfare has grown during this period -- especially

on pensions, family support, and health – and government intervention has continued to maintain the real income of many poor Australians (Mendes, 2009, p. 109).

The tenor of Australian reform has resonated with the highly influential 'Third Way' framework developed by British sociologist Anthony Giddens (1998) and pursued by former British Labor Prime Minister, Tony Blair (1997-2007). Key tenets of the Third Way model include: a balance between rights and responsibilities; equality of opportunity (not outcomes); public support for the welfare state; protecting the vulnerable by addressing poverty and social exclusion; bolstering local community organisations in place of the public sector; neo-liberal principles of individualism and self-reliance; and promoting opportunities rather than redistribution (summarised by Mendes, 2008, pp. 167–171). According to Spies-Butcher (2014, p. 186), Australia pioneered much of what became known as the Third Way by pursuing marketisation while retaining egalitarian goals (see also Deeming & Smyth, 2015). Elements of the Third Way resonated with principles on both the centre-left and right of Australian politics, though with different inflections. The Coalition has promoted charity and philanthropy, with a strong emphasis of faith-based organisations and corporate social responsibility (Mendes, 2008, pp. 145–147). Both parties prioritise 'activation' and workforce participation as the best route out of poverty, though Labor acknowledges free-market failures that need to be addressed by government. Both decry passive reliance on welfare and endorse mutual obligation and conditional welfare, though Labor differentiates itself by emphasising social investment and social inclusion that provide opportunities to remedy the structural disadvantages faced by the poor (Mendes, 2008, pp. 175–6). While global policy models and institutions have clearly influenced local welfare policy, evidenced in the worldwide ascendance of neo-liberal policies, the effects of globalised policy are not coherent, determined, or universal. Rather, policy is also shaped by national ideologies and concerns, as well as local lobby and interest groups (Mendes, 2008, pp. 67–70).

Neo-liberal reform has transformed the architecture of the Australian welfare state over the last three decades (Carney & Ramia, 2000; Mendes, 2008, 2009).[17] Despite considerable debate about the content and scope of neo-liberalism (see Flew, 2014), it generally refers to a set of ideals and practices that favours market mechanisms over excessive state intervention, promoting labour market flexibility and competiveness and emphasising individual choice and freedom. Rather than representing a singular or deliberate policy agenda, neo-liberalism can be understood as a 'toolbox' of strategies that express these ideals (Strakosch, 2015, p. 79). The application of market logic to social provision has transformed the relationship between the state, the market and the non-profit welfare sector, creating what is often described as a 'mixed economy' that 'blurs' the boundaries between public and private provisioning – a process that has been thoroughly documented and debated (see Billis, 2010 for overview; Brennan, 1998, p. 134). Markets are incorporated 'as part of the tool kits of governments' (Spies-Butcher, 2014, p. 191), creating 'quasi-markets' in which the state finances and regulates provision but promotes consumer choice and competition between independent suppliers (Le Grand, 1999, p. 28). The market dynamics take different forms, including the separation of purchaser and provider, the introduction of competitive tendering and contracts, linking ongoing payments to specific services, funding consumers rather than providers, and subsidising the choice of consumers rather than directly paying providers (Spies-Butcher, 2014, p. 192). Meanwhile, new public management principles were applied to all levels of government administration, linking the implementation of output measures and performance evaluations to the funding of outsourced service delivery (Healy, 2002, p. 528).

In this context, community provisioning is endorsed as better positioned to respond to the diverse needs and preferences of individuals. Australian governments have consistently promoted for-profit and non-profit provision of social services and health care (Wilson et al., 2013, pp. 63–4). Non-profits have a major role in social service provision in Australia (Industry Commission, 1995). Australia already had a well-developed landscape of for-profit and non-profit organisations involved in social welfare prior to reforms since the 1980s. But it has also led experiments in more radical models with

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[17] An historical perspective of the architecture of the Australian welfare state is provided in the following chapter.

its creation of the Job Network (1998-2009, renamed Job Services Australia by Labor in 2009), which outsourced delivery of employment services for the unemployed to a system of for-profit and non-profit agencies and is often held up as the epitome the new organisational logic (Wright, Marston, & McDonald, 2011, p. 301). However, the impetus for change has also come from multiple directions. Since the 1970s public bureaucracies have been heavily criticised for inefficient use of scarce resources, for a one-sized-fits-all approach, and for being undemocratic (Brennan, 1998, p. 125). Social movements, such as the disability rights movements, questioned protective professional power and demanded more participatory and personalised services (see Williams, 1999). The community sector has therefore been a key site of reform, with various stake-holders promoting private and community-based responses to care needs and disadvantage as a preferable alternative to centralised and direct government provision of benefits and services.

Also underlying welfare state restructuring is the reconceptualisation of the symptoms and causes of disadvantage and attendant techniques of measurement, assessment, and intervention. Best's (2013) analysis of the shift to conceptualising poverty as risk and vulnerability in the World Bank demonstrates its implications for the way social problems are governed: 'Because poverty is seen as more fluid and contingent, the techniques used to manage it must also be more flexible and proactive' (Best, 2013, p. 110). A vulnerability framework prioritises susceptibility to risk and the diffuse assets at the disposal of individuals and communities to respond, shaping interventions that provide short term relief and change individuals' behaviour to make them more resilient in the long-term.[18] The aim of social welfare shifts from expensive redistribution to productive investment in the capacities of citizens, transforming welfare states, as World Bank staff put it, from 'safety-nets into springboards' (Best, 2013, p. 110). Giddens (1998, p. 117) influentially envisioned a new 'social investment state', in which the role of government is to invest in human and social capital 'rather than direct provision of economic maintenance' by providing access to education and training and promoting community development. The social investment state redistributes opportunities rather than wealth (Dwyer, 2004, p. 267), fostering 'full employability' rather than full employment and

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[18] A review of literature on vulnerability is provided in chapter 4.

social inclusion rather than social equality (Perkins, Nelms, & Smyth, 2005, pp. 37, 38). The ascendency of 'social exclusion', 'social capital' and 'vulnerability' overlap as disadvantage is increasingly understood in terms of 'multidimensional and dynamic' exclusion from mainstream social life that entrenches material deprivation and social isolation (Misztal, 2011, pp. 26, 27). Both social capital and social exclusion emphasise the importance of social relationships and active participation as a means of social integration (Daly & Silver, 2008, p. 541). All three concepts are associated with a shift towards understanding social problems as multi-faceted and designing system-based solutions oriented to improving overall well-being rather than addressing specific issues (Barbara Fawcett, Goodwin, & Meagher, 2010, p. 195; valentine, 2016).

The aim of welfare policy, then, is increasingly framed as reducing welfare dependency by reforming behaviour and promoting labour market integration rather than creating greater equality (Mendes, 2008, p. 10). As Anna Yeatman (2000, p. 161 emphasis in original) writes, 'The rhetoric of mutual obligation begins with a *rejection of dependency*. Dependency is associated with both passivity and long-term, self-destructive reliance on unearned economic support, or "welfare."' While concern about the morally corrupting effects of welfare reach further back, it was revived in the late 1980s and popularised in the 1990s when conservative scholars and politicians blamed welfare benefits for creating a 'culture of dependency' that perpetuates poverty (Mead, 1986; Murray, 1984) (discussed further below). Tracing historical shifts in the valence of 'dependency', Fraser and Gordon (1994, p. 324) demonstrate that indiscriminate condemnation of adult dependency is relatively new: 'With all legal and political dependency now illegitimate, and the wives' economic dependency now contested, there is no longer any self-evidently good adult dependency in postindustrial society.' Everyone is expected to support themselves through paid work, reducing responsible individuality to labour market participation to the exclusion of other non-market forms of contribution (Perkins et al., 2005, p. 37; Yeatman, 2000, p. 174). Mutual obligation is consistent with the premise of new paternalism – that reshaping (economically) productive behaviour of welfare recipients is the way to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty passed on by welfare dependent families (Mead, 1997c). While mutual obligation has been interpreted as the divestment of responsibility from state to

individual (eg. Gatens, Braithwaite, & Mitchell, 2002), the new paternalist model of mutual obligation nonetheless insists on the active (and often costly) role of government in 'changing how the poor live' (Mead, 1997c, p. 11).

Despite divergent theorisations of neo-liberal citizen-state relations, there is a considerable consensus on the centrality of individual responsibility in 'post-welfare' agenda. The term 'responsibilisation' refers to the process of making individuals and organisations responsible and has become shorthand in academic lexicon for the neoliberal forms of governance that cultivate productive and self-managing subjects by teaching and instilling certain active capacities (Newman, 2010; Rose, 1996; Trnka & Trundle, 2014). Drawing on Foucauldian ideas of dispersed power and technologies of the self, Miller and Rose (2008, p. 18) argue that the emergence of 'advanced' liberal state-citizen relations 'entailed a new conception of the subjects to be governed; that these would be autonomous and responsible individuals, freely choosing how to behave and act.' As analysts of Britain's 'New Labour' reforms argue, this model promotes an image of citizen-subjects as enterprising and self-governing individuals capable of managing localised community obligations (Rose, 2000); 'worker-citizens' who will cultivate skills and economic competiveness, look after themselves, invest in their own health and retirement, and raise their children to behave properly (Ruth Lister, 2003, p. 437); and 'bearers of responsibilities as well as rights […] [assigned] the responsibility to produce the conditions of one's own independence – ideally by becoming a "hard working" individual or family' (Clarke, 2005, p. 451). Individuals and groups deemed inactive or incapable according to neo-liberal standards of value incur 'injunction to activity' (Rose, 1996, p. 348). As Strakosh (2015, p. 14) explains, 'where marketisation assumes [the subject's] capacity, paternalism declares [the subject's] capacity temporarily non-existent' (14), thereby justifying corrective intervention. Likewise, for Wacquant (2010) paternalism is not an anomaly amongst neo-liberal ideals of individual freedom and choice and shrinking state mandate. Rather, he defines retracted welfare premised on the 'cultural trope of individual responsibility' and an expanded penal system as core components of neoliberalism alongside economic deregulation. State paternalism and penalisation are aimed at containing those marginalised by poverty and ethnic hierarchy who bear

the brunt of disorder and discontent that neoliberal economic policy creates. "Neo-liberalism brings about not the shrinking of government, but the erection of a *centaur state*, liberal at the top and paternalist at the bottom' (Wacquant, 2010, p. 217). Others suggest that Wacquant's characterisation of the state overstates the contraction of welfare and overlooks social investment-oriented policies, warning against romanticising the Keynensian welfare state, with its rudimentary provisions and exclusions (Mayer, 2010, pp. 98–99). While Wacquant considers the Foucauldian emphasis on diffuse disciplinary power overstated given the corporal punishment embodied in the carceral state, both approaches foreground the primacy of individual responsibility in contemporary conceptions of personhood.

However, the paradigm shift this section has characterised has been neither uniform nor coherent. As Lister reminds us in her discussion of 'the social investment state', 'not all policy shifts are necessarily reducible to the template even if they are consistent with it' (Ruth Lister, 2003, p. 438). Likewise, Janet Newman (2010, p. 714), charting the emergence of forms of governance based on 'techniques of pedagogy', warns that 'multiple projects and governmental strategies' shouldn't be collapsed into one monolithic neoliberal project or coherent characterisation of the state (Newman, 2010, p. 714). Rather, she argues that the directions and effects of pedagogy are diffuse, uneven, and unexpected. This points to the tension between the social care and social control that has always inhered in the welfare state (Mendes, 2008, p. 2) and the need for analytic frames that don't smooth over the contradictions it implies. As Harrison and Davis (2001, p. 5) articulate, 'In the very act of assisting or protecting, the welfare state classifies, deters and supervises.' Ellison (2006, p. 419) likewise pinpoints the ambivalence this tension creates, this time from the perspective of welfare users: 'A clear aspect of the new, fractured world of social policy is precisely that vulnerable or marginal groups want "social inclusion" while simultaneously demanding social and political changes which challenge the nature of what it means to be included.' On the one hand, the paradigm shift this section has described demonstrates the dominant influence of neo-liberal principles in framing contemporary social policy. On the other hand, it also draws attention to 'many over-lapping sub-cultures [including] policy, bureaucratic, activist, professional' that together form a contemporary

welfare cultural of activation premised on the tropes of responsibility and vulnerability (Kowal, 2008, p. 340). This thesis identifies individual responsibility and vulnerability as hegemonic cultural tropes in contemporary social policy while remaining attentive the subcultures that sustain their status and currency. It focuses on how culturally diverse welfare users and, to a lesser extent, frontline staff navigate this new welfare order.

Dealing with difference in the Australia welfare state

While the discourse of multiculturalism has emerged in parallel to the discourse of Indigenous self-determination, Indigenous and multicultural issues have tended to be partitioned off from one another in intellectual and public debate in Australia. This is the legacy of a long-standing treatment of Indigenous affairs and Indigenous-state relationships as a separate sphere since the nineteenth century. It is also reflects historical and continuing distinctions in thinking about racialised "others" (Curthoys, 2000). Moreover, the nation-building element of nascent multiculturalism conflicted with emerging assertions of Aboriginal nationhood. It also reflects the limits of a multicultural frame to capture the particularities of dispossession and colonisation; Indigenous peoples are not one group within a diverse society but hold special claims based on continuing sovereignty (see Moran, 2017 ch. 6 for a discussion). Recent scholarship has unsettled the partitioning of 'the Indigenous' and 'the multicultural' by addressing how the common marginalisation of Indigenous and ethnic minorities sits in tension with migrants' status as settlers implicated in the colonial relationship (Birch, 2007; Moreton-Robinson, 2003; Pugliese, 2002). However, efforts to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders within the multicultural framework have largely failed (Moran, 2017, p. 207). Moreover, social policy continues to construct the 'problems' arising from ethnically diverse immigration and Indigenous difference as distinct and separate issues.

As Strakosch (2015, p. 3) articulates, 'The Australian situation is characterised by its long tradition of framing domestic welfare policy as the 'solution' to settler colonial conflicts'. Protectionism was the official policy for managing Aboriginal people in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and early decades of twentieth century. All Australian states passed legislation (known as the Protection

Acts) that subjected Aboriginal people to surveillance and control of all aspects of their daily life. The Protection Board and Chief Protectors established under the Acts had extensive powers to control the movement and property of Aboriginal people, including in some states and the Northern Territory the legal guardianship of all Aboriginal children. However, as in reality the everyday management and supervision of Aboriginal people fell on missionaries and employers of poorly paid or unpaid Aboriginal labour (Altman & Sanders, 1991, p. 1). Protectionism was based on the assumption that Aboriginal people were dying out. Systematic removal of children aimed to curb to growing population of Aboriginal people of mixed-descent, defined according to racial pseudo-science of blood-quantum as 'half-caste'. From the 1930s the goal of policy shifted to 'assimilation', characterised by proponents as 'advancement' and preparation for future citizenship. The Commonwealth Native Aboriginal Welfare Conference of 1937 discussed Aboriginal affairs at a commonwealth level for the first time. It settled on a strategy of absorbing mixed-descent Aboriginal people into the white population by targeting children to 'breed out the colour' and 'teach away the culture.' The language of 'welfare' was increasingly used during the assimilation era and the theft of children became increasingly governed by general child welfare law (Altman & Sanders, 1991; Maddison, 2009 ch. 1).

Social security was one of the first areas where inclusion in the emerging welfare state was extended to Aboriginal people, though welfare entitlements, like wages, were often withheld by administrators (Altman & Sanders, 1991, p. 3). For a large part of the 20th century support was provided in the form for rations administered not only by officials but also missionaries, miners, and pastoralists (Rowse, 1998, p. 4). Rationing was intended as a technology of assimilation to reform Indigenous behaviours and families in preparation for the transition to citizenship and the cash economy, culminating in equal access to social security benefits and award wages in the 1960s and early 1970s (Rowse, 1998, p. 3). Ideas of assimilation influenced Aboriginal activists and their supporters in their growing call for equal rights, particularly from the 1930s. Demands for equality developed the conditions for the constitutional referendum in 1967 that brought Aboriginal affairs under the remit of the Commonwealth and counted Aboriginal people as citizens. From the 1960s political emphasis shifted

from the rights of Aboriginal people as equal citizens to special rights as Aboriginal peoples alongside new struggles for land rights (Atwood & Markus, 1999). In 1972 the Whitlam Labor Government introduced the formal policy of self-determination. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) was formed and encouraged inclusive State welfare policies. At this time the tension between mainstream and specialised services emerged as the DAA promoted that other agencies and departments at all levels of government should be doing more for Aboriginal people, while also delivering its own Aboriginal-specific assistance programs (Altman & Sanders, 1991, pp. 5–7).

Following its election in 1996, the Conservative Howard government reframed Indigenous policy in terms of 'material disadvantage rather than political redress' (Strakosch, 2015, p. 77). It pursued the mainstreaming of Indigenous specific programs while introducing a new policy of Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRA). SRAs were quasi-contractual agreements made with Indigenous communities that resonated with the shift to mutual obligation in wider welfare reform, in which they made commitments to achieving nominated goals and the government committed to the provision of funding or services in return. The most infamous example was the SRA involving the tiny community of Mulan in Western Australia, in which the community agreed to behaviour changes linked to hygiene such as twice-daily face washing in an effort to reduce trachoma in return for the government funding a petrol pump (see Strakosch, 2015, p. 84). SRAs such as this were heavily criticised as paternalistic and as allowing responsibility and blame to be shifted onto Aboriginal people for failures in Indigenous health (Maddison, 2009, pp. 9–10). Strakosch (2015, p. 101) characterises this period as a 'voluntaristic neoliberal policy phase' but also emphasises the overlap in policy logic in the transition from voluntaristic models to the coercive and interventionist policy embodied in the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

The first incarnations of official Australian multiculturalism from the early 1970s advanced a welfare model that delegated provision of culturally specific services to ethnic organisations based on the construction of ethnic groups as ethnic 'communities' (Castles, Cope, Kalantzis, & Morrissey, 1990, pp. 60–62). It reflected growing recognition 'that safety nets should be tailored to migrants' distinct needs' (Walsh, 2014, p. 285) and that migrants themselves were better qualified to know their

needs. This model promoted privatisation of parts of the welfare state and relied largely on voluntary labour, mostly by women (Jakubowicz, 1989, pp. 23–4). It also facilitated the political incorporation of the migrant middle class through routes of funding and patronage, and the courting of migrant constituencies (Castles et al., 1990, p. 66). During 1970s and 1980s settlement services were established and expanded, including English language programs, orientation and accommodation on-arrival, and translation and interpreter services.

An ethnic-group model of welfare was pursued by both sides of government in the formative years of State multiculturalism, albeit with different inflections. The 1972 Whitlam Labor government emphasised the structural disadvantage and settlement prospects of migrants, but maintained exclusionary and restricted immigration policy in practice (Castles et al., 1990, p. 58; Walsh, 2014, pp. 285–6). Labor perceived migrants as a 'disadvantaged group' that ought to be targeted by specific social welfare programmes (Castles et al., 1990, pp. 60–61; Moran, 2017, p. 37). The incumbent Liberal-National Coalition Frazer government (1975-83)[19] renewed emphasis on residual social policy. Ethnic service delivery fit this logic because it promoted volunteerism, communal responsibility, and competition for resources amongst organisations (Castles et al., 1990, p. 60; Walsh, 2014, p. 286). Fraser framed multiculturalism in terms of cultural recognition rather than systematic inequalities, promoting social cohesion to be achieved through challenging prejudice and encouraging understanding (Castles et al., 1990, pp. 67–70; Walsh, 2014).

The 'ethnicity model' drew increasing criticism for its inferior services, for pathologising 'culture' as the cause of disadvantage and dysfunction, and ignoring other unequal power relations such as class and gender (Vasta, 2004, p. 201). Multiculturalism was redefined by Labor governments of the 1980s as part of a suite of citizenship rights, in which 'all citizens possess rights of cultural maintenance and expression' (Walsh, 2014, p. 287). Labor Prime Minister Keating (1993-96) rearticulated multiculturalism as a unique feature of Australian identity and the basis on national unity and solidarity. While the Hawke and Keating Labor governments of the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s led

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[19] Elected in 1975 but coming to power in 1972 through the controversial dismissal of the Whitlam government by the Governor General.

economic deregulation and oversaw cuts to government programs, they also introduced new initiatives like the Access and Equity Strategy, which aimed to equip government services with the capacity to meet diverse needs (mainstreaming) and consult with ethnic groups about how best to meet their needs (Koleth, 2010, p. 11). The Access and Equity Strategy was originally focused on immigrants but then expanded to include 'anyone who may face barriers because of race, culture, religion, language or Indigenous background' (Moran, 2017, p. 95). Accompanying his program of financial deregulation, Keating developed the policy of 'productive diversity' that sought to capitalise on the assets that migrants could contribute to a globalising economy (Walsh, 2014, p. 288) and reorienting the migration program from humanitarian and family reunion to the skilled entry.

In line with broader public sector reforms, the Howard-led Coalition government (1996-2007) pursued the mainstreaming and tightening of welfare provision, significantly reducing the budgets of ethnic and immigration oriented organisations and defunding and marketising government services. Howard rejected multiculturalism but promoted productive diversity. Nonetheless, in 1998 his government introduced the Charter Public Service in Culturally Diverse Society, a framework for the implementation of access and equity principles into policy development and delivery that applied to government, community based and private sector services (Moran, 2017, p. 121). The Howard government favoured temporary visas that undermined the obligations to migrants associated with permanent settlement and restricted access to social security benefits and the Adult Migrant English Program for newly arrived migrants (Koleth, 2010, p. 13; Walsh, 2014, p. 289). His rejection of multiculturalism in favour of integration culminated in the removal of the term 'multiculturalism' from the Department of Immigration in 2007 (Tavan, 2012, p. 553).

The development and implementation of multiculturalism has now been substantially devolved to state and territory governments and community and non-government organisations (Koleth, 2010, p. 3).[20] With the Coalition's defeat in the 2007 election, The Rudd-Gillard Labor governments (2007-13) revived a celebratory multicultural rhetoric of respect and harmony, but did not significantly reverse

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[20] See Multicultural NSW, *2015 Community Relations Report*, for an indication of the increasing role of the NGO sector in planning and delivering human services and the FACS Cultural Diversity Framework.

the regression of federal multicultural policy that took place during the Howard years (Tavan, 2012, pp. 556–7). Labor promoted multiculturalism as a national asset, emphasising the rights and obligations of migrants, accompanied by 'a moderate program of basic migrant services, education and community engagement' (Tavan, 2012, p. 556). The Gillard government pursued punitive offshore detention of asylum-seekers, paving the way for the incumbent Abbott Coalition government policy of 'stopping the boats'. In 2013 the respective Departments of Immigration and Citizenship and Customs and Border Protection were amalgamated into one portfolio under the Department of Immigration and Border protection, and established the Australian Border Force in 2014 (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2015, p. 84).

Accommodating cultural difference

Responding to these kinds of changes, political theorists in the late 1980s and early 1990s conceptualised pluralist or multicultural models of democracy to accommodate growing demands for cultural rights and mounting critiques of the biases inherent in supposedly universal political and social institutions (Benhabib, 1996; Kymlicka, 1995; Young, 1990). Meanwhile, academics and activists in social welfare called out the 'false universalism' of the post-war welfare state, showing how universal categories are modelled on unmarked norms that obscure 'the diversity of identity, experience, interest and need in welfare provision' (Williams, 1992, pp. 206–7). Particularism emerged as an approach that gives emphasis to social diversity and the 'particular needs, moral frameworks and social expectations of different groups' (Thompson & Hoggett, 1996, p. 31). Despite debate over the universalist-particularist divide in welfare theory,[21] increased interest in social diversity has become a feature of social policy literature alongside growing attention to differential experiences of welfare users and their 'creative, reflexive' agency (Williams, Popay, & Oakley, 1999, p. 1). The critical insights and opportunities for development found in this literature inform the design and analysis of this project.

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[21] A rehearsal of which is beyond the scope of this chapter. See Thompson and Hoggett (Thompson & Hoggett, 1996) and Ellison (2006) for an overview of the debate and different attempts at addressing the universalist-particularist dichotomy.

A notable example is Harrison and Davis's (2001) attempt to balance the significance of diverse housing experiences and strategies with attention to the structural factors operating beyond the local or micro-level. They foreground diversity within, not just across, broader social divisions – conceptualised as 'difference within difference'. However, they insist that while diversity may signal the need to be attentive to distinctive and particular experiences, it does not amount to more choices: 'We are describing a situation of regulated difference and differential incorporation rather than of unconstrained private choices' (Harrison & Davis, 2001, p. 9). They still identify patterns and commonalities based on the difficulties and opportunities some groups face. Hence they argue, 'Housing experiences, preferences and strategies are diverse, but regulatory practices nonetheless constrain and facilitate people's choices in powerful ways […] diversity must be understood alongside continuing commonalities associated with patterns in resources and power' (Harrison & Davis, 2001, p. 22). Harrison and Davis's approach demonstrates 'the interplay of agency and structure in shaping individual poverty trajectories [that] is at the heart of contemporary theorization of the dynamics of poverty' (Ruth Lister, 2004, p. 145). As this thesis demonstrates, such a perspective remains crucial if we are to avoid either overstating the types of agency that remain possible for people at the sharp end of welfare reform or blaming them as agents of their own disadvantage. It also important if we are to avoid overly celebratory accounts of cultural diversity at the expense of sustained critical attention to the wider politics and social structures in which difference is made to matter (Alexander et al., 2012, p. 4).

The distinct needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and Indigenous populations arising from the specific challenges associated with experiences of migration or colonisation, experiences of racism, and marginalisation and exclusion from 'mainstream' social institutions are now commonly acknowledged (Sims, Guilfoyle, Kulisa, Targowska, & Teather, 2008; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2014). Wearing and Fernandez articulate this recognition:

> The poorest children and "worst off" families are the most vulnerable to the inequalities of consumption as well as production, and this inequality falls particularly heavily on indigenous and culturally diverse communities who have been excluded from mainstream societal resources (Wearing & Fernandez, 2015, p. 74).

However, the growing recognition of the ways in which minority groups are disadvantaged has given rise to what Chalmers and Allon (2002, p. 3) refer to as a 'problem centred approach' that characterises particular cultural groups as each having their own specific problems that need to be addressed. Minority groups are figured as the problem and social services and social policy as the solution. This approach overlooks and obscures the cultural norms, assumptions and practices on which social services and social policy are premised. Moreover, concepts designed to signal complexity, such as the notion of 'CALD groups', can be used in ways that obscure internal heterogeneity and pathologise minority communities. Ratcliff (1999) makes this point in relations to the use of 'social exclusion' to explain ethnic and racial discrepancies in housing. He argues that reference to 'excluded minorities' in research, while descriptively expedient, implies a far too simple explanation of complex issues and ignores the heterogeneity of the social actors grouped together as 'the excluded,' thereby contributing 'to the actual or potential pathologization of urban minority communities' (Ratcliffe, 1999, p. 19).

The commitment to culturally appropriate and accessible service provision has been consistently emphasised in multiculturalist policies and institutionalised in public policy in principle, if not always in practice. Moreover, 'valuing diversity' has become a discursive feature of a range of social domains, including human services, to signify 'more modern, innovative, and even progressive and inclusive' organisational arrangements (Boccagni, 2015, p. 609). This trend is reflected in a largely pedagogically oriented body of literature conceptualising 'culturally competent practice', generally affirming a combination of relational skills, self-awareness and knowledge (see Kohli, Huber, & Faul, 2010). Cultural competence models have been critiqued for reifying and essentialising cultural difference, overlooking differential experiences within ethnocultural groups, and paying insufficient attention to structural inequalities (Chau, Yu, & Tran, 2011; Kirmayer, 2012). One proposed alternative is 'diversity practice' as a model that emphasises cultural fluidity, the diversity of cultural groups, and the complexity of social problems embedded in structural inequality and discrimination (Chau et al., 2011; Davis, 2009). Considering the promise and limits of a diversity model, Bocaggni (2015) argues that there remains a gap between its theoretical and pedagogical potential and how it

is operationalised in practice, noting that there has been little research on the latter (for an exception see Harrison & Turner, 2011). Nonetheless, analysts continue to identify lack of practitioner and agency cultural competence and responsiveness to explain discrepancies in service access and poor welfare outcomes of minority ethnic groups, stressing the limits of culturalist understanding of inequality (Vickers, Craig, & Atkin, 2013).[22]

There has been some attention to culturally diverse practices and expectations of support in the social care literature (compared to very little in research focusing on social security). Social policy institutionalises assumptions about the strength of family ties by promoting informal and community provision (Finch & Mason, 1993, p. 9). Research contradicts the common assumption that ethnic minority families have extended family and community networks that fill the gap of formal support (Atkin & Chattoo, 2007; Cardona, Chalmers, & Neilson, 2006; Qureshi, Berridge, & Wenman, 2000; Vickers et al., 2013). Besides misunderstanding preferences, this assumption overlooks the conditions that affect the level of support available in the family, including material resources, previous patterns of obligation, and the quality of present relationships (Atkin & Chattoo, 2007, p. 382). In their qualitative study of the experiences of CALD carers in Sydney, Cardona et al. (2006, pp. 52–54) found that feelings of entitlement related to generational experiences and migration histories directly impacted on the uptake of formal services. In their inter-generational analysis of how Pakistani families understand the relationship between the state, community and family, Atkin and Chatoo (2007) found that there was no single cultural script predefining how norms and practices were negotiated amongst young people, parents and grandparents. Rather, negotiations depended on 'biographical circumstances and particular family histories of migration.' Moreover, they found that while family members regarded the state and the services that represent it 'as a site of competing and sometimes conflicting moral values', their view of the legitimacy of state involvement was dependent on the welfare context: 'state intervention and support in family life is, for example, deemed legitimate within contexts of caring, housing and social security, while in other contexts it is perceived as an infringement of parental responsibility, family or religious values' (Atkin & Chattoo,

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[22] Katz and Sawrikar (2008) identify a dearth of research in the Australian context but extrapolate from research based in the UK.

2007, p. 382). These two studies show how cultural values and practices relating to family responsibility and social entitlement are entangled with people's socio-economic and biographical contexts. To my knowledge, the latter is one of the few studies that addresses ethnic minority perspectives of state support, reflecting what little research there is on how minority groups use or relate to welfare services or benefits (Phillimore, 2015, p. 248; Vickers et al., 2013, p. 318).[23] This thesis begins to address that gap by exploring ethno-cultural diversity as factor shaping expectations and experiences of the welfare state.

Further afield, migration studies has contributed considerably to documenting and conceptualising the motives and dynamics of globalised caring economies and the ways migration changes family relations (see Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Yeoh, Huang, & Lam, 2005 for a review of the literature). Transnational migration studies show the material conditions and moral expectations that sustain or constrain networks of support and transform family structures across borders. They have demonstrated the communications technologies and infrastructures that enable intimacy and sustain bonds at a distance (Baldassar, 2007b; Parreñas, 2005), the circulation and exchange of money and ideas, skills, and knowledge (Levitt, 1998; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011), and the (shifting) contours of family responsibility and duty (Baldassar, 2007a; Velayutham & Wise, 2005). In doing so, they usefully bring into view the multiple scales and sites of responsibility and reciprocity that may elude the national territorial lens typical of welfare state studies. However, how the transnational contours of family obligation and reciprocity interact with welfare state provision and the conceptions of autonomy, responsibility, obligation and individual aspiration that the welfare state endorses remains to be explored.

Attention to networks of support amongst minority groups has received considerable attention due largely to the popularity of the concept of social capital in both policy and scholarship (see Anthias, 2007; Hunter, 2004; Pieterse, 2003 for a critical discussion). Importantly for this study, interest in social capital has brought the significance of social relationships to the centre of social policy. The

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[23] An in-progress Welfare Bricolage Project (UPWEB) aims to address this gap in the European context by exploring how residents in super-diverse areas 'put together their healthcare' (see http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/upweb/index.aspx).

concept of 'bonding' social capital is used to describe the close bonds between familiars, suggesting exclusivity, while 'bridging' social capital describes less intense relationships beyond our intimate circles and is associated with openness (see Patulny & Lind Haase Svendsen, 2007). The concept was reconfigured and popularised by Robert Putnam through his best-selling book *Bowling Alone* (2000) and has had remarkable public uptake. Putnam's communitarian definition conceives of social capital as civic-minded social networks and the 'norms of generalised reciprocity' and trust they generate. Putnam sees social capital as a public good and attributes social problems to a decline in social capital 'stock' (Putnam, 1995, p. 67).[24] Critics have questioned the assumed importance of the decline of social capital at the heart of Putnam's argument, challenging his narrative of an idealised past and lamentable present decline, particularly when viewed from the perspective of women and cultural minorities (Arneil, 2006; Portes & Vickstrom, 2011). Others are wary of the calculative and instrumental dimensions of its uptake in policy and scholarship, pointing to its origins in rational choice theory (see Spies-Butcher, 2002). Nonetheless, Putnam's book has influenced arguments for the state to support and sponsor civil society and is associated with community capacity building approaches applied to disadvantaged populations, discussed further in chapter 4 (Barbara Fawcett et al., 2010, p. 192). Work emerging from a community development perspective advocates the revaluing of human relationships embodied in the concept, and the return of the 'social' to policy agendas (Leonard & Onyx, 2004; Spies-Butcher, 2002, p. 188). The concept of social capital, then, has brought the quality and contours of social networks and social obligations to the fore of social research and social policy.

Moreover, the concept of social capital underpins claims that ethno-cultural diversity undermines commitment to the welfare state, which Putnam's (2007) work has again come to symbolise. Putnam claims to demonstrate the corrosive effects of ethno-racial diversity on social capital and solidarity.

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[24] In Bowling Alone, Putnam used fourteen indicators of social capital to create a Social Capital Index (SCI) through which to measure and compare the 'stock' of social capital across the 50 U.S. states. The indicators included the number of civic and social organisations per 1000 population, presidential election turnout and the level of volunteerism. Putnam statistically related the SCI to a range of positive outcomes – including 'education and child's welfare', 'safe and productive neighbourhoods', 'economic prosperity', 'health and happiness', and 'democracy' – to demonstrate the positive effects of social capital. See Portes (1998) for attention to the negative consequences of social capital and a discussion of its sociological origins.

While he cursorily acknowledges the long term benefits of immigration, he argues that in the short term ethno-racial diversity leads not to racial conflict but withdrawal from collective life. This argument is now known as the 'hunkering down' thesis following Putnam's (Putnam, 2007, p. 149) summation, 'people living in ethnically diverse settings appear to 'hunker down' – that is, to pull in like a turtle'. A massive body of literature testing these claims provides contradictory and inconclusive findings (see Banting & Kymlicka, 2015, pp. 7–10 for an overview ; Schaeffer, 2014 for a review). The implication is the corrosion of a common sense of social solidarity in turn weakens support for the welfare state. This argument echoes earlier claims that multicultural policies undermine commitment to the welfare state, associated with the view that culturalist identity politics dilutes support for redistributive justice (eg. Barry, 2002). As Banting and Kymlicka (2006a) show, concern about the effects of multiculturalist policies and the effects of ethnic diversity on social solidarity are often lumped together.

Besides questioning the evidence for such claims, critics point to the normative assumptions and conceptual imprecision that underpins them. For example, Eisenberg (2007) addresses the current of concern about the 'insularity' of ethnic groups in social capital studies. She argues that social capital studies making a case for the corrosive effects of ethnic diversity can be imprecise with terms such as 'bonding' and 'bridging' capital. They tend to explain bonding in terms of the 'insularity' of ethnic groups, yet ignore 'that organizations dominated by the majority ethnic group are not necessarily culturally neutral' (Eisenberg, 2007, p. 78). Likewise, she argues that the ways in which trust may already be strained due to historical injustice is overlooked, along with the social conditions that multiculturalism aims to address, such as 'racism and cultural alienation' (Eisenberg, 2007, pp. 71, 76). Similarly, Portes and Vickstrom (2011) argue that the methodology through which Putnam arrives at his 'hunker down' thesis skips too hastily over structural and contextual factors that inform social capital. As a result, they argue, he misstates the causal relationship between social capital and its alleged benefits, obscuring how 'social capital – defined as communitarianism or trust – is really a by-product of more basic structural factors of which racial homogeneity, education, and economic equality are paramount' (Portes & Vickstrom, 2011, p. 472). These critiques insist on situating an

analysis of the relationship between social capital and inequality in the broader historical and structural conditions and origins of mistrust.

However, amongst the huge interest in the effects of ethnic diversity on support for the welfare state, and more general attention to public attitudes to welfare (Saunders, Eardley, Evans, & others, 2000 in Australia; eg. Wilson, Spies-Butcher, & Stebbing, 2009), there has been little exploration of how ethno-culturally diverse publics view welfare or relate to the welfare state. This is likely in part due to methodological limitations of drawing this information out of existing social survey data.[25] It may also reflect the marginal attention to differences in welfare culture (Pfau-Effinger, 2005) and migrant and ethnic minority rights (Morissens & Sainsbury, 2005) in comparative welfare state analyses. Interview-based studies of expectations and experiences of citizenship in the UK demonstrate the complex and often contradictory 'moral repertoires' (Dean, 1998) and cultural scripts (Baldock & Ungerson, 1996) individuals draw on in discourse about welfare, demonstrating a degree of cultural diversity anyway implicit in social life (discussed in detail in chapter 3). However, there has been little concerted attention to ethno-culturally diverse expectations and experiences of social citizenship and the welfare state.

Sheila Shaver (2007), a comparative welfare state scholar, usefully demonstrates the importance of what she calls 'the cultural dimension of welfare state citizenship'. She brings three notable theoretical treatments of the relationship between multiculturalism and citizenship – that of Kymlicka, Parekh, and Garcia Canclini – into conversation with Marshall's influential conception of citizenship. Shaver identifies three key elements of citizenship as it is configured in the welfare state scholarship tradition: 'the social identity of the citizens, the nation as a political community, and the shared set of rights and obligations that bind them together' (Shaver, 2007, p. 4). While each of these implies a cultural dimension, Shaver notes the absence of an explicit discussion of culture in Marshall's work. She discusses how these elements figure in the approaches of each theorist of multicultural citizenship, from which I have drawn out four key points that she suggests are unresolved or underdeveloped. The first is the subtly different meanings of what it means to be a

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[25] Thank you to Shaun Wilson for making this point.

citizen, including different understandings and expectations of duty and support. Secondly, Shaver signals moral diversity and the different (moral) assumptions underlying ideas of rights and duties. Third, she point to 'culturally based interpretations' of need and inequality, which delimit policy responses. Finally, Shaver articulates a question that unsettles the dichotomy of (cultural) recognition and (economic) redistribution: How are social rights read through cultural frames? These points not only highlight the ways in which understandings of what it means to be a citizen are culturally produced. They also signal how expectations of support, as well as support for the welfare state, are culturally inflected. These points speak to the significance of a cultural account of social citizenship and warrant empirical attention, particularly given the degree of culturally diversity that characterises contemporary social life.

A number of key points emerge from the theory and research reviewed in this section. A recurring theme is the challenge that cultural diversity poses to the welfare state, either to the practice of service delivery or the principle of redistributive justice and equality. Even efforts to accommodate cultural diversity could be said to approach difference as a problem, and the emphasis remains on dealing with difference. The literature points to the importance of recognising the cultural specificity of welfare users on the one hand, and the cultural assumptions embedded in welfare institutions on the other hand. Compared to scholarship focusing on the capacity of practitioners, agencies and governments to deal with difference, there is still little research on how culturally diverse minorities understand or relate to different forms of social support in practice or the welfare state in principle, particularly outside of a policy framework that prioritises barriers to service access and equity. This warrants systematic empirical attention in its own right that is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, this project begins to address this gap by exploring the culture frames and practices of support that animate understandings and experiences of welfare for people at the sharp end of welfare reform. This project takes as its point of departure the conviction that culturally diverse perspectives and experiences of welfare must be understood in relation to how cultural difference is made to matter in welfare politics, policy and practice. This conviction arises from a second dominant

thread in literature addressing the nexus of social welfare and culture diversity, which foregrounds the welfare state as a means of controlling cultural difference.

Controlling cultural difference

Culture has received considerable attention in accounts of poverty and welfare, particularly concentrated in U.S. scholarship. A preoccupation with lower class and poor culture followed in the wake of Michael Harrington and Oscar Lewis' infamous 'cultures of poverty' thesis. According to Lewis (1966), while poverty was caused by economic disruptions attached to industrialisation, it was perpetuated by a 'culture of poverty' families that relegated the poor to inter-generation destitution. As Harrington put it,

> There is, in short, a language of the poor, a psychology of the poor, a worldview of the poor. To be impoverished is to be an internal alien, to grow up in a culture that is radically different from the one that dominates society (Harrington, 1962 cited in O'Connor, 2001, p. 223).

According to these left-liberal scholars, this distinct subculture was characterised by dysfunctional values and patterns of behaviour including alcoholism, aggressive parenting, and men abandoning families. The likewise notorious Moynihan Report of 1965 attributed black poverty to the instability of female-headed black families.[26] African-American women were characterised as 'pathologically independent with respect to men and pathologically dependent with respect to government' (Fraser & Gordon, 1994, p. 327). The currency of cultural explanations of poverty was revived in the late 1980s and popularised in the 1990s when conservative scholars and politicians alike – ignoring the structural components of Lewis and Moynihan's theses – targeted a 'culture of dependency' on welfare benefits as a cause rather than an effect of poverty. For example, Charles Murray (1984) influentially argued that overly generous welfare provision had encouraged the formation of a passive and dysfunctional 'underclass.' Permissive welfare rules 'made it profitable for the poor to behave in short term ways that were destructive in the long term' (Murray, 1984, p. 9). According to Murray, welfare creates an incentive for (predominantly black) single-mothers to choose a life on

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[26] *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action* (Moynihan, 1965). While Moynihan was widely criticised for 'blaming the victim', the remedy he prescribed was decidedly structural – employment provision accompanied by improvements to social welfare and education (Massey & Sampson, 2009, pp. 7–8). Lewis also advocated both cultural and structural solutions to poverty but his work led to an emphasis on the cultural features of the poor by academics and policy makers (Katz, 1989).

welfare benefits, transforming the preeminent stereotype of welfare dependency from the black matriarch to the black unmarried mother (Fraser & Gordon, 1994, p. 372). Lawrence Mead, a leading theorist of new paternalism and architect of workfare in the US, argues that a 'culture of poverty' produces dysfunctional behaviour and poor choices that entrenches poverty and disadvantage despite social efforts to alleviate poverty. Like Murray, he argued in the mid-1980s that the welfare system was too permissive and demands too little of welfare recipients in return for benefits (Mead, 1986). Unlike Murray, who proposed the retrenchment of welfare programs and income support as the solution, Mead was a key proponent of making welfare benefits conditional on behavioural requirements.

According to Mead (2000), the source of poverty is personal not social. Mead argues that structural factors – or 'social barriers' – such as racial discrimination and economic exclusion may have caused poverty in previous generations but are no longer decisive in perpetuating poverty because they no longer limit opportunities. Rather, it is dysfunctional behaviour passed on through the family – a 'culture of poverty' – that entrenches poverty. He claims that locating the source of worklessness at a personal level does not attribute blame there – 'they are not individually responsible for it' (Mead, 2000, p. 48). Nonetheless, if the social roots of poverty are out of reach in the past, as he claims, then social reform in the present is misplaced. This attempt to dislocate the individual as the site of change from the attribution of blame seems disingenuous given the slippery logic of Mead's argument: external barriers disadvantaged poor (often black) people in the past which led to family breakdown, but external barriers no longer prevent work, intergenerational dysfunctional behaviour does; the failure to take up the mantle of self-responsibility in the present, then, perpetuates poverty. At the very least, the decoupling of blame and responsibility is lost in policy rhetoric that attributes poverty to personal behaviour and lack of responsibility. The legacy of these arguments find expression in more recent claims that a generous welfare state increases the number of children born into disadvantaged households, which in turn fosters an 'aggressive, anti-social and rule-breaking' and 'employment-resistant' personality (A. Perkins, 2016).

The proposition that poverty is perpetuated by the deviant culture amongst the poor was not without critique (eg. Dean & Taylor-Gooby, 1992). The claim elicited empirical studies of the norms and values of benefit recipients, particularly single mothers. A notable example is Edwards and Duncan's (1997) study of lone mother's decision-making about the uptake of work. Two key assumptions of the underclass thesis are that the decision not to work is driven by economic rationalities, i.e. the short-term profitability of welfare, and the erosion of work ethic and decline of 'traditional' family values caused by economic inactivity and dependency. To the contrary, their study found that uptake of work was driven primarily by women's contextualised understandings of mothering and responsibility and the relationship between motherhood and paid work, which they term 'gendered moral rationalities' (Edwards & Duncan, 1997, p. 38). Regardless of class or ethnic background or the 'conventionality' of their views (whether they held feminist or counter-cultural views), 'responsibility' was at the core of conceptions of lone motherhood. However, understandings of what responsibility entailed differed depending on the extent to which they viewed motherhood and paid work as compatible. They found that generally, unlike the white lone mothers they interviewed who tended to see worker and mother as separate identities, black lone mothers had a more integrated view of motherhood and paid work. From this perspective, providing through employment is integral to meeting mothering responsibilities. Moreover, Edwards and Duncan found that understandings that align with dominant 'traditional' views of motherhood were in fact more likely to correlate with the decision to stay at home. Studies of single mothers in the U.S. likewise point to the importance of cultural orientations to work and family. Hay (2003) examines the 'competing cultural logics' embedded in U.S. welfare reform, namely The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. She argues that the legislation advances conflicting visions of work and family life, promoting individualist self-sufficiency and productivity on the one hand, and women's commitment to marriage and family on the other hand. The tension is not confined to welfare policy but reflects wider tensions in contested vision of the 'good life' – 'between work and family, dependence and independence, and competitive individualism and commitment to others' (Hays, 2003, p. 28). In a chapter directly addressing the culture of poverty thesis, Hays points

to the multiple cultural orientations that animate the lives of poor women (see also Holloway, Fuller, Rambaud, & Eggers-Pierola, 1997), insisting that they may be distinctive but they are also multifaceted and changing, and emerge in dialogue with wider cultural logics about family and work. These studies challenge the claim of a singular and deviant cultural underclass while demonstrating that collective cultural understandings of family and work influence economic choices and policy design.

Since the 1990s there has been a remarkable ascendency and convergence of policy prescriptions derived from this perspective in Anglo liberal welfare states.[27] The 'culture of dependency' thesis has been highly influential in consolidating increasingly punitive and prescriptive welfare mechanisms in Australia, New Zealand, Britain, and the US. In Australia it has had particular resonance in Indigenous Affairs, where moral critiques of the welfare state are tied to discourses of Aboriginal dysfunction and the failure of self-determination. Mead's approach is echoed in Noel Pearson's (2000) game-changing critique of passive welfare in remote Indigenous communities.[28] Pearson shook up Indigenous Affairs in 2000 with his argument that it is not absence of rights but rather absence of responsibility that is causing social breakdown in remote Aboriginal communities. He argues that 'passive' welfare creates a welfare mentality that erodes responsibility and corrupts traditional Aboriginal norms of reciprocity. While acknowledging the impact of colonialism, he traces rapid social breakdown in remote Aboriginal communities, after the constitutional amendments that recognised Aboriginal people and citizens and incorporated them into the welfare state. As Pearson puts it, 'increased black rights' went hand-in-hand with 'a calamitous erosion of black responsibility' (2007:26 cited in Maddison, 2009, p. 30). Pearson has deftly mobilised the currency of ideas of dependency culture and behaviourist policy to sell his vision of welfare reform in remote Aboriginal communities. His critique heralded a shift from self-determination to neo-paternalism as the

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[27] at least a discursive convergence – similarities in policy rhetoric do not necessarily equate with similar social policy realities (Mendes, 2008, 67–70; Roach, 2002, p. 8).

[28] Noel Pearson is a lawyer, activist, high profile social commentator. His analysis of Indigenous welfare dependency has a sound platform in mainstream media and has garnered favour from both Conservative and Labor governments. Pearson often cites Mead in his public commentary (eg. Pearson, 2011).

dominant policy paradigm in Indigenous Affairs, paving the way for the Northern Territory Emergency Response in 2007, referred to informally as the Intervention (see Sanders, 2009).

A substantial body of critical literature analysing the Intervention as a form of neoliberal racial governance has emerged in the last decade, drawing strongly on critical whiteness studies, post-colonial studies, and Foucauldian theories of governmentality. Rapid response analyses argued from the outset that the Emergency Response targeted Aboriginal ways of life and forms of land tenure to make them conform to mainstream economic lifestyles and values, justified by moralising discourses of Aboriginal family and community dysfunction and crisis (Altman & Hinkson, 2007; Stringer, 2007). Feminist critical race and whiteness scholars, including Indigenous scholars, have argued that gendered and racialised discourses of protection were deployed to justify intervention in Indigenous lives and land and reassert settler-colonial sovereignty (Moreton-Robinson, 2009; Osuri, Dreher, & Laforteza, 2009; Watson, 2009, p. 56). Lattas and Morris's (2010, p. 16) critique illustrates succinctly a common strand of Foucauldian analysis of the neoliberal rationalities and technologies of governance underpinning the Intervention: 'As it unfolds, the Intervention has become a new form of racial governance, which seeks to assimilate and re-discipline Aboriginal families by transforming their everyday practices and cultural dispositions' (Altman & Hinkson, 2007; see also D Howard-Wagner, 2010; Dierdre Howard-Wagner & Kelly, 2011; Moreton-Robinson, 2009). As the quotes beginning this chapter illustrate, and as Altman and Hinkson show (2010, p. 185), the state positioned itself as 'acting responsibly and decisively to reduce the risk posed by a section of its citizenry who represent a failure to conform to mainstream social values'. At the same time, the government insisted that 'the onus [was] on Aboriginal people to themselves take responsibility for their actions', launching 'a radical form of cultural redevelopment modelled around the fostering of self-respect and individual responsibility' (Altman & Hinkson, 2010, p. 190). These critiques draw on wider analyses of neo-liberal citizen-state relations cited in the first section of this chapter but inflected to account for the co-articulation of settler-colonial and neo-liberal governance.[29] Despite

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[29] Another recurring interpretation of the Emergency Response is in Agambian terms of governance through exceptional measures (eg. Howard-Wagner, 2010; Lattas & Morris, 2010, p. 15; Moreton-

the specific context to which it responds, this work resonates strongly with the tenor of critical analysis of wider welfare reform elsewhere that demonstrates the impact of race in framing and implementing policy.[30]

While there is a degree of coherence and consensus in this body of work,[31] it interjects in a far more fractious academic debate, particularly around the role of anthropology in legitimising or undermining the claim that welfare dependency has cultural roots. The anthropological concept of 'demand sharing' has been imported into the bureaucratic vocabulary, framing 'indigenous poverty [as] not historically but culturally structured' (Altman, 2011; Lea, 2012, p. 190). The term was coined by Peterson (1993, 2013) to refer to Aboriginal forms of 'asymmetrical reciprocity' in which giving is initiated by the request of the receiver and doesn't incur a debt of return. Aboriginal sharing economies are oriented toward producing and sustaining relationships rather maximising profit or personal benefit. Altman (2011) traces the take-up of demand sharing first in anthropology then in wider policy and public discourse. He argues the caution and nuance that characterised Peterson's original characterisation of demand sharing has largely been lost. Instead, it has been conflated with all forms of kin-based sharing and has become 'imbued with moral dimensions, positive and negative' (Altman, 2011, p. 215). Curbing the practice of 'humbugging' – Aboriginal English for a particularly aggressive form of demand sharing – has been a key justification for blanket income quarantining. Pearson articulates the idea of demand sharing as a dysfunctional and corrupted form of Aboriginal culture:

> […] when demand sharing came into contact with passive welfare, alcohol, drugs and gambling, what was a valuable cultural tradition was highly susceptible to corruption and exploitation. Demand sharing when it comes to addictions is now a pathological culture (Pearson, 2007 cited in; J. Altman, 2011, pp. 195–6).

Robinson, 2009). Wacquant's characterisation of neo-liberal governance is also repeatedly cited (eg. Deirdre Howard-Wagner, 2012a; Stringer, 2007).

[30] For example, scholars in the UK have similarly analysed how social policy discourses figure marginalised populations as 'problematic' in ways that both reinscribe 'hegemonic understandings of the category of "race"' and 'construct racialized differentiations' (Flint, 2009; Lewis, 2000, p. 360; Nixon & Prior, 2010).

[31] See Howard-Wagner (2012b) for a closer discussion of this body of work.

Altman (2011, p. 196) argues that the uptake of the term in public policy serves to 'render the messy problem of Indigenous dysfunction, where it occurs, technical thereby making that problem amenable to technical solution' in the form of income management.

The meaning of responsibility and how it should be discharged is central to this debate. For example, Lattas and Morris take issue with Merlan's questioning of the relevance of universalist politics of rights compared to the primary status of responsibility in Indigenous contexts. In response they argue, 'What is not questioned is whether Indigenous understandings of responsibility can be equated with how responsibility is formulated within a neo-liberal model of welfare that speaks of mutual obligations and the responsibilities of welfare recipients' (Lattas and Morris, 2010, p. 19) Merlan (2010, p. 15) rejects their characterisation of her work and responds with the question: 'once one has had experience of these concentrated forms of neglect problems and special vulnerabilities, whether one thinks that action should be taken'. Cowlishaw (2010b, p. 14) weighs in: 'Calling for "action" to be taken, as if we had a well understood problem with solutions obvious to all right-thinking people, seems to me anthropologically irresponsible, for it implies *our* common sense is the only sense the world can make.' She argues that there are two neglected ways for anthropology to make itself relevant: 'First, ethnographic study could reveal the *cultural* underpinning of government process' and second, 'to document Aboriginal people's conceptualisations of the world, of their own social problems and the alternative imagery, ideologies and aspirations that emerge from their specific conditions.' Speaking more broadly, Kowal (2012) attributes the discomfort of the 'liberal left' with Pearson's welfare reform agenda to the mistaken assumption that responsibility implies blame, resulting in the charge of 'victim blaming.' But, she argues, Pearson does not locate blame in Aboriginal behaviour – tracing social breakdown to Indigenous incorporation into welfare state citizenship – but rather sees the possibility for change as residing in Aboriginal agency. This argument echoes Mead's qualification that locating the source of poverty in personal behaviour is not an attribution of individual responsibility. Response to the Intervention is characterised, then, by contested meanings of responsibility and their underpinning cultural logics.

The debate about the role of anthropological knowledge in public policy brought to the fore by the Intervention speaks to a longer history of ethnographic study of the interaction between Aboriginal forms of social life and the welfare economy. Anthropogists have shown that market activities and goods have been incorporated and revalued within Aboriginal kin-based ways of living and relating at the same time as market economies transform and put pressure on Aboriginal forms of social life (Austin-Broos, 2003; MacDonald, 2000; eg. Peterson, 1998). Austin-Broos (2003) argues that, whereas Western Arrente (in central Australia) relatedness was previously embedded in place, the dispersal and mobility of kin networks and the introduction of cash economies has elevated the role of the exchange and distribution of *things* in producing and maintaining kin relations. Relying largely on welfare at the margins of the mainstream economy, the finitude of material commodities that must be continually replenished places limits and strain of kin relatedness. Drawing on her fieldwork with the Wiradjuri, McDonald (2000) observes that government funding channels complicate the 'allocative power' derived from responding to demands and interfere with the authority it garners, creating conflict over who occupies bureaucratic roles and how government resources are distributed. She argues that the existence of two incompatible moral orders in the kin-based and market economy has thwarted the impact of welfare in alleviating poverty, and creates tensions between sustaining Aboriginal forms of sociality of the one hand and improving material conditions and equity in wider Australian society (MacDonald, 2000, p. 106). According to this assessment, the aim of sustaining Indigenous cultural difference and ameliorating Indigenous disadvantage are conflicted.

This signals a central dilemma of liberal multiculturalism: how to balance the right to be culturally different and enjoy equal citizenship (Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994). While liberal multicultural principles of balancing difference and equality may have receded in an era of brute neo-liberal paternalism, they still find expression in frameworks of welfare service delivery, where culturally responsive provision remains a key tenet. Kowal (2008, p. 338) foregrounds the 'conflicting impulses' of the liberal multiculturalism in her ethnography of how white health workers negotiate the tension between improving Indigenous and maintaining Indigenous difference. She joins other scholars in

contemplating the idea that poor health outcomes and difference of socioeconomic status cannot be reduced to structural disadvantage and exclusion, but could arise from distinctive Aboriginal ways of life (see Kowal, 2016; Sanders, 2016 for a discussion of this in Altman's work). In this vein, Kowal (2015, p. 39) asks, 'can inequality be a chosen expression of difference in some circumstances?' Similarly, Martin (2011, p. 211) poses the question, 'to what extent diversity of certain forms can be accepted or even encouraged in a pluralist society, when they could entail very significant disparities in economic status.' This dilemma is not addressed directly in this thesis but rather forms the wider backdrop of the project.

This section demonstrates the revived currency of culturalist explanations of disadvantage in contemporary welfare reform, epitomised in the Australian context by the Intervention. The Intervention reanimated public and academic debate about the framing of disadvantage and, more specifically, the significance of culture. Critical analysts of the Intervention have foregrounded how social policy discourse problematises and disciplines cultural difference; the modes of governance it embodies and the forms of subjectivity and intervention it makes possible and forecloses. However, academic debate about the role of culture also brought into relief the different moral and material economies of obligation and reciprocity operating in multicultural, (never-quite-post) colonial Australia (Haggis, 2004) and the limits of their compatibility with the dominant principles and purposes of the welfare state. Finally, this section signals the importance of responsibility and vulnerability as a central yet contested cultural tropes animating contemporary welfare politics, policy, and practice in Australia.

Framing this study: the cultural dimensions of the lived experience of welfare

This thesis foregrounds the cultural dimension of expectations and experiences of social security recipients, paying particular attention to multiculture as a condition of the contemporary welfare state. Attention to (multi)culture and ethno-cultural diversity has been peripheral to the main Australian studies of lived experiences of poverty (Peel, 2003) and welfare (Murphy et al., 2011).[32]

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[32] In the UK Dwyer (2000) includes Muslim focus groups in his study of how welfare users understand citizenship and includes an analysis of Islamic conceptions of welfare in his account of different

Historian Mark Peel (2003) spoke to over 300 people in three culturally diverse suburbs on the outskirts of three major Australian cities during the recession of the 1990s. He uses a narrative approach that resonates with cultural research, consciously drawing attention throughout to the conventions of storytelling mobilised by himself and his participants. Peel argues that 'the boundaries of their world' were not organised by cultural difference:

> Certainly, most of the people with whom I spoke shared a very strong and deeply held interpretation of the world as divided into a 'them' an 'us'. For a few, a very few, that division was racial or ethnic. The most consistent identification of 'them', however, measured the gulfs of place and class (Peel, 2003, p. 154).

The significance of gender, race, culture and religion was subordinate in their accounts compared to the common struggle to get by. While Peel justifiably prioritises the immediacy of socio-economic inequality in his composition of 'voices of Australian poverty,' attention to the cultural factors that inflect experiences of disadvantage could add further nuance to his sensitive portrayal of the contradictions and complexities that characterise how people make sense of their own poverty.

John Murphy and his colleagues (2011) conducted interviews with 150 social security recipients and 108 follow up interviews. Replicating the findings of Peel's interviews, the themes of dignity and respect emerged as an important narrative in many of the interviews, though they suggest that a decade later the same experiences 'are given a sharper edge by a sense that the income support system has grown more suspicious and mistrusting' (Murphy et al., 2011). The authors repeatedly situate the common descriptions of indignity, shame, and humiliation of their participants in 'liberal' culture, identifying 'liberal values of independence and self-reliance [as] such a fundamental part of our culture' (Murphy et al., 2011, p. 167). This accurately signals how the primacy of cultural tropes of self-reliance and self-responsibility in contemporary welfare policy can undermine the sense of worth of people surviving on income support. However, the presumption that they embody "our" fundamental cultural values overlooks the processes through which the very idea of core Australian values is mobilised to claim that dependency on welfare is an affront to Australian culture. A more nuanced conceptualisation of culture, as well as a multicultural lens, will help refine this point and

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perspectives of welfare. However, this served the purposes of inclusivity rather than comparative analysis (Dwyer, 2000, p. 1).

draw attention to the multiple frames through which experiences and expectations of the welfare state are inflected.

The revival of culturalist explanations of disadvantage and their influence in framing policy that this chapter has demonstrated speaks to the need for more sophisticated conceptualisation of culture in addressing the nexus of cultural diversity and welfare. Michele Lamont and Mario Luis Small (2008) make a similar point regarding policy-oriented poverty and inequality studies literature about racial and ethnic disparities in poverty. They argue that this literature tends to rely on 'thin understanding of culture' broadly conceived as 'a groups norms and values, as its attitudes towards work and family, or as its patterns of behaviour' (Lamont & Small, 2008, p. 76). Lamont and Lewis review developments in the sociology of culture that provide direction towards refining the conceptualisation of culture in poverty studies, drawing together disparate research that conceives of culture as frames, repertoires, narratives, cultural capital, symbolic boundaries, and institutions. All of the conceptual tools they identify foreground the relationship between (cognitive) perspective and the possibility of action. Lamont and Small (Lamont & Small, 2008, p. 79) insist that each of these culture-related concepts illuminate different kinds of causal processes, thus allowing for a more refined understanding of particular aspects that are overlooked by broad definitions of culture. While this project does not share the aim their aim of explaining the relationship between race and poverty, it is does respond to the racialised discourses and mechanisms at play in the increasingly conditional model of welfare in Australia.

While a comprehensive discussion of each of the conceptual tools Lamont and Small identify is beyond the scope of this review, two that have proved useful for the cultural analysis undertaken in this thesis are worth elaborating. First, conceiving of culture as frames foregrounds the particular lens through which people interpret the world. It stems from the idea that 'individual perceptions of the social world […] are filtered through cultural frames that highlight certain aspects and hide others' (Lamont & Small, 2008, p. 80). For example, Small (2004 cited in Lamont & Small, 2008, p. 80) employed this perspective in his analysis of local participation in a Latino housing project. He found that people's level of participation differed not according to values, but rather in their framing of the

neighbourhood; whether they viewed it simply as a low-income area or as having an important history of political engagement. Lamont and Small (2008, p. 81) argue that looking at values is likely to yield few explanations in studies of racial differences in poverty, whereas conceiving culture as frames makes clear the internal heterogeneity within defined groups. Moreover, this perspective posits an alternative to the 'cause-and-effect relationship' between culture and behaviour by redefining it, according to Small's notion, as a 'constraint-and-possibility relationship' – whereby frames are understood to make behaviour possible rather than causing behaviour per se. For this same reason, however, frames don't sufficiently explain behaviour (Lamont & Small, 2008, pp. 80–81). Second, institutions are defined loosely as the taken-for-granted expectations, rules, routines and schemas that orient shared ways of thinking, feeling, and acting – referred to in this thesis as cultural scripts. They are particularly relevant to considering how cultural constructs feed into social policy, for example, when policy resonates with taken-for-granted assumptions about need and deservingness (Lamont & Small, 2008, p. 89). This approach 'requires focusing less on individuals and more on structures and institutions, including the cultural and social mechanisms that maintain classification systems' that delimit how need and disadvantage are interpreted and addressed (Lamont & Small, 2008, p. 90). Combining these conceptual tools enables an analysis that keeps in view both the way people make sense of their lives and the conditions under which it occurs.

This approach allows me to keep in view both the cultural frames through which need and support are understood and experienced 'on the ground', so to speak, and the cultural logics that frame overlapping policy, bureaucratic, and professional constructions of social problems and solutions. In particular, this thesis foregrounds responsibility and vulnerability as hegemonic cultural scripts in contemporary welfare policy and practice. The moral potency of these concepts – and their fundamentally social and relational character – provides fruitful grounds for exploring how diverse moral and material economies of support interact with the cultural logics underpinning the welfare state. Following Trnka and Trundle (2014), this thesis explores the diverse and conflicting framings of responsibility that animate the welfare state and people's expectations and experiences of it.

> If we wish to reconceive of 'responsibility' as it is increasingly being cast in both scholarly and public debate, our perspectives must be broadened to encompass these other forms of ties, obligations, duties, and reciprocities, that lie alongside, challenge, or are reconciled with those of responsbilised, neoliberal subjects (Trnka & Trundle, 2014, p. 141).

Similarly, this thesis is concerned with the ways in which social actors revise, reinscribe, and resist wider cultural scripts of responsibility and vulnerability as well as forms of embodied interaction and moral reasoning that exist in excess of dominant cultural scripts. I foreground the experiences of people living in or on the edges of hardship in the highly multicultural south-west of Sydney as they are targeted as disadvantaged populations under place-based interventions. In other words, they are broadly defined as vulnerable and compelled to be responsible through policy interventions. In doing so I bring cultural diversity to the centre an empirical exploration of how welfare users experience and relate to the welfare state, where it has previously been peripheral or focused on a single ethnic group. However, rather than surveying and documenting the diversity of expectations and practices, this thesis looks for moments and encounters where it comes to matter in contest, contradiction, or complementarity with the cultural logics of the welfare state.

A micro-level approach attuned to the material and corporeal aspects of everyday social life lends itself particularly well to a focus on the moral and material economies that animate expectations and experiences of welfare. Throughout the thesis I draw on a wide range of concepts that foreground the sensory and affective dimension of moral repertoires, interpretive schemas, and material practices. As Trnka and Trundle (2014, p. 146) observe of discharging responsibility, 'The motivations for enacting such responsibilities at any time are as likely to include affect or sensation as they are moral or ethical decision making.' My approach is informed by scholarship on diversity and multiculture that foregrounds the mundane and inhabited encounters with difference in everyday life, nonetheless infused with politics and power: 'It shows how national and international structures, discourses and politics filter down to the local level, how they impact upon and are negotiated by diverse actors in their relationship to one another' (Wise & Velayutham, 2009, p. 15). Moreover, a focus on the micro-level is apt given that 'activation' policies and mechanisms fixate on the everyday lives of welfare users and target their mundane behaviours. As the ethnographic research on Aboriginal sharing economies and migrant caring economies demonstrates, fine-grained analysis at

the micro-level is particularly suited to illuminating the complexities and ambiguities of everyday social life. The detail and nuance that this approach can yield is particular important given the overdetermined framing of disadvantaged lives that feeds what Tess Lea (2008, p. 151) describes as the 'magic circularity of interventionary perception'; the bureaucratic imagination reduces disadvantaged lives to the governmental categories that define them so that more intervention seems the only way forward. The preoccupation with the lives and practices of 'the disadvantaged' also bears a warning to researchers like myself lest we provide more fodder for the fantasy. This this navigates and mitigates this risk by insistently placing the fine-grained analysis of particular encounters and experiences within the broader conditions and contexts in which they occur.

Chapter two – Problems of access in community welfare: initiative or opportunism?

'It's interesting, the second-generation Arabic-speaking group in Bankstown; that's a very interesting group to work with and not necessarily easy,' Janet offers in response to my question about whether there are some groups of clients that are more responsible than others. At first she refers vaguely to 'certain cultural groups' but, like most of the staff I have spoken to, is hesitant to elaborate. Janet works in a community development role and is one of the frontline staff I have interviewed from the Bankstown community service sector. I ask Janet to explain her response and – as if given license – she continues at length:

> Because they often think they know everything, and they're confident, some of them, probably over-confident. They usually were born here, gone through Australian schools, primary schools, secondary school. And married young; have lots of children. And some people, some are quite loud, they talk, they do everything. They think they know a lot, but not necessarily so. And sometimes, actually, it's easier to work with newly arrived migrants, because they think they don't know. They know they don't know. They know they need to learn something; they are very happy to be helped, or to be introduced to different system. While second generation people often think they know everything; they know more.

She suggests that the low 'participation rate' of second-generation Arabic-speakers in welfare services is down to this self-assurance; a mistaken perception that 'they already know more'. Perhaps they don't need the services because they already have extensive social networks, she speculates, but then 'the results of the children's achievement' suggests otherwise. Later though, reflecting on the fairness of the welfare system, she suggests that second-generation Arabic-speakers arrogantly expect rather than refuse support. By this point Janet is ranting, perhaps emboldened by her captive audience. She describes being approached by an Indonesian mother who was ineligible for a support programme Janet offered; the woman had a young child and was unable to work due to an illness, but her husband worked. The woman complained that it was unfair that mothers who drive big, expensive, petrol-guzzling cars access the programme when her family relies on one income for five people but is not eligible.

> And I thought, "Well, what can I say?" It's unfair, definitely. Because I've seen all those women, they've got the latest of fashion. They mostly second generation, Arabic-speaking.

And also got a bit of racial tension because people thinking, "Those people". And there are few of them, they came as a big group, and people complain to me, they say, "They're arrogant." The reason they are arrogant is because they think they know everything; they speak English.

This story exemplifies the problem of access, which was a recurring theme in my conversations with community service staff and in the programmes in which I volunteered as part of my research. By this I mean the ways in which front-line staff define access as both a primary goal and challenge of service delivery and, in doing so, interpret and classify clients' need for and entitlement to support. Second-generation Arabic speakers – specifically women – appeared as contradictory exemplars of the problem of access. Janet characterised them as arrogant because, on the one hand, they refuse support, and on the other hand, because they expect it. She read loudness, arriving in larger groups, and speaking English as betraying their arrogance, implying wilful self-importance or entitlement and lack of gratitude. Markers of Arabic-women's excess and undue entitlement reappeared in staff interviews as well as in the accounts of the Lebanese-Australian women I spoke to – the large car, the ostentatious jewellery and adherence to fashion. The contrast Janet drew between newly arrived migrants as receptive to help and second-generation migrants who 'think they know everything' draws on cultural scripts that construct the genuinely needy and deserving as receptive to, but not expectant of, support. This vignette illustrates how the problem of access is a site through which the enduring distinction between deserving and undeserving poor is reanimated and reinscribed.

This chapter explores the ways in which *access* encapsulates both the objectives and challenges of service delivery in the community welfare sector. My questions about the responsibilities of service staff and clients often elicited reflection on the challenges of reaching 'difficult to access' groups on the one hand, and curbing improper consumption of services on the other. Many programmes promoted access for disadvantaged or isolated clients as initiating the process of empowerment. Yet all operated within the context of limited resources and constraints of narrowing entitlement and targeted service provision. The chapter begins by situating non-for-profit service delivery within the broader welfare landscape and the (multidirectional) impetus for activation and empowerment. In this chapter I draw primarily on staff interviews and participant observation in community welfare organisations in the Bankstown area to identify ideal configurations of what I call 'empowered

responsibility' and 'deserving vulnerability' and how they are constructed, negotiated and contested by staff.

I argue that the problem of access is animated by a tension between under-access and over-access – where accessing services can be figured as either positive initiative to improve one's circumstances or negative opportunism that abuses the system. I trace the categorisation of clients through ideal scripts of access to professional dispositions and the ways in which they reflect and refract hegemonic cultural scripts about need and support and the contradictory pressures arising from a welfare sector characterised by contested concepts of empowerment. To make this argument I draw on Lipsky's (2010) influential theory of 'street-level bureaucracy' to understand how judgement is structured into frontline welfare provision, attempting at the same time to sensitise the theory to the affective and bodily dimensions of frontline discretion.

Before I begin, it is worth spelling out that the point of Janet's example and the problem it illustrates is not to expose the prejudice of community sector workers. Most of the workers I spoke to, Janet included, thoughtfully reflected on the complex causes of disadvantage and the drawing of the boundaries of entitlement. Many were reluctant to generalise about clients, especially in terms of cultural differences. They puzzled over how precisely culture matters with fellow community workers but were cautious to articulate it in a formal interview, in part because the answers can seem elusive and partly because it can lead to the fraught territory of cultural stereotyping. The fear of stereotyping and simplifying culture meant that there was a common professional knowledge that culture mattered but a reluctance to articulate how (resembling anxiety about *essentialising* culture in academia). A number of staff were uncomfortable speaking in these terms and yet their responses suggested considerable prior reflection. Some even said that they were willing to voice the sense they had of how culture mattered to me because my research might help shed light on the issue. Nor is this example intended to indicate the truth or otherwise of Arabic-speaking welfare fraud that was repeated as 'common knowledge' by a number of interviewees, staff and non-staff alike. The data I gathered shed no light on which cultural 'groups' are 'inclined' to use and rely on public welfare, nor

did it seek to. Rather, this chapter speaks to how and why welfare access is figured as a gendered

and racialised problem and how staff participate in and negotiate such cultural coding.

Activating and enabling

> 'You need to give some structure or perimeters of that support to move on, because there's
> a comfortability in being supported. When you're already in a place and you're quite
> vulnerable and you realise how vulnerable you are, and you feel like the worlds coming down
> and you're demotivated and all the other things that come with being vulnerable and
> disadvantaged […] You need to feel reassured that there is something. You take respite in the
> belief that you'll be looked after for the short term, **but then you're being supported to pick
> up your momentum, to move on**' (Sally, community welfare frontline worker)

The currency of an 'enablement' approach to social policy coincides with the rise of the third-sector –

private, voluntary and non-profit organisations – as an alternative to direct government provision. In

this context reformers of various persuasions have presented 'community' as an 'ideal site for

meeting social needs and constructing ideal citizens' (McDonald & Marston, 2002, p. 6). The growth

of community services began in the 1970s out of social movement demands for services that

promoted client independence, autonomy, and participation, and well as the fiscal pressures of

recession and a focus on maximising cost-efficiency. The parallel rise of marketisation and

democratisation agendas has precipitated the increasing role of local community organisations in

service delivery in place of the public sector, while governments continue to substantially fund and

regulate community provision. In this context, tensions between the administrative mandates of

funders and the goals of organisations and practitioners can be pronounced (see, for example,

Meagher & Healy, 2003; Trudeau, 2008). Analysts of the new arrangements commonly point to a loss

of autonomy and curtailed advocacy role of non-profit organisations and the undermining on social

goals by competitive norms (Brennan, 1998, p. 131; Short & Mutch, 2001, p. 115; Spies-Butcher,

2014, p. 191). Others argue that while non-profits can struggle to be responsive to both

organisational and government goals, many find ways to negotiate the balance between

empowering local communities and complying with state-mandated objectives (Healy, 2002;

Trudeau, 2008).

Enhancement of capabilities has been increasingly figured as 'the route to social justice' (Newman,

2010, p. 714), invoking the work of Amartya Sen's (1999), Martha Nussbaum (2011) and others in a

policy shift towards capacity-building, empowerment and agency based on more substantive definitions of wellbeing. Sen's (1999) highly influential 'Capability Approach' foregrounds individuals' capability to live a life they value by integrating both opportunities and outcomes. His model distinguishes between resources at an individuals' disposal, what an individual is and does (functionings), and their real freedom they have to convert resources into achieved states of 'being and doing' (capabilities). According to Sen, 'understanding the agency role is central to recognizing people as responsible persons: not only are we well or ill, but also we act or refuse to act, and can choose to act one way rather than another… It makes a difference' (Sen, 1999, p. 90). Sen's model has influenced a 'social investment' shift in social policy from redistributing income to redistributing opportunities by investing in human capital (Deeming & Smyth, 2015, p. 308). The currency of capacity-building is also entangled with the promotion of 'active citizenship' and the 'moralisation' of welfare, resulting in increasing regulation and intervention in the lives of marginalised groups (Rodger, 2008). Moreover, 'empowerment' is widely used to describe the purpose and process of social work and other helping professions (see Bay, 2003 for an overview and critique). Writing in the mid-1990s and concerned particularly with an empowerment approach to poverty, Craig and Mayo (1995, pp. 1–2) described the use of 'empowerment' as 'widespread' but 'divergent', claiming that 'empowering the poor has become an almost universal slogan'. Capacity-building is a related term that is similarly prevalent in the 'community development lexicon' (Kenny & Clarke, 2010, p. 6). The use of terms like empowerment and capacity-building, then, are divergent and contested (Mayo & Anastacio, 1999), reflecting the different (but at times converging) agendas from which they have arisen.

An 'enablement' approach emphasising participation and autonomy took hold in various spheres of social policy alongside the reorganisation of the welfare state, from the provision of social care to the elderly and disabled to the social and economic inclusion of the poor. However, these terms have different inflections across different spheres of welfare. For example, while the personalisation agenda in social care aims to displace the paternalist authority of professionals, poverty relief revives paternalism to 'activate' the self-responsibility that is seen as lacking amongst the poor. Paternalist

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welfare policy attaches obligations to the receipt of social support, with the aim of moulding the behaviour of recipients. It is 'supervisory and directive' and emphasises surveillance and enforcement (Mead, 1997c). Rejecting the perceived determinism of structuralist explanations of poverty, moralists like Murray (1984, 1990) and Mead (1992, 1997c, 1997b) have focused instead on agency. While they differ in their characterisation of the agency of the poor – Murray describing cunning agency corrupted by structure while Mead a stifled agency that needs to be reactivated – they share the view that permissive welfare is the problem and changing people's behaviour is the solution. A new paternalist approach has been highly influential in the rise and consolidation of increasingly conditional and punitive welfare regimes in Australia and elsewhere. The rise of workfare or work first policies in the 1990s is a resounding example, linked to the idea that unemployment is voluntary and reflects the disappearing work ethic amongst the unemployed (Morris & Wilson, 2014). Work-first prioritises job search assistance and engagement with the labour market – welfare is conditional on meeting activity requirements, accompanied by surveillance and penalties for non-compliance (see Davidson, 2011 for a review of evaluations of work-first programmes). In Australia, the shift to work-first started under Labor but was consolidated by the Howard government after 1996, most notably through the introduction of work-for-the-dole for young unemployed people. Mutual obligation extended beyond the sphere of employment with the introduction of income management as a child protection policy (later reframed as a welfare policy). Such policies are referred to as 'activation' policies, aimed at activating personal responsibility and self-reliance in recipients of social support targeted at the poor. Research suggests 'a positive association between increasing expenditure on 'activation' and cuts to benefits' (Morris & Wilson, 2014, p. 205).

There have been a number useful analyses of the different agendas and ideological underpinnings driving the prevalence of empowerment – and related concepts of choice, participation, and independence[33] – as terms of reference in contemporary social policy. The shift to consumer-centred care and associated principles of choice, independence and autonomy have gained momentum in

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[33] See (Lloyd, 2010; Meagher, 2010; Morris, 2006; Postle & Beresford, 2006).

Australia recently with the introduction of individualised funding in disability and aged care.[34]

However, scholars have cautioned that the emphasis on self-governance through choice and independence exposes the personalisation agenda to neo-liberal co-option (Newman, Glendinning, & Hughes, 2008, p. 550), and the promotion self-responsibility at the expense of social responsibility (Barbara Fawcett & Plath, 2014, p. 753). Kenny and Clarke (2010, p. 6,7) similarly critiqued the 'strong anti-statist rhetoric' and the 'agency paradigm' associated with capacity-building. The currency of the term is strongly associated with the divestment of responsibility for social outcomes from the State to families and communities, underpinned by neo-liberal ideas of the self-reliant and independent individual as the centre of action. Within a market-oriented discourse, choice is understood as consumer choice and autonomy as freedom from interference. However, while the same language has been deployed in the push to democratise social services, empowerment and participation are not reducible to their neo-liberal meaning. For example, the reality for many disabled people is that self-determination requires positive intervention rather than absence of interference, as liberalism assumes (Morris, 2006, p. 244). The empowerment paradigm in social work has been strongly critiqued for being depoliticised and reduced to a 'therapeutic tool in the hands of professionals' that focuses on changing individuals rather than social and political change (Askheim, 2003, p. 235; Lee, 1994, p. 11). Critics aiming to recover its radical roots argue that 'it is professionals who have colonised empowerment and this, by definition, means that empowerment is taken out of the hands of those who are being empowered' (Parker, Fook, & Pease, 1999, p. 151 cited in Bay, 2003, p. 2). As these critiques suggest, and as Janet Newman (2010, pp. 718, 719) has articulated, the push to empower citizens is driven by a range of agendas and stakeholders that inform 'multiple framings' of the concept, which are not reducible to either neo-liberal responsibilisation on the one hand or the state surrendering power on the other.

As this chapter demonstrates, the concepts of participation and empowerment remain current and contested. Welfare service users, often also recipients of cash benefits, encounter both punitive, deficit-based activation policies and strength-based models of empowerment. Likewise, community

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[34] See https://www.ndis.gov.au/ and https://agedcare.health.gov.au/programs/home-care/consumer-directed-care.

workers work in a social policy context in which market-oriented and community development oriented notions of participation and empowerment co-exist, often in tension. In order to define the terms of the problem of access that I have identified, it is necessary to examine the meanings of user empowerment that staff deployed and the vulnerabilities they aimed to address. The following sections lay out how frontline workers draw-on and re-work divergent cultural scripts to construct 'deserving vulnerability' as a condition worthy of intervention and 'empowered responsibility' as a quality they aim to activate in their clients.

Issues of access in community welfare

My analysis in this chapter is primarily based on interviews with eleven frontline staff and participant observation with two community welfare organisations that specialised in resourcing the highly culturally and linguistically diverse community of Bankstown. Broadly speaking, welfare services in Bankstown are delivered by ethno or religious organisations with a welfare branch and generalist welfare organisations that are none-the-less tailored to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the local population. The staff I interviewed were from generalist welfare organisations that ran primarily on funding from local, state and federal government grants as well as user payments and private industry sponsorship. A range of programmes with different funding channels are often housed within a single organisation. For example, the main community welfare organisation I volunteered at and observed housed family support programs and activities, clinical services, and ethno-specific community groups variously funded by the state Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), the state Department of Education and Communities (DEC), the federal C4C initiative, local council grants, and user payments. The frontline staff I spoke worked in family support or community development as therapists, case managers, youth workers or community development officers. They tended to be either qualified in the human services professions of social work or therapies, or had general qualifications such as a social science degree. Their experience in social services ranged from a few months to a couple of decades. To protect the anonymity of respondents I do not refer to specific job titles or work experience and names are fictional.

Access to Empower (positive access)

The importance of facilitating access to key services for those most in need speaks to 'social inclusion and cost- effectiveness' as key concerns in human service provision (Cortis, 2012, p. 351). It stems from the recognition that disadvantage entails restricted participation in society and lack of access to services, not just lack of financial resources (McDonald, 2010, p. 1). It also reflects concerns that the intended beneficiaries of services targeted at those most in need can be the hardest to involve, particularly in early intervention and prevention programmes (Cortis, Katz & Patulny, 2009, p. v). A growing literature on 'hard-to-reach' populations has sought to understand and overcome barriers to access and engagement (see Cortis et al., 2009 for a review). Barriers to access and continued participation are frequently explained in terms of the preferences and behaviours of those who don't take-up services for which they're eligible. But there is increasing attention to the ways in which the organisation and delivery of services may make them inaccessible to potential beneficiaries on the back of critiques that focusing on user characteristics alone casts them as the problem.

The challenge of involving and retaining 'hard-to-reach' populations in services has become a particular concern given the increased targeting of prevention and early intervention initiatives at communities with the most contact with the child protection system (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2017, p. 15). Child and family support services are designed to alleviate the negative impact of disadvantage on childhood development and family functioning (McDonald, 2010, p. 1). Investment in family support services reflects the growing emphasis on early intervention to improve child welfare by addressing problems before they become entrenched or escalate into crisis (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015). Support services can include therapeutic care, developing parenting knowledge and skills, and promoting safe and supportive families and communities (AIHW, 2017: 3).

During my fieldwork, access was often expressed as the doorway to capacity and community building, succinctly expressed in the title of one Council-led project, *Access to Empower.* Despite the considerable scrutiny of empowerment-based approaches described above, the concept retains currency and is reflected in the professional disposition of many organisations like the ones I

encountered. Most staff used the language of 'empowering clients', 'strength-based approaches', and 'person-centred services' automatically and, for the most part, comfortably. While these approaches are not synonymous, they all signal a paradigm shift prioritising democratic and responsive human service delivery.[35] They are all associated with the move towards harnessing and enhancing the capacity of welfare users and displacing the authority of professionals. Frontline staff invoked these terms to articulate their role in achieving outcomes and to characterise their professional responsibility.

Involving isolated or disengaged groups in programmes as a way of building contact with services and community is a primary goal of 'soft entry' programmes. As the name suggests, soft entry programmes aim to draw participants into contact with services through indirect and unintimidating activities such as playgroups, excursions, and arts and crafts. As one worker described, 'it's based around fun stuff […] it isn't intensive and it's not going to freak them out'. They serve as a hook through which people can be referred on to need-specific services as well as building informal networks with other participants. Soft entry programmes fit within the push to develop receptive, responsive, and accessible services that has been a strong emphasis in the personalisation of service provision. They address isolation as a cause and symptom of vulnerability in the family services sector. Embedding interventions targeting disadvantaged families in universal services or venues is a popular strategy for engaging 'hard-to-reach' individual or groups (Cortis, 2012, p. 355). The organisation I volunteered in facilitated a number of soft-entry activities in partnership with other community welfare organisations and local council, through which I met an inter-agency network of frontline staff.

Staff examples of success stories often reflected the goal of connecting people to services and community. For example, Lihn described a case of an isolated Vietnamese mother with post-natal depression. The mother never left the house and she had low confidence because of her abusive

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[35] For example, involving service users in decisions on how to treat disorders is an example of a deficit-based model of empowerment (Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 58). Nonetheless, these are commonly associated with overlapping principles and values – such as user participation, capacity-building, and self-determination – couched in terms of empowerment (see Powell, Batsche, Ferro, Fox & Dunlap, 1997; Waters & Buchanan, 2017).

parents-in-law. After an initial period of home visits, she began attending a parenting group run by Lihn (herself Vietnamese) structured around parenting skills like cooking, craft, and toddler behaviour. 'We come to her house many times and she reduced her anxiety and she doesn't feel lonely. And after that we normally get the people to the group, and in the group first she was very shy, didn't have a friend, but after that she got a friend'. At the end of each session they would share a modest lunch of Vietnamese food. Lihn proudly recounted an instance where another woman – a victim of domestic violence living in a refuge—said at the end of her first shared meal, 'Wow, I feel like I'm back to my family in Vietnam'. Aaron was similarly enthusiastic about the relationship between parents initiated in a fathers' group: 'So, four months in, there were fathers that were supporting other fathers even outside the program. So they would go and see each other on the weekends and they would go play'. Ideally, users would 'exit' such programmes with stronger informal support networks that would supplant the need for formal service provision. This approach reflects the legacy of a broader emphasis on social capital and community building in social policy, heavily influence by the work of Putnam (2000; see also Leonard & Onyx, 2004).

'Helping people to help themselves' was also a recurring mantra across the range of services I encountered, from clinical services to soft-entry programmes. Staff consistently articulated their responsibility as being to *enable* client access, engagement, and autonomy. The aim of developing autonomy and self-responsibility was apparent when staff somewhat reluctantly described the responsibilities welfare users ought to fulfil when accessing the service:

> Alima: Um, and I think also, just the homework. So basically therapy isn't just about what we do here for half an hour, once a week or once a fortnight – it's largely with… you know, **empowering** the parents to be able to go home and practice the skills and **incorporate them into daily activities**. Some parents are fantastic and some parents [pause], um, they mean well and they try their best, but maybe they're just finding it, yeah, difficult to do, and they just want it fixed when they come.

> Marika: Expectations, responsibilities? Um [pause]. I guess **we empower families** – if there does need to be a follow-up outside the session. **So empowering families to have the responsibility to be able to follow that up.**

> Ali: I would just hope that they would be open and truthful with things and that they would commit to some of the sessions as well.

These quotes from early-career practitioners illustrate the resounding currency of 'empowerment' discourse in the professional lexicon – though the practice they describe arguably more accurately reflects *enablement* that empowerment more expansively imagined. Matilda, a more experienced practitioner, elaborated on how she embeds enablement in her professional practice:

> […] say in the past a family might say to me, "Oh..." – I'm giving a real example here from a month ago – a family would say, "Oh, I don't know how my child goes at that childcare centre. They said he cries, I don't know how he's going, if he's getting better or if…" So there was a time when you might think, "ok, I'll call the centre and find out for the family, and tell the family". And I think that we are really challenging that in our practice, and thinking, how do I support that parent to problem solve and find the best way to connect with the centre. So that might be, for example, in the childcare centre "Oh they're too busy to talk to me". So that might be saying, "I think, because you have quite a few questions here, it would be really good if you could make a time to speak with them. A pre-arranged time and just say it would be 10 minutes or five minutes, but you want to speak to the director and what's a good time to do that. And they suggest a time and you go at that time to talk to them". So its things like that.

This quote illustrates the effort to translate the principle of empowerment into practice and articulates a sense of pedagogic responsibility to strengthen client capacities for problem solving and self-advocacy.

Most staff identified showing up to a scheduled appointment or cancelling the appointment in advance as the primary responsibility of service users, avoiding waste of limited resources. However, the following excerpts also imply that staff are answerable for their ability to build rapport and foster communication with welfare users, again invoking professional responsibility:

> Marika: You know, when you do develop rapport, they're unable to make an appointment or they need to, you know, change, or if circumstances come up, that they're able to, um, to notify us… I guess, let us know when they can. Um, expectations? [pause], I guess yeah, and with them notifying us if they're unable to come, I guess, that kind of builds respect for the service as well.
>
> Matilda: Um, in terms of the families that I am working with, I guess you could say, you know, their responsibility is perhaps, to show up to an appointment that we've made. But I still feel that, you know, if I have communicated really well with a family, and they can't make it or something happens, they will ring me. Um, so failure to attend doesn't happen all that much.

Personal engagement and relationship building tended to be viewed as integral to empowering clients – an approach consistent with contemporary critical social work (Barbara Fawcett & Plath, 2014). As Irene, who has spent who entire working life in the community sector, said, 'it's not the

policy so much, it's the person who drives it the programs and their relationship and their ability to foster relationships'. She went on:

> […] to be able to pick up the cues of when families are feeling not comfortable. And building strategies to ensure that, you know, that they can link with you and feel confident that… And being honest, I think sometimes as professionals we're a little bit too…, want to project we're the know it all's. I mean, just tell them, "I don't know the answers, but I've got a good set of ears. I'll listen to you"; "I don't know what to say now, I don't have the answer, but I'll get back to you" and get back to them; "I'm not sure about that, I'm being honest". Just don't patronise them. Yeah, they're down and out, and they know it before you know it. They know it more than you know it.

More experienced and reflexive respondents like Irene emphasised the relational and communication skills required to carry off their professional responsibilities, such as reflexivity, listening to user perspectives, seeing users' life in context, and avoiding expert hubris – again, all skills that a critical social work perspective prioritises (see Fook, 2012). Matilda similarly explained:

> So I am currently funded by the government to offer this service and I want to make sure that there are no barriers, as few barriers as possible, for families to access this government funded service. And so, I need to look at policies and procedures, but also the way I conduct myself, [for example] in a phone call, to make sure that I optimise families' opportunities to access this service. I've probably given quite few examples of this along the way. Um, and that's you know, my responsibility, and also to support families to access other opportunities in their community.

Here minimising barriers to service access and facilitating access to wider social networks is expressed as a primary goal and responsibility, articulated as a dual obligation to government funders on the one hand and local communities on the other.

While these workers described themselves as the bearers of this responsibility, the pedagogic impulse elicits the latent capacities and imminent self-responsibility of service users. The latter are expected to reciprocate by respecting the limited resources of the service and cancelling appointments if they can't make it, applying professional direction in their daily lives, and being open and truthful in their encounters with services. The problem of access is vulnerable and isolated clients under-accessing or not accessing available supports; the goal of facilitating access is to draw people into networks of support and build their skills and confidence to manage. Having the confidence to ask for help and navigate the system is a sign of empowerment.

This perspective was clearly expressed by Kat, a middle-aged Aboriginal woman and service user who I met through one of the organisations, who implied that she was less vulnerable now that she had learnt how to find and ask for help. 'I think it's okay to ask other people for help and then that's how you learn to help yourself, yeah. Otherwise people don't know – you're just sitting there suffering or whatever when help is out there for whatever you may need'. Speaking of her first intimidating encounter with the Department of Housing, in which she felt like they treated her 'like shit', she later reflects, 'Well, back then I was vulnerable. If they had said that to me today I would have given them a piece of my mind and went higher. But I think Aboriginal people feel more intimidated and don't know where to go or what to do.' This was the only time that one of my interviewees, excepting staff, used the term vulnerable to describe themselves. While it certainly reflects contact with the professional terminology, her story also illustrated the strength she had gained from willingness to ask for help and valuing it as a personal asset rather than a weakness. And yet she locates her growing assertiveness as allowing her to stand-up to welfare agencies – assertiveness that some frontline staff would interpret as overly familiar and expectant. As the next section demonstrates, it can be a fine line between client assertiveness being read as empowered or over-entitled by frontline staff.

Knowing how to work the system (negative access)

Where access was mentioned as excess rather than absence of engagement, the main but not exclusive reference point was Emergency Relief. Emergency Relief programmes distribute material and financial crisis aid, typically food or transport vouchers, part-payment of outstanding rent or utility bills, or household goods and food parcels. Programmes also offer budgeting assistance, advocacy and referrals. The Commonwealth government provides Emergency Relief grants to 300 community and charity organisation across Australia (DSS, 2015a). Generally, applicants attend an appointment and describe the challenges they are facing, presenting proof of their financial and family situation – usually in the form of a Centrelink (Department of Human Services) statement that states income, relationship status and number of dependants. The organisation I observed maintains a register that tracks the number and frequency of requests an applicant has made and the level of

assistance received. There are a small number of organisations in Bankstown that receive a

Commonwealth grant to deliver such programmes.

Even workers from organisations that did not deliver emergency relief tended to use it as the

example of inappropriate access and undue-entitlement. Clients who were familiar with the available

aid – when and where to access it – were often described as 'knowing the tricks' or 'knowing how to

work the system'. Nonetheless, while some staff were emphatic that this betrayed ungracious

expectation and opportunism, other staff were ambivalent about what it indicated about client

entitlement and desert.

Anthony was vocally and vehemently critical of what he perceived as some client's treatment of

Emergency Relief as an income supplement. I queried this by asking him if it might indicate that

meagre public benefits are insufficient to live on, particularly in an expensive city like Sydney.[36] He

was certain payments were sufficient and, what's more, some welfare recipients get more through

their suite of benefits than he earns as a community worker. This was a claim repeated by a number

of staff I interviewed, invariably using the same example of a family with one partner receiving

disability support, the other carer payment, and with many dependents – an example hardly

representative of the average payments received or indicative of levels of financial stress.[37] Anthony

described a time he saw a client smoking in the street, adding, 'They need financial help but

apparently they can afford cigarettes'. His tone seemed to at once assume my agreement but also

suggest he was teaching me a thing or two about 'the reality out there'. Such admonition of how

recipients of public benefits spend tax-payer's money is an axiom of welfare politics. While Anthony's

36 See Morris and Wilson (2014, p. 207) for figures demonstrating the meagre rate of unemployment benefits in Australia compared to other OEDC countries. In 2011 Newstart represented 28% of the average wage, much lower than the average 64% across the seven other 'conservative' welfare states reported by the OECD.
37 According to Department of Social Services data, only 28% of major payments in Bankstown were for Carer Payment and Disability Support Pension combined between March 2016- September 2016, though this says nothing about aggregative payments within a family (see http://data.gov.au/dataset/dss-payments-by-local-government-area/resource/7c8c1ed7-9e62-4e18-bca5-6504b1483ce2).
A 'poverty gap' was reported in an ABS survey of recipients of major payments, which takes into account the actual amount of social security and other income received (not simply maximum benefit rates) and the cost of housing. A gap exists for all major payments, though the distance below the poverty line is greater for recipients of Youth Allowance ($309 a week), Newstart Allowance ($222), Parenting Payment Single ($223) and Carer Payment ($214) compared to the Disability Support Pension ($126) and the Age Pension ($118) (SPRC, 2016, p. 29). See Saunders (2007) for an analysis of the higher needs and costs associated with disability.

is a hard-line opinion, workers (and sometimes welfare users themselves) who were otherwise more

sympathetic than Anthony to the depressed situations people found themselves in repeated versions

of the same sentiment.

Unlike Anthony's decided and assertive opinion, Sandra was far more ambivalent about expectation

and access, though her ambivalence still related to Emergency Relief. She articulated the idea that

there are welfare-savvy people who know the 'tricks':

> Sandra: I do feel the more… the earlier people receive support, the more support they'll get. They become more, obviously more aware of the services about, and the benefits on offer. I don't mean specific to Centrelink benefits but a whole range of benefits; and so there probably would be some individuals, and this would be the minority, that for, want of a better expression, do know how to work the system.
>
> Me: Do you have any examples you can give me?
>
> Sandra: Well, I guess Emergency Relief.

But Sandra had an unsettled view of whether or not knowledge of how to work the system was a

form of taking advantage or indicative of a canny client's underlying need. I quote her at length to

demonstrate her ambivalence:

> Sandra: Yeah so, Emergency Relief, you know, there's the pot of money that organisations get to distribute Emergency Relief. But people will still, if they feel that they can get assistance will make a call into that organisation. But we will get calls, because we are a community organisation. So you refer them to where they can get that stuff, including Emergency Relief. But sometimes they know specifically the agencies. Well they are in need of assistance. I guess, even the people that know how to work the system, they're working the system because they do need help. You wouldn't have people who were comfortable, just doing it for fun. They do need help.
>
> Me: Do you have a particular instance in mind?
>
> Sandra: Well I guess, people that are, phone calls that I have received in the office from individual clients. They kind of know where the agencies are that have the 'Emergency Relief'; how long they have to wait; if they've gone to this agency, they have to wait X-amount of time until they go there, so that's how it works. They're aware of that, it's not like a one off thing, you know. […] But there are obviously going to be individuals that are cluey, that might make it their business to work out well, "What is on offer for me and my family? What benefits can we get from accessing the programs?"

Sandra suggests that knowing what assistance is available, where, when, and how often, both

demonstrates familiarity with the system and indicates that people are in sufficient need to bother

working the system. I asked another worker whether this was an example of resourcefulness and the

kind of initiative they try to instil in their clients. She replied that it did demonstrate resourcefulness

but ultimately it was unproductive as people get stuck in the cycle of looking for short-term relief instead of looking for work to lift themselves out of their present circumstances. In other words, whether interpreted as resourcefulness or opportunism, such familiarity with the system is viewed as indicative of a cycle of dependency.

It's not accessing support per se but accessing material aid without making use of additional support programs that some staff considered problematic – articulated as clients expecting 'a hand-out rather than a hand-up'. When I asked Rina what obligations clients accessing support services should demonstrate, she said it depended on the situation of the person, but used Emergency Relief as example. If someone was accessing crisis assistance regularly, she would say 'Ok, I'm able to help you, but there's another program you need to see, like a financial counsellor.' Signing up to other programs isn't an official condition of receiving assistance, but because aid is given at the discretion of staff they can push for it (or not). 'It's not a condition, but as an encouragement to improve themselves and to put that idea in their mind how to improve themselves with our support.' Rina views this as a matter of good practice – getting at the root of the crisis – as well as fairness – using a limited budget to 'provide support for everyone'.

Fadi viewed disinterest in engaging with support programs as a sign of 'taking the system for granted' and 'lack of initiative'. He compares lack of interest and initiative to people who show gratitude and fortitude:

> There are people that are actually wanting to engage with you so when you come they're asking you all these questions and it's nice to know that there are people like that because sometimes you feel like a lot of people do take advantage of what we do here. Like we've got emergency relief where people can come in for a food voucher and some people will come here [after the requisite interval] to the day, on the day they'll be here because that's when they're eligible.

> Then other people, you know, you see that it's been a year so when you do give them a call and you say, "I just want to see how you're going" and that's where they're like, "I've been really struggling" and then you tell them, "Did you know you're eligible for another voucher" and then they get excited and they're like, "Thank you so much. This is going to help me so much" and, yeah, so there are people that more responsible that they make a genuine effort they just happen to be in not the best of circumstances at the time.

For Fadi and Rina, like other workers I spoke to, expectation signals lack of appreciation; as Rina articulated, 'some people don't appreciate because they have expectation of the welfare'. The

problem of access, then, is one of improper use and over-access, predominantly associated with material and financial aid. Repeatedly accessing aid is seen to demonstrate dependency and failure to 'get it together'. Frontline workers are prone to interpret clients in this way when they do not reciprocate by demonstrating obvious gratitude, by enrolling in additional capacity-building programs, or by accepting their professional direction. My point is not to deny that there are people whose knowledge of and familiarity with the system allows them to squeeze what they can out of it. Rather, I'm interested in how agency is differentially coded as either a positive or negative trait, and how this reinscribes and reanimates the distinction between the deserving and underserving poor.

The problem of access

Clients capable of navigating the system feature in the positive and negative version of access outlined above – as both the goal and the problem of access (see Figure 1). On the one hand, access is a central goal of the re-ordering of services as receptive and responsive, to the extent that staff understand their professional responsibility as facilitating access. Policy and programs aim to draw disengaged and isolated clients into networks of support and equip them with the skills and confidence to self-advocate and self-manage. On the other hand, clients knowing how to access resources and initiate that access is defined as a persistent problem of service provision. Whether seen as betraying undue entitlement and ingratitude or genuine need, it is read as a sign of a deeper passivity and dependency. I use the terms 'deserving vulnerability' and 'empowered responsibility' to articulate the dynamics of defining ideal welfare access in the contemporary Australian context, though they would likely have resonance in other contexts.

The 'problem of access' demonstrates how recipients of support are expected to act in order to be validated as in need and deserving. 'Deserving vulnerability' points to the ways in which 'the vulnerable' become the legitimate targets and consumers of limited resources; 'empowered responsibility' points to the desired outcome of activating responsible agency. This is not to imply that elite discourses about a crisis in welfare determine the perspectives of staff or clients but, rather, to interrogate how hegemonic cultural scripts (which are given meaning and currency not only by elites but by their inscription in the everyday) play out on the frontline of service provision.

These terms indicate the moral economies that animate ideas of vulnerability and responsibility – to be deserving is to be unassuming, grateful, to show evident suffering and fortitude. Ideal recipients humbly accept direction but also actively pursue improvement. This resonates with Mark Peel's description of 'performing poverty' (further discussed in chapter 4), demanding the poor exhibit a balance of suffering, gratitude and unbeaten resolve (Peel 2003). However, linking cultural scripts of access to the concepts of vulnerability and responsibility refines our understanding of the broader paradigms that 'performances of poverty' are part of, and the conditions out of which they emerge.

+ve Access	-ve Access
more access = goal	too much access = problem
initiative as responsibility	initiative as opportunism
receptive to professional direction	rejects professional direction
access to social networks	access to material aid
empowerment	dependency

Figure 1 The problem of access dichotomy

As a caveat to this argument, we must be careful not to overstate how ideal scripts of access determine delivery of services and material aid. The salience of workers' judgements in determining access depends on the specific program, organisation, and funding arrangements. For example, the bureaucratic administration of social security payments is based on different principles of access than family support programs delivered by NGOs. In many of the instances interviewees described, clients were immediately eligible for and received assistance despite the judgements of workers, whether they were immediate judgments or a product of later reflection. Nonetheless, frontline discretion may still operate to deter welfare users accessing support or make their encounters with welfare agencies demeaning and disempowering (a point pursued in chapter 4). For example, a worker at one of the emergency relief sessions I observed would tell applicants that the assistance was a 'one-off' to deter them from coming back even though this was not technically the case. Some

workers would accept answers for why people were seeking extra assistance that were challenged by others. They seemed less suspicious of the people asking for help and did not press them for details as long as they ticked the required boxes indicating eligibility. As one worker put it between appointments, 'that woman dramatised her situation,' qualifying by adding, 'that doesn't mean she wasn't genuine.' However, in the sessions I observed in both organisations administering emergency relief, everyone went away with the help they came for. In this instance, ideal scripts of access had little bearing on technical eligibility yet they affected interactions between welfare staff and users. Moreover, the construction of ideal scripts of deserving vulnerability and empowered responsibility points to how the problem of access in the community welfare sector links in to a broader politics that structures and justifies the distribution of material resources.

I argue that the ways in which access is defined as a problem provides insights into the cultural institutions that construct 'ideal' recipients and thus circumscribe the lines of deservingness and entitlement. So far I have focused on how frontline staff draw on and reproduce hegemonic cultural scripts in their encounters with service users. In the next section, I elaborate an analysis of why these processes of categorisation occur by examining the conditions of frontline welfare work and the systemic and professional tensions it embodies.

Teach a man to fish

A key point of the problem of access that I have identified is that practitioners and professionals work within social policy contexts in which market-oriented and community development-oriented notions of participation and empowerment co-exist in tension. This model gives rise to 'techniques of pedagogy', such as those described by some of the frontline workers I spoke to, that aim to inculcate and activate self-management and self-determination in service users, with a strong emphasis on personal responsibility. However, as Janet Newman (2010, p. 719) argues, the rise of techniques of pedagogy in social services entails the reconfiguration rather than the removal of professional power. Frontline worker's definitions of the problem of access provide a useful lens for understanding the shifting dynamics of professional power and the systemic and structural tensions

they articulate. To analyse these conditions I draw on Michael Lipsky's (2010 [1980]) influential theory of 'street- level bureaucracy'. While Lipsky's framework has been enthusiastically taken up and is widely accepted (Brodkin, 2012; Lipsky, 2010, sec. preface), it has also been revised to account for the changing landscape of public service provision and refined to interrogate the nature of discretion in specific organisational contexts. Likewise, this chapter modifies his framework to better account for professional dispositions and values (Evans, 2011) and to draw attention to the bodily and sensorial dimension of frontline discretion. This is contextualised by welfare reforms that prioritise lean and efficient budgets within a consumer driven model of service provision. Lipsky's analysis of the role of frontline workers in public organisations and the 'dilemmas' that characterise street level work lends itself well to thinking through professional practices of categorisation in the context of prevalent yet divergent ideas of empowerment that characterise contemporary social policy.

Ambiguous goals and moral judgements

Lipsky argues that practitioner discretion is inherent not only to the delivery of policy but also to the production of policy. Policies take shape through the decisions and interpretation of frontline workers. According to Lipsky, street level work is 'deeply conflicted' (Brodkin, 2012, p. 941); as the providers of 'public benefits and sanctions', the role of street-level bureaucrats embodies the tension between responding to individuals (flexibility) and enforcing standardisation (fairness) (Lipsky, 2010, p. 10). Further, inadequate resources to meet consistent and escalating demand means they work under constrained conditions and must therefore develop routines and strategies to cope with the gap between the ideal of the work they carry out and what they can actually achieve. The decisions and interpretations of frontline workers thus significantly inform allocation of and access to public resources and services.

Significantly for the purposes of this chapter, Lipsky (2010, p. 105)identifies categorisation as a necessary part of the people-processing work of public organisations: 'People-processing bureaucracies have two tasks: to develop an appropriate set of categories in terms to which people will be processed, and to map clients in terms of their qualifying or disqualifying characteristics.' He

suggests that the judgements and interpretations of workers will inevitably be informed by personal inclinations and orientations, as well as broader societal assumptions about moral worthiness, particularly when the decisions they are required to make explicitly call on moral judgement (Lipsky, 2010, pp. 106–10). However, crucially, for Lipsky it is the *conditions of work* rather than personal or professional qualities that 'nurtures' bias in this context. The necessary differentiation of clients in a context of considerable discretion and resource constraints means that street-level work is characterised by a 'structural receptivity to prejudicial attitudes' (Lipsky, 2010, p. 115). In other words, the categorisation of clients may find expression in stereotypes inflected by social divisions, but 'the need for simplification exists, so to speak, prior to the stereotype' (Lipsky, 2010, p. 115). Categorisation is not simply a practical strategy for processing clients but also a mental strategy for coping with the motivation gap where conflicting goals and limited resources constrain work practices. Particular constructions of clients and the job serve to 'rationalise' the discrepancy between the ideal and the reality of service provision.

Lipsky identifies 'conflicting or ambiguous goals' (2010, p. 81) as an 'enabling condition of street level-bureaucracy' (Ellis, 2011, p. 228). The shift towards personalisation creates new kinds of tensions and ambiguities for practitioners. For example, Foster and her colleagues (2006) found practitioner discretion is critical in the assessment process to determine and allocate direct payments or individual budgets to care recipients, both instruments of service personalisation. This is in a context in which the pressure to allow greater voice and input from service users is in tension with managerialist imperatives to control elibility criteria and scrutinise performance (Foster et al., 2006, p. 227). Likewise, in her studies of adult social care conducted during a period of transition toward a consumer-directed care (CDC) model, Ellis (2007; 2011) found that CDC renewed the legitimacy of paternalist discretion rather than displacing it. She attributes this not only to the context of competing objectives of greater responsiveness and increased targeting, but as a defensive response to the erosion of professional power with the shift to user empowerment approaches (Ellis, 2011, p. 238) (a point I return to shortly).

The ambiguous goals arising from the co-existence of market-oriented and community development oriented notions of empowerment produce the kinds of tensions described by Lipsky, but in line with contemporary policy principles and service innovations. The empowerment model has both 'political conservative and radical possibilities' (Fook, 2012, p. 56 following Bastow 1994). Both vulnerability and responsibility are likewise potent and malleable concepts that can emphasise either individualist or collectivist orientations (Brown, 2011). This is evident in the tension between self-responsibility and social responsibility as principles underpinning social policy. As the excerpts from my interviews with staff suggest, deserving vulnerability and empowered responsibility are mutually reinforcing ideals. Both sides of the definition of the problem of access rely on the 'agency paradigm' (Kenny & Clarke, 2010, p. 7), in which capacity for action is foregrounded and privileged, particularly individual capacity. Clients capable of navigating the system feature in both versions, yet only one qualifies as empowered while the other is problematic. One might dispute the description of knowing how to work the system as empowered, yet initiative, knowledge, and self-advocacy are common to both. Paradoxically, where access is viewed as negative access, the initiative and knowledge required to navigate the system can become a marker of underlying dependency and passivity rather than responsible agency. The bipolar definition of access as a central problem of service provision thus retraces the lines of entitlement and is infused with moral judgements about desirable and appropriate access. The ideals of deserving vulnerability and empowered responsibility are compelling precisely because they are morally charged and malleable, appealing to both social justice and restrictionist views of welfare.

The ideal of empowered responsibility and, I would argue, its shortcomings, is encapsulated in the aphorism, 'Give a man a fish a you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.' A few times workers cited this saying (though not always verbatim) to explain the principles underpinning community welfare. For example, Rina responded to my question about client obligations by saying: 'So they have that responsibility because we're here to help them, not to provide the fish for them [but] to teach them how to fish then they're able to go and fish for themselves.' This saying illustrates the tensions underlying the community welfare sector – with its

dual origins in democratising social movements and fiscal crisis and neo-liberal reform. The saying

also articulates the differentiation of material provision of resources and cultivation of human capital

as principles of social support used to justify the redistribution of opportunities rather than

resources. However, while this distinction was crucial to Sen's (1999, p. 87) highly influential

capabilities theory, which insists that low income is not the only factor that undermines capabilities,

he also acknowledges that capabilities require material resources to flourish.[38] While it speaks to the

democratising agenda behind enabling rather than paternalistic welfare institutions,[39] it also

demonstrates the justification for conditioning, if not withdrawing, direct provision of support

because it is incapacitating. The apparent wisdom of the saying elides the context in which it is being

applied; it implies control of production to achieve subsistence – a misleading analogy given the low-

pay, low-skill sectors of a deregulated labour market that the poor are actually compelled to

participate in through activation policies, characterised by 'an erosion of pay, conditions, job

security, and family friendly arrangements' (Cortis, Cowling, & Meagher, 2008, p. 5; Cortis &

Meagher, 2009, p. 634).

Following Lipsky, then, the problem of access as I have defined it arises from the tension generated

by the prominence and ambiguity of the concept of empowerment in community welfare provision,

animated by both market-driven and social justice agendas. For Lipsky, while the moral judgements

that street level bureaucrats must negotiate draw on wider assumptions about deservingness, the

impulse to categorise derives from the conditions of work. However, reading Lipsky's contribution

through a more nuanced account of moral judgement may provide a richer and subtler

understanding of the moral economies that animate the way access is defined as a problem and the

'contradictory pressures' (Sayer, 2005, p. 142) it reflects. An understanding of moral evaluations not

simply as formal standards but rather embodied dispositions that orient and energise people and

their actions may help account for the (affective) resonance of certain scripts, including 'deserving

vulnerability' and 'empowered responsibility'.

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[38] See Lister (2004) for a concise review of the debates around Sen's definition of poverty.
[39] Though paternalism has been refashioned outside of custodial institutions to 'supervision within society' (Mead, 1997c, p. 9)

Sayer's definition of morality and how it infuses social interaction is useful here. He defines morality simply as 'the matter of what kinds of behaviour are good, and thus how we should treat others and be treated by them.' (Sayer, 2005, p. 8). Morality thus relates to ideas about what is good and how one should live. Sayer approaches morals not as formal norms and rules but, rather, 'informal embodied dispositions'. Moral evaluations – understood as emotional and embodied responses that 'ranges from the subtlest differences in ease or unease, preferences and aversions, through to strong identification and approval or revulsion and disapproval' (Sayer, 2005, p. 139) – are part of social life. As Sayer (2005, p. 139) explains:

> We are evaluative beings. Our streams of consciousness have an evaluative dimension which ranges from spontaneous, unexamined, unarticulated feelings about other people, objects and practices, and about what to do, through to more considered evaluations of those things.

While Sayer is specifically concerned with 'the moral dimension of class', as the title of his book suggests, he insists on acknowledging the extent to which moral evaluations vary independently of class and other social divisions in hand with how they map onto such social divisions. In this sense he echoes Lipsky's insistence that the need for judgement in street level bureaucracy precedes the content of the judgements, regardless of the social divisions and cultural narratives they reflect. Such judgements, Sayer (2005, p. 143 emphasis in original) argues, '*would need to be made – and are made – even in the absence of such social divisions*'. However, Sayer locates the compulsion to categorise within the embodied minutia of social interaction, which can then be understood as exacerbated by the people-processing work of street-level organisations.

Moreover, as embodied dispositions of sentient beings, moral evaluations may be animated by boredom and pleasure, as Lea (2012) argues. Lea complicates accounts of policy making that attribute agency to a coherent and rational State. Rather, she argues:

> 'the state' and its imagined location within rule making bodies such as policy bureaus, is inhabited by sentient, encultured beings who think, feel, and emote, and make meaning within the worlds they are symbiotically shaped by and which they help produce' (Lea, 2012, p. 110).

Using the notoriously dysfunctional Northern Territory Emergency Response as an example, she explains the compulsion to construct Aboriginal communities as anarchic through the discourse of

crisis in terms of its revitalising appeal for bureau-professionals accustomed to the monotony of

prosaic 'bureaucratic routine' (Lea, 2012, p. 120). This fits with Lipsky's argument that the

construction of clients and the job serves to 'rationalise' the discrepancy between the ideal and the

reality of policy making, in this case the discrepancy between the reality of prosaic routine and the

ideal of "making a difference". But it also suggests that Lipsky's instrumental account could be

fleshed out, so to speak, by accounting for the compulsions engendered by feeling bodies.

Frontline staff judged clients as reciprocating when they display qualities valued by staff, including

emotive qualities like gratitude and receptivity. The examples I have drawn together suggest that

particular demeanours and dispositions may be more readily read as reciprocating – like deference

and gratitude – and therefore interpreted as conforming to ideal scripts of access. Others qualities –

like loudness, large groups, and ostentatious jewellery – can be interpreted as 'group' attributes that

are indicative of expectation and entitlement. The distinction Janet made between second-

generation Arabic-speaking women and newly arrived migrants is instructive. Second-generation

Arabic women's supposed arrogance is contrasted with the newly arrived migrants who are

unfamiliar with the system and thus willing and grateful recipients of assistance. Janet went on to

further distinguish between deserving and underserving welfare recipients, assuming that Muslim

men attending prayers on Friday is evidence that they don't work:

> And also every Friday, you would go to… For example on Friday, I'll go to Punchbowl; you will
> see lots of people going to the… some sort of house, as a Mosque. That means lots of young
> men or middle aged male; they are all in the working age group, are not working. They're not
> working, they're praying on Friday. So then on the other hand, there's lots of people work
> hard for, you know, for $20, $15, one hour, and when you have working poor, and you have
> people who have five children; don't work, and their actual income, after all their expenses
> are deducted, is higher than people who go to work five days a week. It's totally unfair.

She invoked reverberating racialised discourses of Islamic practice as morally alien to Australian

fairness.[40] Janet's rant was highly emotive; she became more animated when she spoke about Arab

and Muslim misuse of welfare, the pitch of her voice rose, she spoke more quickly and

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[40] Articulated in the extreme in the catchphrase 'jihadi dole bludgers' associated with moral outrage about
'home-grown terrorists' who receive welfare benefits (eg. Benson, 2015), described by one commentator
as 'the most maligned of the bludger family' (Keneally, 2014).

spontaneously, her responses were less considered.[41] The qualities she singles out – loudness, large groups, and ostentatious jewellery – are sensory impressions of racialised phenotypes and overlaid with discourses about Arabic-speaking, specifically Muslim, bodies and practices.

The impressions Janet describes strongly echo the construction of Lebanese Muslims in an Australian coastal town and popular working-class holiday destination as imposing and out-of-place that Randa Abdel-Fattah (2016) documents. Abdel-Fattah (2016, p. 324) found that long-term residents described Lebanese Muslim holiday makers as 'loud, rude and showy' and experienced them moving about in big groups as 'taking over'. She uses the concept of habitus – culturally conditioned bodily bearings and dispositions – to explain 'incompatible embodiment and everyday rituals, body techniques and ways of inhabiting public space' as the main source of discomfort and tension.[42] However, as Abdel-Fattah (2016, pp. 327, 330) notes, accounting for the relations of power that infuse such encounters requires understanding that they are emplaced and 'coalesce around histories of practice and discourse,' such that some bodies more than others become 'the locus of negative meanings'. Ash Amin (2010, p. 7) makes a resonant point in his explanation of the persistence of race in terms of the repetition and 'automaticity not only of coding bodies and cultures, but also of affective and evaluative response'. He argues that the durability of race operates through the interplay of 'practiced histories of racism and human compulsions to categorize' – the weaving together of 'handed down folk-summaries' of others and sensory-affective signals that fuel our sorting instincts; a mode of racism he calls 'phenotypical' (Amin, 2010, p. 7). This work points to the ways in which visceral, pre-conscious evaluations both enrol wider cultural scripts of belonging and feed into more considered or articulated judgements.

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[41] I wasn't present for the encounters she described, and I only have access to her narration of them, inevitably told with me as audience in mind. So it is with the interview method. Nonetheless, interviews are also interpersonal encounters and I have tried to be attentive to affective cues in my interviews, particularly where participant-observation of client/staff encounters was limited. I read the emotive retelling as an indication of the impression the original experience made on her, even if that impression is not identical to that experienced through the narration.

[42] See also Wise (2009) for a related analysis of the use of beach space.

Professional power

While I have differentiated between neoliberal and community development oriented conceptions of empowerment, the matter is not simply one of 'bad' market notions of empowerment and 'good' community development ideas of the term. While there has been debate about the extent to which professional power has been diminished by managerialism or divested to service users through personalisation (see for discussion Fawcett et al., 2010, pp. 126–8), my findings echo that of other research that has found that professional power has been reconfigured rather than stamped out by new policy directions and organisational arrangements (eg. Ellis, 2007; Foster et al., 2006). Professional dispositions and discourses come to bear on the ways that frontline staff define their work and the problem of access.

Evans (2011) argues that Lipsky underplays professional values and overstates the distinction between managers and professionals. He finds that practitioners are motivated by professional values as well as organisational goals, which Lipsky scarcely acknowledges. Likewise, managers, often once professionals themselves, can share professional orientations aligned with staff rather than central management. Ellis (2011, p. 236) likewise argues that managerialism has not stamped out but rather created new conditions for professional discretion in which managers 'collude'. She distinguishes between different types of discretion based on whether it is organisationally legitimated or unsanctioned, the degree of influence of managerialism on the one hand and professionalism on the other. Lipsky emphasises the dilemmas that structure bias into work, rather than professional orientations or values, suggesting that the discretion arising from work conditions can even be 'at odds with professional codes of ethics' (Ellis, 2011, p. 223). Ellis uses street-level discretion to denote the conditions outlined by Lipsky, where managerial pressures result in informal discretion aimed at coping with the practical and psychological demands of the work. In contrast, value discretion is bestowed on professionals who are 'entrusted' to make ethical judgements based on their 'professional training and code of conduct' (Ellis, 2011, p. 223). Importantly, she demonstrates that the salience and degree of different types of discretion is contingent of the specific organisational context.

The description of empowerment as both the process and the goal of frontline practice reflects social work values and skills and the 'moral imagination' of workers who want to make a difference (Marston & McDonald, 2012, p. 1026). Staff often used the language of empowerment to describe their goals and responsibilities, with various degrees of reflexivity and grounding in practice depending on their length of experience in the field. This was particularly true of clinical professionals, though the language was common across most of the staff interviews. Staff defined their role as initiating and precipitating change, even if that change was one of greater self-motivation and self-management or improved connection to social networks. Empowerment as a pedagogic practice led by professionals is epitomised in the saying 'give a man a fish you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish you feed him for a lifetime.' This version of empowerment 'tends to cast practitioners in a leading role' (Solas, 1996, p. 152) in changing people or institutions. Marston and McDonald (2012) argue that the imagined identity of social workers as 'heroic agents' of social change prevails in social work education despite being at odds with the constraints and challenges that characterise contemporary work conditions, a discrepancy between theory and practice that practitioners can experience as disempowering (see Fook, 2012, pp. 59, 124–5). While some have suggested that this reimaging of professional practice provides a chance to revalue professionalism given the rise of managerialism, it could also manifest as a defensive assertion of professional discretion (Askheim, 2003, p. 229; Ellis, 2011, p. 238).

Whether clients are interpreted as displaying empowered initiative or arrogant presumption speaks to this tension in the role of the professional. For example, Matilda described the professional discomfort that can arise when clients push for a preferred approach, suggesting it can be 'a fine line' between interpreting a client's initiative as presumptuous or empowered. She gave the example a family asking for a support letter for social housing, and a colleague responding 'you know, they're just using you. Don't do that letter for them.' When I asked her what determined the crossing of that line, she illustrated by mimicking the comments of colleagues: 'In fact, any act of empowered behaviour, unless I've given it to you and created it in you – in that case I like it – but if you have come up with it yourself, you're stepping over the line a little bit there.' The emphasis on discomfort

is significant; drawing on Sayer and Lea, it may be a spontaneous and unexamined sense of unease, rather than a 'rational' and considered judgement. As Lea's (2012; 2008) work suggests, professional codes and aspirations are also infused by an affective dimension, propelled by interest, passion, anxiety. Matilda's observations, alongside the characterisation of appropriate and problematic access outlined above, suggest that *who* initiates can matter to how initiative is interpreted by staff. The push-pull of professional and client agency as the locus of change – whereby practitioners are cast as responsible for eliciting personal responsibility in welfare users – seems to be one of the tipping points between positive and negative access.

This signals the way staff imagine their professional identity through the construction of welfare users and their relationship to them. To return to the example that I began the chapter with, Janet's characterisation of second generation Arabic speaking mothers suggests discomfort about professional expertise that taps into broader questions of belonging and the negotiation of professional identity. Puzzling over their low rate of participation in welfare services, she said:

> There's no language barrier because they speak English since they were born here. And sometimes I felt like, "well it's not me". Because I've been thinking, those women probably think "I speak more English than you do. How do you know much?" Because I speak English with accent, and I'm from another culture. But when they got to know me, they just started realising that I do know lots of things. But then, I've been thinking, my colleagues they were Anglo Australian, and they've been here for years in the field, and the participation rate from this particular group is as low as mine, probably even lower; so it's nothing to do with me.

Her response betrays a certain anxiety about their perception of her ability to give advice as a Chinese migrant with less of a stake, so to speak, in the country than her Australian-born clients. She worries that her foreign accent implies lack of familiarity and professional knowledge, but is reassured that her Anglo Australian colleagues encounter similarly low participation in the programs they run. Her assertion that these mothers are arrogant because 'they speak English' has particular significance given her own anxieties about their perception of her as foreign and therefore unknowledgeable.

It is important to note that new configurations of professional power 'privilege professional conceptions of the purpose of empowerment' (Newman, 2010, p. 719). Regardless of the mission of community services, service users may be uninterested in (and indeed unaware of) professional

aspirations to empower. There are clients who simply want practical help without the direction associated with it; to repeat Alima's phrasing, 'they just want it fixed when they come'. Hasan, a Pakistani father on a bridging visa, was frustrated that there was no available assistance with the appeal case for his denied asylum application, just emergency relief, which he proudly refused. Bill, an older Aboriginal man, was exasperated by the suggestion of financial counselling when he sought emergency relief because his problem was not having enough money: 'I say to them, "we don't get the finance to work the budget out." Fadi described clients who had been referred to him but had little interest in the shared goal setting that he employed, which he interpreted as lack of effort and reciprocity on the client's behalf. But people may resist accessing services as a way of preserving autonomy and dignity as Nessa, a young Aboriginal mother, suggested when I interviewed her, proudly explaining how she talked her way out of a parenting skills course that was a condition of housing assistance from a NGCSO: 'they just kept watchin ya and you had to go to playgroup to keep your house […] and I was like, "nah, I'm a grown arse woman, I don't need people watching me."' This highlights the possible discrepancy between what welfare users understand as empowerment and the normative assumptions of agencies and professionals.

Conclusion

The problem of access reflects cultural scripts about access, systemic tensions in the reordering of social support, as well as professional dynamics that emerge from transformed institutional arrangements. The ways in which access is defined as a problem provides insights into the cultural institutions that construct 'ideal' recipients and thus circumscribe the lines of deservingness and entitlement. Such cultural institutions can't be disentangled from the socio-economic context that structures welfare provision or reordered dynamics of professional power. Creating accessible service networks is a key goal of community service provision, where access is envisioned as a positive portal to empower vulnerable, particularly isolated, members of the community by facilitating connection and building skills and confidence. On the other hand, access also figures as a key problem when clients know how to work the system and seek out services and resources where

they can. Initiative and confidence to navigate the system are part of both versions of the problem, yet in the former it is a product of empowerment and in the latter a sign of underlying dependency.

The problem of access that I have identified demonstrates how responsible agency remains an object of policy and a point of tension in the discursive field of social policy, at the level of government policy and professional practice. The agency paradigm is reflected in ideals of deserving vulnerability and empowered responsibility that animate the problem of access. However, these ideals derive from divergent conceptions of disadvantage and agendas of empowerment that can exist in tension despite their semantic congruity. Moreover, this chapter demonstrates how racialised perceptions of ethno-cultural difference inflect framings of access as a defining problem in a multicultural community welfare landscape. The gratitude nexus is the point where the problem of access and the problem of cultural difference appears to intersect, where particular cultural styles and demeanours become marked as arrogant and expectant and others as humble and receptive. This suggests that some bodies fit ideal scripts of access more readily than others. How staff in the community sector use, rework, and challenge these ideals is indicative not simply of personal or professional assumptions about and attitudes to need and entitlement, but a broader cultural and economic politics of access that structures the distribution of material resources. In this chapter I have focused on how this politics of access is negotiated and played out on the frontline of community welfare services from a staff perspective. In the remaining chapters I will focus on the perspectives and experiences of welfare users on the other side of the exchange. The following chapter zooms out to consider how my interview participants framed responsibility to claim and justify entitlement to social support, focusing broadly on the principles of access that inform understandings and experiences of social citizenship in the civic and national spheres.

Chapter three – Seatbelts and safety nets: expectation, reciprocity and belonging

> Like we don't wear seat belts [in Pakistan]. Yeah, mostly the traffics, when you get to the intersection here or to the roundabout, you have to wait for your turn, and in my country nobody waits, everybody wants to go as quick as he want to. These kinds of things. […] If you follow the rules our country has the potential, our people have the potential, if we follow the rules, we can come to [match] any civil country. Because we do have a lot of potential.

Sabiha was explaining to me the difference between rules in Australian and Pakistan, where she grew up. The mother of three had lived in Australia for the last 15 years after migrating to marry her Pakistani-Australian husband. Family benefits (Parenting Payment Partnered and Family Tax benefits) supplemented earnings from her husband's work as a security guard. Like most of the people I interviewed, she nominated following the rules as the primary obligation of citizenship.

> I think follow the rules and everything comes in rules, the traffic lights and when you go to the bank you need to make a queue, this kind of small things make a big difference. If you did these things you feel good and your country will be much beautiful.

Like Janet's impressions of appropriate demeanours in service access discussed in the previous chapter, Sabiha read civility in cultural terms. Another time she complained to me that 'Lebanese people think the rules aren't for them', describing traffic related improprieties like honking their horns from their cars to greet people outside the school or stopping in the middle of the road to chat to someone on the sidewalk. Later she said she preferred the Campbelltown area, where some of her relatives live, because 'Aussies [Anglos] follow the rules'. For Sabiha, the rules and etiquette that governed transport and traffic were potent embodiments of the degree of care expressed by the public and the commitment to be civilised. She was far more roused by the topic of incivility than welfare entitlements, acknowledging the latter with complacent pragmatism. But the orderliness of life in Australia was not its main drawcard. She missed her family and wanted to return to Pakistan but said she never would. Her husband had diabetes and healthcare and medicine was free here and expensive in Pakistan. Her children's schooling and future was here, and she wanted to stay with them. The 'care about' others expressed through public order and the 'care for' others provided through the welfare state for Sabiha symbolised Australia's status as a civilised country.

This chapter considers how respondents frame their expectations of social support and the social infrastructures that engender claims of entitlement. It foregrounds the 'social' dimension of social citizenship – the social lives and social relations through which 'we develop a sense of our rights as others' obligations and others' rights as our obligations' (Isin, Brodie, Juteau, & Stasiulis, 2008, p. 7). If social citizenship is fundamentally about the boundaries and terms of inclusion and exclusion in the citizenry (Patrick, 2017, p. 294), this approach focuses on how those boundaries and terms are brought to life. As Cardona et al. put it (2006, p. 52), 'there is a need to ask how questions of entitlement and duty relate to the diversity of culture in everyday life.' For their part, they found that CALD carers in particular expressed ideas about not wanting to ask for too much or be a burden on the system. Feelings about accessing entitlements were coloured by migration history, sometimes expressed as a conflicting sense of gratitude and fear of drawing attention to themselves (Cardona et al., 2006, p. 54). In this chapter I show how expectations of welfare provision are negotiated and confirmed in the context of everyday experiences and biographical circumstances, and the elastic ways people fit the details of their lives into normative conceptions of need, deservingness, and entitlement. I draw on Ghassan Hage's (2003) concept of the 'social gift' to consider how my respondents frame and relate to social welfare, foregrounding the social infrastructure that makes certain forms of relationality possible.

I prompted my interviewees by asking questions about what makes a good citizen, whether they felt supported by the government, who should get help from the government and what kind of help they should receive. Part of my aim was to explore diverse expectations of the welfare state, both as a principle and a practice. The chapter begins by giving a brief overview of shifting conceptions of social citizenship that inform the approach taken. I then trace a broad outline of the expectations of welfare and conceptions of citizenship expressed in interviews, placing it in register against the terrain of existing literature on welfare and citizenship orientations. The final section offers a more thickly situated account of the modes of reciprocity respondents invoked to claim and justify entitlement to social support and the different forms of belonging they signal. Like other studies of social security recipients (Murphy et al., 2011) and the Australian public (Wilson et al., 2009), I found

that generally views of the welfare state amongst participants were diverse and complex, contrary to

popular claims that welfare recipients in particular (Saunders, 2004) and Australians in general

(Tingle, 2013) have insatiable expectations of government support. More significantly, this chapter

draws attention to the affective-relational dynamics that animate different modes of access to social

rights and the multiple forms of ties, obligations, duties and reciprocities (Trnka & Trundle, 2014)

that give social citizenship meaning in everyday life.

Social citizenship

> A new welfare orthodoxy that stresses reduced access to public welfare provision, a stronger
> link between rights and responsibilities, and an increasingly moral agenda is now dominant
> (Dwyer, 2000, p. 95)

The British sociologist T.H. Marshall's (Marshall, 1977 [1949]) classic thesis crystallised the social

dimension of modern citizenship – the right to a minimum standard of living and economic security

and the benefit of participation in society – alongside the civil and the political. He defined the social

rights of citizenship in both narrow and expansive terms, encompassing both 'a modicum of

economic welfare and security' and the enjoyment of a 'civilised life' (Marshall, 1977, p. 78). He

traced the historical development of civil rights in England to the eighteenth century and the

establishment of political rights to the nineteenth century. Social rights arose in the twentieth

century as a result of working class struggles for social security, when the bundle of entitlements that

were endowed to citizens in postwar democratic nations – including public education, social housing,

health care, unemployment and retirement provisions, and social security – were attained as social

rights. For Marshall, the liberal-democratic welfare state was required to guarantee the full

expression of citizenship rights, ensuring equal enjoyment of and participation in society (Kymlicka &

Norman, 1994, p. 354). While Marshall also outlined the corresponding duties of citizenship, his

emphasis on unconditional rights has drawn criticism from architects of welfare conditionality like

Giddens (1994) in the UK and Mead (1997a) in the US (Dwyer, 2004, p. 267).

As is now extensively documented (and described in chapter 1), the emphasis on 'passive' rights in a

Marshallian approach has been displaced by welfare reform in recent decades prioritising conditional

entitlements derived from 'active' citizenship (Dwyer, 2004 on UK reform; and Gilbert, 2009 on

reform in the US; see Macintyre, 1999 and; Mendes, 2009 for an overview of Australian reform). A revisioned model of citizenship prioritises obligations over rights and endorses personal responsibility. This reconstruction of the welfare state and the challenges posed to Marshall's model of citizenship by multiculturalism, feminism, environmentalism and transnationalism (Roche, 2002, p. 73), as well as 'debates over the nature of the social' at the turn of the century (Isin et al., 2008), has prompted theorists to reconceptualise social citizenship. In the context of the 'retreat' of multiculturalism and the welfare state, scholars have sought a more dynamic understanding of the social dimension of social citizenship that can make sense of the ostensible decline of the social in neo-liberal social policy regimes (Brodie, 2008, p. 23). The burgeoning field of citizenship studies has precipitated the development of a sociological concept of citizenship that is attentive to 'norms, practices, meanings, and identities' (Isin & Turner, 2002, p. 4). Citizenship is defined not just as a legal status with accompanying rights and duties, but also as the practices and social processes through which claims to such rights are enacted and even embodied in law (Isin et al., 2008; Isin & Turner, 2002, p. 4; Isin & Wood, 1999, p. 4). In the final section of this chapter I relate Ghassan Hage's concept of the 'social gift' to this expanded conceptualisation of social citizenship.

Dean (2013, p. S33) takes up the task of reconceptualising social citizenship in this vein, foregrounding 'sociality' and negotiation': 'Social citizenship is best conceptualised as a multilayered process of negotiation. It is constituted through the recognition and claiming of needs, the acknowledgement of claims as rights and the formulation of rights in specific social contexts'. This an inherently social process – as interdependent beings humans make claims on each other based on shared experiences and understandings of need, which are interpreted and recognised through negotiation. Social citizenship is a 'quotidian human practice [that] reflects the manner in which we frame our claims on others and recognise the claims they make on us as *social* rights' (Dean, 2013, p. S40). Dean argues that a 'contractarian' liberal discourse and 'solidaristic' civic republican discourse have historically been the two broad approaches to citizenship. The former is contractarian to the extent that it frames the citizen as 'an autonomous bargaining subject' who trades their goods for a livelihood and certain individual freedoms 'for collective guarantees against interference or unfair

treatment by competitor citizens'. Civic Republican discourse frames the citizen as 'a vulnerable associating subject who looks to the social collective to which she belongs and on which she depends of mutual protection against shared risk' (Dean, 2013, p. S38). According to Dean (2013, p. S38), social rights are shaped not only through these competing understandings of citizenship, but also through their origins as 'doctrinal' rights endowed 'from above' or 'claims-based' rights demanded 'from below'. He uses the intersection of origins and discourses to construct a heuristic typology of rights-based approaches that differentiates the construction of needs and terms of entitlement that underpin them. This approach allows for various and contested interpretations of needs and foregrounds how different versions of social citizenship emerge and achieve dominance in a given context.

Wilson et al. (2009) demonstrate contestation in the Australian context at the level of public attitudes to social policy. They use the term 'welfare orientations', following Svallfor, to refer to 'the normative values underlying "social arrangements" of the welfare state' (2009, p. 510). As they suggest, 'an overview of patterns of support for welfare helps situate those norms which are widely held, and those which are more contested'. They argue that Australian welfare politics is marked by contest over four main orientations to social policy: 'pro-welfare' targeted poverty relief, 'pro-welfare' universal service provision, 'anti-welfare' reduction of spending/ promotion of self-reliance, and 'anti-welfare' paternalist enforcement of welfare rules. They analysed the results from two questions related to welfare and tax in the Australian Survey of Social Attitudes, 2005, which asked respondents to prioritise from a list of four choices that aligned with these main orientations. The results indicate stronger support for a pro-welfare stance, with 80% of respondents choosing either targeting welfare or improving services as their first preference. 43% chose welfare services as their first priority. 16% of respondents chose the paternalist option 'to cut off benefits to people who don't deserve help,' while there was little support for directly cutting welfare. Welfare preferences were broadly consistent with priorities for taxation, indicating strong preference for targeting welfare as a 'hand-up' to the poor and targeting tax cuts to low-income earners, consistent with the Australian targeted welfare model. While they identify contest over preferred arrangements, they

found that the welfarist option of taxing to fund services, rather than anti-welfarist preferences, was the main challenge to the dominant targeting model. Wilson et al. conclude that people draw on a common set of norms about the appropriate role of government to judge taxation and welfare, supporting the claim that welfare institutions condition public views on welfare. The following section broadly characterises welfare orientations expressed by my interview respondents and the wider conceptions of citizenship, deservingness, and entitlement to which they relate.

Welfare orientations

Overall, amongst the people I interviewed there was a wide expectation that the government should be responsible for looking after those in need. But while needs-based entitlement was widely endorsed, interpretations of entitlement were also inflected by ideas of reciprocity, contribution and virtue. Concern about these issues animated considerable, though usually partial and qualified, support for welfare conditionality. The common discourse of unfairness particularly reflected contested and sometimes contradictory expectations of welfare and conceptions of citizenship.[43] While this section is primarily descriptive, it serves to situate the views expressed by my respondents within the existing terrain of literature on welfare expectations and orientations and provides context for the more textured analysis in the latter part of the chapter.

Needs-based entitlement

Amongst the people I interviewed, needs-based entitlement was the most common justification for government provision, with basic need forming the basis of an implied collective right. The expectation of state support for those most in need amongst my interviewees resembles the Australian targeted welfare model of 'doing the most for the less well-off with the least', and is consistent with the preferences of the broader Australian public (Wilson et al., 2009, p. 508). Nonetheless, collective services like public health and education were frequently named when I asked what tax revenue should be spent on and what form government support should take, often

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[43] Unlike the survey Wilson et al. (2009) used, respondents were simply asked to comment rather than choose from a number of preferences, perhaps eliciting less considered priorities than if than had been offered a range of choices. As a result, my respondents expressed complex and sometimes contradictory views.

expressed as 'hospitals and education.' As Leena, a Lebanese-Australian mother living on parenting payment and her husband's income, put it, 'Don't give us money, give the places we need to go money – schools and hospitals'. There was a wide expectation that the government should look after those in need, sometimes including themselves in that category. When speaking generally they most readily named the elderly and people incapacitated by illness or difficult circumstances as those who should get help from the government, but many also defended their own right to support, particularly as parents or families struggling with the cost of living. Reem, a Lebanese-Australian single mother of three children living on the single parenting payment, said 'People that really need it [should get help from the government]. People like myself [voice trembling] who have struggled with health and with [starts crying] you know, no family to help me take care of the kids'. Tracey, an Aboriginal mother of a large family, likewise said, 'People who are really in need […] homeless, very, very low income earners […] people with illnesses'. When I asked whether she would put herself in that category she replied, 'Yes I would, definitely.' For respondents like Reem and Tracey, their own experience of disadvantage confirmed the need for state provision.

A number of people expressed a defensive entitlement against the implied assumption that they were choosing an easy life by accepting welfare despite struggling to make ends meet:

> Like for example, I tell you my own situation, I am getting benefits, but still I can't make much out of that, I still have to suffer from many problems and we still have to make many sacrifices, it is not that the government is supporting and we are just like living a very good life and we are just enjoying, it's nothing like that, we're just getting a very small amount, so the government should improve there. (Nadira, Pakistani mother of two, recent skilled migrant)

> I do receive money from Centrelink but I don't feel comfortable. It's not like I'm receiving this money and I'm, you know, I'm enjoying it because I'm not, it's just going towards our needs. (Reem, Lebanese-Australian single mother of three children living on the single parenting payment)

> Some people also are making fun [saying] people just want handouts. Some making fun; the ones that don't have families and the ones that don't have kids think it's a joke. It's not like we're making the money, raking it in, living the luxury life and driving a Mercedes Benz, it's nothing like that. Just need a little help that's all. (Aisha, Lebanese- Australian mother of two, husband's earnings supplemented by family benefits).

Aisha's defensiveness was heightened by the rhetoric of belt tightening and proposed cuts to spending in the 2014 Federal Budget, with Treasurer Hockey (2014) insisting there should be 'more

household income coming from personal effort than from the government'. She resented the idea that families should make more effort to tighten their belt:

> We are already tightening our belt! Don't speak for us […] there's a reason why we got it in the first place, because obviously it's not manageable with life being so expensive. Nothing's cheap. Homes are not cheap. Homes are the most expensive compared to anywhere else in the world.

Aisha justified this expectation in contributory terms – 'I'm like "So what's the government there for, why are you paying taxes?"' Ronda, an Aboriginal mother whose husband's income was supplemented by her parenting payment, was equally incredulous, though less defensive, about the proposed budget:

> For Tony Abbott [the Prime Minister at the time] to say "if you can't afford it don't have it" – we had it before you hiked everything up, so you're making it worse for us. They're happy, they have multimillion dollar homes, they have people that chauffer them around. They don't have to pay for petrol, they don't have to wait in lines, they get everything done for them.

She implied that the Government was breaking its compact to be there for citizens by 'just taking, taking, taking'. While both Aisha and Ronda were the most assertive in defending their right to an extra hand, the idea that Government should rightfully cushion people from the effects of external pressures like the cost of living and ameliorate social inequalities was implicit in the wide expectation of social provision for those in need. Some also blamed the government itself for creating the difficult circumstances – 'they've killed the jobs, they've sold everything off to overseas […] so where's the jobs for people – and then he [former PM Tony Abbott] said get off the dole you bludgers, well where is the work, you're creating these people, they go well just keep us on the dole, there's no work' (Leena).

Despite these complaints, the majority of the people I spoke to said they felt supported by the government. Those who didn't tended to associate the government with politicians they distrusted. Kane, a young Aboriginal man with no source of income after quitting unemployment benefits, said emphatically, 'I don't feel no support.' Nessa, also Aboriginal and a single mother on Parenting

Payment Single added, 'We feel no love from 'em [politicians]. Not like Kevin Rudd.'[44] But many others, even those who complained about government, said they felt supported, usually citing their welfare payments and family benefits but sometimes the wider range of public services and infrastructure in Australia. The idea that Australians were more fortunate – 'lucky' – than those in other countries recurred, usually compared to the countries their families had migrated from or the generic 'third world'. For example, Leena said 'I tell my husband I kiss the ground of Australia, we are so lucky, we can bitch and moan as much as we want, we are so lucky', describing the conditions in Lebanon when she visited with her Lebanese husband. However, her sister expressed the sense that the collective benefits Australians enjoy were under threat by the proposed budget, 'We're a pretty lucky country but I mean if Abbott comes in and changes these changes there's going to be a lot more [people struggling]'.

Conditional entitlement

While the idea that 'anyone that needs it' should get help from the government recurred, for many it was qualified by concern about undeserving beneficiaries and unfair distribution. Support for needs-based entitlements and more inclusive social services and the endorsement of welfare conditionality were not mutually exclusive, and many of the same people who advocated government responsibility for helping those in need also endorsed some form of conditions attached to welfare benefits. Conditional welfare was usually justified in terms of curbing destructive behaviour, promoting work ethic and stopping idleness, or making sure people don't 'get something for nothing.' Nonetheless, support for conditionality was usually qualified. For example, Christina, a Chinese-born mother of two receiving family benefits, thought that job-search conditions and sanctions should be attached to benefits to encourage the unemployed to look for work, but she was also concerned about barriers to employment like racism. Bill, an older Aboriginal man on the aged pension, thought the unemployed should be made to do community work or study to prepare them for employment, but he was also conscious that there was a lack of work. Nessa expressed how the

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[44] The former Labor Prime Minister elected on the back of popular support that ended 11 years of unbroken Coalition government.

surveillance inherent in conditional welfare was infantalising, 'yeah, they just keep watching ya and you had to go to playgroup to keep your house […] And I was like "Nah, I'm a grown arse woman, I don't need people watching me"'. She didn't object to welfare conditionality in principle though, only its blanket application that tarnished her as dysfunctional. She suggested it was appropriate for some others but not her – 'the girls in there [the compulsory playgroup], they actually do need help' – a view common amongst those who voiced some support for welfare conditionality. This echoes Dwyer's (2000, p. 154) findings in the UK, based on focus groups with a total 69 welfare users predominantly reliant on welfare benefits, that support for conditional benefits was 'rarely unequivocal' and often qualified by insistence that conditional regimes should take account of circumstances beyond an individual's control and depended on 'how the schemes were implemented and administered.'

Like Dwyer, I also found that support for welfare conditionality was stronger amongst those who tended to emphasise individual rather than circumstantial causes of disadvantage, unsurprising given the behaviourist logic of conditional welfare. For example, while Reem understood her own disadvantage as someone genuinely in need to be caused by factors outside her control, she still assumed that poverty, which she characterised as extreme destitution, was caused by behaviour like gambling and wasting money on things like smoking. Jasmin, a mother of two originally from Hong-Kong who worked part time and received Parenting Payment Single, strongly supported conditional welfare on the assumption that a substantial proportion of welfare recipients were not legitimately in need but just lazy, 'So push them into work or study instead of sitting at home.' A few people implied there was no excuse for poverty in Australia because support was available, and if someone is destitute it must be as a result of their own behaviour. 'You're either like that because you're a drug addict or gambler', as Leena put it. However, even those who considered poverty a result of personal behaviour tended to say the government should be responsible for looking after the poor to stop social breakdown – as Jasmin put it, 'If you don't help them there'll be more problems, they'll be on the street.'

Whereas common citizenship status previously guaranteed entitlement to a minimum standard of welfare, the principle of conditionality reconfigures citizenship to prioritise responsibilities over rights and make the latter contingent on the former. As Dwyer (2000, p. 205) articulates, 'These responsibilities may vary from an agreement to behave in a civil manner or accepting that individuals have a general duty to make a recognised contribution to wider society, to more specific responsibilities that tie access to specific social rights to certain specified tasks or forms of behaviour'. The most common citizenship obligation that respondents identified was following the rules, narrowly meaning obeying the law and more broadly implying being civil and respectful to others.[45] However, work was the obligation most explicitly associated with welfare. Welfare conditionality figures inactive welfare claimants as part of 'deficit populations' (Patrick, 2017, p. 299) that owe a citizenship debt for not participating in the paid labour market (Dwyer, 2004, p. 268). This idea was reflected in some respondents' views of who should get support from the government, as well as more general descriptions of what makes a 'good citizen'. For example, Samah said 'people that have worked a little bit' should get assistance from the government. Many considered work as a contribution to individual and collective welfare – either through payment of taxes or fostering a strong economy – to be a primary characteristic of a good citizen, as Jasmin articulated, 'work to help themselves and the country'. Evoking a contributory model of citizenship, Samah described a good citizen as 'someone that puts something back as well as gets back.' Her sister Leena likewise emphasised the contributory dimension of citizenship, though with a more solidaristic inflection, 'help support the country, that's how it should be.' The implication of equating contribution with paid work is that people reliant of benefits have failed to meet their contributive obligations and are therefore 'seen as having broken the contract between citizen and state' (Dwyer, 2000, p. 149).

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[45] This is consistent with Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (2005) data that shows that what matters most to citizenship for the Australian public is, first, obeying the law and regulations and second, not evading taxes, both of which are strongly associated priorities. The question (B4, p. 7) asks respondents to rate different opinions about what it takes to be a good citizen on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is not at all important and 7 is very important. The attributes listed are: a. always vote in elections; b. never try to evade taxes, c. always obey the law and regulations, d. to keep watch on the actions of government, e. to try to understand the reasoning of people with other opinions, f. to choose products for political or environmental reasons, even if they cost a bit more, h. to help people in Australia who are worse off than yourself, i. to help people in the rest of the world who are worse off than yourself, j. To be willing to serve in the military at a time of need. Thanks to Shaun Wilson for helping with the analysis of the survey data.

Forms of participation other than work tended to be raised more as ideal than a concrete obligation of citizenship. Jasmin explicitly differentiated a good citizen from a good community member, distinguishing between the formal rules of citizenship and active participation in the community:

> If it's a good citizen it's just like don't do anything illegal but the community you need to do activities and all these kinds of things […] Part of the community means you say you join them and try to help and organise things. That's called part of the community.

When I asked her if she was part of a community by that definition she said, 'No I don't think so. I'm just the audience or something'. Jane, an Anglo mother of two who, like Jasmin, lived on a part-time income supplemented by the parenting payment, expressed a similar sentiment, identifying a good local citizen as someone who follows the rules – 'I'm always told I'm a goodie-goodie' – and a great one as someone who helps out. In contrast to the prime importance of contributing through paid work, the idea that active civic participation went beyond the minimum obligations of citizenship was repeated a number of times.

Unfairness

The idea that welfare conditionality remedies a citizenship debt because welfare recipients shouldn't 'get something for nothing' implies unfairness, which was a recurring theme in interviews. It was mainly expressed in terms of the unfairness of social inequality and unfair eligibility requirements and conditions in the benefits system.[46] Some (about a third of respondents) pointed to the inequality of prevailing social arrangements. As Leena said, 'the rich stay rich, the poor stay poor', and her sister echoed 'I think it needs to be brought together more – the rich and poor shouldn't be that fat line in between'. Kane defiantly described receiving welfare as 'getting one back off the government'. Entitlement to a 'hand-up' was in these cases framed as a matter of fairness.

Some of the people who implied systemic unfairness were sensitive to the hypocrisy of targeting the behaviour of welfare recipients, particularly how payments are used. While complaining about people wasting payments on gambling, Samah shifted gear and added, 'But in saying that why are

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[46] Dean and Melrose (1996, p. 17) likewise found a 'discourse of unfairness' common in their interviews with 35 benefit recipients in the UK who had engaged in benefit fraud. While their respondents similarly complained about the unfairness of social inequality and the benefit system they differed in that, amongst their respondents, 'the discourse of unfairness tends to intersect or coincide with the discourse of justified disobedience rather than with a discourse of rights.'

you [government] not taking away pokie machines, because they make too much money, that's another disrespectful thing.' Talking about income management, Nessa said, 'What? Cos you're working you're entitled to a drink and smoke? That's unfair. That really is unfair.' For Kane, Nessa, and Luke, three Aboriginal young adults, income management exemplified systemic discrimination and control of Aboriginal people in the name of welfare.[47] They resented and felt let down by the lack of genuine support and the arbitrary job search requirements attached to benefits, as Nessa said, 'the employment agency, they say "we promise you this, we promise you that" and they give you nothing'. Kane described the stress and lack of return that participation requirements like job search quotas, preparatory courses, and mandatory appointments created, 'And it's like if I put this much time and effort into work I'd be getting way more [money], you know, and I'd be getting more out of it as well, instead of sitting in the office [of the employment agency] stressin out about the whole situation of getting paid'.

Distribution of payments was also commonly described as unfair, reflecting expectations that welfare be reserved for those in genuine need and 'a preoccupation with notions of desert' (Dean & Melrose, 1997, p. 18). The discourse of unfairness most often related to resentment about claimants 'rorting the system', many claiming they knew people or knew *of* people taking advantage of the system (it was often difficult to distinguish personal experience from general gossip), while a few others said they saw it on the television. Rorting applied to people lying and claiming extra benefits, not spending their payments appropriately, or not genuinely looking for work. Young people, single mothers, and the unemployed were most of often named as claiming benefits they don't really need at the expense of others, consistent with the stigmatisation of these categories in public welfare politics and media. Some expressed this as a personal grievance because they were ineligible for certain benefits while other claimants 'take advantage' and 'live the life'. As Tracy said, 'Very upsetting, especially for the ones who don't have anything and sort of have no choice but be on a Centrelink payment really.'

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[47] Income management originated as a race-based provision solely targeting Aboriginal people in remote communities of the Northern Territory. See chapter 1 for details.

Unfairness was presented as a justification for stronger enforcement of welfare rules. Amal, a solicitor and volunteer in community welfare, was the most financially well-off amongst my interviewees and had never relied on welfare for day-to-day survival. She insisted there should be 'mechanisms in place to be sure that people are not rorting the system, because that's not good for our economy and it's purely unfair.' Echoing former Treasure Hockey's admonition in his budget speech that government entitlements come from the pocket of another person, Monica self-critically reflected, 'How do you say to a person who works every day of their life and pays tax that someone else deserves not to work and still get paid? Why is that fair? That man working over there has to pay for my dinner. How do I tell him that anyway?' However, where Amal saw rorting the system as undermining collective benefit, reflecting her inclusive view of welfare – 'I think just because you're in a good financial position doesn't mean that you no longer need assistance from the government […] so everyone really [should get help from the government]' – Monica saw permissive welfare in individualist terms of taking from the pockets of hardworking individuals. In both cases, though, benefit recipients are seen as 'having responsibilities not just to the state, but also to their fellow citizens' (Patrick, 2017, p. 295).

The discourse of unfairness also reflected ideas of collective membership and benefit of national resources administered by the state, as implied in Amal's reference to the health of 'our economy'. Leena insisted that Australians should get support from the government, particularly Australian companies that create jobs – 'help the people that help Australia'. Ronda emphasised collective responsibility above individual contribution but nonetheless hinged on national belonging: 'People in our own backyard [should get help from the government]. Money needs to stay here. You know, we are the multicultural country of the world – we need to support our young people, our old people. If they don't have support from the government and families are working that hard just to pay their own bills, no one's gonna look after them'. While Ronda was careful to include multicultural Australians in her vision of the nation, Bill viewed claimants 'from different countries' as 'ripping the money off people that need the money', describing the queue at Centrelink as 'The whole lot of them from different countries'. The implication was that they were visibly not Australian and

therefore not genuinely entitled to welfare. Bill also rejected the idea that Aboriginal people like himself are owed a debt because of what they have lost and suffered through colonisation, repeatedly disparaging what he described as 'a typical blackfella, always "they owe me"'. The principle of national belonging as the basis of entitlement was repeatedly evoked, though the contours of how it was defined varied and shifted, a point I take up in the final section.

As this section has demonstrated, my interviews echo the diverse and complex views of the Australian welfare state that Murphey et al (2011) found among social security recipients, based on 150 initial interviews 108 follow-up interviews. Of the 100 or so participants they interviewed with articulate views on the welfare state, just under half regarded welfare as an entitlement and collective obligation linked to their critique of social inequality or as necessary to prevent social degradation. A quarter argued that welfare should be accompanied by responsibilities and obligations, while about a third considered the system too permissive and should force people into the workforce (Murphy et al., 2011, pp. 183–186). Amongst the deliberately diverse but smaller range of people I interviewed, shared views and expectations of welfare cut across ethno-cultural background. However, Aboriginal and CALD interviewees more often referred explicitly to cultural difference to explain their expectations and feelings of entitlement while Anglo respondents did not. For example, Jasmin said, 'I come from Hong Kong. They [the government] don't give you anything so I think it's right, they shouldn't give you anything. If they give you [support] it's a bonus but if they don't give you that's life. That's where I come from so that's what I think about that.' Bill repeatedly characterised fellow Aboriginal people as work-averse and over-entitled (echoing familiar stereotypes), 'As I said the black fella he's too lazy to get out and work because he thinks the world owes him something.' Kane and Nessa wanted more Aboriginal workers and programs in unemployment services: 'It would be more comfortable for us, like you know. He knows where we're coming from. He's got a lot of family that's probably like us.' In doing so, they distinguished between Aboriginal mores and experiences and the implicit culture of welfare agencies, which they related to feeling let down and 'mucked around' by mainstream services. In contrast, while Monica expressed a related sentiment by wanting to see the practical knowledge of welfare recipients incorporated into

policy design because 'you can't know something if you've never seen it,' she did not articulate the distance between herself and policy makers as cultural but rather 'from a lack of education because they haven't been exposed to it.'

While this section has broadly characterised the expectations of the welfare state expressed in interviews, it is important to note that such expectations do not necessarily predict practices and decisions relating to work and welfare. Jordan and Redley (1994, p. 167) argue 'that social democratic discourses are still widely deployed in discussions over specific issues of public provision, but most decisions about work and family welfare use other repertoires.' Dean and Melrose (1997, p. 13) likewise conclude that 'there is a gap between people's expectations of the welfare state and the way in which their experience of it dictates their behaviour'. Nonetheless, Dwyer (2000, p. 192) found that welfare users' views tended to reflect 'the realities of how provision is differentially organised in discrete areas of welfare and the real options available to people when trying to address their particular needs.' He concludes that 'this perhaps suggests that people's understandings and beliefs are likely to be confirmed and negotiated in the context of their daily experience.' The following section considers more closely the interplay of normative discourses about social citizenship described above and concrete experiences of welfare, which produces situated moral vocabularies of entitlement inflected by wider discourses. It draws on Hage's concept of the 'social gift' to understand how welfare as a material benefit and form of sociality becomes imbued with particular values.

Welfare, citizenship, and the spirit of the gift

In the final chapter of *Against Paranoid Nationalism*, Hage (2003) offers a poignant 'concluding fable' that illustrates the difference between a contractual and an ethical model of mutual obligation. He tells the story of Ali, a Lebanese man who arrived in Australia traumatised by the civil war. His loss and dislocation sent him mad, and in his madness he was drawn to pedestrian crossings – he would spend hours lingering at the crossing, revelling in the fact the traffic stopped for him, making him feel special. So enamoured was Ali with the pedestrian crossing that his family joked that he refused to

return to Lebanon with them because he would not leave behind the crossings. But Ali said he refused to return because Australia took care of him during his mental illness. Hage develops Ali's experience of the pedestrian crossing as an analogue for an ethics of reciprocal social obligation. The crossing, he argues, is a 'structurally present ethical space'; drivers and pedestrians may approach it differently – arrogantly or graciously – but it is a structural fact nonetheless. The crossing is a 'social gift' that offers the pedestrian recognition and honours their worth in return for their presence. He draws on Mauss's theory of gift exchange as reproducing the mutual obligation foundational to social life, and Strauss and Simmel's respective accounts of social obligation as a commitment to sociality and communal life itself, to argue that genuine mutual obligation involves honouring the mere presence of others and the humanity it brings. Proponents of neo-liberal mutual obligation, in contrast, 'see it as unthinkable that the existing national culture should *yield* before the marginalised forms of social inhabitance they constantly encounter'. They reduce reciprocity to a contractual exchange and empty the state's obligation of any ethical dimension. In response, Hage (2003, p. 147) evokes the crossing as 'a space where people can enact a ritual of stopping and crossing, and through which society affirms itself as civilised (that is, ethical).'

There are strong parallels between Sabiha's sense of the care embodied in public civility and social welfare and Hage's interpretation of Ali's attraction to the crossing. Of course, Hage uses this fable to make a case for the *ideal* of ethical reciprocity as the foundation of social care, which should not be confused with an empirical claim.[48] Nonetheless, it is associated with his broader conceptualisation of the affective relations of social life as structured by a gift economy: 'all communal life if communicated to us as a gift and, like all gifts, it creates obligations when it is well given' (Hage, 2003, pp. 99–100). Moreover, his account of Ali feeling valued and supported as the traffic yields for him potently foregrounds the concrete material and affective-relational experiences of social life that engender collective belonging and social obligation. It therefore resonates with the expanded

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[48] In drawing on Hage's model of ethical mutual obligation I am cautious not to imply that a caring state apparatus creates caring citizens. Hage contrasts care as a mode of belonging with worrying, foregrounding the role of the nation-state in creating the material social conditions that distribute hope and activate a caring rather than defensive outlook. Feminist analysts of care have challenged the idea implicit in Hage's ethics that care begets care by demonstrating that 'the outcome of receiving care is not predictable and may not result in giving care to "others"' (Beasley & Bacchi, 2005, p. 57).

conceptualisation of social citizenship developed by Isin et al. (2008) and Dean (2013). Hage is likewise concerned with the social relations through which we develop a sense of expectation of and obligation to others, which he understands – following gift theory – not simply as deriving from the sociality of human beings but a commitment to that sociality. Using the pedestrian crossing as exemplar, he argues, 'It is from such socio-ethical offerings of recognition that "mutual obligation" emerges in society.' Hage's characterisation on the crossing as a 'social gift' foregrounds the social (infra)structure that makes certain forms of relationality possible and the spirit it embodies and engenders – be it ethical, generous, mean, or begrudging. I argue that it therefore provides fruitful direction for embedding the sociality and negotiation that is key to Dean's conception of social citizenship in the institutional and relational structures that form the contexts of people's lives.

By posing the idea of welfare as a social gift I do not mean to imply, as some conservative critics of the welfare state might, that welfare should be taken as a gift rather than a right or entitlement. Rather, I mean to point to how the value of the gift is derived from the relationship between giver and receiver and 'the relationship between them and what is transacted' (Carrier, 1995, p. 19 cited in Komter, 2005, p. 32). Relating gift exchange to solidarity, Komter (2005, pp. 54–55) identifies three key features relevant here: the principle of reciprocity underpins the gift and is integral to the social relationships it animates; it requires mutual recognition of the identities of parties to the gift exchange; and it serves diverse motivations that can be both positive and negative. 'Gifts reflect, confirm, disturb or injure identities. The motives used in this interactional process range from love and sympathy to insecurity and anxiety, to power and prestige, to self-interest and overt hostility' (Komter, 2005, p. 54). Welfare regimes institutionalise reciprocity based on an implicit social contract that specifies expectations and obligations not only amongst citizens and between them and their governments, but between family members as the welfare state apparatus comes to bear on the caring obligations and relationships that exist within families (Komter, 2005, p. 146). Conceptualising social welfare in terms of the gift, then, foregrounds both the material and affective infrastructure that animates the *social* dimension of social citizenship.

This section draws on Hage's concept of the 'social gift', alongside his other writing on responsibility and belonging, to consider how my respondents framed and related to social welfare and the modes of reciprocity they invoked to claim and justify entitlement. Whereas the previous section situated the views expressed by respondents within the existing terrain of literature on normative orientations to welfare, in this section I zoom in to offer a fine-grained perspective of how expectations of welfare provision are negotiated and confirmed in the context of everyday experience, and the elastic ways people fit the details of their lives into normative conceptions of need, deservingness, and entitlement.

Nadira

When I interviewed Nadira she was 29 years old, a newly enrolled PhD student, and a mother of two young children. She was from a wealthy family in Pakistan, but after resettling in Australia on a Skilled Migrant visa with her husband they were struggling to find skilled work and meet the high cost of living here. She had an expansive view of what welfare was, describing not only cash transfers but the family support programmes offered by local council (where we met) and public services like libraries – 'I often go to the library. There's a preschool program for children over there and I come to this family hub, so it's very good, my children get a lot of benefits because they get to interact with other people and gain confidence through the activities.' Local services were important site of participation and inclusion for Nadira, which she had actively sought out by searching the internet. Referring to her own experience, while she was grateful for the Family Tax benefit and public services, she was disappointed that she was not eligible for more financial support at the time when she needed it most.

> I don't know why it's that they support more after two years – I just have this in my mind that it would have been better if they would have supported when somebody is new over here rather than when he's old and he's good enough to bear everything himself.[49]

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[49] There is a waiting period of 2 years for most newly arrived migrants applicable to most benefits and payments, except family assistance payments
(https://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/enablers/newly-arrived-residents-waiting-period)

Nadira saw government provision for skilled migrants who had borne the emotional and financial cost of migrating as inadequate. She considered it part of the government's responsibility to create the opportunities for work and support those who cannot find it.

> I don't know why the Australian government is inviting so many migrants from other parts of the world since there are not enough jobs. […] if they need skilled migrants they should also create opportunities for them if they want somebody to leave their house and everything from another country and they are coming here and they're not getting a job, then it would be very bad because somebody leaves everything.

For Nadira, hers was an economistic contract between her and the government that was clearly defined through the terms of her migration. Throughout her interview Nadira spoke about her relationship with the Australian government as a kind of mutual investment: 'I want to serve Australia with my skills', 'the government has invested on me [through a scholarship to study] and it is my duty I should do something for them,' and later, 'if I am getting any payment and they are investing on me, I should also give the best out of me.' She expected to contribute to the country by working and to be given the opportunity to do so.

Dina

Dina was a mother in her early 30s, born in Australia to Lebanese parents and married to a Lebanese Syrian man who she met in Lebanon. He worked while she looked after their two young children, for which she received the parenting payment. They weren't struggling, but their mortgage and the unexpected cost of an operation for her mother-in-law in Lebanon absorbed much of their income. Dina described the parenting payment she received as recognition of her care work as a parent. When I asked her how she felt about receiving the benefit, she reflected:

> I feel good because – I mean look, something just came to mind now. I've never thought about it before but it feels nice to also be recognised that when you are at home raising your children that you are actually being recognised as doing something important and that you might need – so it's nice to be able to know that while you are doing the most important job in the world that financially you don't have to be worried. You don't have to choose between leaving your kids with other people to be raised or to be financially stable.

She implied both the gift of being to be able to stay home and raise her children without financial strain but also invoked the idea of parenting as work with a public benefit.[50] But she was disappointed that her payment was reduced as her husband earned more, which she viewed as stifling their personal effort to 'try to do better': 'He is out there working and trying to do what he has to do and sometimes through his work and what he gets, we get much less. I would hope that wouldn't be the case.'

Dina was nonetheless grateful not only for the gift of being supported to raise her children, but for the security and comfort the welfare system gave her, both in previous tough times and in case of unanticipated future need:

> [...] It's been a blessing to be able to – when times have been tough and when my husband has been between jobs just to know that you have that support. I can't even imagine being in a situation like my in-laws in Lebanon where they don't have much money and they don't have support from the hospitals and so forth.

> What I do know from other people in my family is that there are different types of parenting payments. So depending on your situation, you can get more. So for example if you have a child with a special need and you are taking care of them, you can actually get more. So depending on – maybe if I was ever in a situation where I needed more or something happened, that gives me comfort to know that there are different levels of payment if I ever needed to access them.

The comparative experience of her family in Lebanon highlighted the benefits she received in Australia. The security she described evoked a solidaristic conception of citizenship as bestowing collective protection against shared risks, whereby 'entitlement is a matter of mutual moral obligation' (Dean, 2013, p. S39). Like Ali in Hage's fable, she felt recognised and cared for, and her resulting security confirmed her belonging and faith in the national collective.

Monica

Dina's feeling of recognition for her caring work stood in sharp contrast to Monica's intense shame as a single, nonworking parent (discussed further in chapter 5). Monica dismissed the idea that raising her child was an adequate contribution given she wasn't working to financially support herself or her

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[50] Greg (Anglo, long-term welfare recipient now on aged pension) similarly justified receiving benefits on the grounds that he was raising his children. To this extent Dina and Greg echo White's (2003, p. 98 cited in; Deacon, 2007, p. 481) idea of informal care as 'civic labour', which he defines as 'roughly speaking, labour that provides a significant service for, or on behalf of, the wider community'. Though I'm not sure that Greg would agree he ought to raise his children to be virtuous and productive citizens for his parenting to count as civic labour.

family. An Anglo mother also in her early 30s, she had relied on welfare benefits as her only source of income since she left home as a teenager. She was one of the few examples of unqualified support for conditional welfare and she also stood out for including herself amongst those who needed stricter compliance with welfare rules. 'Anybody who needs it [should get help from the government] for a specific amount of time with regulations.' She repeatedly described the benefits system and the present job search requirements as 'too easy', enabling people to sit around while others had to work – 'What gives us the right?' Her own self-destructive drug habit and the destructive behaviour of people around her, including her siblings who she was forced to care for from a young age, convinced her of the logic of paternalism. 'It needs to be like America maybe, six weeks and you're kicked off. Because what choice would I have, I'm not going to let my kid starve, I would get a job. I would have to get a job.'

Monica articulated the idea shared by many of the people that I spoke to that people unemployed by choice – assumed to be a handful of claimants by some and the majority by others – are failing in their responsibility to provide for themselves and their families or contribute to collective welfare. When I asked her how society in general treats people on welfare, she replied:

> Like they should mostly, and I'm one of them and I don't think that – like they don't contribute I suppose. Maybe sometimes it's unfair, people look down at people and I think in a way it's cementing their position in welfare by looking down on them because they're never going to feel worthy of being anything else if society says you're crap because you take money off the government. But the same time they are doing that, they are taking money off the government when they could have a job. So I don't know, probably pretty fairly I think, which is mean. Like it's harsh, but we're spoilt.

So while she acknowledged the way that stigmatising people on welfare undermined their self-worth and motivation, she concluded that the judgement was fair because they, like her, lacked the virtues of self-responsibility and self-reliance. She offered up her shame as her only way to pay the symbolic debt she had incurred: 'I feel like I'm more to blame than somebody who is ignorant to it all, because I'm aware but still making those choices.' Her account of welfare resonated strongly with a contractarian 'moral-authoritarian approach to need' in which 'entitlement is conditional on obedience' (Dean, 2013, p. S39). She had accepted and internalised the 'mean' and grudging spirit

with which welfare is given to single parents and the unemployed, judging herself as harshly as she felt others judged her.

Mick

Mick, an Aboriginal father with an income from his own small business supplemented by his partner's family benefits, considered Australians lucky but not spoilt. He described himself as self-reliant – 'I've got my own business so I pretty much look after myself' – but appreciated the benefit he received from tax breaks for his business and public infrastructure. He described a documentary he saw where an English garbage man employed by the council worked collecting garbage in 'an Asian country 12 hours a day, 7 days a week', and insisted, 'The roads, all the infrastructure, people just don't understand how lucky we are in Australia.' Mick stood out for his unconditionally generous and optimist outlook. 'Anyone what [sic] needs it really [should get help from the government]. We're a first class country. We've got the infrastructure to help people.' His view that 'the rest of the country [should look after poor people], like with tax and that' implied a solidaristic view of social support. Mick valued the 'social inheritance' (Hage, 2003, p. 101) that national communal life afforded and received the social gift of welfare graciously. He had a socio-structural view of poverty and disadvantage that foregrounded people's circumstances – what he called their 'back story' – and he strongly rejected moral judgements about people's situation and behaviour, saying, 'I think it's disgusting and low that you can judge someone without knowing anything about them.'

While Mick compared Australia's fortunes with other countries, another point of reference was his grandparents' experience of having their lives utterly controlled by welfare authorities, which he compared to his own situation living in Aboriginal housing with opportunities 'wide open' to him:

> But they weren't allowed to own their own home. They had to move onto a mission where there was a mission manager; his job was to look after Aboriginal people, allegedly. But he walked around – could walk into anyone's house when he wanted to make sure the house was clean and what not. So they couldn't buy a house; they couldn't leave an inheritance to my parents […] now I'm in a situation where, the third generation down the line where I'm able enough to save, start saving money to hopefully one day purchase a house.

He echoed the commonly expressed view of a good citizen – 'pay my taxes and keep out of trouble' – though for Mick and a few others the obligation to follow the rules touched an affective nerve: 'Bad

behaviour, I'm not a big fan of bad behaviour. I think everyone should act civilised, at least civilised to each other. You don't have to be nice but you don't have to be a jerk.' The importance of obeying the law had an added significance for Mick as an Aboriginal man alive to the threat of police harassment and the reality of Aboriginal incarceration rates.[51] He repeated his Dad's advice to him: 'don't give the police any reason to talk to you,' adding, 'that great bit of advice from my Dad has kept me out of trouble my whole life.'

Mick's idea of a good local citizen was someone who looked beyond their personal and familial life – 'Someone who will take time out of their day' and 'sacrifice time from their own families to help out other people.' He saw his role in his Aboriginal community as brokering support, describing how he made inquiries on behalf of other Aboriginal fathers who 'get shame' (in the Aboriginal sense of the word) in the face of welfare service providers. He called this his 'little personal obligation', a skill he was equipped for by being one of the elder siblings in an Aboriginal family with the responsibility to 'look after everyone else'.

Christina

Christina was a Chinese-Australian mother of two in her late 20s receiving the parenting payment. Her husband worked as a labourer and they lived in the granny-flat at the back of her parents' house. When we first spoke one child was living with her and the other was being cared for by her grandmother in China, who was awaiting a visa to come to Australia.[52] Christina strongly believed social spending should prioritise parents, especially pregnant women: 'pregnant lady is two lives in one'. Like Mick, being respectful and following the rules was at the heart of her conception of citizenship obligations, though her characterisation of a good citizen suggested a more private than communal orientation that nonetheless emphasised order – 'try not to get in a mess. You are responsible for your own property, for the grass outside, for your bin'. Like Mick, Christina was

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[51] Indigenous people make up only 3% of the Australian population but 27% of the prison population (see http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2016/04/15/national-crisis-indigenous-incarceration-rates-worse-25-years).

[52] Da (2003) refers to this arrangement as 'transnational grandparenting' and found it to be a significant pattern emerging from her qualitative interviews with Mainland Chinese parents settled in Australia. Da (2003, p. 92) explains this practice as not only practically supporting work arrangements but also aimed at the 'cultural cultivation and education' of children.

roused by uncivil behaviour, describing in particular the difference between Australia and China

where people won't give up their seat on the bus or train to a woman with a child:

> In Australia people are more polite, in China not really. And it's like they don't care if you've got a child or not in China, if you're on transport. But here they care about you, they care about the child. They offer you whatever they can. If they're on a bus and they're sitting on a seat and there's no other seat they offer you their seat. In China – no – that's it. My seat is my seat until I get off.

Respectful and civil behaviour was a sign of strangers *caring about* and *caring for* others,

characterised as an Australian quality with which she identified: 'They [people in China] should learn

from Australian people: be kind, be responsible, and be polite. If they can do all these three things,

when they come to our country we'll do exactly the same.' For Christina, such care circumscribed by

belonging was also manifest in public health provisions:

> Also, Chinese hospitals you gotta line up, pay money, just to see a doctor. After you see a doctor you gotta pay for your um medication. But *here* when you see a doctor you don't have to pay money. You just give them your card, if you're Australian citizen. If you're not then you have to pay money.

Christina articulated her perception of the mutual obligation embedded in the social contract: 'In

Australia I have a right to do what I want, just don't break the rules. If we follow the rules, the

government should reward us.' For Christina the rules and the order they ensured formed the

'relations of reciprocity' embedded in the social contract while simultaneously manifesting 'relations

of care [...] motivated by commitment to the welfare of the other' (Trnka & Trundle, 2014, pp. 142,

145).

For Christina, like Sabiha, the rules and etiquette that governed transport and traffic were potent

embodiments of the degree of care expressed by the public and the commitment to be civilised. Both

Sabiha and Christina imply that following the rules is not just a formal requirement but an affective

investment – resonating with Hage's (2001, p. 334) concept of 'participatory belonging' to denote

'participation as an affective relation to society, an indicator of how much one "cares."'[53] Despite

formally being an Australian citizen, Sabiha felt unqualified to comment on the desirable traits of

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[53] Hage pinpoints the differentiation of instrumental and affect interest in debates about migrant participation. He identifies emotional investment as an intense form of participation that isn't recognised as such.

Australian citizens except through comparison with Pakistan – 'It's really hard for me because I am not Australian; I'm Pakistani, so this one is hard for me.' Christina, on the other hand, asserted her judgement as an explicit marker of her Australianness, perhaps expressing what Hage (1998, pp. 45–6) distinguishes as 'governmental belonging' – feeling entitled to make judgments about the management of the nation – in comparison to a more 'passive' mode of belonging whereby one expects simply to 'be part of' and 'benefit from' the nation.

Entitlement and belonging

The various forms of reciprocity invoked in these cases – from productive commitment to caring embodied in civility – imply different terms of entitlement and modes of belonging. They demonstrate the multiple and competing framings of responsibility (Trnka & Trundle, 2014) that shape expectations and experiences of welfare. This resonates with Dean's (1998, p. 148) earlier observation that people draw on 'a complex and often contradictory mixture repertoires' to make sense of the rights and obligations citizenship entails. While Dean's approach is largely discursive, recent work of the sensory or affective dimension of citizenship emphasises the visceral relations (Trnka, Dureau, & Park, 2014) and 'economy of feelings' (Fortier, 2010, p. 27) that engender and circumscribe constructions and experiences of citizenship. As Trnka et al. (2014, p. 4) put it, 'the viscerality of feelings […] give moral weight to claims of rights and inclusion' and immediacy to the insecurity and exclusion that characterises 'fractured citizenship status' (Patrick, 2017, p. 300). Moreover, as Fortier (2016a, p. 1039) insists, there is a cultural 'logic to how, through formal and informal institutional arrangements, some feelings are validated while others are not.' So, for example, it is valid for benefit recipients to feel gratitude, graciousness, and fortitude but resentment is reserved for the 'hardworking majority'. By putting Ali's experience of the pedestrian crossing to work as an analogy for ethical mutual obligation, Hage likewise reminds us of the affective relations and concrete 'material furnishings' (Velayutham, 2004, p. 12) that animate social encounters with welfare as much as the discourses about need and entitlement. The pedestrian crossing brings into view on the one hand the diversity of ways of approaching and receiving social welfare, illustrated

above, and on the other hand prioritises the structural fact that makes these diverse modes of relating possible.

The understandings and experiences of welfare expressed in interviews were inflected by the realities of the respondents' situation and their differential positions in relation to the affective and material infrastructure of the welfare state. Nadira invoked an economistic form of reciprocity as 'mutual investment' befitting her reception to Australia as a skilled migrant – she regarded the Australian government as having reneged on its side of the contract to provide the conditions that enable her ability to productively participate and be self-sufficient. Dina's views of welfare were inflected by her experience as a stay-at-home mother with a working husband – she felt valued and recognised for her work as a parent, and comforted by the safety net the welfare state provided. In contrast, Monica's care work as a single parent could not assuage the acute shame of not providing financially for herself or her daughter; she endorsed the punitive orientation of welfare conditionality and internalised the moral authoritarian judgements it relies on. Mick's inclusive view of welfare implied the collective responsibility to ensure wellbeing, his optimism in part informed by the opportunities open to him in comparison with the previous generations of his family. Christina and Sabiha described behaving in a civil manner as not simply an obligation of citizenship but also an embodiment of civic care and potential, brought into relief by their comparison of Australia with the countries they had migrated from. These examples suggest that expectations of welfare are embedded in the particularities of people's lives, even as they claim and defend their social rights by evoking normative scripts of entitlement into which they fit the details of everyday life.

Hage's emphasis on the spirit of the gift also helps refine our understanding of the nature of inequality embedded in the institutional arrangements of the welfare state. He insists that belonging and exclusion are not only dependant on formal eligibility but on the mode of access. Elsewhere, Hage draws on the idea of different modes of access to citizenship rights, arguing that, 'Where the problem of inequality and discrimination emerge is not around questions of accessing rights as much as it is in the *mode* of accessing such rights' (Hage, 2002, p. 4 emphasis in original). Here he emphasises the difference between a 'dishonouring mode of delivering services' that is demeaning

and one that preserves dignity and engenders what he calls 'honourable citizenship' – foreshadowing the idea of the ethical spirit embodied in the social gift that he develops in *Against Paranoid Nationalism* (2003). Locating the problem of inequality and discrimination in the *mode* of accessing rights is a useful move given that welfare reform promoting 'active citizenship' has made *access contingent* on meeting additional responsibilities and not simply the withdrawal of welfare state support (Dwyer, 2000, p. 205). Certain sub-groups – including migrants, Indigenous people, single parents and the unemployed – may be formally included as citizens but figured as incapable or underserving of existing citizenship. Conceptualising social citizenship in terms of the social gift – be it well-given or begrudgingly bestowed – draws attention to the affective-relational dynamics through which differentiated state-citizen relationships are (re)produced (Fortier, 2016b).

Conclusion

The view that the government has an obligation to support those in need was widely expressed and uncontentious amongst the people I interviewed living at the sharp end of Australia's residual welfare system. However, while needs-based entitlement was commonly affirmed, it was frequently qualified by moral impressions of virtue, reciprocity, and deservingness that tapped into wider conceptions of rightful contribution and participation. The expectations expressed by the people I spoke to broadly resembled the contested welfare orientations of the Australian public (Wilson et al., 2009) and the diverse and complex views of the welfare state in previous studies involving social security recipients (Dwyer, 2000; Murphy et al., 2011). However, the responses of the small but diverse range of people I interviewed suggest more about dynamics than patterns of expectation. While drawing on normative ideas of welfare and citizenship, they often related them to personal and proximate injustices – whether it was the divide between rich and poor or people unfairly claiming benefits. Proximity seemed to magnify the intensity of feeling expressed through common affective registers of gratitude, resentment, anxiety, shame, and complacency. This general picture provides that backcloth to the close analysis of individual cases adopted in the rest of the thesis.

I have also argued that Hage's concept of the social gift helps elaborate the material and affective infrastructures that condition and mediate how a sense of social obligation and entitlement is engendered, though I have focused more on the affective dimensions and only signalled the materiality of welfare (though this warrants attention in future research). Whether people received welfare as a social gift defensively or graciously seemed to relate to the particular claimant category into which they fell, combined with family and work composition – whether they or their partner were also engaged in paid work. It also reflected where they located themselves in the divide between rich and poor. The degree of defensiveness expressed by respondents is hardly surprising given the maligning spirit with which social security is extended to welfare recipients in general and certain categories of claimants in particular. A closer look at framings of reciprocity and the modes of responsibility and belonging they imply reveals how the details of individual biography and history shape the reception of the gift. For example, 'migrant' (including second generation) respondents feelings about entitlement were often informed by comparison with their (or their parents') country of origin. Nessa, Kane, Mick and Bill's made reference to the colonial welfare regime in articulating their views, though they differed according to whether they located it in the past, as Mick and Bill did, or sorely recognised its continuities in the present, like Kane and Nessa. The following chapter focuses on the experiences of the most marginal claimants in my study, illuminating the conditions of everyday insecurity they experience and the threat of subjective injury in the encounter with welfare agencies.

Chapter four – Over-drawn accounts: on being and performing "vulnerable"

Struggle Street (2015) – a television documentary about poverty in the Western Sydney suburb of Mt Druitt – aired amid controversy. Before its release, residents from Mt. Druitt (located about 25km north-west of Bankstown) who participated in the show accused it of ridiculing them in a promotional video that showed them passing wind, swearing and shouting. Public commentators debated whether the show was a classic example of 'poverty porn' or an unflinching portrait of 'life on the fringes', as the producers claimed (Fife-Yeomans, 2015; McNair, 2015; Rees, 2015; Threadgold, 2015).

Described by the producers as a 'fly on the wall documentary', it relies on the candour, generosity, and performance of the residents who told their stories and agreed to be followed by the camera. As someone who grew-up in similar conditions, it is the (willing) exposure of the participants that is the most striking; the demand to provide convincing details of hardship that justify why they live like they do and why their life didn't turn out differently. Sixteen-year-old Bailee, for example, provides a matter-of-fact account of family violence, homelessness, depression and attempted suicide. She leads the film crew through her vandalised public housing flat, so trashed that the lease has been terminated leaving her homeless again. Later, the camera stays with her as she explains to a local youth worker that she was raped after being kicked out of home at 13, that she started using ice. The male narrator (David Field), with his broad Australian accent, insists on a clichéd commentary that imposes on the mundane directness of her account – 'and that's how it is when you're on the fringe'.

Despite the ridiculing tone of the promo, the documentary itself offers a sympathetic insight into the everyday obstacles and disruptions that complicate life in poverty, albeit one that can veer into voyeurism of the strange antics of the poor.[54] It at once illustrates the unrelenting instability of

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[54] A style aptly characterised by Mark Peel (2003:17) as 'a mix of excited revelation and inexpert sociology'. He provides an astute discussion of the politics of describing poverty that includes the media representation of Mount Druitt in the chapter, *Describing Disadvantage*. This chapter draws on and develops the insights offered by Peel.

poverty and exemplifies the persistent pressure to describe life in poverty in convincing detail, both themes of this chapter. Taking as its point of departure the discursive currency of vulnerability as a compelling way of making sense of the disadvantage and suffering in both social policy and scholarship, this chapter explores the intersection of cultural scripts and daily experiences of vulnerability. It focuses on cash welfare recipients' interaction with welfare bureaucracies that deliver increasingly conditional support and their daily struggle to get by. It is divided into two empirical sections; the first theorises the daily disruptions and challenges associated with living on welfare as 'everyday emergencies', the second examines the injury of the encounter with welfare agencies based on proof and disclosure, before drawing these sections together to think about how the compulsion to perform vulnerability may elide the ordinary and persistent wear of everyday emergencies.

These two themes demonstrate in different ways the relationship between vulnerability as script and as condition, which I argue is embedded in the temporality of the concept as something that is unrealised yet imposes itself on the present. By focusing on what the people I spoke to are *vulnerable to*, and how they are compelled to demonstrate their status as *vulnerable*, I think through how the welfare state both responds to and constructs vulnerability. The chapter draws primarily on interviews and participant observation with people with long-term familiarity with the welfare system, who have relied on social security themselves and are surrounded by friends and family who also rely on it to get by. It examines the dynamics of vulnerability in an effort to bridge the focus on the construction of disadvantaged people as "the vulnerable" and the genuine vulnerability that can characterise experiences of disadvantage and deprivation.

Scholarship on vulnerability

Terms like "the most vulnerable" tend to be used in public discourse to refer to 'specific social groups who are particularly susceptible to the experience of overlapping disadvantages' (Misztal, 2011, p. 2). Despite its discursive currency and circulation, the meaning of vulnerability often remains 'vague and nebulous,' ascribing certain social categories as 'the vulnerable' and eliding the relation dynamics of

susceptibility *to* specific risks and hazards (Brown, 2011, p. 314; Levine, 2004). The prevalence of the concept in public discourse is matched by a surge of interest in the phenomenon in social science linked to the prominence of risk (Misztal, 2011, p. 32). As Brown (2011, p. 318) argues, vulnerability is not an objective phenomenon to be measured but a 'value-laden' and 'malleable' concept that lends itself to both structural and behaviourist explanations of need and disadvantage and must therefore be critically treated in scholarship. Given that understanding the potency of the concept in both the public and academic imagination is critical for situating the concerns of this chapter, this section offers an overview of literature on vulnerability. It is not exhaustive but rather illustrative.[55]

For decades fields like disaster studies and poverty studies have sought to refine the definition of vulnerability. It is commonly defined in terms of both susceptibility and resilience, with the aim of anticipating damage and strengthening the capacity to cope with, respond to, and recover from crisis (see Hogan & Marandola, 2005; Misztal, 2011 ch.1 for a review). This literature tends to be concerned with identifying indicators of vulnerability, as well as the qualities that people and communities possess to reduce vulnerability. It also reflects the effort to understand the intersection of natural hazards and the social systems that exacerbate risk, as well as the complex overlap of multiple vulnerabilities and differential exposure and adaptability to risks within social groups. This perspective is concerned with how history and society creates the conditions that render some populations less equipped to face and recover from disaster (Blaikie, Cannon, Davis, & Wisner, 1994). For example, vulnerability is not synonymous with poverty, but rather is seen as a symptom, reflection, and cause of poverty (Hogan & Marandola, 2005, p. 457; Misztal, 2011, pp. 22, 23). However, Bankoff (2001, pp. 25, 27) argues that despite conceptual efforts to clarify the conditions that differentiate susceptibility to disaster, vulnerability discourse is still rooted within the historical and cultural legacy of Western interventionist logic. Like the discourses of topicality and development that preceded it, vulnerability discourse 'also classifies certain regions or areas of the globe as more dangerous than others' by constructing them as 'disaster-prone,' thereby justifying

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[55] See Mackenzie et al. (2014) for a review from the perspective of moral philosophy, Brown (2015) writing from the field of social policy, and Misztal's (2011) comprehensive synthesis of the literature from human and social sciences.

Western intervention and interference in the form of scientific expertise and technologies. While more nuanced definitions foreground how particular regions, populations, or social groups may be internally differentiated in terms of the degree of unsafety, such categories may nonetheless stand in as key indicators of vulnerability, particularly in the effort to operationalise the concept in practical assessment (eg. Buckle, Mars, & Smale, 2000).

Misztal (2011, pp. 29, 32) describes the proliferation and evolution of the concept in the human sciences as the forerunner to its rise in social theory, much of which shares a reference to risk as a characteristic of 'modern, global, individualized society.' Perhaps most prominent is Beck's 'risk society' thesis, also developed and popularised by Giddens (1998), which argues that modernisation processes have resulted in a new league of human-produced hazards that are indeterminable and global in reach. Contemporary life is therefore characterised by increased uncertainty and insecurity. Alongside globalisation, individualisation creates more risk by loosening binding social ties and encouraging individuals to chart their own life course. With new opportunities for self-direction comes new risks, which individuals are left to handle on their own (Bauman, 2007; Beck, 1992).The theme of risk and endemic insecurity has also been taken up in both optimistic theorising of vulnerability as the basis for social justice agendas and critical accounts of vulnerability as a paternalist and patronising construct in social policy.

Work emerging largely from moral philosophy and a feminist ethics of care has pointed to the positive potential of recognising vulnerability as a human condition. This body of work posits shared bodily fragility and common experiences of suffering and dependence as the basis for an ethics and politics of compassion and responsibility. For example, Judith Bulter (2004) foregrounds how our inescapable bodily vulnerability exposes us to the actions of others. But while we may all share a common ontological precariousness, not everyone is exposed to the same degree. Moreover, the vulnerability of some is overlooked because of the lack of value attributed to their lives. She argues that our fundamental interdependence elicits the ethical obligation to mitigate the suffering of others and redress the unequal conditions that exacerbate vulnerability. Common dependence on one another is also at the center of Goodin's (1985, p. 145) argument for 'protecting the vulnerable'.

He attempts to transcend blaming those in need for their circumstances by arguing that they are most vulnerable when their power and control to protect themselves is so reduced that the opportunity for self-help has passed, thereby eliciting the special moral duty of other actors to respond. However, feminist theorists have argued that because he writes from the perspective of the protector, he is 'unable to deal adequately with the dangers faced by the vulnerable in the hands of caregivers and other champions who may come to assume that they can define the needs of the vulnerable' (Tronto, 1993, p. 135). Kittay (1999) and Dodds (2007) mobilise a vulnerability-focused view of personhood to insist on appropriate recognition and support for recipients and providers of care. Nonetheless, many of these theorists are still sensitised to the dangers of classifying particular subgroups or populations as vulnerable and hence characterised by 'victimhood, deprivation, dependency or pathology' (Fineman, 2008, p. 8).

This brings me to the other strong current in the literature, which often draws of Foucauldian ideas of governmentality to explain the prominence and function of vulnerability discourse in justifying intervention and widening social control. Critics are concerned that the concept promotes increased state intervention (Furedi, 2008) and constructs certain social groups – such as people with disabilities (eg. Hollomotz, 2009; Wishart, 2003), queer youth (Cover, 2012), and Aboriginal people (Altman & Hinkson, 2010) – as *at risk* by virtue of their minority identity. This implies that all people belonging to that category are vulnerable and fails to contextualise the conditions that make some people more vulnerable to specific risks than others. Policy research and practice constructs social groups as vulnerable by reproducing statistics about comparative risk to social problems like addiction, violence, suicide, poor health. Cover (2012, p. 4) articulates the problem in his critique of the ways risk discourse constructs queer youth as vulnerable to suicide: 'risk cannot be ignored, but we should avoid indulging the view that the risk is produced simply by the existence of queer persons, which ultimately reinforces some of the same heteronormativities that produce an environment for difficult lives in the first place.' In Australia, critiques informed by critical race theory have challenged colonial constructions of vulnerability that justify disciplinary interventions in Aboriginal communities (Bielefeld, 2014a; Dierdre Howard-Wagner & Kelly, 2011). Furedi (2007)

explains vulnerability as a 'cultural script' that orients our understanding and experience of adversity. He is highly critical of the cultural narrative of vulnerability, which he relates to the emergence of individualist conceptions of fragile personhood and new forms of social control and self-surveillance through therapeutic intervention (see also Furedi, 2004). However, refugee studies scholars suggest that narratives of vulnerability are also resources that refugees actively utilise to access aid and resettlement (Jansen, 2008; Kibreab, 2004). 'In the limited environment of the refugee camp, representing vulnerability and using identity is *the* essential resource for refugees, because many other resources are lacking' (emphasis in original Jansen, 2008, p. 576). These critiques demonstrate the ways in which policy 'constructs' rather than merely 'describes' vulnerability (Bielefeld, 2014a, p. 699).

Theorists who maintain the significance of vulnerability as an aspect of the human condition have aimed to clarify the concept by disentangling its different dimensions and meanings. Mackenzie et al. (2014, pp. 7–9) have sought to grapple with the promise and challenges of an ethics of vulnerability by putting forward a 'taxonomy of vulnerability' that differentiates between 'inherent' and 'context-specific' sources of vulnerability. They also distinguish between 'dispositional' and 'occurrent' vulnerability to clarify whether the state of vulnerability is potential or actual. Acknowledging the conceptual deficiencies in understanding the term, arising in part from its broad but disparate meanings across various fields, Barbara Misztal (2011) proposes an 'aggregative conception of vulnerability' that can address its complexities rather than dismissing the term altogether. Misztal's sociological definition therefore speaks to the aims of this chapter.

Drawing on a comprehensive review of literature from the human and social sciences, Misztal (2011, p. 7) defines vulnerability as multidimensional phenomenon that derives from 1. 'human dependence on others', 2. 'the unpredictability of action', and 3. 'the irreversibility of human experience'. For each dimension she proposes a respective remedy – responsibility, promise, and forgiveness – each grounded in trust – and operating across an individual, national and global scale. Bodily and social dimensions of vulnerability. The first form of vulnerability arises from dependence on others as a common feature of humanity, but the degree of vulnerability depends on the capacity

to balance autonomy and dependence and the specific situations that make people dependent. Human interdependence is both physical and psycho-social; everyone depends on others at some stage of their life for care and sustenance and humans require the recognition of others for self-realisation. Misztal advocates cultivating responsibility through responsiveness to those in need that hinges on respect as a remedy for this form of vulnerability. The second form of vulnerability is rooted in the 'unpredictability of human experience and action', which is differentiated by the reliability of social support (informal and formal) and extent of socio-economic protections in a society. Drawing on theorists of risk, she argues that the inherent unpredictability of individual life is exacerbated by the insecurity of income and social support brought about by the individualisation of work and life. Promise mitigates the vulnerability associated with fear of uncertainty by 'establish[ing] shared expectations' and invoking trust and confidence in future (interpersonal and institutional) support (Misztal, 2011, pp. 86, 90). The third form of vulnerability comes the injury of irreversible past suffering and trauma. The pain and resentment of human inflicted trauma hampers 'the emotional capacities of individuals' and reduces the possibility of 'collaborative relationships' between wounder and wounded (Misztal, 2011, p. 95). According to Misztal, forgiveness as a mode of memory can allow the wounded to recover from past trauma and begin anew. Misztal's attention to the different temporal dimensions of vulnerability and her effort to apply critical pressure to the term without dismissing it resonates with the approach in this chapter. I will go on to critically relate her tripartite conception to the concepts of 'everyday emergencies' and 'performing vulnerability' in the sections that follow.

Vulnerability is understood across this diverse literature as both a cultural script that shapes how social problems are understood and experienced and a material phenomenon and condition of human life (perspectives that are not mutually exclusive). The over-determining discourse of vulnerability in social policy tends to classify particular groups and populations as necessarily at risk and in need of behaviourist interventions, losing the relational quality that some theorists regard as its strength. At the same time, subjects of social policy are often genuinely susceptible to suffering and harm, exacerbated by the inequities of the social systems in which they live. A nuanced

understanding of vulnerability can help draw out the conditions that produce experiences of insecurity. The question, then, is how to acknowledge the serious limitations of how the concept is operationalised in social policy without losing sight of the genuine vulnerabilities to which social policy responds?

Everyday emergencies

Kathleen Millar (2014, p. 33) argues that the concept of 'everyday emergencies' allows us 'to grasp the ways that disruption and insecurity not only suspend but constitute "normality" in Rio's favelas'. She is concerned with 'the multiple forms of insecurity that destabilize daily life: health vulnerabilities, makeshift housing, environmental hazards, debt, incarceration, and crime and violence' (Millar, 2014, p. 34). While the tenor and form of these disruptions may differ in Sydney suburbs compared to the Brazilian favelas, the way Millar uses the concept to account for the disruptions that destabilise daily life – both dramatic and mundane – resonates with the experiences recounted to me by some of the people I spoke to. The challenges and disruptions that mark life in poverty – both unpredictable and routine – constituted daily life for those who relied on welfare as their main source of income and were familiar with the welfare system. Everyday emergencies are to this extent unexceptional (though nonetheless consuming) to the people experiencing them, yet figured from the outside an exceptional departure from or breakdown of the normal order of things.

I draw on the concept of 'everyday emergencies' to make sense of the nature of the threats and crises that people living in poverty on welfare in Australia are susceptible to. While the authors I borrow the concept from write about favelas (squatter neighbourhoods) in Brazil, I maintain that 'everyday emergencies' helps illuminate the scale and temporality of the disruptions that shape life in poverty in Australia. Ben Penglase (2009) originally uses the concept to explain how drug traffickers deliberately create disorder and insecurity in order to justify their power and presence in favelas. Rather than simply exchanging security for complicity with favela residents in the face of arbitrary police violence, drug traffickers (and police alike) create the daily sense of insecurity they purport to contain. The concept of everyday emergencies can directly invoke Georgio Agamben's

work on states of exception (as Penglase's original does; see also Skilling, 2014). However, I am less interested in linking everyday emergencies to an engineered political-juridical order and mode of governance.[56] Instead, I follow Millar's (2014) broader application of the concept in her 'phenomenological' account of precarity.

While Millar uses the concept to signal the immediacy of daily disruptions – 'the precarious present' – I would argue that the concept resonates with the temporal quality of vulnerability as simultaneously immediate and imminent. Vulnerability is unrealised (Brown, 2011, p. 319) but imposes itself on the present. By this I mean that one is vulnerable *to* an unrealised threat, yet the condition of susceptibility resides in and has immediate bearing on the present. The concept of everyday emergencies contains the juxtaposition of the present and the future alongside the routine and the exceptional. The unrealised quality of emergency is evident in its etymology; it is defined by the Macquarie Dictionary as 'an unforeseen occurrence; a sudden and urgent occasion for action', and derives from the Medieval Latin 'emergentia – a coming up' and English 'emerge' ('Macquarie Dictionary Online', 2015). For a handful of my interviewees, daily challenges and disruptions were at once routine and held the potential for impending crisis; they oscillated between unrelenting pressure of 'just survivin' and 'big drama' that could threaten to undo them. The concept of everyday emergencies reflects the second form of vulnerability identified by Misztal, speaking to the ways in which the inherent unpredictability of life is exacerbated by the multiple disruptions that can unsettle life in poverty and produce the experience of ordinary insecurity.

"We struggle everyday"

The kinds of crises that people mentioned could be intense and tragic, like the turmoil associated with illness, drug addiction, violence, and crime: fleeing a violent partner with the kids, hospitalisation for drug addiction or mental illness, a psychotic episode, incarceration, drug overdose, or a heavy loss on the pokie machines. But they also confronted a different scale of crisis, which is less sensational, from the disruptions that unsettle daily life in poverty. The kinds of mundane disruptions I heard about included: an over-drawn bank account that incurs a penalty and

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[56] I return to this point later.

throws out the fortnightly budget, not having money for the train fare to a compulsory job network appointment, the breakdown of household appliances that there's no money to replace, the review of benefit entitlements, shortage of money because it was spent on school photos or an excursion, the cost of medication not covered by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) or referral to an expensive specialist,[57] paying a fine, getting caught shop-lifting, losing driver's license, or an infected tooth. These incidents created disproportionate disruption and sapped disproportionate energy.

While most people I spoke to had to be careful with money and 'count every coin', for others it was a daily struggle to find food or pay bills. As Reem, a Lebanese-Australian single parent of three, said holding back tears: 'We struggle every day [...] But what do you do? You've just got to keep going'. Bill, an elderly Aboriginal man on the Aged Pension, describes the daily struggle to provide for his young family:

> But it gets you down because honestly there's not a day that goes by that I'm [not] under pressure for food. Not a day that goes past [...] Oh a lot of times I've got to come to [family support worker] and she'll get us food and things like that. It's just – everything is in bills. I'll get caught because I can't pay the whole bill. I can pay some of it and then I might leave say $50 short or $70 short. So the next time it comes, well that $50 adds on and then I find out I can't [afford it] so I've got to say "oh well, I'll have to pay the other $100 next time.

Just as expected daily costs could accumulate and get out control, unexpected costs could be very disruptive and destabilising. Monica, an Anglo mum in her late 20s who had relied on Parenting Payment Single since she had her daughter in her late teens, talked about how a deduction from her payment had left her unable to budget for Christmas. She was entitled to child support from her daughter's father and, even though she hadn't received any, Centrelink[58] still determined that they had overpaid her and began deducting from her fortnightly benefit in the lead up to Christmas. Greg, who had just become eligible for the Aged Pension but was previously a long-term recipient of the Newstart unemployment benefit, lost the boost in income to a repayment plan for an overblown water bill caused by a hidden leaking pipe, which the council insisted he pay at the maximum rate he could "spare".

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[57] Under the PBS the Commonwealth government subsides the cost of medicine. It also offers subsidies for specialist consultations through Medicare but only 30% of appointments are bulk-billed and unregulated prices mean patients can be left substantially out-of-pocket (see Sivey, 2016).
[58] The government agency and monopoly provider of cash benefits in Australia.

Besides the daily grind of living on little income, drug addiction, domestic violence, and gambling created daily complications. My sample is not representative, so I don't want to imply that all welfare recipients experience these issues, but the long-term recipients I spoke to (primarily Anglo and Aboriginal) were most often touched by one or more of those issues. Conflict and complications associated with addiction, violence, or illness can cause 'big drama', as Kat describes. When Kat's adult son was released from prison without his anti-psychotic medication for his schizophrenia, which wasn't typically stocked in pharmacies but instead had to be ordered, Kat phoned different chemists with the help of her daughter and grandson's mother until they found one that stocked the medication. Tracking down the medication absorbed their attention and energy; a relatively minor complication created significant stress, particularly because it held the threat of a more explosive episode. This example suggests the ways in which the mundane disruptions of 'just survivin' are embroiled with the 'big drama' typically associated with vulnerability to illness, violence or addiction. However, I want to be careful in making this point, as it may imply an undue distinction between the banal and the dramatic. Rather, the concept of everyday emergencies points to the ways in which banal disruptions create everyday drama and banal drama constitutes normality.

People told me about not being able to plan ahead – described by one person I talked to as 'living hand to mouth' – but constantly having to think ahead to contain potential problems. Monica's account of 'rationing' food illustrates how this sense of planning permeates the most mundane tasks:

> everything I do or use, I'm always thinking about the expense […] You know, I always get cranky at my brother for instance, if I've just bought a new hot chocolate container he will go and have three scoops because it's a new jar. But that means three cuppas to me, like so I'm always thinking ahead. You have to think [ahead], like you have to, like to be able to budget you have to actually contemplate how you're going to make whatever last this many days.

Bill similarly described the uncertainty of not knowing how he would feed himself or his children day-to-day: 'Every day I get up I've got to worry. Worry about where the loaf of bread's coming from. Worry about where the bottle of milk's coming from. Every single day. You just can't survive even these days'. This suggests the simultaneously immediate and imminent quality of the insecurity constituted by everyday emergencies – the unsettling effect of being absorbed by the demands of the present while the uncertainty of the future presses in.

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Most of the people I spoke to wanted to find work and financial security – consistent with research that contradicts the assumption underpinning the 'culture of poverty' thesis that poor people are intergenerationally habituated to resist work (Shildrick, MacDonald, Furlong, Roden, & Crow, 2012). But the immediate priorities of getting by and the obligations to family and friends embroiled in everyday emergencies trumped or derailed the desire and effort to get ahead, competing with the commitment to find work. Monica's experience of juggling work and single parenting illustrates the competing obligations she had to negotiate, though both ultimately aimed at best supporting her daughter. I quote her at length to keep the rhythm and arc of her story:

> The last one before that [job] I was a house keeper at the ------- Motel. But as soon as she realised I was a yes person, like 'yes I'll do that, yes I'll do that, yes I'll do that for you,' she started asking me to do all sorts of things. I started coming in to be a waitress at night. I started being a chef. She actually would leave the cooking to me, I wasn't qualified!
>
> Anyway, so I'd be waiting, kitchen-hand, doing the prep and stuff next to her while she was cooking, then cooking, then in the day I was a housekeeper/receptionist because I'd have to answer the door. I signed up to be a housekeeper from hours like 8 til 1 in the day. I was leaving there at 10.30 at night sometimes with my daughter because my sister ended up saying, 'No I can't take her anymore.' You know, that's not good hours for my daughter, it's not responsible parenting. But it was my boss.
>
> So yeah, eventually I ended up saying I can't do waitressing anymore, I can't come in nights. And within a couple of months of me just doing the morning shift she'd say, 'Oh there's no work, we're really quiet.' And I drove past there and the other girl who'd been hired after me would be working. So she replaced my with the next yes girl as soon as I said no.

This example brings into relief the immediate priorities created by everyday emergencies and the obligations to family often also caught up in them. In this way it echoes Miller's (2014, p. 35) suggestion that 'unstable daily living destabilizes work' rather than the conventional account of precarious work disrupting life, although this example suggests both dynamics are at play.[59]

This formulation – precarious life disrupts work – must also take into account the cultural characteristics of attitudes to work. This point is demonstrated by Lorraine Gibson's (2010) work on Aboriginal peoples' relations and attitudes to mainstream employment in Wilcannia, a small town in far western New South Wales. Gibson argues that relatedness rather than occupation is a defining feature of identity for Aboriginal people in Wilcannia, an observation echoed by research on other

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[59] Millar's argument is specifically concerned with the rhythms of the favela and working on the garbage dump, which contrast with the ways in which full-time work interferes with obligations to family and the demands arising from everyday emergencies.

Aboriginal communities across Australia. She quotes MacDonald's work with Wiradjuri people to characterise their ontology as 'to some extent "a relational ontology [that] sees people defined through relationships rather than roles"' (MacDonald, 2004, p. 15 cited in Gibson, 2010, p. 129 emphasis in original). Her description of regular disruptions to work to some extent resonates with Miller's account of everyday emergencies: 'Family illness, a hangover from "a big night on the drink", Nana's need to do the shopping, the arrival of family or friends from out of town or an unexpected occurrence of interest continue to be the cause of much non-attendance at work' (Gibson, 2010, p. 135). However, simply reading this as precarious life encroaching on commitment to work overlooks 'the culturally perceived and culturally attributed values, social obligations and desires' also at play in shaping priorities. Gibson (2010, p. 135 emphasis in original) argues that these disruptions 'highlight the importance of family, not the unimportance of work,' despite often being interpreted as a sign of irresponsibility and laziness by white people. Moreover, she concludes that saying Aboriginal people don't regard regular work as a social responsibility misses 'the importance and nature of what "work" is' (Gibson, 2010, p. 137). In her ethnography with the Aboriginal population in Western Sydney (adjacent to where my research was based), Cowlishaw (2011, pp. 177–8) likewise observes that regular paid work can conflict 'with many of the familiar assumptions of community life such as being available to fulfil the needs of other family members.' The meaning and valuation of work comes to bear on how people interpret and negotiate the balance between paid employment and family. For example, Monica was deeply conflicted about balancing her competing responsibilities as parent and employee, and profoundly ashamed of what she saw as her failure to fulfil her moral obligation to support herself and her daughter through paid work (discussed in-depth in chapter 5). Kat, by contrast, expressed little discomfort about receiving welfare benefits and had a different barometer of success that included being open to approaching others for help rather than suffering alone: 'Speaking for myself, I would just be helpful and being there for people, never being afraid to ask for things.' While both women faced similar disruptions and challenges arising from deprivation and disadvantage, their experience of them was inflected by their understandings of work, family, and worth.

The accounts of everyday insecurity told to me are consistent with other Australian studies that have

sought the perspective of people living in poverty and found that their life is marked by financial,

housing, and psychological stress (Morris & Wilson, 2014; Murphy et al., 2011; Peel, 2003; Saunders,

2011).[60] Worrying about money all of the time – having to watch every cent without knowing what's

going to happen – is a common theme across this research. The scale of the disruption when

something goes wrong and its cumulative effect likewise reappears in the stories these studies cite:

> I think the problem with welfare is it doesn't stretch enough and then if something goes
> wrong it sends you reeling right back so there isn't any margin for you to try an put anything
> away, you're just barely making ends meet… well your fridge breaks down, then you can't
> pay one of your bills, or three or four of your bills, to replace your fridge because you can't
> live without your fridge (Centrelink recipient (payment unspecified), cited in Saunders, 2011,
> p. 70).

> There are many occasions where my electricity has been cut off. It's led to increased health
> problems. Last year with no heating, no electricity, no lighting, no cooking, I got pneumonia.
> This led to a virus, which caused the bone to collapse under my eye… Now I need open facial
> cranial surgery… This is a major $20,000 operation for which I am in a queue that may never
> eventuate. (Newstart recipient, cited in Morris & Wilson, 2014, p. 214).

> I think there would be many people whose real focus in life is survival, and they can't do
> anything more than survive. If they try to get out of it they get sucked back into it because
> something goes wrong (welfare worker, cited in Peel, 2003, p. 64).

This last quote in particular speaks to the divergent priorities that arise from everyday emergencies;

the focus on hanging on and surviving rather than aspiring and thriving, articulated by Peel (2003, p.

69) as 'loss of movement towards the future.'[61] Withstanding and containing everyday emergencies

consumes time and energy that interrupts and undermines the pursuit of something better. This has

larger implications for policy and how we understand the will and motivation of people living in

poverty that doesn't revert to lamenting the poor choices people make under such conditions.

Banal drama

The concept of everyday emergencies helps make sense of the experience of daily insecurity that

unsettles yet settles-into daily life. The examples I have cited suggest the disproportionate potential

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[60] The degree of unpredictability and uncertainty experienced by benefit recipients, particularly recipients of out-of-work benefits, also features in qualitative research from the UK (eg. Patrick, 2017; Wright, 2016).
[61] In their comparative analysis of experiences of poverty across seven countries, Walker et al. (2013, p. 223) likewise found that 'many respondents found themselves caught in the continuing short-term, dealing with today's needs at the expense of tomorrow's'. Describing experiences of debt, they observe that 'a miscalculation or misfortune could spiral into financial disaster.'

of seemingly minor incidents to destabalise daily life, creating drama that consumes time and energy. Minor incidents can also accumulate into and infuse 'big drama.' Everyday emergencies include the routine potholes and hurdles of getting by on a meager income and more tumultuous episodes of violence or illness. But while the adjective 'disproportionate' implies such disruptions are exceptional, they are ordinary for the people experiencing them. In other words, the mundanity of everyday emergencies constitutes the banal drama of daily life. In many cases, the familiarity of everyday emergencies made them no less urgent.

Importantly, the point of offering everyday emergencies as a concept is not to bolster the discourse of crisis that energises interventionist policy. Lea's (2012) analysis of the compulsion to construct Indigenous worlds as anarchic and requiring urgent policy intervention is instructive here. By acknowledging policy as a messy human endeavor, she undoes the opposition of bureaucratic order and Indigenous dysfunction on which the logic of intervention relies. She argues that critiques of the disciplinary function of intervention, while they have merit, imply that 'the state operates as a coherent and even rational ordering device' (Lea, 2012, p. 17). Functionalist accounts of engineered crisis can thereby obscure the 'more anarchic human endeavor' that comprises bureaucracy and the state (Lea, 2012, p. 114). By acknowledging that 'bureaucracy is peopled', Lea (2012, p. 117) brings into view how bureaucratic (dis)order is animated by embodied feeling as much as instrumental intentionality. Crucially, Lea (2012, p. 117) not only signals the anarchic dimension of policy-making but also the ways in which concrete yet ad hoc policy measures condition the disorder and disruptions of everyday life: 'Policy's anarchic material expressions constitute [Aboriginal peoples'] quotidian world. The extraordinary is their ordinary.' This is a salient insight given that the everyday emergencies people described to me so often related to the bureaucratic hoops and quagmires of Centrelink, not to mention the privations of living on such meagre payments.

Moreover, Lea's description of the ordinariness of the extraordinary resonates strongly with the concept of everyday emergencies, which illuminates how insecurity constitutes the 'normality' of everyday life. Lea points to the ways in which the 'heady' urgency that grips the language of emergency and the rollout of intervention – as well as Agambian explanations of the creation of

exception as a form of inclusion – overlooks the banal and persistent 'duress' that has conditioned everyday life for Indigenous people since colonisation began.[62] The people who experience it are 'inured to dealing with the cruddy pragmatics of life'(Lea, 2012, p. 117), which, significantly, is not to say that it doesn't wear them down or leave them reeling.

Finally, I have suggested that the concept of everyday emergencies speaks to the quality of vulnerability associated with living in poverty, experienced as insecurity that both unsettles and settles into daily life. By encompassing the small and big disruptions and dramas that at once destabalise and constitute daily life, everyday emergencies embody the temporality of vulnerability as an unrealised threat that presses in on the present. The condition of insecurity is both immediate and imminent, occupying the present and holding the threat of crisis if not contained. However, while the concept of everyday emergencies speaks to this quality of vulnerability, I would suggest that by foregrounding the conditions that destabalise everyday life it is not so susceptible to slipping into characterising certain people and groups *as vulnerable* per se. For this seems to be another way in which vulnerability is both immediate and imminent – as an unrealised condition of susceptibility that imposes itself on the present through the overdetermining category of 'the vulnerable'. With that in mind, the next section considers the recital of everyday emergencies to welfare agencies as integral to claims for extra support. I argue that the compulsion to perform vulnerability in the encounter with welfare agencies produces vulnerability to subjective injury.

"You gotta expose everything"

Frontline welfare bureaucracy reappeared as a site of injury or exposure in some of my interviews, particularly with more socially and economically excluded participants. Speaking to people about their experiences of asking for help, encounters with welfare agencies often figured as uncomfortable or even painful. In this section I argue that encounters with welfare agencies based on proof and disclosure can wound subjectivities by undermining dignity, creating what I'll go on to explain as a kind of second-order vulnerability for welfare recipients seeking or receiving support.

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[62] She argues that ordinariness also constitutes the life word of bureau-professionals, such that they experience a sense of crisis as revitalising compared to the boredom and routine of bureaucratic work.

In the following section of an interview two young Aboriginal people describe how they feel when they have to go to welfare agencies for help. They are both in their mid-twenties. Kane is unemployed and not receiving any form of cash payments because he found the mutual obligation requirements attached to benefits, such as fortnightly job search reporting and job seeker appointments, too demanding. He lives with his mum, herself on the Disability Support Pension (DSP), and his adult brothers. Nessa is a single mum receiving the Parenting Payment Single (PPS).

> Kane: often if you go to them sorts of people [welfare agencies] you've gotta put it all out there, that you're homeless, that you got nothing, you got no friends, no family – and then they're gonna go **boom 'alright' [you get the help you came for]**…
>
> Nessa: Yeah, that's what I had to do to get a house and it's embarrassing [talking over each other] I think it's embarrassing.
>
> Kane: You gotta go down to those levels you know – it's wrong.
>
> Nessa: When you gotta expose everything and don't want to, it's like your dignity.
>
> Kane: Yeah, it's everything.

There was a palpable sense of bitterness and resentment in Kane and Nessa's retelling of their encounters with welfare agencies. It reflected a general change in demeanour during the interview as I shifted from asking questions about family to questions about welfare and government support, which I described in my field journal. They were animated, jovial and at times facetious when talking about family, bouncing off and confirming one another's responses. As I steered the interview toward experiences of welfare Kane slouched further in his chair, frowning and fidgeting with the information sheet I had given him, while Nessa went from turning her phone over in her hand to holding it in front of her face, visibly texting as she responded to my questions. Their tone became defensive yet defiant.

Feeling 'embarrassed', 'intimidated', or 'uncomfortable' in interactions with welfare agencies was repeated by many of my interviewees, especially in relation to attending obligatory appointments or seeking additional help like Emergency Relief, which is material and financial crisis aid like food or part-payment of outstanding bills. For example, Kat described how she felt treated when she approached the Department of Housing[63] about repairs: 'Again, she treated me like shit. She said,

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[63] The NSW public housing agency, now called Housing NSW.

"Oh well you're lucky you got a house. You didn't wait for long." And again I've been there for ten years and there's still no work.' Bill said about asking for emergency relief: 'I don't like it. I'll hold off. I feel embarrassed when I go and ask and a lot of times I'll hold off and hold off until I've just got to do it.' Monica, who received a charity Christmas hamper every year, said, 'I really would like to be on the other side of charity […] to be able to give to charity and give my time to them and my money to people who need it, not to be a charity case.' While some felt embarrassed but nonetheless described frontline staff as 'understanding', others told of being 'treated like shit' and being expected to explain 'the ins and outs.'

The humiliation and embarrassment arising from dealings with welfare agencies is a recurrent theme in research on experiences of poverty and welfare. There's a chapter dedicated to it in *Half a Citizen* (Murphy et al., 2011), a large-scale qualitative survey and interview study of Australian welfare recipients. Murphy and his colleagues dedicate a chapter to their interviewees' dealings with Centrelink. The government agency is an 'impersonal bureaucracy' that requires payment recipients to provide personal information and report any changes to paid income or changes of circumstances (Murphy et al., 2011, p. 36). As they explain, the forms and reporting requirements involve considerable work and create frequent anxiety for fear of making a mistake and having payments cut off.[64] They summarise their respondent's stories in the following way: 'while for our interviewees [Centrelink] was frequently a place of humiliation and belittlement – in a few cases, it was also a source of helpful advice and genuine compassion' (Murphy et al., 2011, p. 36).

Kane's story of having to "peddle" his misfortune to increase his chances of getting support also resonates with Peel's (2003) discussion of the dynamics of describing disadvantage and the stories of despair that come to be expected from the poor. In *The lowest rung: voices of Australian poverty*, Peel (2003, pp. 72–3) argues that the poor are compelled to 'perform poverty' with the appropriate mix of suffering, unbeaten resolve, and gratitude:

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[64] The worry and fear associated with reporting requirements has been exacerbated recently with the bungled implementation of automated debt recovery from mid-2016, in which thousands of current and former benefit recipients were wrongly told they had to pay back money (see Doran, 2017).

> Telling your story is part of a performance, and a number of people talked about having to "act poor". People in hardship must describe their lives all the time, often to someone who has the power to give or deny them something they need. This emphasis on proving need creates its own kind of convincing stories [...] You must be weak enough to have suffered yet strong enough to prevail.

Murphey and his colleagues quote one woman's account of her experiences with Centrelink that provides an insight into the dynamics of disclosure and exposure that characterise some recipient's encounters with front-line bureaucracy of welfare agencies. One interviewee, Kathleen, recounts a distressing experience where she felt 'bullied' into signing an Activity Agreement when she applies for Parenting Payment Single because her children were already over 8 years old. She describes how she was 'pleading' with the worker to understand her situation and how the worker's cold response made her feel 'invisible'. But she also tells a positive story about the worker conducting her Job Capacity Assessment, who said to her:

> [...] 'tell me about your life, tell me your story'. She validated my story... she said 'tell me about the things that impact on your life, like I want to know your whole picture. And I need to have that evidenced by your doctor's report and your psychologist's report, so I need to know that you're not stooging me,' which is okay, I'm happy to do that. But she said 'I want to know the whole picture. And based on that, let's together work out a plan because I can hear that at some stage you want to, you want self-reliance and self-responsibility, but you need these things in order to do it' (quoted in Murphy et al., 2011, p. 38).

What is striking about this story is how the system rewards not simply full disclosure, but a particular performance of disclosure. Kathleen displays the appropriate degree of misfortune and motivation to merit assistance according to the worker's assessment. For Kathleen, who was new to the welfare system and had applied for assistance for the first time after a divorce, this expectation was validating. However, for others who are familiar with the system and the demand to disclose, it can be exposing and injurious, as Kane and Nessa articulate, 'It's like your dignity', 'it's everything'.

Performing vulnerability

One of the critiques of vulnerability in social policy is that it may demand recipients of support to demonstrate and accentuate particular behaviours associated with vulnerability like deference and dependence in order to receive assistance, particularly in the context of increasingly exclusive and discretionary entitlement. Dominant ideas of vulnerability can work against young black men in

particular as they are constructed not simply as *at risk* but a *risk to* the community (Brown, 2014b; B. Fawcett, 2009).

Kate Brown (2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2015) who interrogates the operationalisation of vulnerability in welfare policy and practice, uses the term 'performing vulnerability' in a way that strongly resonates with Peel's concept of 'performing poverty' but is explicitly linked to the rise of vulnerability as a way of interpreting and assessing need and disadvantage. She interviewed 25 young people identified as vulnerable by youth services workers and 15 professionals involved in the delivery of services to vulnerable young people. Her interviews with professionals suggested that youth who 'conformed' to expected behaviours were more likely to be classified as 'vulnerable' and benefit from support that status conferred. Moreover, the performance of vulnerability was likewise associated with disclosure, compliance, and motivation:

> Young people were more likely to be seen as vulnerable if they were willing to give information about their personal histories, and where they demonstrated contrition for transgressions. 'Compliance' was repeatedly referred to as one of the primary factors on which conferring vulnerability status was contingent, along with 'engagement' or 'motivation for change' (Brown, 2014b, p. 380).

A potential critique of concepts like performing poverty and performing vulnerability is that they imply that welfare recipients falsify accounts of their disadvantage to access support, where 'performing' implies 'pretending'. The point, though, is not that the need is false but that the behavior and experiences of disadvantaged people is expected to resemble particular *ideals* in order for them to be intelligible as in need and deserving of support. That some people seeking help will embellish their stories and accentuate certain behaviours, as Peel (2003, pp. 26, 27) suggests, is unsurprising given that 'entitlement to support [is most] secure' (Brown 2014b, p. 379) when clients resemble such ideals. In order to clarify the misinterpretation of the performative dimension of vulnerability as disingenuous, I talk about this process in terms of what I call 'ideal scripts of access', which are animated by ideals of 'deserving vulnerability' and 'empowered responsibility' (elaborated in Chapter 3).

Cultural scripts, then, animate the kinds of stories that find voice and are heard. Kane suggested the conscious negotiation of these scripts when he said, 'boom, alright' (you get the help you came for) –

implying that particular scripts will be rewarded with assistance. It's reasonable to speculate that Kane would have learnt the 'rules' of such scripts through experience, embedded as he is in social networks where negotiating Centrelink (and perhaps other welfare agencies) is a necessary and normal feature of daily life. It is possible, too, that some people are actively coached in such scripts by frontline staff who are conscious of the currency of certain buzzwords and behaviours and the favourable outcome they could yield. As one young person in Brown's (2014b, p. 377) study described, he was 'put down as vulnerable' by a youth worker who wanted a less punitive sanction to be applied. Moreover, as I demonstrate in chapter two, such cultural scripts need not be consciously deployed in order to be actively negotiated; they inform, though they don't determine, interactions between welfare agency staff and support recipients by providing the ready categories and frames through which the intentions and behaviour of clients are interpreted as needy and deserving.

Just as ideal scripts of access don't determine staff expectations and responses, nor do they decide the approach or response of people seeking support. Even the small number of Emergency Relief (ER) sessions that I observed was enough to demonstrate the different degrees to which people are willing to plead their exceptional circumstances. A few applicants were forthcoming, giving elaborate and animated descriptions of irregular circumstances and everyday emergencies. For example, one amenable applicant presented a large gas bill as evidence as they chattily explained that their sister had been evicted and there were two families living under the one roof, causing a surge in the household gas use. The applicant nodded in apparent assent as the ER worker suggested turning down the temperature on the water heater to curb the use of gas and accepted a flyer about financial counselling. Others, however, offered only the minimum information required of them. One applicant, when pressed by the frustrated ER, insisted with quiet stubbornness that 'Centrelink isn't enough to live off and rent is too high,' withholding any other details and refusing the offer of financial counselling. Perhaps this applicant was confident of meeting the official criteria to receive the additional assistance. Despite this refusal to perform, and the ER worker's opinion that 'he doesn't want to take responsibility' expressed to me afterward, the applicant left with the assistance sought. This example illustrates how the expectations about motivation and behaviour embodied in

cultural scripts of access may colour the encounter between staff and clients even if they don't affect the immediate outcome of resource allocation.

The injury of the encounter with welfare agencies

To return, then, to the initial excerpt from my interview with Kane and Nessa, what is striking about this quote is the sense of exposure and indignity and, indeed, vulnerability they express. Exposure and injury are closely related to vulnerability, a condition of being open to assault and susceptible to wounding. Anderson and Honneth (2005) argue that individuals are inherently vulnerable because they are dependent on the recognition of others to realise and sustain a sense of self, and a positive self-conception is a necessary condition of autonomy. Individuals or groups who a socially denigrated are more susceptible to 'autonomy-related vulnerabilities' than others, and Anderson and Honneth insist that protecting people from subjective injury should be a priority of liberal justice. Sennett (2003) poignantly articulates how the dynamics of proof and disclosure in welfare agencies risks shaming and demeaning welfare users. He explains shame as a feeling of involuntary exposure: 'the "nakedness of shame" thus refers to losing control over what is being revealed' (Sennett, 2003, p. 117). Thus he argues, 'there's nothing inherently shameful about [the statement "I need help"], so long as it can be *managed* by the person who makes it' (Sennett, 2003, p. 118 emphasis in original).[65] It is not simply that targeted and conditional welfare rewards the performance of vulnerability (and then again, not always), but that this dynamic makes welfare users vulnerable to subjective injury.

To think through the nature of the vulnerability expressed in this excerpt I return to Misztal's (2011) 'aggregative conception' of vulnerability. I want to focus on the second part of Misztal's book, where she explores existing strategies for confronting the three forms of vulnerability she identifies in part one. This section is framed by the relationship between trust and vulnerability. While there is much confusion and disagreement in the conceptualisation of trust, Misztal points out that they all share the understanding of vulnerability as inherent to trust. She quotes Kramer's (2006, p. 3 cited in Misztal, 2011, p. 120) summary of the literature: 'first and foremost, it is generally assumed that trust entails a state of perceived vulnerability or risk related to individuals … uncertainty regarding

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[65] I discuss Sennett and Honneth's work in detail in the following chapter.

the motives, intentions, and prospective actions of others on whom they depend.' Misztal (2011, pp. 120, 121) argues that trust both produces and reduces vulnerability. The condition of trusting someone – having faith that another's intentions and actions will be in your interest without knowing the outcome – is a condition of vulnerability. Yet strong relationships of trust can reduce vulnerability by creating confidence, security and hope. Speaking of dependency, Misztal (2011, p. 122) points out that imbalanced relationships of dependency can breed mistrust and deception, and thus increase the vulnerability of the 'trustor'. Challenging the vulnerability arising from dependency therefore 'involves some real trust in the other party's goodwill and the proper use of discretionary power'.

This dissection of the vulnerability of unequal relations of dependence hinged on trust is an apt characterisation of benefit recipient's encounters with frontline bureaucracy. The unbalanced relationship of dependence occurs not only at the interpersonal level of encounters between frontline staff and welfare users; it is an institutionalised relationship of dependence in which the promise of protection is insecure and not guaranteed in a context of narrowing and conditional entitlement. To requote Peel, 'people in hardship must describe their lives all the time, often to someone who has the power to give or deny them something they need' (Peel 2003: 272-3). The emphasis on proving need creates mutual mistrust. Moreover, the exposure of the person seeking/receiving support is twofold; first in laying bare the details of their hardship, and second in relying on someone else's response. Kane articulated this twofold exposure, soon after adding:

> Cos you got nothing else in that situation, you've put your heart on the line, told 'em everthink, and now you're just sitting there waitin for something to happen. So it's up to them, they can go like that [clicks fingers] if they want to, and get you [trails off]

Mizstal's conceptualisation gives a handle on the condition of vulnerability reflected in Kane and Nessa's account, and points to the way it inheres in the asymmetrical relationship between welfare recipients and providers that fosters mutual mistrust. They felt let down by support services, especially employment agencies, which they described as 'a muck around.' As Nessa put it, 'the employment agency, they say "we promise you this, we promise you that" and they give you nothing.' And later in the interview, 'I don't trust em', cos they muck ya around.' Moreover, for Kane and Nessa mistrust arose not only from the immediate asymmetries of welfare provision but the

legacies and continuities of colonial abuse in the name of welfare. Welfare agencies have been key sites and technologies of control of Aboriginal people, both historically and into the present (Cox, 2007, p. 83). Kane and Nessa were acutely aware of moralising stereotypes about Aboriginal people as 'lazy dole bludgers' and welfare as a means of control: 'people think that Aboriginal people get free cars, free houses [...] like ya lazy' (Nessa); '[the basics card] comes back to the government controlling them because they've got control of that card' (Kane). They bitterly resented the characterisation of Aboriginal people as untrustworthy embedded in present-day mechanisms like income management. Given this context, Kane and Nessa were cynical about the goodwill of welfare agencies and their proper use of discretionary power.

The specificities of Kane and Nessa's relationship to welfare institutions suggests that susceptibility to the injury of the encounter with welfare agencies is inflected by the interplay of other determinants such as gender, culture, race, (dis)ability and proximity to/familiarity with welfare. It may be informed by gendered and cultural attitudes to privacy, dependency, disadvantage and the meaning attached to needing help. For example, while I'm wary to read this into Kane and Nessa's account per se, it is important to note the specific character of "shame" and "shaming" that Aboriginal people may experience as a strongly negative sense of being singled out that dictates avoidance of attention-drawing behaviour and circumstances (Harkins, 1990).[66] Mick, an Aboriginal father in his 30s, described acting as a broker for other Aboriginal fathers who 'get shame' in the face of welfare service providers. Moreover, men are generally less willing than women to engage with welfare services, perhaps because of an emphasis on masculine invulnerability and control and a consequent avoidance of professional figures, as well as an assumption the family care is a woman's domain (Pringle, 1995, p. 133). Belonging to a publicaly stigmatised subgroup like unemployed youth, single mothers, or Aboriginal welfare users is also likely to exacerbate the potential exposure in the face of welfare agencies, as well as the frequency of the encounter. We can speculate, then, that the

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[66] The linguist Harkins analysed the semantic differences between 'shame' in standard English and as it is used in Aboriginal English, particularly in the context of the classroom. While they have in common being a negative and uncomfortable experience, Harkins argues that the Aboriginal meaning of the word implies a sense of propriety that dictates behaviour but does not necessarily express negative self-image or low self-esteem. However, non-Aboriginal teachers tended to assume that expressions and manifestations of shame were destructive states that needed to be overcome.

'occurant vulnerability' (Mackenzie et al., 2014) to subjective injury in fronting up to welfare agencies is conditioned by multiple intermediary factors.

Just as not all welfare users are equally susceptible to such wounding, injurious encounters may elicit a range of responses and defences. For example, when I followed up Kane and Nessa's response with a question – 'how did you find the people who were helping you responded?' – Nessa boasted, 'Well I had a trainee, so yeah [proud] I told her what to do. [Wry laughter] I got a house from telling her what to do.' It seemed to me an effort to recover or reassert her dignity following the admission of indignity and the exposure of its retelling in front of me. She claimed her savviness as an asset in contrast to the ignorance of the trainee worker, signalling her own capacity to make things happen and inverting the negative view of 'working the system'. Kane had withdrawn from the Newstart roll because he refused to participate in the 'muck around' requirements on which receipt of payment was conditioned. His awareness of the kinds of performances that elicit a favourable response also suggests stories of vulnerability may be actively used as resources in resource-constrained settings in a way comparable to refugee contexts (Jansen, 2008).[67] Kane and Nessa's experience reveals that the degrading and agentic aspects of performing vulnerability are not mutually exclusive, recalling Anderson and Honneth's (2005, p. 131) reminder that 'even if one's efforts to maintain self-esteem in the face of denigrating treatment are successful, the question of justice is whether the burden is fair.'

This argument needs to be qualified given the problems associated with the currency of vulnerability discourse in contemporary social policy. Any effort to conceptualise such encounters with welfare agencies in terms of vulnerability must prioritise and insist on its *situational* and *relational* nature to avoid re-inscribing the overdetermining classification of Aboriginal youth (in this case) as necessarily at risk, disadvantaged, or damaged. Otherwise 'suffering becomes the defining moment of Indigenous identity which others must be made to recognise' (Cowlishaw, 2010a, p. 215). [68]

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[67] Thank you to kylie valentine for reminding me of this.
[68] Cowlishaw (2010a, p. 215) offers a discussion of Aboriginal people embodying 'iconic suffering' in the Australian imagination, for which the formal process of reconciliation seeks to make amends. However, it is limited to a 'symbolic embodiment' not concerned with particular wounds. See also Eve Tuck (2009).

Moreover, vulnerability tends to be a condition diagnosed by professionals but rarely by local communities themselves (Furedi, 2007, p. 242), and this remains the case here. Based on my conversation with Kane and Nessa I doubt they would embrace vulnerability as a descriptor that applies to them, and only one of the people I interviewed described herself as vulnerable. But ignoring the vulnerabilities that the welfare state both mitigates and produces is not an adequate response to the fraught politics of vulnerability. To draw together the ways that the welfare state simultaneously mitigates and produces vulnerability, the final section returns to the relationship between constructivist accounts of vulnerability as a way of framing need and suffering and realist accounts of vulnerability as a condition.

The unnarratability of everyday emergencies?

So far I have focused on two forms of vulnerability that emerged out of my fieldwork, which is well supported by literature on experiences of poverty in Australia. The experience of everyday emergencies and the injury of the encounter with welfare agencies demonstrate how the material and symbolic apparatuses of welfare are directly implicated in creating the conditions that expose welfare users to insecurity and indignity. People who access welfare services genuinely suffer hardship and disadvantage, yet they are also compelled to communicate their need in a culturally intelligible idiom. In this final section I draw on trauma theory to explain how expressions of suffering are formed in dialogue and shaped by the cultural frames governing their reception. Vulnerability and trauma share the same etymological root in the Greek word for 'wound' (Misztal, 2011, p. 96). The injury arising from the irreversibility of past trauma is the third form of vulnerability identified by Misztal. I reflect on the extent to which the more mundane everyday emergencies that destablise life in poverty are communicable within ideal scripts of access that anticipate and expect 'big drama'. Finally, I use Rebecca Stringer's idea of 'vulnerability after wounding' to make sense of the vulnerability that the compulsion to perform vulnerability produced in the attempt to communicate suffering.

The dynamics of testimony and witnessing of suffering elaborated in memory and trauma theory provides a lens that brings into relief the relationship between script and experience; the cultural frames that mediate the expression of suffering and its reception. Caruth (1995) influentially argued that the defining feature of trauma is that the original event is not assimilated but rather is experienced belatedly in the form of traumatic memories that possess the trauma survivor. Traumatic memories refuse discrete temporal boundaries because they have an imposing 'presence' that is embodied and therefore experienced as immediate. Incorporating the memories into a meaningful self-narrative is one way to tame them, but 'their particularly bodily and sensory character exacerbates the difficulty of integrating them' (Wise, 2004, p. 33). Narrative thus occupies an integral but troubled position in memory and trauma theory. Witnessing is a crucial element of testimony and validation of stories is bound to their reception.

Lambek and Antz (1996, p. xvii) make the important point that 'stories require interlocutors, and the right to establish authoritative versions never rests with the individual telling the story alone.' Frontline staff of welfare agencies, State policy makers, and the broader public provide cultural scripts and frameworks of meaning that 'hear' certain kinds of stories and respond to certain kinds of identities (Wise, 2004, p. 35). So it is that welfare users are most readily recognised as needy and deserving when they resemble ideals of 'deserving vulnerability' and 'empowered responsibility'. These witnesses (or listeners) thus shape the idioms through which people make meaning of their experiences of poverty. Peel (2003, p. 26) is attuned to this point (though he focuses on demonstrating rather than explaining it), and it drives his account of performing poverty: 'It is just as important, however, to recognise that what is said about poverty also shapes what poor people feel they can and must say, and even the way people feel they must act'.

The focus on 'social suffering' has remained a strong current in more recent scholarship on trauma, which has sought to distance itself from the 'individual psychological' emphasis of earlier trauma literature by being attentive to 'the social and political contexts in which testimonies and narratives circulate, and to the ways in which particular memories and narratives are rendered "unspeakable"'(Kennedy & Whitlock, 2011, pp. 152, 154). Feminist and post-colonial developments

of trauma theory have challenged the presumption of the discrete event on which much of the literature is based, arguing that it overlooks the persistent traumatisation associated with quotidian forms of gendered or racial violence (Craps, 2013; Jolly, 2011; Kennedy & Whitlock, 2011). Their attention to the 'insidious' rather than 'extraordinary' character of ongoing trauma (Kennedy & Whitlock, 2011, p. 251) resonates with my emphasis on everyday emergencies as simultaneously exceptional and mundane. Drawing attention to the banal drama of everyday duress potentially unsettles Misztal's proposal of forgiveness as a remedy for vulnerability arising from the irreversibility of past suffering. If forgiveness is supposed to allow the wounded to recover from past trauma and begin anew, it seems ill-equipped to respond to the subtle and cumulative trauma that extends into the present. Moreover, to what extent do persistent and banal forms of duress that accumulate and constitute trauma resist narrative integration and the potential for witnessing? We could speculate then that descriptions of the persistent grind of everyday emergencies may not be 'heard' in the same way as stories of big 'E' Emergency that are rewarded in Emergency Relief.

The temporal dimension of performing vulnerability is significant here too; it holds the expectation to repeatedly describe hardship and crystalise experiences into convincing stories. If narrative is the 'condensation of what were once temporally discrete experiences' (Lambek & Antze, 1996, p. xxvi), they are further condensed in the repeated retelling. For people in dire hardship the frequency of the performance will likely be multiplied as extra relief is sought. The frequency and intensity of the burden of proof is also likely heightened in the context of conditional welfare, where recipients are expected to regularly present to Centrelink or employment assistance agencies, or otherwise justify exception from mutual obligation requirements. Scripts of vulnerability can similarly be understood as a process of condensation, where fluid and indeterminate conditions of susceptibility to suffering solidify as indicators of vulnerability and the category "the vulnerable". As Valentine (2016, pp. 239, 241) articulates in her analysis of multiplicity as a way of framing disadvantage, 'explanations of social processes dovetail into descriptions of individuals and families;' the conceptualisation of 'complex needs' morphs from a ' generic descriptor of everyday life to a category of person.'

I suggest that Rebecca Stringer's (2014) analysis of the construction of women's agency in feminist critiques of victim feminism and its echoes in rape law may prove productive for thinking about the injury inflicted by the framing of vulnerability in welfare policy and practice. Stringer (2014, p. 57) challenges the assumption that agency is inherently empowering by looking at how constructions of women-as-agents contributes to victim-blaming for sexual violence, thereby inflicting, in Stringer's words, 'a kind of secondary victimization'. She draws on Lyotard's theory of the victim whose suffering is not recognised in law and instead exists as a 'differend'. To quote Stringer, a *differend* is:

> […] a form of suffering that cannot be phrased in a shared idiom. Where 'vulnerability' refers to the ability to be wounded, Lyotard's theory of the victim points up a second order vulnerability: the ability to be wounded and then to have that wounding effaced, in language, by others, by law (Stringer, 2014, p. 58).

Stringer uses Lyotard's theory to unpack the dynamic of wounding and its acknowledgement, what she calls 'vulnerability after wounding.' She argues for the need to 'find a way to phrase women's agency' that doesn't 'construct women as blameworthy agents of their own victimization' (Stringer, 2014, p. 59).

There is much in Stringer's analysis of victimhood and agency that resonates with the politics of self-responsibility in contemporary welfare policy. Here I want to use it to point to how the mechanisms of welfare provision based of proof and disclosure, 'specify criteria' of ideal vulnerability (Stringer, 2014, p. 72) – inflected by ideals of empowered responsibility – in order for need and deservingness to be recognised. For some of the people I spoke to, the exposure and indignity that this inflicted loomed in interviews as the most raw. Kane and Nessa, for example, smarted at the retelling of these encounters more so than the other hardships they described. This is not to prioritise the injury of the encounter I have identified as more pressing than other forms of hardship, but rather to bring into view the relationship between conditions of vulnerability and framings of vulnerability, and the secondary wounding that this can inflict. For Kane and Nessa, this injury finds expression in anger and resentment that is contrary to the display of contrition, motivation, and humble suffering that more readily indicates vulnerability according to ideal scripts of access.

Conclusion

The currency and potency of vulnerability speaks to the flexibility of the concept, which resonates with both the pursuit of social justice and of widening control (Brown, 2011). It points to the tension between the social care and social control that has always inhered in the welfare state(Mendes, 2008, p. 2). The different faces and dimensions of vulnerability make it both incredibly fruitful but somewhat slippery to critically grasp. This chapter has aimed to interrogate vulnerability in a way that neither denies its salience or impact in people's lives, nor evades a critical discussion of how it is plays out in welfare policy and practice.

The title of the chapter makes reference to the phenomenological and discursive dimensions of vulnerability that it tries to hold simultaneously in view. On the one hand, the overdrawn bank account that both testifies to and exacerbates financial stress epitomises an everyday emergency. On the other hand, a system of welfare based on proof and disclosure compels recipients to repeatedly recount such everyday disruptions and difficulties in a way that conforms to ideal scripts of access marked by stoic suffering and humble self-improvement.

The concept of everyday emergencies speaks to the scale and temporality of vulnerability experienced by the people I spoke to. Everyday emergencies disrupt yet dwell in everyday life, characterised by the mundane grind of poverty punctuated by crisis. The concept captures the immediacy and imminence of vulnerability defined as both unrealised susceptibility and present capacity to respond. The welfare system, an apparatus that aims to reduce vulnerability, itself creates vulnerability. It does so, first, by destabilising everyday life through an increasingly meagre and conditional social security system and, second, by demanding the performance of hardship that conforms to the expectation and conventions embodied in ideal scripts of access. I have argued that the potential injury inflicted is two-fold, first in the experience of insecurity that constitutes daily life, and second in the demand that such suffering not only be repeatedly retold, but also expressed in a particular idiom. This second mode of vulnerability can be understood, following Stringer, as 'vulnerability after wounding.' Stringer's analysis helps illuminate how the dominant cultural lexicon

of agency effaces the wounds inflicted by disadvantage and inequality by expecting the wounded to conform to cultural scripts of deserving vulnerability and empowered responsibility in order to be validated.

The indignity and exposure of encounters with welfare agencies is a recurring theme in research on the lived experiences of welfare users, often articulated in terms of the wider theme of shame. As Kane and Nessa's defensive and defiant reactions to the injury of their encounters with welfare agencies suggests, shame can be at once undermining and activating. The following chapter takes up the complex relationship between shame and agency in an effort to add clarity and nuance to the abundant literature on the shame of poverty and welfare.

Chapter five – The shame of protection: shame, dignity and agency for the plural actor

I'm sitting in on Emergency Relief appointments. I sit to the left and slightly behind the worker conducting the appointments; he and the first applicant for the day face one another, seated on opposite sides of a desk. A desktop computer holds an agency database of previous applicants and decisions that is consulted and updated during each appointment. The room is small and barely furnished with the desk and four chairs – mine was brought in especially from another room. The man asking for assistance says very little, but insists that he doesn't need the financial training suggested by the worker – Centrelink simply isn't enough to live on. The worker gives him the voucher he came for (he is technically eligible) but keeps him a while longer to lecture him about emergency relief not functioning as 'an income supplement'.

I feel uncomfortable and self-conscious perched in the corner, watching. I'm there to observe, but I don't know where to fix my eyes. I'm indignant and offended on behalf of the man being subjected to the worker's 'tough love' performance (is this for my benefit, I wonder) and refusing to play his part. I think of the stories people have told me about feeling diminished in these encounters. I think of old friends and family who have been in his position, yet here I am, on the wrong side of the desk. I'm embarrassed to be identified with the worker. 'I'm not with him', my internal dialogue protests. But I am with him. As an apprentice researcher, I've been invited by the agency to sit in on the appointments. I am another surveyor of their hardship, and I'm ashamed. I offer the applicant a weak smile but I stay put and say nothing.

I begin with this anecdote because personal accounts can provide a lens into the interior drama and embodied discomfort induced by shame that interviews cannot, assuming we can honestly face ourselves. This personal anecdote illustrates the simultaneous and conflicting identifications and responses animated by shame in a single encounter. Shame is 'an experience of the self by the self' (Tomkins in Sedgwick & Frank, 1995, p. 136), but that self is not unitary; it inhabits different roles and positions, even in the same social context – what Bernard Lahire (2011) has called the 'plural actor'.

The visceral self-consciousness I experienced in this emergency relief appointment was aroused by the imagined judgements of multiple others – the applicant and worker who were in the room, my family and research peers who weren't – speaking to different aspects of myself that I could not reconcile and thus provoking the conflicted (albeit modest) combination of refusal and acquiescence. It is the shame experienced by the plural actor that I want to foreground in this chapter, for it opens up the complex and potentially contradictory ways in which shame animates social (inter)action.

In this chapter, I mine two stories – Monica and Hasan's – to explore the nexus of shame and dignity in the context of welfare and multiculture, considering the tension between shame as enabling and disabling different forms of agency. Shame was a recurring theme that emerged in my interviews with people who rely on or refuse welfare in difficult times. This is consistent with existing literature on the topics of poverty, welfare, and class, though shame as such is not often explicitly conceptualised in such studies (for recent exceptions see Chase & Walker, 2013; Jo, 2012; Walker et al., 2013). I start with a brief review of the extensive literature on the shame of poverty and welfare, highlighting how agency is both foregrounded and problematised in both empirical and theoretical scholarship. On the one hand, agency is prioritised through the empirical emphasis on reactions to shaming. On the other hand, evidence of the corrosive impact of chronic shame on self-esteem and self-worth points to the constraints that seriously inhibit agency. I argue that, while the emphasis in this literature on the unfair burden of shame borne by people economically and symbolically marginalised by inequality is vital and worthwhile, it overlooks a more nuanced understanding of how shame shapes people's identity and behaviour.

The picture that emerges from a more fine-grained view of my qualitative fieldwork suggests a more complicated and contradictory story. Both Hasan and Monica, during my first interview with them, were afflicted with a deep shame, sometimes articulated as guilt, about finding themselves in a position where they rely on the help of the Australian government – Hasan for protection and Monica for a basic income. At the same time, their attempts to ameliorate shame were entangled with pride and the recovery of dignity. To make sense of the messy bundle of shame and agency their stories reveal, I bring shame as a sensitising concept into dialogue with efforts to clarify the

conceptualisation of agency. Doing so provides a conceptual frame that can refine our understanding of the plural and simultaneous ways that shame enables and disables subjects to act in the multiple social worlds they inhabit and traverse. The aim is to diversify our view of the shame of poverty and welfare – to think through the complex and contradictory identifications and aspirations animated by the interaction of diverse arenas of shame.

The not-so-hidden injuries of poverty and inequality

> 'It's helping me [the Parenting Payment Single]. But I don't really want people to know because people judge you. Before I had kids when I had a full time job that's how I looked at them [single mothers] too. I thought single mothers were just sitting in a coffee shop drinking and popping out kids. That's what I thought so I know they're [other people] judging me' (Jasmin, single parent living on part-time work and Parenting Payment Single, raised in Hong Kong)

> 'I hate it, to tell you the truth. I hate asking for money, I hate asking for help. I would love to be able to do it on my own and to earn my own money. I just don't feel comfortable with it. Yes, I do receive money from Centrelink but I don't feel comfortable' (Reem, single parent living solely on Parenting Payment Single, second generation Lebanese-Australian)

As these quotes illustrate, shame was commonly expressed in my interviews – either explicitly or through participants' stories – primarily as failure, inadequacy, defensiveness, exposure, or a sense of being misunderstood. Both the prevalence and significance of shame is well documented in research about experiences of poverty and welfare. As Lister (2004, p. 119) articulates:

> The significance of shame and humiliation is not to be underestimated. They play an important role in maintaining inequality and social hierarchy. They are painfully injurious to identity, self-respect and self-esteem, in other words to how we feel about ourselves.

In this section I briefly review how shame and agency figure in empirical studies of poverty and welfare and critical theories of inequality. Within the literature reviewed, attention to the power of shame to cripple self-esteem and self-worth – and hence undermine agency – is countered by an emphasis on reactions to shame and strategies to refuse and accommodate shaming discourse and encounters. Shame in this literature tends to carry the vernacular meaning of negative and thwarting affect, though its productive power is implied by its constitutive role in maintaining social inequality and symbolic domination. In the final part of the section I signal the theoretical framework (elaborated later in the chapter) intended to open up a more nuanced account of the different forms

of agency that are animated and constrained by shame, building on the insights offered in the existing literature.

The common and corrosive effects of shame amongst the poor, and the stigma associated with welfare receipt in targeted welfare systems, are well established. Recent cross-national comparative research even claims that prevalent and damaging feelings of shame are a universal feature of poverty across extremely different cultural and economic settings (Walker, 2014; Walker et al., 2013). Commentary on Australian welfare reform notes the 'stigmatisation of "dependency" on social benefits as an unworthy social condition' as a key tenet of the shifting terms of social policy towards mutual obligation (Shaver & Thompson, 2001, p. 5; Shaver, 2001). Humiliating encounters with welfare providers and feelings of inadequacy for relying on welfare recur in large-scale Australian studies of experiences of welfare and poverty (Murphy et al., 2011; Peel, 2003; Saunders, 2011). Health and psychology research demonstrates that welfare benefit recipients are much more likely to experience poor mental health than people who don't receive payments, including 'significantly elevated rates of hopelessness, worthlessness and dissatisfaction with life' (Butterworth, 2008, p. 17). Grahame and Marston (2012) found evidence of the stigmatising effects of the extension of "welfare-to-work" policies to single parents receiving income support. Drawing on data from semi-structured interviews with 21 working single mothers receiving benefits, they demonstrate the subjective injury felt by single mothers who feel their multiple commitments are not recognised by the welfare system, which prioritises employment but disregards care work and the work involved in claiming welfare, such as job search requirements. The authors challenge the narrow claim underpinning workfare policy that employment promotes wellbeing. They argue, following Anderson and Honneth (2005), that positive self-conception is integral to autonomy and the supervisory and moralistic dimensions of workfare undermine self-worth and self-respect, and therefore wellbeing.

There is much more international research that explicitly addresses the topic of stigma, particularly in the US. Ample studies document the effects of stigma of the wellbeing of welfare recipients and varying degrees to which welfare recipients internalise negative stereotypes, much of it focusing on

the stigmatisation of 'welfare mothers' and the extension of workfare to single mothers on welfare (Davis & Hagen, 1996; Herd, Mitchell, & Lightman, 2005; Kingfisher & Goldsmith, 2001; McCormack, 2004). The comparative analysis of historical period (Davis & Hagen, 1996), country and welfare state regimes (Kingfisher & Goldsmith, 2001), and geographical location (McCormack, 2004) has been fruitful in teasing out the differential effects of stigmatising discourse and the increasingly supervisory structure of welfare delivery.

Agency is implicit in such efforts to document and differentiate responses to shaming discourses and encounters. These qualitative studies demonstrate that societal attitudes to welfare entitlement, the structure of welfare delivery, family background and proximity to welfare, the frequency of shaming encounters in everyday life, and how inequality is understood affect susceptibility to shame and the ability to manage it. Women consistently differentiated themselves from the tainted category of welfare mother by emphasising their own demanding work-load, their effort to improve themselves, or the external factors that have forced them onto welfare. Distancing oneself from tainted categories recurs as a tactic of both accommodation and refusal across the literature on welfare and stigma. This pattern was echoed during my interviews, in which 'we're not those kinds of people' was a recurring qualification when talking about welfare receipt, usually followed by an assertion of personal work ethic – 'I'm a self-made man'; 'I've always wanted to work for my money, you know'. Shaming conditions can elicit contradictory responses, particularly for subordinate groups for whom such conditions are beyond their control, as Sayer (2005, p. 160) suggests: 'They may try to make a virtue out of their position and their toughness and fortitude in bearing burdens, at the same time as they feel shame at having to bear those burdens. These are simultaneously responses of resistance and compliance.'

Shame is also a recurring, though not always explicitly named or defined (Scheff, 2000), theme in the sociology of class. In *The Hidden Injuries of Class* Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb (1972, p. 74) argue that the fault lines of class differences are being redrawn around individual ability and self-determination rather than material status. Amongst the 150 or so white, working class men they spoke to, mainly of Italian and Jewish background, there was a common 'sense of injured dignity'

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that was felt, at least in part, to be a sign of their own weakness and inadequacy. This 'existential wound', Sennett and Cobb argue, derives from an American culture of individualism based on individual achievement that sets one apart from the mass of ordinary people:

> The badges of inner ability people wear seem, in sum, unfairly rewarded – yet hard to repudiate. That is the injury of class, in day-to-day existence, that the people we encountered face; it is a tangled relationship of denied freedom and dignity infinitely more complex than a resentment of "what other people are doing to me"(Sennett & Cobb, 1972, p. 118).

The injury of class is the uneven development of individual ability and the rejection and compromised dignity this inflicts. As the quote above suggests, it is more insidious than overt mistreatment and deprivation because it erodes a sense of *self*-worth and achievement. Sennett points to the subjective toll of class and, like Sayer (2005, p. 168), insists that reactions to class are not simply motivated by material interests or the pursuit of power.

Sennett (2003, chapter four) likewise locates the cultural schema of the self-determining individual at the centre of his analysis of 'the shame of dependency' embedded in the modern welfare state. He suggests that the shame of dependency hinges on 'self-sovereignty' as the defining characteristic of liberal adulthood and the primacy of work as the measure of worth. The equation of worth with work and idleness with a 'defective character' was articulated in the nascent welfare state through the distinction between the deserving working poor and undeserving paupers who relied on charity. As Sennett (2003, p. 110) puts it, 'the moralization of work meant that the unproductive elicited little sympathy'. He also signals the significance of self-sovereignty in his assessment of the shame arising from needing help, explaining shame as a feeling of exposure in terms of 'losing control over what is being revealed.' Thus he argues, 'there's nothing inherently shameful about [the statement "I need help"], so long as it can be *managed* by the person who makes it' (Sennett, 2003, p. 118 emphasis in original). He suggests that the expertise of welfare professionals strips welfare users of this control and positions them as recipients of help rather than solvers of their own problems – 'spectators to their own needs' (Sennett, 2003, p. 106).

Sennett's work speaks to the significance of recognition as a matter of justice addressed by critical theorists like Taylor (1994), Honneth and Fraser (Honneth, 1995; Fraser & Honneth, 2003). While

there are important differences in their formulations of an ethics and politics of recognition,[69] they all argue that individual development depends on recognition by others we recognise, defining recognition as a human need and placing it at the centre of the meaning of justice. Here I focus on Honneth's (1995) comprehensive model of recognition, which names shame as a symptom of disrespect but also a resource of struggle. Honneth identifies three levels of identity development that depend on three forms of intersubjective recognition: self-confidence is acquired through intimate relations with friends and family; self-respect depends on legal relations that institute equal rights as a member of society; and self-esteem requires one's capacities and achievements to be esteemed by others within a community of value. Honneth associates each with a different form of disrespect, by which he means 'the denial of recognition', the most relevant here being the degradation of self-esteem. Socio-cultural frameworks orient mutual esteem – the evaluation of contribution and achievement requires shared values and goals, or 'value-horizons'. 'Social devaluation' therefore undermines a subject's ability to have a positive understanding of themselves, threatening their identity (Honneth, 1995, pp. 134, 135). But Honneth (1995, pp. 135, 136) also argues that negative emotions like shame can be a resource for activating struggle by serving as an affective register that alerts the individual to the recognition being withheld from them.

Honneth elaborates with Anderson (Anderson & Honneth, 2005) on the threat disrespect poses to subjectivity in an essay that specifies the ways in which shame hampers agency. They identify protecting the autonomy of the vulnerable as a central commitment of liberal justice. However, the inherently intersubjective nature of autonomy exposes individuals to 'autonomy-related vulnerabilities'. They define autonomy as 'the real and effective capacity to develop and pursue one's own conception of a worthwhile life' (Anderson & Honneth, 2005, p. 130). This capacity, they argue, requires that one be able to sustain a self-conception that is necessarily dependent on the recognition of others to be realised.

> The importance of mutual recognition is often clearest in the breach. Consider, for example, practices and institutions that express attitudes of denigration and humiliation. They

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69 The most prominent being between Fraser and Honneth (2003). Surveying these differences is beyond the scope of this chapter, but see Thompson (2005) for an overview.

threaten individual's own self-esteem by making it much harder (and, in limit cases, even impossible) to think of oneself as worthwhile. The resulting feelings of shame and worthlessness threaten one's sense that there is a point to one's undertakings. *And without the sense of one's aspirations being worth pursuing, one's agency is hampered*. (Anderson & Honneth, 2005, p. 131 emphasis added).

While not everyone prioritises recognition as the basic principle of social justice to the extent that Anderson and Honneth do,[70] the ability to go about in public without shame is often conceptualised as a fundamental human need (popularised by Sen, 1983).[71] As Fraser (2013, pp. 176–177 emphasis in original) likewise argues, misrecognition implies not simply being looked down on by others but rather:

> to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction and prevented from participating as a full peer in social life […] as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of interpretation and evaluation that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem.

Sayer (2005, p. 159) suggests the integral role of shame in this dynamic when he argues that 'shame is a necessary condition of symbolic domination.' Shaming, then, not only inflicts personal injury but operates as a form of 'affective regulation' (Noble, 2005, p. 115) that reinforces inequality and social hierarchy.

The tension between shame as both (and possibly simultaneously) enabling and disabling is signalled in this literature, though not explicitly acknowledged, by the central presence of agency. The ambiguous relationship between shame and agency surfaces in the emphasis on the ways in which people negotiate institutionalised shaming, on the one hand, and the ways in which the agency to develop and pursue one's own aspirations is inhibited by chronic shame on the other. Honneth's naming of shame as a symptom of disrespect and a trigger of social struggle illustrates this ambiguity. It is likewise expressed by Walker et al. (2013, p. 230) when they argue, 'The sense of powerlessness

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[70] For Anderson and Honneth, acknowledging the extent of our subjective vulnerability as social beings based on a more expansive conception of autonomy becomes the basis for claiming a more expansive sense of justice that includes the obligation to protect individuals from autonomy-related vulnerabilities. This is the novelty of their proposal more so than the relational model of autonomy they develop – to place the conditions for recognition, 'a supportive recognitional infrastructure', as the basic principle of social justice (Anderson & Honneth, 2005, p. 144).

[71] This is often sourced to the late eighteenth century when the economist Adam Smith wrote: 'By necessities, I understand not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life but whatever the custom of the country renders indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without. A linen shirt, for example, is strictly speaking not a necessity of life… But in the present time… a creditable day labourer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt' (1776, 691 cited in Lister, 2004, p. 26).

attributable to shame associated with poverty is not to say that people in poverty lack agency […] To survive on a low income in very challenging conditions requires skills, inventiveness and fortitude.' I want to suggest that a more developed conceptualisation of both shame and agency might help tease out the different forms of agency that are operating here. The point is not to downplay the negative consequences of shame associated with poverty and welfare, but to disentangle its devastating and activating dimensions.

This chapter attempts to clarify the relationship between shame and agency by bringing an explicit conceptualisation of both into dialogue. I draw on theories of shame that highlight its peculiar dynamics as *simultaneously* intimately personal and deeply social, painful and productive, and as contextually situated and lingering in the body (Biddle, 1997; Probyn, 2004; Sedgwick & Frank, 1995). Shame does not merely inhibit but constitutes behaviour; it is present in social interactions through the anticipation of shame, even if it is not felt. Shame may be explicitly expressed or 'bypassed', surfacing as protracted anger or resentment. Moreover, shame simultaneously signals and disrupts one's relation with others (Scheff, 2000). An elaborated concept of shame thus suggests a more subtle view of how shame constitutes social identity and social action, which can be further refined by developing a more nuanced conceptualisation of agency.

I draw on theory that aims to 'specify agency' (Ortner, 2001) by distinguishing between its different forms and orientations. This work has in common the understanding that agency is situated, contingent and relational. From it I foreground three dominant distinctions, between:

- reactive agency and projective agency;
- manoeuvrability within the rules of the game and capacity to transform the rules of the game;
- strategic/purposive agency and impulsive/nonreflexive agency

These distinctions open up an understanding of the different *forms* of agency embodied in reactions to shaming. For example, chronic shame can undermine a sense of 'one's aspirations being worth pursuing' (Anderson & Honneth, 2005, p. 131) and thereby hamper projective agency at the same time as one nonetheless finds creative means of response, refusal, and reworking in the face of

immediate constraints. Such responses may involve innovative manoeuvring within the rules of the game but do little to challenge the source of shaming. Likewise, such responses may be entirely impulsive and make little sense even to the actor themselves. Identifying the nonreflexive dimension of agency, then, seems critical for understanding the *affectivity* of shame and the embodied (pre-cognitive) responses it elicits.

This conceptualisation of shame and agency is coupled with a non-unitary understanding of the self-as-actor – acknowledging the multiplicity of roles and characters subjects inhabit across and within different situations and contexts, not always reflexively (Hoggett, 2001; Lahire, 2011). The literature on welfare stigma cited above illuminates the different arenas in which the shame of welfare is felt with varying degrees of intensity (such as the family, the neighbourhood, the welfare agency) and how this affects responses to shaming. The emphasis on the 'plural actor' (Lahire, 2011) further illuminates the complexity and multiplicity of social worlds individuals inhabit. It may therefore allow us to expand on existing distinctions between different arenas of shame by offering a lens that is sensitive to diversity at the level of the individual, not just the social group.

The anecdote that begins this chapter illustrates the inconsistency and simultaneity that this conceptual lens brings into views. My visceral discomfort and conscious shame in that situation brought into relief my conflicted identifications and affiliations – I was *at once* the daughter of 'welfare dependent' parents, aligned with 'helping' professionals, and conducting social research. My response to the shame I felt was also conflicted – an uncomfortable combination of refusal expressed in smile and acquiescence embodied in my silence. This suggests the ways in which shame can *at once* open up some forms of agency and shut down others. A close reading of Hasan and Monica's stories reveals a similarly complex and contradictory picture of shame enabling and disabling different forms of agency at the nexus of shame and dignity. I now turn their stories, before elaborating the conceptual frame and analysis in the sections that follow.

The shame of protection

The stories in this section are based on long interviews (between two and three hours) with Monica and Hasan, and subsequent encounters and conversations. They were two of a handful of interview participants that I stayed in touch with beyond the recorded interview. I present their stories in considerable detail in order to situate the shame Monica and Hasan express within 'the context, history, and moral force' that their narratives also communicate (Osella & Osella, 2006, p. 571). As Osella and Osella note, 'This also seems to be a more comfortable way of using data, rather than chopping them up into tiny "ethno-bites."'

Hasan's story

[…] I never dreamed of this that I'll – one day I'll be coming to another country and begging them for the protection and asylum. This is what – it's a lot of guilt I have inside.

Hasan and his family – his wife and two children – came to Australia on a Visitor Visa and, once in Australia, applied for asylum. When I first spoke to him his initial application had been denied and was before the Refugee Review Tribunal. Hasan and his family had to leave Pakistan because, as a Sunni turned Shi'a who was active, though not high profile, in the Shi'a community in Sunni-majority Pakistan, he was persecuted and terrorised. At the time of our first meeting he had been in Australia for a year, living with a relative and working as a cleaner, having used up their savings. Despite the expense, his family had just moved into their own flat and he had recently found a job in a firm that made use of his skills as a consultant.

In Pakistan they were wealthy; his job came with perks like a car and health cover, his children attended private schools, his wife stayed home. Here, they all work – his wife as a cleaner, his teenage son in a chain store when he was not at school – 'In this country everybody has to work. That's fine. I'm now understanding the culture and everything. So mentally I'm prepared that everybody has to work in my family, except for my young one, because of survival'. Expensive rent, the high cost of living, and the private lawyer fees for the review consumed most of the family's

resources. He was proud of his family pulling together working to survive this tough time. And he was so proud of his children, who were flourishing here.

> Hasan: My son, obviously he's seen me working. He's seen his lavish life in Pakistan. He's seen my lifestyle, my father; his family was working in a very big company and we had this big property and we had this financial situation very well. Then when we broke down he said, "Okay. I'll work in [fast food chain]. He was first…
>
> Emma: Are you proud of him for that?
>
> Hasan: Really, I feel very proud for my kids that the way they supported me when – when I took a job as a cleaner. He [his son] said to me, "Papa, you don't work. I'll manage". I said, "No, I can do whatever I can do". So I saw him working after school […] two jobs he's working.

But his pride in his children's ready adaption to their new life was shadowed by the shame of seeking protection and not being able to secure his family's future. His emphasis on the words 'protection' and 'asylum' was tinged with disdain. 'We have asked some other government for help, for *protection*, for *asylum*. This guilt I have inside.' The shame of seeking asylum was amplified by the fact that in Australia he and his family had to live with his wife's relatives, a situation which, coupled with his need to ask for protection, compromised his role as provider and protector of his family.

> So, see, we have this culture; it was very difficult for me to dilute that I have to come and stay with my in-laws because we have this culture in Pakistan, we don't take any help from anybody. We don't live with my in-laws or we don't take any help from them.

He attributed his discomfort to a culture of not asking for help but it was also gendered and classed, arising from his reliance on his wife's parents. It speaks to the idealised category of the 'householder' as a hegemonic ideal of South Asian masculinity, characterised as the 'successful, social, mature man: a head of a household, holding substantial personal wealth, supporting many dependents and helping many clients' (Osella & Osella, 2000, p. 118). At the same time Hasan was flexible and adaptable to the demands of his new situation – reconciling him to relinquish his role as the exclusive economic provider for the family in a country where 'everybody has to work'.

Hasan suggested that his in-laws judged his reluctance to apply for asylum as selfishly jeopardising the safety of his wife and children, yet for Hasan applying for asylum confusingly felt like he was forgoing his responsibility to protect his family at the same time as risking their safety. He described the decision to finally apply as sacrificing his ego for his family: 'So I thought, "I am being selfish". So

why don't I just put my ego aside and live this life for my family now.' What he had to do for the sake of his family compromised his sense of self, which he repeatedly described as a sacrifice – 'I'm living for my family now'.

Hasan was also confronted with the limits of his agency, expressed as a sense of powerlessness. The ability to secure his family's future was beyond his control, his responsibility to protect them entrusted to a 'foreign government'.

> Now when my son or my daughter they ask me what is going to happen now, next; what is the state now the government has refused us to give us this - they have refused […] So I tell them, "You just don't worry about anything. Leave everything on my shoulder. I am here." So there's nothing I can do. I cannot go and fight or, like, anything. I can just request humbly can you please help and protect my family. That's about it.

This lack of control was heightened by his deep depression in this period; he had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and prescribed anti-depressants, he had flashbacks and heard the voices of God and his dead mother. He didn't recognise himself. His story poured out of him – compulsive, insistent, at times scattered – justifying and pleading his case:

> [continuing directly from the quote above] If you think that I'm a sinner just throw me in the ocean, just send me to a detention centre. Send me anywhere.

> Send me to a prison, just please for the sake of God, which - for the sake Jesus you believe. Whatever religion you believe just save my family, that's about it. That's what we want. We don't want your charity. We don't want anything from you. Just I need a protection for my kids and my wife. That's about it. That's what we want. I cannot - I don't - I don't have a lion heart to tell my family that the government is refusing us and they are sending us back.

Besides expressing his desperation, this quote signals Hasan's awareness of the criminalising discourses about asylum seekers. He likewise defended himself against the unspoken implication that he was looking for an easy life by seeking asylum. 'I don't want Centrelink or any of this blah, blah. We're not these kind of people who believe in living on charities or welfare. We believe in hard work. From my very young age I am a self-made man.'

In his former life in Pakistan he was deeply involved in the informal charitable activities associated with his sect. They would provide white goods and dowries to poor families in the neighbourhood, and organise food relief for neighbourhoods devastated by bombings. Much of the charitable and philanthropic activity that takes place in Pakistan is intertwined with religious beliefs and practices,

particularly Islam (Kirmani & Zaidi, 2010, p. 19). There are many forms of charitable giving in Islam that 'aim to purify wealth, better the self, and improve chances of attaining paradise in the afterlife' (Kirmani & Zaidi, 2010, p. 19).[72] For example, zakat, a religiously mandated 'levy on "idle" wealth' (Jehle, 1994, p. 205), is paid by Muslims who meet the criteria of wealth and typically distributed to the poor, the needy, and the destitute. Moving from this context to find himself in the position where he was asking for rather than offering help felt degrading to Hasan.

The family had been told about support to help meet the basic requirements of daily life, but Hasan vehemently refused. When I asked him if anyone had provided practical help he quickly and emphatically dismissed the possibility:

> No. No. We never went to - we had this option of going to - we were told by a lot of people that, "Why don't you go to Red Cross and go to different community? They'll help you. You are the" - I said, "*No*. In my life I have never begged anybody. In my life we have help other people. Now we are in a - the days has come on us that we are asking for help. I would rather die than I will go to a charity thing or help or grant or anything.

He had a strong emotional response to any suggestion that he should seek support for day-to-day living, which he associated with begging. He would only seek support for his asylum case. Hasan told me about a fierce and upsetting argument he had with his wife and son where they urged him to get help from one of the charity or community welfare organisations they had been told about, but he stubbornly rejected it as an option. Despite the tension and anguish it created in the family, he remained steadfast in his refusal in an effort to preserve his already damaged dignity. Hasan's unwillingness to seek or accept financial or material aid is not just a remnant of his class and religious background in Pakistan. It derived also from the dependency that seeking asylum imposed on him, which coloured his feelings about accepting social assistance.

I have caught up with Hasan a few times in the year since our original interview, most recently when he called to tell me that his hearing before the RRT was approaching, and again shortly after when he happily received news that he and his family had been granted protection and Permanent Residence. If his refusal to accept charity was previously a source of tension in the family, it is now solidified as a source of pride. Hasan proudly repeats the comments of the immigration official reviewing his case:

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[72] Zakat generates the most funding, and is individually and institutionally orchestrated in Pakistan.

he was impressed by the strength of the family to stick together, that they had all worked to contribute to keeping the family afloat, and that Hasan had even managed to donate to charities despite his own precarity. This is the first time Hasan has mentioned the donations he has made in the last year. '$600 of donations', he tells me precisely; he presented the receipts during his hearing. The official's comments are proof of the conviction Hasan held onto even at his most desperate that, if given the chance, his family could survive and thrive here.

Monica's story

I want to be someone who takes responsibility for my own choices and therefore is in control of my own success.

In contrast to Hasan, when I first interviewed Monica she was 30, a single parent, and relied of on Centrelink benefits as her only source of income. She had previously received Parenting Payment Single, but had been transitioned to Newstart (unemployment benefit) when workfare was extended to single parents with school aged children. She was on break from completing her Year 12 Certificate at TAFE. Monica had a 'harsh upbringing', living first with her distant, authoritarian father and later with her drug-addicted, mentally unstable mother when her father gave up custody of her and her siblings. Soon after moving in with her mum she dropped out of school. 'I was in a refuge when I was sixteen. I moved out when I was fifteen and then in a refuge and then – I just felt like I was on my own from a pretty young age. Even when I lived with my parents we were still on our own in a way.' She became pregnant at 17 and says of the early years of her daughter's life, 'I wasn't stable then, I was in bad relationships, there was a lot of things went on.' Monica had been on welfare and a daily pot (marijuana) smoker since before her daughter was born.

When I asked her about her family she told me, 'we haven't really been taught much of the stability thing and how to manage your life well. And so I guess we've all made mistakes and don't get along as well as we used to.' Her adult brother was addicted to ice (methamphetamines) and in trouble with the police. He'd turn up unexpectedly at her house high or needing somewhere to sleep; she'd feed him and wash his clothes. Her mum died of a drug overdose in suspicious circumstances two

years ago. She had had a falling out with her sister, though they still occasionally babysat each other's kids.

Monica frequently returned to this enforced independence to make sense of her present disposition to responsibility and care that defines her role as the crutch of the family, which she was ambivalent about. 'Yeah, so I've tried to be the backbone of our family a little but I too am not completely stable […] When I was younger it was all put on me, it wasn't a choice, like I was the oldest so I was the babysitter […] And then we grew up and I never stopped.' It hurt her that her siblings resented her as bossy and imposing: 'Yeah I do feel like I'm really misunderstood, because you know, I've done it out of not just responsibility and need, but out of love. And you know, I have no – like I'm not – I don't have a debt to them, I don't owe them what I do but yet it's almost like a burden to them.' She felt torn between continuing to support her siblings, whose lifestyle she didn't agree with, and putting her and her daughter's life first: 'I feel really guilty. Where's the line? I don't know how to care about them all at once.' She reflected, 'I can't separate myself not to be a part of their misery I suppose.'

Choice was a recurring theme when I spoke to Monica. She was deeply critical and ashamed of her drug addiction, which she describes as a 'loser attitude'. Her self-judgement was guided by her fierce sense of integrity, 'I feel like, you know, I've got a lot of morals […] And it's not just knowing what's right and wrong, its choosing to act based on what's rights and wrong and choosing right.' She was proud of her strong moral values, but it meant she felt the sting of her problems as self-imposed. 'I feel like I'm more to blame than somebody who is ignorant to it all, because I'm aware and still making those choices.' But she was also perplexed by her addiction, 'Because I don't want to smoke, I don't enjoy the feeling anymore […] Like I enjoy nothing about it and yet I do it everyday. I don't get it.' She was highly reflexive about choice and its limits. She couldn't make sense of her strong desire to stop using drugs but her seeming inability to do so; she understood her addiction as her fault but not arising from rational choice. 'It's not practical, it's not responsible, and maybe that's why I'm so highly strung in every other area of my life, because that one thing I can't control.'

Monica was also ambivalent about her ambitious aspirations in the context of her long-term unemployment. She had very high standards for her moral conduct and her ambitions but was dismissive of her achievements; she was proud of surviving but not satisfied:

> I have high expectations of myself but standards that I'll never reach, and I think that I might do that on purpose so that I can constantly feel, you know, not quite good enough. Like no matter what I ever do – I could do better than that. So I don't know, maybe that's my driving coping mechanism. I don't know, like my way of excelling ever.

She had had jobs on and off. She explained her failure to hold down a job as a case of self-sabotage.

> I think it's deeper than me just choosing 'I don't like work!' That's not how I am, I actually do really miss it sometimes. But then I get scared of getting into – there's this responsibility and I don't want to let anyone down. As soon as I'm actually in a job I start thinking of how I can get out of it […] but why would I get into a situation just to try and get out of it? That's really stupid.

She speculated that it was 'laziness', or not wanting to be told what to do, but added that she's a 'good worker'; she applies herself but 'gets bored of the same': 'So you can only clean one bathroom so well so many times and then be over it. And money's not enough of a motivation for me to go, "oh well, I'll be making the money."' Her last job was sitting inside a 2x1 meter display counter selling phone accessories in a shopping mall. When I asked her whether unemployed people should be expected to take any job offered to them, she replied:

> I get it, I get it because what right do I have to say no to that job and then allow Centrelink and all the taxpayers to pay for my life. But I don't want to work for a fast food chain where it's killing people every day. […] Like I want to do something that I want to do. And you know, is that being like wah wah? […] I don't know. I don't think it's fair but maybe it's necessary.

Monica was acutely conscious of, and had largely internalised, the axiomatic discourse of parasitic welfare recipients living off the hard-earned income of tax payers. She equated worth with work and she expected, or at least wanted, fulfilment from work. But this left her conflicted about whether her dissatisfaction with the meaningless jobs she could access was her own failing or an unfair social imposition.

Despite the internal conflict about the cause of her problems, the explanation of *social* injustice and disadvantage tended to be subordinated to the script of *personal* fault and failing in Monica's narrative.

When I first moved out of home, which was a long time ago but I had nothing and I needed help then. But in my mind ten years from then I was in way better of a place than I am now. I was ahead, not just coping. Yes I've coped, yes my daughter's had what she needed, I've got this far and I suppose to an extent it's something to be proud of but it's nothing great. I just did it you know, like I didn't excel really, I just did it.

While she acknowledged her difficult upbringing as a setback, she rejected it as an excuse for the limited horizons of her life. She was not satisfied with merely surviving; it was something she simply did as a matter of fact and necessity. She wanted to excel. The pride of being a good parent and pillar of the family wasn't enough to ameliorate the shame of not fulfilling her ambitions in the sphere of paid work. She ascribed to the standards of the dominant horizon of value, making her – to borrow from Goffman (1968, p. 18) – 'alive to what others see as [her] failing' and 'causing [her] to agree that she inevitably does fall short of what [she] ought to be.' Monica was so alive to other people's potential judgements of her failings that she retreated from public, anticipating even the awareness that she had been seen to cause her pain – 'even just people seeing me, I don't even want to know that they saw me.' She avoided encounters where she expected to be judged; she stayed in the car when she picked her daughter up from school, deliberately arriving ten minutes late so 'there's no bumping into people'. She also avoided the shops. When I asked her, 'What are you avoiding do you think?' she replied, 'Judgement, just judgement really, having to justify why I'm doing nothing, why I'm doing crap, like why I'm suffering in my relationships, why they're not going so well.'

Monica severely dismissed any inclination to dwell on her misfortune. The appeal of the notions of choice, personal responsibility, and ambition was the possibility for personal change they embodied. I asked her what she would change about her life if she could, and she responded at length about removing her 'excuse making':

> I want to completely take the 'poor me' aspect out of my life because by saying 'poor me' I'm trying to take the focus off what I've done to put myself in this situation, and really, poor me? What's that do? Like that is not going to benefit me in any single way. If anything it's going to make me miserable by saying "woe is me, look what happened". Woopty-do, that's done, so learn from it and now – yeah, I just need to do what I know I can I suppose, and I'm not. I've been in the habit of just saying poor me and then trying to get understanding off other people and talking about it with other people who I know will agree.

Her reflexivity and focus on the self as the locus of change resonated strongly with therapeutic culture, with its emphasis on 'psychological knowledge' and practices of self-transformation (Wright,

2008). One of the strongest critiques of the ascendency of therapeutic culture is the myopic focus on individual rather than social change (eg. Furedi, 2004). However, others have problematised the overly pessimistic view of therapeutic culture and suggested a more 'ambivalent reading' that acknowledges how forms of suffering that would have otherwise been 'confined to private life' have been given expression, noting the gendered dynamics of this shift (Wright, 2008). Monica's faith in self-mastery gave her hope for an alternative future, it energised and motivated her. Yet it also meant that the weight of blame for not changing rested squarely on her.

Not long after our initial interview, Monica began casual work in a bakery franchise. Her job was to rise in the early, dark hours of the morning to ice and decorate the cakes and then organise the display at the counter. She described her manager as belittling and controlling, and she was self-conscious of being the oldest amongst the floor staff dominated by teenagers, but she enjoyed her new work. She took pride in the care and skill she applied to decorating and displaying the cakes, despite there being little room for creativity, and it allowed her to be home in time to send her daughter off to school.

Specifying shame and agency

Shame is typically conceptualised as a self-conscious and social affect, bringing into relief the inherently relational and 'provisional' nature of self-identity (Biddle, 1997, p. 230; Probyn, 2004; Scheff, 2000; Sedgwick & Frank, 1995). The psychoanalyst Silvan Tomkins described shame as 'an experience of the self by the self' (in Sedgwick & Frank, 1995, p. 136). Shame simultaneously differentiates the self while exposing dependence on the recognition of the other for self-identity. As Biddle (1997, p. 230) eloquently articulates, 'This double movement of shame, it seems to me, is critical, at once producing the very possibility of self-identity and destabilising it as a process'. Shame feels intimately personal and yet it is constitutively social, illuminating the 'everyday dependence' of the self 'on the proximities of others, of place, of routine, of biography and history' (Probyn, 2004, p. 329). Feminist writers like Biddle and Probyn emphasise the sensorial, embodied, and affective materiality of shame, highlighting the simultaneity of internal/external, private/public, self/other,

withdrawal/exposure associated with shame and permeability of the boundaries between these states that shame suggests. Scheff (2000; 2014), by contrast, elaborating a sociological definition of shame, prioritises the social, identifying shame as the primary social emotion.

Scheff (2000, p. 97) draws on psychoanalytic and sociological theories dealing with shame (though not often, he argues, conceptualising it), to define shame as 'a threat to the social bond'. As Scheff notes, Charles Cooley signalled the social nature of what he called the 'self-sentiments' – shame and pride—through his concept of 'the looking-glass self': 'A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principle elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgement of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification' (Cooley, 1922, p. 184 cited in Scheff, 2000, p. 88). Helen Lewis's definition of shame as a response to disconnection from others underpins Scheff's own definition. Her distinction between 'overt' and 'bypassed' shame contributing to the intensity and manageability of the feeling also informs Scheff's argument that unacknowledged shame draws out alienation and conflict (see also Scheff, 2014). Like Cooley, Goffman's seminal study of embarrassment and its avoidance insisted on the centrality of shame in everyday social relations, a point which is critical to Scheff's understanding of shame as 'pervasive in virtually all social interaction' (Scheff, 2000, p. 93,97).

> Especially important for social control is a positive variant, a sense of shame. That is, shame figures in most social interaction because although members may only occasionally feel shame, they are constantly anticipating it, as Goffman implied (Scheff, 2000, p. 97)

This acknowledgement that shame is not merely prohibitive (Sedgwick & Frank, 1995, p. 5) or inhibitive (Scheff, 2000, p. 85) but also has a productive dimension is common in conceptualisations of the affect. Tomkins (in Sedgwick & Frank, 1995, p. 134) understood shame as interrupted interest or enjoyment. As Sedgwick and Frank (1995, p. 22) summarise in their introduction to the Tomkins reader, 'Without positive affect there can be no shame: only a scene that offers you enjoyment or engages your interest can make you blush.' The socially constructive dimension of shame is also emphasised in research that differentiates between the forms and salience of shame in collectivist cultures compared to individualist cultures (Wong & Tsai, 2007). For example, studies of experiences of shame in China point to the salience of shame in cultivating self-improvement and collective

honour (Bedford, 2004; Wong & Tsai, 2007). Shame is constitutive also in delineating the boundaries of the self (Biddle, 1997, p. 230) and drawing subjects into 'spontaneous and unavoidable […] affective communities' (Ferrell, 2003, p. 31). Biddle (1997, p. 236), again, eloquently articulates this: 'As much as it may haunt and stultify, shame also shapes and defines, and makes for the very delineations called self-identity. It structures, necessarily, we come to realise, the difference(s) we call cultural.' This is evidenced in the different experiences of and values attached to shame where the self is taken as stable and differentiated from behaviour and actions – as in individualist cultures – compared to conceptions of the self-in-relationship and therefore amendable to change, more typical of collectivist orientations (Walker, 2014, p. 138; Wong & Tsai, 2007; Harkins, 1990). The experience of shame signals the creation of boundaries in the moment of their rupture and the self and community identity it brings into being. Conceived in this way, shame offers a potentially productive sensitising concept for thinking through culturally diverse responses to social welfare that foregrounds the process of cultural boundary makings rather than pre-existing boundaries.

The literature also tends to distinguish shame and guilt, describing guilt as about *doing* while shame is about *being*. As Scheff explains, the sociologist Helen Lynd differentiated between guilt and shame in order to demonstrate how pervasive yet hidden shame is in human relationships. 'She notes that guilt is usually extremely specific and therefore close to the surface; it involves specific acts done or not done. Guilt is about what one did, shame is about the self, what one *is*' (Scheff, 2000, p. 92). Guilt implies a strong ego – 'one is powerful enough to injure another and powerful enough to make amends' – whereas 'shame feels like weakness and dissolution of the self'; guilt individualises by foregrounding the actor, while shame attests to the interdependence of self and others (Scheff, 2000, p. 92). Similarly, Biddle (1997, p. 231) draws on Helen Lewis to distinguish between 'activity oriented' guilt and identity oriented shame: 'In short, shame seems far less to be about normative prohibitions and repression than guilt does. It is less identified with specific rules and more generally concerned with the boundary between the self and other'. However, research suggests that the conceptual distinction between shame and guilt may have less resonance in collectivist cultures in

which shame may arise from actions or inactions, including that of other members of one's social group (Bedford, 2004; Wong & Tsai, 2007).

The literature I have drawn on suggests an inherent simultaneity in shame – between the feeling of 'paralysis' (Biddle, 1997, p. 231) and 'dissolution' (Scheff, 2000, p. 92) on the one hand, and its constitutive and activating properties on the other – that speaks to its complicated relationship to agency. In order to further clarify the relationship between shame and agency, I selectively draw on efforts to conceptually 'specify agency' (Ortner, 2001). Recognising the often vague conceptualisation of agency despite its pervasiveness, there has been considerable effort to differentiate and specify different forms and dimensions of agency, to which I now turn.

While agency 'customarily refers to purposive human action or behaviour'(Deacon, 2004, p. 447), Hoggett (2000, 2001) argues that such 'rationalist' model of agency overlook impulsive and non-reflexive behaviours. He argues that approaches to subjectivity in the social sciences are restricted by a lingering rationalism, expressed 'in the preoccupation with intentionality, purpose, strategy, performativity, people as planners and shapers of their lives, creators of their own scripts, plucky troopers capable of agency in any kind of situation' (Hoggett, 2000, p. 11). Drawing on sociology and psychology, he calls attention to 'spontaneity and impulse' in shaping people's behaviour and lives – an unwieldly force that can be both constructive and destructive. Significantly given the purpose of the chapter, Hoggett views actors as 'impulsive and passionate subjects' (Hoggett, 2001, p. 40), thus foregrounding the emotional wellspring of action.

Hoggett proposes a model of agency based on a plural conception of the self as comprised of 'a multiplicity of different characters who speak through us and act through us at different moments in time' (Hoggett, 2000, p. 18). Significantly, he qualifies this by insisting that he is not assuming 'identity is delusion' or that subjects experience identity as fragmented: 'This is to ignore the powerful integrative forces at work within subjectivity' (Hoggett, 2001, p. 42). Crucially, Hoggett (2001, p. 52) is making the argument not simply that actions have unintended consequences, but that 'actions themselves' may be unintended because some parts of ourselves may be unfamiliar to

us. Hoggett disagrees with Gidden's privileging of reflexivity in his influential theory of structuration, that is, the assumption that agents always understand the reasons behind their actions. Drawing on Bauman, he points to the limits of reflexivity:

> Choice, then is not simply something which occurs after reasoned deliberation, most choices we make are made on impulse in urgent and contingent encounters in which we have to make on-the-spot decisions as our own and other's needs, expectations, phantasies and feelings press in on us (Hoggett, 2001, p. 40).

He proposes a model of agency that imagines a continuum between 'reflexive and non-reflective agency' and grades of empowerment between 'self-as-object and self-as-agent' (see Figure 2).
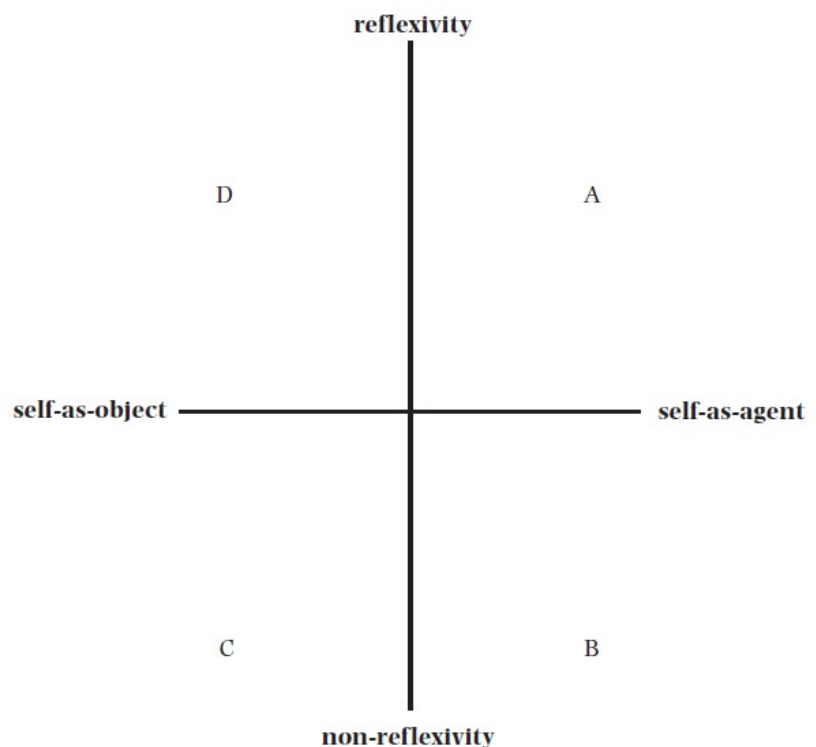

Figure 2 Hoggett's model of agency. Reprinted from Hoggett (2001).

Elsewhere, Hoggett (Frost & Hoggett, 2008) elaborates on the 'tragic' dimension of agency by exploring how suffering finds expression in actions. Frost and Hoggett use a psychosocial approach to offer an account of social suffering that aims to keep both the internal psychical and external social dimensions of suffering in view. Drawing on Judith Butler, Frost and Hoggett develop the idea of non-purposive, unreflexive forms of agency by considering the destructive forms of agency deriving from

the 'melancholic dimension' of social suffering. They describe Butler as 'derationalising and de-intentionalising' performativity – 'so that the act contains a thought which is nevertheless unrecognisable to the one who acts.' Butler calls this 'a "melancholic agency", an agency haunted by a past (experience) that cannot be represented' (Frost & Hoggett, 2008, p. 450). Experiences of hurt and loss that cannot be thought about find expression in actions that are thereby unreflexive: 'the possibility that the experiences can be worked through is foreclosed because there is no public recognition or discourse through which it might be named or mourned' (Frost & Hoggett, 2008, p. 449).[73] The reactions to this unacknowledged suffering can take form of both 'dysfunctional defences and of adaptive forms of coping' (Frost & Hoggett, 2008, p. 449). The concept of 'melancholic agency' is particularly relevant for understanding both constructive and destructive reactions to shame, particularly unacknowledged shame.

Hoggett's argument for a not-unitary model of agency resonates with Bernard Lahire's (2011) theory of 'the plural actor', though Lahire is more concerned with elucidating *how* the plural actor is formed.[74] Lahire offers a useful framework for understanding simultaneity and contradiction of sources and responses to shame that seems able to accommodate the tension between shame as enabling and disabling. He argues that we act within multiple social contexts and settings, which generate multiple and at times contradictory habits, dispositions, and practices. In highly differentiated societies most people are socialised within multiple social worlds, which, though plural, are not equivalent (some have more influence on socialisation than others, for example, the family or the school) (Lahire, 2011, p. 28). These social worlds are also likely internally differentiated, animated by heterogeneous and perhaps competing principles. Subjects occupy different positions or roles even within the same social context. He uses the example of a working class-woman who, as a wife in the family sphere, resents and discourages her husband escaping the home to masculine sites like the garage or the bar, yet as a mother encourages the same desire in her son but not her daughter. We therefore 'live experiences that are varied, different and sometimes contradictory'

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[73] This resonates strongly with Stringer's conception of 'vulnerability after wounding' discussed in the previous chapter.
[74] First published in French in 2001 in the same year as Hoggett (2001).

(Lahire, 2011, p. 31). However, like Hoggett, Lahire (2011, p. 37) does not celebrate fragmentation, suggesting that this plurality is usually reconcilable with the 'illusion of personal coherence and identity with oneself'. As Noble (2012, p. 258) points out, by emphasising the diversity of socialising experiences in various collectives, Lahire insists that 'individuals are not reducible to a single collective, but defined by a range of competing cultural influences'. This insight is critical if we are to offer a more nuanced account of the shame and social support that is sensitive to cultural diversity at the level of the individual.

Emirbayer & Mische (1998, p. 963) seek to develop a conceptualisation of agency that is attuned to the specific temporal orientations that animate different dimensions of agency:

> We reconceptualize human agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment).

They provide a comprehensive review of the conceptualisation of agency in social theory, which they use to elaborate three 'disaggregated' dimensions of agency that are analytically differentiated but empirically interrelated. The first is what they call 'iterational', referring to routinised practices and habits that nonetheless require some effort. 'The agentic dimension lies in *how actors selectively recognise, locate, and implement* such schemas in their ongoing and situated transactions' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 975 emphasis in original). The second is 'projective', signalling how imagined trajectories animate inventive reconfigurations of received schemas and practices. It is oriented toward future possibilities and 'generating alternative possible responses to the problematic situations [actors] confront in their lives' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 984). Their idea of projective agency resonates with Ortner's (2001, p. 79) distinction between 'reactive agency' as the power to 'rethink, reframe, and reshape' imposed structures, and what she calls 'an agency of intentions – of projects, purposes, and desires' formulated within one's own system of meaning and value.[75] The third form of agency they identify is 'practical-evaluative', referring to the capacity of actors to exercise practical judgement and make 'considered decisions' among present possibilities.

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[75] I properly explain Ortner's distinction in the next chapter, in which I address the generative dimension of projective agency.

'By increasing their capacity for practical evaluation, actors strengthen their ability to exercise agency in a *mediating* fashion, enabling them (at least potentially) to pursue their projects in a way that may challenge and transform the situations and contexts of action themselves' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 994).

Significantly, Emirbayer & Mische suggest that different temporal-agentic orientations promote increased or decreased capacity for change.

> We claim that, in examining changes in agentic orientation, we can gain crucial analytical leverage for charting varying degrees of manoeuvrability, inventiveness, and reflective choice shown by social actors in relation to the constraining and enabling contexts of action (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 964).

This point is echoed by Hoggett in his distinction between 'first order change' – making do within the system – and 'second order change' – challenging the rules of the system (Hoggett, 2001, pp. 49, 50). The extent to which agency involves the ability to turn constraints into resources and transform received structures is a crucial distinction that unsettles the valorisation of agency *per se*.

Drawing on these efforts to refine the conceptualisation of agency, we can identify three dominant distinctions between:

- reactive agency and projective agency;
- manoeuvrability within the rules of the game and capacity to transform the rules of the game;
- strategic/purposive agency and impulsive/unreflexive agency

I argue that a thicker conceptualisation of agency allows for a more nuanced account of the *forms* of agency that are opened up or closed down by feelings of shame and experiences of institutionalised shaming. I would also suggest that it can more readily accommodate the particular dynamics of shame as simultaneously intimately personal and deeply social, as contextually situated but relived by the body, and as both devastating and productive. Finally, it suggests that an account of the shame of welfare that is sensitive to diversity needs to pay attention to the plurality of motives, repertoires, and orientations not simply across or within social groups but at the level of the

individual. In the final section I bring together a reading of Hasan and Monica's stories alongside one another in light of this conceptual framework.

The nexus of shame and dignity

Specifying shame and agency helps account for the nexus of shame and dignity without valorising nor dismissing the agency of people in highly constraining circumstances. This nuanced approach is warranted given that the agency of both refugees and welfare recipients is consistently problematised in public, policy, and academic discourse. When I first spoke to Hasan and Monica, both were in situations that confronted them with the limits of personal agency and induced severe shame. Hasan and his family were terrorised in Pakistan and forced to leave their lavish life to seek asylum in Australia, where they were initially refused and awaited a review judgement. Hasan's ability to secure his family's safe future was out of his hands and under the authority of Australia's punitive immigration system. Monica, a single parent, depended on welfare to survive and was dogged by drug addiction and persistent unemployment. She was puzzled by the disjuncture between her convictions and her behaviour, and felt inadequate and disappointed in herself. Yet their shame was entangled with efforts to recover their dignity that also produced hope, strength and pride.

Monica attributed her situation to her choices yet they felt confusingly beyond her control. She had made bad decisions by choosing to habitually smoke pot, though she couldn't make sense of the continued hold addiction had on her – 'I enjoy nothing about it and yet I do it everyday. I don't get it.' It seemed to her like she subconsciously refused to commit to a 'meaningless' job – 'why would I get into a situation just to get out of it?' Her confusion speaks to the unfamiliar aspects of the self that Hoggett insists is critical for acknowledging behaviour that is neither premeditated nor purposeful. As he explains:

> Rationalist models of agency simply cannot comprehend how the subject gets stuck, fixed or fixes itself, how it procrastinates, flees from decisions, gets stuck in recurring patterns, falls back, repeats itself first time as tragedy later as farce, is entrapped and traps itself, acts in ways which are destructive to its own interests, destroys sense rather than makes sense and engages earnestly in projects for reasons which it entirely misunderstands. In short what we

require are non-rationalist models of agency in which action, thought, and affect are held
simultaneously in mind without splitting one from the other (Hoggett, 2000, p. 172).

Hoggett provides an angle from which to understand impulsive and even self-destructive behaviour

as a form of agency, and hence unsettle the emancipatory hue the concept has taken on in social

policy and social science. Nonetheless, from Monica's perspective – viewed through a conventional

rationalist lens – her contradictory behaviour remained inexplicable and perplexing. The discrepancy

between her understanding of herself-as-agent and her experience of powerlessness, to borrow from

Hoggett's model of agency, was disconcerting. Hasan also seemed disoriented by the unfamiliar sides

of himself during our first conversation. He didn't recognise himself, the person who couldn't provide

for his family and had to ask a foreign government for asylum. He found himself profoundly out-of-

place (Probyn, 2004) – in the country he was in, in his life, in himself – and it called forth aspects of

himself he didn't recognise.

The discursive force of scripts of self-reliance and self-responsibility had both enabling and disabling

aspects for Monica, though not in equivalent measure. She had largely ascribed to individualised

explanations of inequality that attribute welfare dependence to the unworthy character of recipients

and their bad choices. She judged herself severely as a parasitic dole bludger, echoing the vitriol of

public rhetoric but internalised within her own meaning system so that her shame was 'experienced

privately, personally, and as all embracing' (Frost & Hoggett, 2008, p. 445 following Goffman). She

blamed herself for failing to sustain work, but saw in that personal responsibility the potential for

change – 'if we say it's our fault then we can change the outcome or you can change the

circumstances.' It supported her strong sense of integrity, which she was proud of and which she felt

differentiated her from her troubled family and other so-called 'dole bludgers'. But it also meant her

persistent addiction and unemployment was squarely her fault and the source of considerable

shame, which eroded her self-esteem and restricted where she would go in public. While Monica's

take-up of schemas of individualised responsibility reflects 'iterational' agency in Emirbayer and

Mische's (1998, p. 975) model, one might also say there is a degree of reflexive agency in her

conscious invocation of the power of personal choice as a motivating mantra. And yet holding to that

logic reinscribes its shaming and undermining force, proving an inadequate resource for changing the

situation in which she finds herself. The agency in Monica's take-up of schemas of individualised responsibility is not synonymous with empowerment (expansively defined).

Like Monica, Hasan's efforts to ameliorate shame and recover dignity – which are at once self-preserving and anguished – reveal the entanglement of shame's overwhelming and activating effects. He was proud of his family's fortitude in responding to the burdens of their circumstance yet ashamed to have to bear those burdens. Hasan also drew on the clichéd script of the 'self-made man' to distance himself from the stereotype of the opportunistic refugee – 'we believe in hard work. From a very young age I am a self-made man'. His determined refusal to accept welfare or charity, despite the financial and emotional strain the family was under, ameliorated the shame of being in a position where he would benefit from such help. But it conflicted with his determination to put his family before his pride, creating anguish within the family and himself. He was conflicted by his responsibilities as role model, provider, and protector, husband, father, and son-in-law in the family, roles which suddenly felt not so easy to reconcile. Perhaps his anguish reflects the fracturing of the 'illusion of personal coherence and identity with oneself' that integrates subjective plurality, in Lahire's (2011, p. 37) terms. But he was also able to reorient himself to a new value-horizon according to which 'everybody has to work'. Moreover, insisting on donating to charity despite his own hardship, alongside his family working together, crystalised as a source of enormous pride once the family's future in Australia was secured. His declaration that he is a 'self-made man', coupled with his refusal to accept charity, may be at once a reactive response to shaming discourses about asylum seekers and a projective expression of his faith in his ability to (re)make something of himself in Australia.

While embracing the power of personal choice and the self as the vehicle for change asserted dignity in the face of shame for Monica, Hasan in a way negotiated shame by shifting from the self to the family. While he described the shame of seeking asylum as debilitating his ego, there was an implied honour in sacrificing himself to his family that was socially dignifying. This may reflect the prime importance of prioritising the collective honour of the family expressed in South Asian cultural orientations (Walker, 2014, p. 71). Self-sacrifice for the success of the family and investment in

children as the hope of the future is a common template of the migration trajectory. Hasan remained convinced even at his most desperate that, if his family were granted protection, they would build a successful life in Australia. His shame did not dent this conviction but rather channelled it. While Monica had not experienced the profound uprooting that Hasan had, her understanding of herself and her circumstances was also defined by multiple and competing cultural frames and injunctions – albeit less pronounced. They were evident in her disposition to care for her siblings out of love and not just obligation; the rejection of money as a motivator or measure of success; the sense of social responsibility expressed in not wanting 'to work for a fast food chain where it's killing people every day'; and her ambition to excel and find meaning in paid work. However, shifting from the self to the family did not offer Monica the same reprieve from her chronic shame as it offered Hasan. She was also proud of her enduring commitment to her siblings and the way she had raised her daughter, but it was expressed modestly and buried in the shame of unemployment. It was subordinated to and overshadowed by paid work as the primary reference of value. Her shame was bound up with her thwarted ambition; aspiring to excel both excited and disappointed her. She seemed to have internalised the denigrating rhetoric about 'job snobs' – unemployed (young) people who are said to aim too high but not have the skills or work ethic to match their expectations. 'I want to do something that I want to do. And you know, is that like wah wah? I don't know. I don't think it's fair but maybe it's necessary.' She imagined 'getting ahead' but felt paralysed in the present, her template of a trajectory more tentative than Hasan's and her conviction in its arrival more tenuous.

I would suggest that the degree of *projective agency* seems to be a significant point of difference between Monica and Hasan that speaks to the differential impact of shame. As Emirbayer and Mische explain, imagined trajectories animate the capacity to react inventively to received schemas and generate new possibilities. Ortner's 'agency of intentions' likewise insists on distinguishing the *generative* dimension of agency by refocusing attention on the projects that give life meaning and purpose. To be clear, the difference I'm suggesting is not between imaginative capacities – Monica had an intelligent and active imagination. The difference seems to reside in their confidence in the trajectories they imagine and the temporal horizons and scope of their projections, a difference that

is classed and gendered. While Hasan viewed his obstacle as external – the RRT ruling – for Monica it seemed to come from within her. Monica's feeling of self-sabotage – her persistent drug addiction and restlessness in menial jobs – seemed to undermine her confidence in her pursuit of her ambitions. But that is a deceptively individualist explanation – the feeling derives from a collective experience of frustration that is experienced as personal inadequacy and failure, much like the hidden injury of class identified by Sennett and Cobb. Anderson and Honneth's indictment of the threat that feelings of shame and worthlessness pose to agency – 'without the sense of one's aspirations being worth pursuing, one's agency is hampered' – speaks particularly to the concept of projective agency. I would add, though, that the subcategories that underpin Honneth's model of recognition are too neat to grasp the dynamics of projective agency signalled in Monica and Hasan's stories; in prioritising the development of self-confidence through intimate relations with family and friends he understates the mediating cultural ideals and institutional arrangements that come to bear on confidence (Alexander & Lara, 1996, p. 131).[76]

Appadurai's (2013) idea of 'the capacity to aspire' speaks to the collective cultural aspect of one's ability to realise desires for the future and hence exercise projective agency. He insists that the poor and marginalised do not lack aspiration, but rather do not have access to the navigational experience and resources to successfully traverse the path between immediate wants and needs and wider social contexts and norms. He conceives the capacity to aspire as the ability to read a map of trajectories into the future, which, 'like any complex cultural capacity, thrives and survives on practice, repetition, exploration, conjecture, and refutation' (Appadurai, 2013, p. 189). Appadurai articulates the uneven distribution of such navigational capacities as follows: 'The more privileged in any society have used the map of its norms to explore the future more frequently and more realistically, and to share this knowledge with one another more routinely than their poorer and weaker neighbours' (Appadurai, 2013, p. 188). The cultural capacity to aspire, as Appadurai conceives it, points to the importance of experiential knowledge in pursuing collective future

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[76] It has also been argued that Honneth's model needs to be revised to account for the complex and layered modes and webs of relations that constitute each domain (Alexander & Lara, 1996; Noble, 2004), as well as overlooking the mediating institutions and structures that are part of social interaction and implicated in the intersubjective relations he prioritises (Alexander & Lara, 1996; Deranty, 2006).

horizons and nurturing one's conviction in the route to get there and confidence that one will successfully make the journey.[77]

Conclusion

The theme of shame is well-trodden in both empirical and theoretical scholarship on poverty, welfare, class, and inequality, which documents the corrosive effects of social shaming on wellbeing and theorises the symbolic apparatuses that denigrate the modes of existence of certain individuals and groups as inadequate and inappropriate. This chapter has sought to contribute to this crowded field by exploring the specific dynamics of shame and agency that are implicit in existing literature. Concern with agency is evident, on the one hand, in the emphasis on diverse responses to shame, exploring the conditions, resources, and repertoires that differentially equip people to manage and ameliorate the effects of shaming. On the other hand, the potentially devastating effects of shame on wellbeing and self-esteem can undermine autonomy and capacity to participate equally in social life. These two currents in the literature suggest the both constraining and activating force of shame.

This chapter builds on the insights of existing scholarship by bringing the explicit conceptualisation of shame and agency into dialogue in an effort to develop nuanced account of shame and agency that resists overstating or understating the agency of people severely constrained by circumstances beyond their control. This allows for an account of the messy entanglement of shame's devastating and productive dimensions, as well as an account of the shame of welfare that is sensitive to diversity at the level of the individual and not just within or across social groups. Hasan and Monica's stories illustrate two very different situations that produced intense and sometimes overwhelming shame. However, when explored in detail, their stories also reveal the complex interplay of shame and dignity and the ways in which shame can both hamper and animate social action. Their stories suggest that the impulsive and non-reflexive aspect of agency is particularly relevant for

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[77] Appadurai's notion of the capacity to aspire has gained traction in research responding to increasing attention to aspiration in higher education and social inclusion policy (eg. Bok, 2010; Sellar, Gale, & Parker, 2011). The concept appeals to efforts to develop the social and cultural dimension of aspiration in order to better understand the unequal and unjust conditions out of which aspiration arises. Kenway and Hickey-Moody (2011, p. fn. 4) suggest 'the means to aspire' as an alternative that foregrounds the systematic inequalities out of which aspirations arise and does not evoke the 'psychologistic connotations' that 'capacity' implies.

understanding shame as an affective wellspring of unintended action. Moreover, contrasted side-by-side, their stories tentatively suggest that inequality and the chronic shame of welfare dependency may be particularly corrosive to projective agency, restricting the confidence in and scope of one's projective horizons.

The presence of shame in poverty and welfare literature arguably has a reactive orientation in that it emphasises the welfare subject's capacity to endure and respond to the symbolic violence of institutionalised shaming. And yet the ways in which navigating and reacting to shaming circumstances is entangled with efforts to affirm and recover pride and dignity suggests the blurred boundaries between the reactive response to imposed constraints and the projective pursuit of one's own desires and aspirations. The following and final chapter continues the conceptual task of specifying agency by taking up the distinction between reactive and projective agency in order to develop an account of the generative dimension of getting by in hardship.

Chapter 6 – The art of getting by: toward a generative account of making do

As I follow Greg around the supermarket, I'm oblivious to the small collection of items he has deftly accrued in his deep jeans pockets. Once we're past the checkout and out of sight he swiftly transfers the shoplifted goods from his pocket to his bag of purchased groceries, shooting me a furtive, mischievous grin. I get the impression he's pleased by my ignorance and his sly revelation. At home he neatly lays out his haul on the kitchen table to admire before stowing it away for future use.

Greg (Anglo, 65 years old) shoplifts daily, though the stream of supplies has dwindled since he was recently caught and banned from the supermarket. He came of age during the counter-culture of the 1960s and 1970s and had rejected the protestant work ethic of his middle-class parents. He has shifted between family and unemployment benefits for the best part of three decades, interspersed with short stints of cash-in-hand work since he lost his full time administrative job almost thirty years ago. He recently moved from Newstart to the comparatively more generous Aged Pension, and has been relieved of the job-search requirements attached to unemployment benefits.

Much of what he shoplifts is not strictly necessary for getting by. He accumulates expensive toiletries – lavender oil, moisturiser, tea-tree and paw-paw ointment – which he regularly brings home as offerings for his wife. Birthday and Christmas gifts invariably consist of moisturiser, socks, and underwear. A compulsive collector, he regularly steals small plastic figurines that he saves up and gives to his nieces as a full set. He smuggles specialist magazines between the pages of the daily newspaper to present to his teenage son. These lifted gifts are Greg's imperfect gestures of care to the people he loves.

Like a considerable body of research before it, this chapter looks at practices of 'getting by' (managing) on a meager income. However, a simply instrumental account of getting by on limited resources overlooks the affective and material investment in making life *livable*. The distinction between living and merely surviving recurred among those I spoke to living in the worst hardship.

This chapter pays particular attention to how getting by engenders values and gestures of care. The lifted gifts that allow Greg to participate in the gift economy defy neat classification as strategic survival, responsible caretaking, or dysfunctional 'acting out' that often seems to characterise accounts of poor people's agency.

Extending the nuanced conceptualisation of agency outlined in the previous chapter, here I'm concerned particularly with the generative and sustaining dimensions of getting by. As Les Back (2015, p. 832) puts it, 'Tales of damage, hopelessness and injustice always make for a good sociological story. But 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.' The title of the chapter acknowledges the ingenuity with which people 'make do' and signals the ways in which practices borne out of necessity can become elevated as principles or values. But it is also warns against the implication that people should survive poverty 'artfully'. This is a tall order when 'getting by' is characterised by desperation and unpredictability. Getting by can mean both the desperate struggle to stay afloat and the sustaining practices of making do. The challenge is to draw attention to the moments and practices that enrich difficult lives without romanticising or ennobling them.

I use the term *generative capacities* to mean the capacity for pleasures, pursuits, and values that nourish and sustain life even in hardship. It implies a hopeful orientation but not necessarily of a grand scale. I draw on the concept of 'social repair' (Hall & Smith, 2015; Thrift, 2005) to signal the minute and mundane practices of care and upkeep that produce and nourish social relationships. Like the continual regeneration of the physical infrastructure of the city through 'repair and maintenance activities', I use it to signal the 'hum' of activity that regenerates meaningful and liveable social life (Thrift, 2005, p. 136). Komter (2005, p. 3) conceptualises this in terms of solidarity and the integral role of the gift in social life, foregrounding how 'gifts still create and maintain social bonds, thereby continually contributing to the revitalization of society.' She refers to both material and immaterial gifts, from money and objects to time and attention, and of course care, which can have both material and immaterial dimensions. Generative capacities, then, can be understood as generative in both an everyday sense of enriching life and the sociological sense of bringing about

and sustaining sociality. Finally, while Thrift (2005, p. 144) notes the 'macro-politics of urban care' embedded in various forms of welfare, volunteer and care work – a point critically taken up by Hall and Smith (2015) – I am interested in the activities that occur *in* excess of this framework as I argue it tends to emphasise the 'reactive agency' of welfare subjects (Ortner, 2001).[78] Eve Tuck (2009, p. 416) speaks to this excess in her critique of damage-centred research, arguing that 'even when communities are broken and conquered, they are so much more than that.'

I begin by briefly situating the chapter within the turn to agency in both social theory and social policy, followed by a review of how this has manifested in social policy literature on getting by. The chapter then turns to my fieldwork, zooming in on mundane and muted gestures of care and modest projects and accomplishments that nonetheless signal generative capacities. The final section considers theoretical direction for thinking about generative agency. The title of the chapter and the focus on the things that make life livable could be said to conjure Michele de Certeau's (1988) hopeful and pragmatic outlook. I argue that, while Certeau's theory of everyday resistance might lend itself to understanding practices and tactics of making do on welfare, this needs to be carefully qualified in a social policy context in which individual agency is fetishised and politicised.

'Juggling, piecing together and going without'

> 'At a very minimum, coping or getting by is an active process of juggling, piecing together and going without' (Lister, 2004, p. 133)

When I asked the people I interviewed how they got by on very little income[79] typical responses echoed the picture of 'juggling, piecing together and going without' portrayed in existing literature; they described budgeting, rationing, prioritising rent or urgent repairs, putting off paying bills, borrowing money from family, getting food or amenities vouchers from welfare organisations or

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[78] Sen's (1985; 1989; 1999) Capability Approach could also be said to prioristise generative capacities by foregrounding possibilities and outcomes. However, there is a number of reasons I have chosen not to employ it for my understanding of generative capacities. 1) It was developed to be instrumentalised in welfare development, while I am seeking precisely to illuminate the dimensions of getting by that exceed this orientation, 2) his overemphasis on choice sits uncomfortably with the conceptualisations of agency drawn on in this thesis, and 3) significantly, his approach seems ill-suited for understanding the kinds of interpersonal and relational goods like care, repair, and support that are my focus (see Gasper, 2002).

[79] The majority of the people I interviewed were on very low income, with welfare benefits as their sole source of income, or a tight income, combining work and welfare but still having to 'count coins' at one time or another.

charities, or going without – from leaving ginger out the curry or living on spaghetti on toast to skipping meals. A review of literature documenting the creative and adaptive strategies people use to manage on welfare is beyond the scope of this chapter.[80] Rather, this section will briefly introduce and contextualise this literature within a broader shift in welfare research that prioritises 'the creative, reflexive welfare subject' (Williams et al., 1999, p. 7). I argue that the generative dimension of getting by is suggested but submerged within the instrumental orientation of a coping and resilience framework.

Social policy literature of the 1990s was marked by an increasing emphasis on 'the capacity of people to be creative, reflexive human beings, that is, to be active agents in shaping their own lives' (Williams et al., 1999, p. 1). Titterton (1992) influentially argued for a 'new paradigm' for welfare research that accounts for how people respond to threats to their welfare in diverse and creative ways. Old approaches, he argued, 'share a common neglect of the differentiated nature of vulnerability and risk among individuals and the role of creative human agency in responding differentially to threats to wellbeing across a lifespan' (Titterton, 1992, p. 2). Titterton, like others (see Deacon & Mann, 1999), characterised post-war social policy as over-stating structural causes of poverty and denying the individual agency of people who experience it. He proposed a new model of research that must address 1) 'differential vulnerability' to threats to wellbeing, 2) the differential coping strategies that 'mediate' reactions to social challenges and their outcomes, and 3) the characteristics of people who weather adversity unscathed – the 'invulnerables'. For Titterton, literature on stress, coping and life-events offered promising material and direction for forging such an approach. His aim was to develop a more subtle understanding of the interaction between structural determinants and individual actions and the diversity of individual needs and behaviour it produces. [81]

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[80] See Lister (2004, pp. 130–140) for an overview of the literature and Lister (2015) for an updated version pre-empting the second edition of Poverty.
[81] See Williams et al. (1999) for a useful overview of the transition from the old to the new paradigm and a critique of the exaggerated departure within research traditions that it suggests.

This shift heralded the development of welfare theory that situates agency within social divisions and relations of power that enable and constrain people's opportunities and choice (Williams et al., 1999), alongside attempts to classify the types of agency enacted by people in poverty (Hoggett, 2001; Lister, 2004). Hoggett (2001, p. 50,51) has argued that the literature on coping strategies illuminates 'first order change' – getting by within the system—but says little about 'second order change' – changing the system. Lister likewise seeks to clarify the types of agency that characterise life in poverty. She differentiates between the 'consequential' choices people make and the more mundane practices of making ends meet, which she labels as '*strategic* agency' and '*everyday* agency' respectively. She also distinguishes between '*personal*' agency associated with individual livelihood and '*political/citizenship* agency' involving 'acts of defiance or trying to effect wider change' (Ruth Lister, 2004, p. 129). These different dimensions – 'everyday-strategic' and 'personal-political/citizenship' – form the axis of her typology of agency (see Figure 3). She is careful to note that this schema is a continuum that 'categorizes actions not actors', meaning that 'any one individual may exercise all four forms of agency identified in the quadrants' and 'not all expressions of agency can be neatly classified' (Lister, 2004, p. 129).
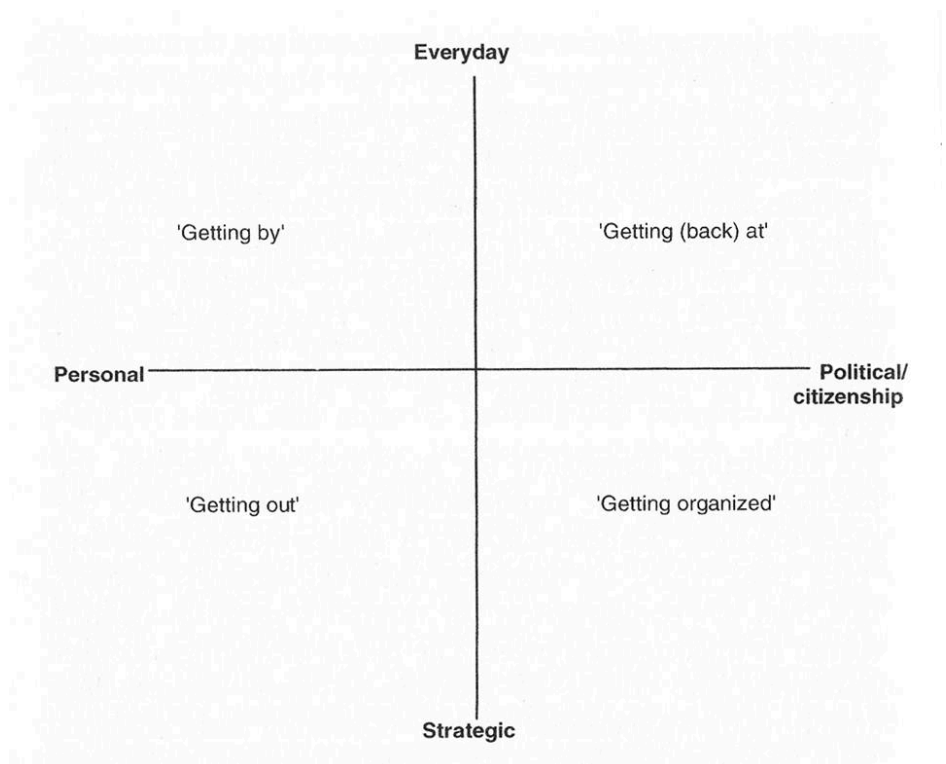

Figure 3 Lister's model of forms of agency exercised by people in poverty. Reprinted from Lister (2004).

'Getting by' is located in the 'everyday-personal' quadrant of Lister's model. She illustrates this form of agency by drawing on empirical findings from a range of fields. Practitioners and academics have explored the personal, social and economic resources – 'assets' or 'capital' in the development literature – available to people that allow them to survive and make a livelihood (Lister, 2004, p. 132). A vast literature documents the routines, skills, materials, and networks people draw on to cope with inadequate income, the stigma and trauma associated with poverty, and the general life-course challenges that are exacerbated by the strain of poverty. Recurring themes in these studies are the competence, care, and creativity getting by demonstrates on the one hand, and the strain, sacrifice and 'relentless struggle' involved on the other. Coping strategies are not necessarily constructive or successful; they can include behavior destructive to self or others, like drug abuse or violence (Hoggett, 2001).

Some forms of getting by have been interpreted as 'everyday resistance' and bleed into 'getting (back) at' in Lister's schema, particularly strategies associated with navigating social welfare. Welfare fraud as a resistant practice is notable and contested example (Lister, 2004, pp. 140–144). That some kinds of activity involved in managing, adapting and surviving have been described as 'tactics' (De Certeau, 1988) or 'weapons of the weak' (Scott, 1985) is not surprising given the focus on resistant practices that 'originate from the direct concerns of daily life' (Gilliom & Monahan, 2012, p. 405) – what James Scott (1985) influentially labeled 'everyday resistance'.[82] Both Michele de Certeau and Scott were interested in the forms of agency that remain possible for the weak. By describing their ordinary practices as an *art*, they attribute to them skill, imagination and intuitive technique – which the title of this chapter likewise evokes. Given its influence and resonance with the themes of this chapter, I return to their work in my theoretical reflection later on.

The emphasis on coping strategies and, in more recent lexicon, resilience foregrounds what Ortner (2001) distinguishes as 'reactive agency' – the capacity to adapt, repurpose, and manoeuvre within imposed structures (I will return to this point later). The coping and resilience framework tends to

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[82] See for example (Andres & Round, 2015; Cornwall, 2007; Gilliom, 2001; Kingfisher, 1996; McCormack, 2004; Sarat, 1990; Shaw, Horton, & Moreno, 2008).

emphasise the 'responsive capacities' (MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013, p. 253) embedded in relationships, identity, and belonging. This is understandable in policy-oriented research that seeks to understand how people respond to threats to their welfare and how the architecture of informal and formal social support affects their capacity to do so. Nonetheless, it signals the generative dimension embedded in coping practices by foregrounding sociality and the 'affective and structural support' of family and community, albeit submerged in the instrumental orientation of 'strengthening relational and social assets of families' (Orthner, Jones-Sanpei, & Williamson, 2004, p. 166).

The resilience framework has been critiqued as ameliorative and individualist, and for not addressing underlying structural causes of poverty (MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013; Seccombe, 2002). The ascendency of resilience in public policy resonates with, and arguably legitimises, a neo-liberal withdrawal of government responsibility and hand-over of governance to communities, criticised as 'responsibility without power' (Peck and Tickell 2002:386 cited in MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013, p. 255). Seccombe (2002) insists that resilience depends on strong economic policies, while Andres and Round (2015) more recently argue that the practices that foster resilience occur in informal or semi-formal spaces that need ongoing state investment, contrary to neo-liberal vision of communities managing and government withdrawing. While for some critics the concept is therefore irretrievably tainted and implicitly conservative (MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013), others have sought to recuperate its transformative and grassroots democratic potential (Boschma, 2015). This fraught politics of resilience is a reminder of the need to situate a generative account of getting by within a critique of how individual agency is politicised in contemporary social policy. I return to this point in the final section of this chapter.

Ethnographic research in impoverished neighbourhoods or housing estates has emphasised the role of kinship and community relationships in developing adaptive strategies. As McKenzie explains:

> In-depth study into a local community can also capture the strength and resilience that are usually buried very deeply within a neighbourhood, and are often missed or discarded, especially within political, policy and media rhetoric about poor neighbourhoods (McKenzie, 2015, p. 53).

In the US context, Hyatt (2001, p. 207 cited in Lister, 2004, p. 136, emphasis in original) observes that:

> ongoing ethnographic work in marginalised communities continues to demonstrate that "social capital" and civic engagement among the poor remain at an all-time high, *if* they measured in terms of community residents' participation in the open-ended social networks that have long been a critical component of self-help strategies among the poor.

The importance of structures of care – 'based largely on shared capacities and commitments of women' (Peel, 2003, p. 164) – recurs in such studies, though many likewise warn of the 'danger of painting too rosy a picture of women's resourcefulness that ignores the strain that it places on many of them' (Kempson, 1996, p. 24 cited in Lister, 2004, p. 136). Such fine-grained research illuminates the gender dynamics that animate networks of support as a source of both sustenance and burden.

Peel (2003) found that the caring work of 'activist mothers' in the notoriously impoverished Australian suburbs of Broadmeadows, Inala, and Mt Druitt generates hope but also the support networks that buoy people in times of struggle. He borrows the concept of 'activist mothering' from US sociologist Nancy Naples who uses it to signal the link between family and community care that was integral to purpose and pride in the neighbourhood she studied. He illustrates with an anecdote in which two women check in on 'their crazies', a few homeless alcoholic men settled at the end of their street, making sure they have blankets. Such gestures are suggestive of the everyday repair described by Hall and Smith (2015)(discussed below).

Peel's optimism about the hope embedded in women's caring work is qualified by his insistence that it cannot replace 'adequate social welfare': 'it is important to resist opportunistic expectations of continuing female self-sacrifice or the idea that people are best off looking after themselves, which invariably means poorer women, paid or unpaid, looking after everyone else' (Peel, 2003, p. 163). Despite this warning, Peel insists that the 'structures of care' and lessons on social justice he found betray not only resilience but broader potential:

> And from both came crucial insights for the most effective architecture for a just and tolerant society. It will seem a striking thing to say that the outlines of a better society might be discerned in Mount Druitt, Inala and Broadmeadows (Peel, 2003, p. 141).

The purpose, pleasure, and hope that such practices engender speak to the generative dimension of getting by. In the following section I consider how this surfaced in my fieldwork. In particular, I consider the cumulative effect of minute gestures of care in nourishing relationships and those that sit uncomfortably with normative ideas about responsible agency. Foregrounding the actions of people in poverty – even if prioritising flashes of hope – is loaded in a context in which their agency is already policitised and fetishised as the object of policy, as this thesis has demonstrated. At the same time, nuanced and human accounts are necessary to pierce through over-determining policy narratives of life in poverty. Emphasising the moments that make life livable requires walking the sometimes fine line between acknowledging and romanticising the agency embedded in getting by.

Everyday care and accomplishment

I now want to focus on the examples and stories I encountered (in interviews, informal conversations, and occasionally through observation) that suggest everyday gestures of care as a form of getting by that engenders meaningful and sustaining relationships or a sense of (sometimes modest) accomplishment. The examples range from budgeting and 'chipping in' to shoplifting and 'scrounging'. I also consider more muted and mundane forms of care that recurred as examples of support; while alone they may seem inconsequential or predictable, I suggest they have a cumulative effect in nourishing relationships.

Just being there

In contrast to my questions about managing on a low income, my questions about available support elicited a different kind of response that spoke to the sustaining rather than instrumental dimension of getting by. 'Just being there' was a common answer when I asked what makes a supportive family, which at first I took as a cursory response. When pressed for examples from their own family, the kinds of things that came to their mind were often so modest and mundane they seemed insignificant. For example, Eli, a young Aboriginal man, told me how his brother would make him toast when he returned home from hospital. Monica continued to wash her homeless brother's clothes no matter how badly he mistreated her as he descended further into his ice addiction.

Leena's dad would deliberately buy too many vegies and drop some round to his adult daughters, and even though they insisted they were 'big girls now' they were touched by the gesture. Every week the elderly volunteers at the church playgroup would send Bill home with his favourite curried egg sandwiches, a welcome treat given his daily struggle to put food on the table. Reem, a young mother, would volunteer to chop the fruit at her local playgroup, her way of reciprocating even though she couldn't contribute financially. Rather than being cursory or insignificant, 'just being there' perhaps signals the cumulative effect of everyday gestures of care in nourishing the bonds that elicit more demanding obligations.

While almost all of the people I spoke to valued family support, people from CALD and Aboriginal backgrounds sometimes referred to family relations in ethno-cultural terms in a way that Anglo-Australian participants did not, at times implying that it set them apart from typical Australians. This echoes the findings of previous research, reflecting a tendency for Anglo-Australians to perceive their values and practices as 'culture-free' while non-Anglo-Australians are more aware of being part of a 'non-normative culture' (Cardona et al., 2006, pp. 16, 43). As Aisha, a mother born in Australia to Muslim Lebanese parents, put it, 'In our culture, parents and grandparents are very high up. We look to them and we are taught to respect. Not just culture, but religion as well; after God it's your parents pretty much.' Leena attributed her supportive family to her Muslim Lebanese culture – 'In our culture we are more family oriented.' Mick described how in his family on the mission[83] 'we like to look after each other', which he explained in terms of respect; 'Respect has a lot to do with it. It comes from our grandparents. They learnt their kids to respect their elders and so forth down the line until my parents learned me about respecting my elders, and I'm doing the same with my kids.' For Aisha, Leena and Mick, the strength of their family bonds was imbued with positive moral dimensions and figured as a major source of pride and identity. By contrast, Bill repeatedly expressed

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[83] Missions were settlements set up and run by churches and missionaries in the 19th Century. Reserves were parcels of land set aside for Aboriginal people and stations were reserves managed by government officials. Aboriginal people were forcible relocated to reserves and missions but many others lived in fringe camps on private property or the outskirts of towns. Many Aboriginal people continued to live on these sites after they were officially closed in the 20th Century and the term 'mission' has been adopted by many Aboriginal people to refer to reserve settlements or fringe camps generally (see http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/chresearch/ReserveStation.htm).

the burden of family expectations as a tension between Aboriginal culture of 'everyone helps everyone' and individual aspirations:

> Because in Aboriginal culture too say if you've got a car well that's everyone's car. But over the years things change and just because you go to work and you struggle to save and you buy yourself a nice house and you set yourself up well you just can't say to the mob come on put tents up in the back yard fellas. Those days are gone.

He described his brother coming to him and expecting 'oh give me this [money or use of the car] because they think because you've got it it's theirs.' However, Bill was ambiguous about whether this was a personal or cultural trait: 'I think he was just using you up. He didn't like to go to work and he expected the family to support him. That was all it was.' The tensions that unequal changes in income and employment status introduces to Aboriginal modes of family obligation is a recurring theme in ethnographies of Aboriginal sociality (Cowlishaw, 2011; Gibson, 2010, pp. 133–4; MacDonald, 2000, p. 98).

The strength of family support as a cultural orientation recurred particularly in my interview with Leena and Samah, sisters born in Australia to a Muslim Lebanese dad and Anglo mum who converted to Islam. Both were mothers themselves. They continually made comparisons between the Arab and Anglo sides of the extended family, as well as between their husbands – Leena's born and raised in Lebanon (in the same northern town as her father) and Samah's an Anglo-Australian. They took pride in their 'family oriented' Arab sensibility and the less 'judgmental' outlook they saw as inherited from their Anglo-side, proudly describing themselves as 'multicultural' and 'half-half ethnic.' Leena affectionately boasted about the closeness of her family (her adult siblings and parents), revolving particularly around her father:

> Yeah money wise if I need money at the shops and I'm pretty tight, and mum's with me or whatever and I need some money, mum will give me money, dad will give money. Half the time we buy stuff and we bring it to the house, like we pay for dinner, he'll make sure he gives us the money back, we're like "no dad", and "why did you spend this much on me for my birthday, it's silly", he's like that. He still has to look after his kids. My husband went overseas, dad's like "you come and stay at our house, you don't stay in a house by yourself". Like "dad I'm a big girl now". Yeah, for money if we're ever tight – my brother bought his own house and all in one go his roof collapsed, his hot water system went, his that and that. So my dad of course was there – my dad is very handy, he helps us every time we move.

Samah confirmed her sister's description: 'you can't go to my dad's house without taking something home.' Leena talked about her husband's giving character as a source of both pride and tension in their marriage: 'it caused us a bit of dramas, he can't say no to anyone. He's the type – he'll drop everything and help someone [But] Dude you have a wife and kids, I understand you like helping people but then we were last.' She was similarly equivocal about his shouldering the burden of support for his family back in Lebanon: 'He cops all the burden overseas but we support them and thank god we can, because we're lucky here we can support them – he pays his mum's rent over there […] Well some [of his siblings] get greedy, when they come here there's some that want to take a lot, they think we're from Australia, we're rich.' Despite oscillating between expressions of pride and frustration, being culturally 'family oriented' was a defining characteristic in Leena and Samah's narrative about everyday life.

Mick's account of 'chipping in' for family gatherings articulates how contributing is not simply an implied obligation but engenders the bonds that give that obligation meaning. A self-employed Aboriginal father of three, Mick was deeply proud to belong to an expansive extended family:

> A few years ago my cousin was hit by a car and he was killed. The aunties got on the phone to let everyone know and then the people who couldn't get to that town come back to [town in regional NSW] for the funeral. We all chipped in to help hire a bus or something from that town, pay for petrol, pay for food, make sure everyone got there. As I said early my dad is one of 13 and there was my uncle's kids and then the other kids what my grandparents took in to help cover - because he was only a young man he wasn't in a funeral fund or anything like that. So they had to come up with a lot of money in a short period of time.

> All of dad's brothers and sisters they all put $100 each towards the funeral. Then the rest of us nieces and nephews we all just chipped in what we could and we got the money together to help pay for the funeral. We all made sandwiches; all the women made the sandwiches, cooked soups and all that kind of stuff for the wake. Yeah. It was - it was good, like, we all come together as a family and we showed each other what we meant to each other. Yeah. If someone's having a celebration each family will put in $100 or $150 towards that celebration, whether it will be 18th, 21st, 50th, a wedding anniversary, everyone puts in a bit of money to help make the gathering as special as could be.

Macdonald (2000, p. 94) similarly observed sharing the cost of unexpected and expensive funerals amongst extended family networks and sometimes the wider community amongst Wiradjuri in central NSW. Mick articulates chipping in as a gesture of care through which they 'showed each other what [they] meant to each other'. While chipping in as a way of affirming family ties could be taken as a generic description of family life, in this case it speaks to the cultural distinctiveness of Aboriginal

modes of relating in which kin relationships are integral to Aboriginal identity. This is often expressed in terms of 'the pan-Aboriginal trope of caring and sharing' (Gibson, 2010, p. 134) as a form of social obligation that maintains kin relationships and a sense of 'self-in-relationship' (MacDonald, 2000, p. 97). This example is clearly not reducible to the responsive capacity to manage an unexpected and costly funeral, but rather speaks to the generative and projective orientation of practices of getting by – in this case affirming relationships by being available to fulfil the needs of family members.

The importance of extended-family gatherings recurred in my interviews with Aboriginal residents as the crux of a supportive family. One member of a supported Aboriginal social group suggested that gatherings take-on particular importance in suburban western Sydney where Aboriginal relatives and friends were dispersed:

> I come from [rural mission] where it's all Aboriginal people there. So everyone's all in close together and there's a lot of Aboriginals that also they don't live on the mission. But being in Bankstown there isn't any area like that where there's just all Aboriginal people in one spot. It's not the same feeling for me here as it is back there. […] Yeah, so it's just – It's been a great group bringing all the Aboriginal people, families together.

This account resonates with Yamanouchi's (2010) description of the diverse family structures and modes of interaction amongst urban Aboriginal residents in south-west Sydney. She points to the significance of locally based organisations in facilitating relationships between Aboriginal people that are not based on kinship ties, which was significant also for the Aboriginal people I spoke to (not surprisingly given I met most of them through such organisations). Another member described the value of the group in the following terms: 'It's like everybody is *equal* here. Like it's not, "you're better than me or I've got more money than you." It's like – this is gonna sound bad – we're all *black*, and we're all cut from the same piece of cloth. We're all equal. We're not talking about, "Aw, I've got this mortgage, and you know, I've just bought this car, I just did this."' The group allowed this participant to spend time with people who shared their simple tastes and mores – people who were 'happy to sit out the front with toast and a ciggie'. 'Just being there' by sharing time and company can be understood as a gesture of care and commitment to maintaining relationships.

A focus on minute and muted gestures of care resonates with recent calls to notice mundane resilience by 'extending the scalar path of analysis to the micro-level' (Andres & Round, 2015, p. 667).

Andres and John's (2015, p. 667) argue 'that crucial to persistent resilience [the everyday coping practices toward ongoing and changing everyday pressures] is informality, be it in the formation of networks and the spaces they take place in, the sharing of knowledge, and/or the mutual exchanges of everyday life – all of which are extremely ephemeral processes that states find extremely hard to observe and conceptualise.' Greg's gifting of small luxuries to his family may be interpreted as a form of intimate '*social* repair' – the mundane practices of care and upkeep that 'contribute to and constitute unremarked, everyday, resilience' (Hall & Smith, 2015, p. 3, emphasis in original). Crucially for our purposes, the concept of social repair insists on the (re)generative dimension of resilience – the hope and possibility for urban life that repair work points to.

In pointing to the everyday gestures of care that create and maintain relationships, we must be careful not to idealise care. The burdensome and sustaining aspects of family life aren't mutually exclusive, just as care and violence can exist under the one roof, as was the case for some of the people I spoke to. For example, Dina described the way that being there for her sister during episodes of severe mental illness was a source of both satisfaction and strain: 'It's tough and challenging and draining, but you want to be there. Even though sometimes you don't know what you're doing'. Thrift (2005, p. 144) advocates a practical politics of 'affective maintenance and repair […] which attempts to inject more kindness and compassion into everyday interaction' to contend with the misanthropy that he argues is engrained in urban social life. Taking up Thrift's approach, Hall and Smith (2015, p. 14) caution that repair is shot through with politics that depends on what we mean by kindness. Unlike physical repair, the 'necessary reciprocity' of social repair can create problems – care may be offered selfishly, it may be unwanted, or offered on terms that aren't the recipient's own. Feminist critics of care also remind us that care can be asymmetrical and taken for granted (Beasley & Bacchi, 2005). Komter (2005, p. 95) similarly points to the (gendered) power dynamics of gift exchange, including care – gifts can assert status and authority, create debt and dependency, exclude or subsume others. The motives and effects of care, then, are not inherently positive and involve power in a way that interrupts a simply rosy version of the politics of care in getting by.

Budgeting

While for many I interviewed 'counting coins' was something they did begrudgingly, for a few it was a source of considerable pride (also see Holloway et al., 1997). Ronda became a mum at the age of 14, when she moved in with her now husband. She described a long history of scraping through and difficult times, but insisted, "We've lived on a small income, but we've worked out how to get by." She described the breakdown of her budget in detail, telling me how much came out for power and phone bills and was automatically debited for rent. She spoke with pride not only about her capacity to budget but particularly that she was instilling that skill in her sons:

> Emma: How are things now?
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> Ronda: Really good! [enthusiastic] I mean, we are in Aboriginal Housing, but we own two cars. We don't have any bills because I'm so strict on myself for budgeting, I literally allow myself $30 a day, $30 and that's it. You know, if we need something else – sorry – that's my budget for the day. We don't go over that budget. I mean, I'll do a food shop and then after the food shop that's my budget - $30 and that's it.
>
> Emma: Is that easy to stick to with kids?
>
> Ronda: It's kind of good cos I can say "if we can stick to this budget, and then end of a fortnight I can buy you McDonalds or I can buy you some stuff that you might need." My 8 year old says to me every week, cos he does school banking every week, "mum, if you give me…" – every week it goes $3, $5, $3, $5 cos that's his chores money – "mum I need a new pair of shoes" and I go, "well, we've got our food budget [covered] – this week lets go" and he's like, "No, I wanna have enough money in my bank so I can pay for my own shoes." And he's only got about $65/ just on $70… and cos he only wears Nikes his shoes are $80 at the moment. And so I said, "just take the money out and Mum will pay the rest." [He replies] "No mum, I wanna pay it." Because he's earn't that money and he's been saving that money… I mean it's been taking him few weeks, but he just won't budge on us…
>
> Emma: Are you proud of that?
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> Ronda: Yeah we are [emphatically]. You see, like our 17 year old, he was two weeks ago "mum, I need new shoes" – cos he lives with his mates now, he can't handle his dad anymore, so he gets living away from home allowance and um, he's like, "mum, I need new shoes" and I'm like, "You get money so you do it. If your brother can save you can save". [proud] And then he rings up last night, "mum, I bought a new pair of shoes today."

Thriftiness was a value borne out of the necessity of raising a family on a meagre income, but it was a skill she had mastered and a principle she was proud to instil in her children. It was linked to the standards of discipline and care that were closely intertwined for Ronda, who saw her job as a mother to prepare her children to survive in a tough world. For the few people I spoke to who upheld budgeting as a principle, it was more than a practical way of making ends meet in the present, it was

used to invoke humble family origins and values, as expressed by Aisha, a Lebanese-Australian stay-at-home mum whose husband's income was supplemented by family benefits:

> We're pretty smart, me and my husband. […] We know how to extend the dollar. I've come from a very humble family. We never had an extravagant life. I'm used to living on the minimum, so to me it didn't really bother me, to me I didn't feel it. To me, it's a shelter over my head, I'm eating, I'm with the man I love, so it's nothing I care about. It was okay, but don't get me wrong, there were times where it was a bit tough; things you wanted but you couldn't really get. But we still managed to save enough to have our holiday every year. It was nice.

Discipline and care were principles embedded in practices of getting by that, to invoke Michele Lamont (2000, p. 4), 'function as an alternative to economic definitions of success and offer a way to maintain dignity and to make sense of their lives'.

However, Aisha's qualification – 'don't get me wrong' – offers an important caveat. Both she and Ronda have young children and an income from their husband's work that shields them somewhat from the stigma of being mothers on welfare and allows them some leeway to budget for comforts like Nike shoes or holidays. Consistent with other research (Murphy et al., 2011; Peel, 2003), the first thing people surviving on welfare would mention missing out on was often socialising, treats, outings, or holidays – 'you can't do nothing with your kids', as Kane put it. Thriftiness and self-discipline offered little comfort to people barely getting by and worn down by the effort.

I am wary of feeding into the idea that 'deserving' welfare recipients should be virtuous ascetics, which fuels judgmental disparaging of small pleasures. This is perfectly illustrated by a scene in the SBS documentary *Struggle Street* (2015, 6.12 mins), which followed Ashley and his mate Tony making some extra cash from collecting and selling scrap metal. They immediately spent the $29 they made buying sandwiches and Caesar salad from a Service Station (not the most economically efficient place to shop). 'Just a little bit of luxury we enjoy' Tony tells the camera, followed by the sanctimonious lament of the narrator, 'It's two steps forward, three steps back as this luxury feed eats up the arvo's earnings'. Rather, this chapter seeks to highlight the moments of pleasure and sustenance, regardless of whether they conform to normative assumptions about responsibly getting by.

Scrounging

There was a quiet satisfaction in Dylan's detailed description of foraging at the rubbish dump for copper wire and aluminum cans to sell as scrap metal. He was a single father, Anglo, 31 years old, and living with his young son at his parents' house when I spoke with him. He was looking for work and living off the Parenting Payment with the begrudging help of his parents. He had struggled with drug and alcohol addiction in the recent past, and still smoked pot daily like his girlfriend Monica, who introduced us. But his understated pride couldn't be confused with sentimentality; when I asked him in what situation he'd find himself making a trip to the tip he replied: 'Desperation. If we've got credit from a pot dealer I need to pay it two days before pay day, we might be able to [make it from the tip].'

He told me about stripping electrical wire and that they wouldn't melt the plastic off even though it was quicker 'cos of the environmental thing'. The price they could fetch for copper had dropped a lot so they aimed for aluminium instead – 'It's worth less but there's just so much more of it, so at the end of the day you're probably better off going for things that aren't worth as much but the availability...' But the hard work was far from lucrative. 'But you know it's too... by the time you pay the petrol [for the trip to the dump] sometimes it's not worth it. Sometimes you might go out, I think we've made 60 or 70 bucks in one day off the tip.'

He explained prices, methods, pros and cons to me for quite some time, shifting between enthusiasm for the quiet pleasures to be found – 'It's like a treasure hunt really, you know what I mean?' – and the fact that 'it's really just not worth it'. 'I've found some awesome stuff when I went out there. I found a medal from the war, in a container in an old drawer. I opened the drawer and there was a container with a World War Two medal; a cigar holder in a silver case that goes around your neck.' Monica chimed in as he showed off the functional iPod they had found, a pair of good-as-new boots, and the ornaments that Monica's daughter repainted and gifted to extended family – marvelling at the things people throw away. Even though the labour they invested didn't pay off, they expressed a certain satisfaction at the initiative and energy they applied to the task and their contribution to reducing landfill.

If I go to the tip for five hours there's five hours I haven't been smoking pot so it's probably actually saving me money going to the tip and spending that on petrol [laughs] than smoking 50 bucks worth of pot, but um. [perks up again] I kind of, I find it fun, and even when I'm back in the work force, now for the rest of my life I'll probably just have a few drums in my shed that I'll just continually fill them up. And even just things like electrical items break, you know, you can get little bits and pieces out them. I mean, you know, if you can do it as a hobby it's worthwhile doing, but, trying to make money off it's a bit of a joke. If you can save it up for 12 months and take it in, once every 12 months, you know, it would be worthwhile, but tryin to do it to pay a 20 buck drug deal or something it sort of makes it hard. Pretty dangerous too, you see a lot of used needles and stuff, I get a bit turned off by it, they've been popping up quite a bit lately. And you're not allowed; it's against the law [which is] pretty silly, the amount of cans we've collected that have now gone to a recycling plant. Monica collected 11 kilos of cans in 3 hours, that's like a 44 gallon drum full of crushed cans. I don't know how she did it myself. And the amount of cans now that aren't gonna get buried have gone to be reused and recycled – I think it's a good thing […] I think in a way we've done the world a favour.

Here Dylan frames the value of scrounging as a form of distraction from his drug habit and an expression of social and environmental responsibility, as well as being simply 'fun'. The point is not to celebrate Dylan, or Greg and his lifted gifts, as heroic figures. Overly romanticising more marginal forms of making do as necessarily 'resistant' is perhaps just as fraught as celebrating strict budgeting as 'deserving' (as Scott, 1985, p. 29 himself notes). Like all humans, Dylan and Greg are flawed; they both struggle with gambling and drug addiction, which are recognised health problems that also put emotional and financial strain on their families. When I asked Dylan what it means to be a responsible person he replied after a pause, 'I've never really been one so I don't know.' Scrounging on the tip was something he tended to do when he was desperate to score some pot. Even so, it offered him satisfaction, pleasure and value – albeit modestly expressed – irrespective of its financial payoff.

The example of scrounging and lifted gifts in particular draw attention to the *generative capacities* embedded in getting by that might go unrecognised when the analytic frame is fixed on how people respond to threats to welfare. While occasionally such activities may deliver material reward – some extra cash or treats that would otherwise have to be foregone – their value exceeds any practical function and sits uncomfortably with a purely instrumental account of getting by. While I have provided examples that don't necessarily conform to normative assumptions about responsible and constructive behaviour, one might push this further by asking whether pleasure in mischief and malice is in its own way generative, or considering the line between generative and destructive

pleasures, pursuits and values[84] – though this is beyond the scope of this chapter. In the following section I begin to trace some theoretical direction for thinking about the generative dimension of getting by.

Living, not just surviving

Sherry Ortner (2001, p. 81) has argued that the analytic emphasis on 'reactive' forms of accommodation and refusal creates an imbalance, so that any view of the lives of colonised people outside of their relationship with the colonisers is eclipsed. She makes this argument as part of her contribution to the debate about whether the seminal anthropological collection, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, by John and Jean Camaroff, gives sufficient attention to Tswana agency. She distinguishes between two different forms of agency in the context of colonialism, oriented on the one hand to power, and on the other hand, to intentionality. The first concerns relations of domination and resistance, whereby agency is 'reactive to power, an agency of "resistance"' (Ortner, 2001, p. 80). Reactive agency involves the power to 'rethink, reframe, and reshape' within imposed structures, and features predominantly in the Camaroff's project according to Ortner (2001, p. 7). She argues for greater attention to what she calls 'an agency of intentions – of projects, purposes, and desires' (Ortner, 2001, p. 79). By this she means the 'culturally constituted projects, projects that infuse life with meaning and purpose. People seek to accomplish things within a framework of their own terms, their own categories of value' (Ortner, 2001, p. 80). This requires a lens on 'internal' relations of power, not simply 'external' relations of domination and resistance. She suggests that while early ethnography has been accurately criticised for fetishising cultural 'otherness', in their haste to decolonise the discipline anthropologists may too readily overlook the projects and ways of life beyond the relationship between coloniser and colonised. Thus Ortner argues that the Camaroff's address the Tswana's 'reworking' of missionary projects but overlook Tswana projects and intentions, which are overshadowed by the endeavors of the missionaries. In other words, Ortner

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[84] Thrift (2002, p. 450; 2005, p. 139 emphasis in original) argues 'that achieving sociality does not mean that everything has to be rosy: sociality is not the same as liking', while Gasper (2002:450) asks, 'Which pleasures enrich and sustain one, and others? And which disable?'

calls for greater attention to the generative and projective capacities that are overlooked when the analytic lens is fixed on reactive agency.

I have suggested that a similar characterisation could be made of some of the literature documenting getting by described by Lister, attuned as it is to the responsive capacities of people in poverty. Greg's lifted gifts speak to his schemes – they are tokens of luxury and gestures of affection for his family. I have pointed to the 'projects, purposes, and desires' discernable, however modest or muted, in practices of getting by. Of course, recognising the generative dimension of getting by mustn't obscure how more expansive aspirations – or projective agency – are curtailed by the material and symbolic burden of poverty. But nor should we ignore the generative capacities that provide flashes of hope, pleasure, and sustenance that make life livable.

The reactive orientation identified by Ortner animates the work of Scott (1985, 1990) and de Certeau (De Certeau, 1988), a point worth elaborating given their influence on interpreting everyday practices of getting by. Both scholars acknowledge that they are concerned with relations between the powerful and the subordinate. For example, Scott characterises 'hidden transcripts' – the discourse of subordinates that take place out of view of powerholders – as 'derivative' because their reference point is 'what appears in the public transcript'. As he reiterates in a footnote:

> This is not to assert that subordinates have nothing more to talk about among themselves than their relationship to the dominant. Rather it is merely to confine the term to that segment of interaction among subordinates that bears on relations with the powerful (Scott, 1990, p. 5, fn. 8).

De Certeau likewise distinguishes between the strategic moves of the powerful and the opportunistic tactics of the subordinate: 'The place of a tactic belongs to the other' (De Certeau, 1988, p. xix). And later: 'We are concerned with battles or games between the strong and the weak, and the "actions" that remain possible for the latter' (De Certeau, 1988, p. 34). Their emphasis is explicitly on reactive agency as Ortner defines it.

Their emphasis on the domain of the everyday and the forms of agency that remain possible for the weak also lends itself to an agentic account of getting by. Scott (1985, p. 29) coined the term 'everyday resistance' to refer to the typically quiet, persistent and outwardly acquiescent forms of

resistance that 'relatively powerless groups' engage in – 'foot-dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage and so forth'. He argues that the overwhelming focus on rare occasions of explicit subordination and rebellion in the study of peasant resistance neglects the cumulative power of ordinary resistance, the object of which is 'nearly always survival and persistence' rather than 'public and symbolic goals' (Scott, 1985, pp. 301, 32). De Certeau (1988, p. 30) is similarly concerned with everyday practice that 'insinuates into' or 'poaches' from imposed structures – the unintended 'ways of using the constraining order'. Like Scott, he characterises these adaptive practices as 'clandestine', 'tireless but quiet', and 'quasi-invisible' (De Certeau, 1988, p. 31). De Certeau's is a resolutely, though not blindly, optimistic view of the power of the subordinate to divert and subvert received cultural schemas and products. 'With de Certeau one can always perceive and optimistic élan, a generosity of intelligence, and a trust given to others in such a way that no situation appears to him a priori fixed or hopeless' (Giard, 2014, p. xxi). He ascribes a poetics to their ways of making do or 'bricolage' (De Certeau, 1988, p. xv). Describing making do as an art – just as Scott refers to everyday resistance – speaks to the ingenuity it embodies.

This chapter speaks to this tradition of foregrounding the art of making do but without conforming to the reactive emphasis it implies. Ingenuity does not necessarily betray resistance, and my intention is not to suggest that the examples I have cited are somehow subversive. As Scott (1985, p. 88) acknowledges, descriptions of distinctive actions must be embedded 'in an analysis of the conflicts of meaning and value in which these patterns arise and to which they contribute' in order to determine whether they reflect resistant motives. Moreover, to loosely borrow from Sedgwick and Frank (1995, p. 25, fn. 3), 'the most important question to ask about any cultural manifestation' need not be is it 'subversive or hegemonic?' – a sentiment echoed in Ortner's appeal not to neglect projective agency and my emphasis on the generative dimension of getting by.

However, we must also be careful not to overstate Ortner's heuristic distinction between reactive and projective agency. She points to the ways that resistance itself can signal aspects of 'intentionality, of projects of empowerment and identity', noting that 'in practice they are often

inseparable' (Ortner, 2001, p. 81). Ortner usefully unpacks the ways in which foregrounding reactive agency – in which she includes explicit and hidden forms of resistance – can neglect the 'schemes and projects' of the oppressed. However, we should likewise not overlook the ways in which 'resistance is ultimately generative and frequently self-affirming' (Gilliom & Monahan, 2012, p. 407). 'Through resistance people test boundaries, build sociality and achieve dignity, both within and between institutional structures and dominant cultural logics' (Gilliom & Monahan, 2012, p. 407). By making the products of the dominant order 'function in another register' (De Certeau, 1988, p. 32) – 'within the framework of their own tradition' (Giard, 2014, p. xxi) – de Certeau suggests the blurred boundary between the reactive and projective agency described by Ortner. It suggests that we ought to be careful not to overlook the projective capacities embedded in actions simultaneously oriented toward survival and getting by.

This returns me to the argument made previously about the generative dimensions of getting by being submerged in the instrumental orientation of social policy literature. It is not that generative capacities are ignored, but rather that they are framed as a reaction and response to threats to welfare – which indeed they can be. This is suggested by the findings from the Care, Identity and Inclusion (CII) project, which suggests private care as a form of resilience and resistance 'for some minority mothers' (Kershaw, 2010). Kershaw (2010, p. 46) cites a number of black women in Canada, both Aboriginal and immigrant, describing their mothering practices, including Jenny, an Aboriginal woman, who says:

> As a mother, one of the most important tasks that I have undertaken is the role of creating identity in my children. When the girls were very young, I began exposing them to every possible element of their culture […] For far too long, my extended and immediate family has had our culture taken away, by banning our culture and the use of our language. I guess you could say that I have turned the tables and made 100% certain that my children have seen and heard and tested every aspect of their cultural identity.

This quote clearly illustrates how the same practice can be at once reactive and generative, fortifying resilient capacities as well as projecting self and community empowerment and identity. The same could be said of the commitment to black sociality expressed in extended-family and community gatherings that Aboriginal participants described to me. The supported social group, which was

facilitated by the community development arm of a welfare organisation, epitomised a responsive welfare orientation entangled with the projective investment in black community and identity. As Ronda put it, 'It is our group. I don't see it as a service.' Similarly, the pride and satisfaction invested in budgeting was a means of achieving dignity despite disadvantage for Ronda and Aisha that also enabled them to manage the practical challenges of living on a limited income.

But not all practices so readily speak to this dual recognition, particularly those that don't conform to normative or instrumental orientations. Neither Dylan nor Greg's habits would likely be considered responsible or constructive by conventional definitions. Scrounging at the rubbish dump offered little in the way of financial pay-off for Dylan and he characterised it himself as an act of desperation. Yet it also afforded him a sense of independence and satisfaction, not to mention a welcome distraction. Greg's shoplifting was perhaps more lucrative, but the real reward was the thrill of pulling one over the corporate supermarket, the pleasure of collecting, and the ability to express his love through tokens of luxury for his family. Having the analytic lens always fixed on reactive and responsive capacities risks overshadowing and crowding out the more modest and muted pleasures, pursuits and values that nonetheless nourish and sustain life.

The distinction between living and merely surviving recurred among those I spoke to living in the worst hardship, but it tended to express the felt absence of the former. By way of a qualification to the argument so far, then, it is worth reiterating that it would be damaging to imply that people should survive poverty *artfully*. On the one hand it can romanticise agency as necessarily positive and constructive; on the other hand it can be used to characterise people who struggle to cope and manage as incompetent and blame them for their poverty (Lister, 2004, p. 125). More simply, it ignores the relentless struggle that getting by can entail. Some of the people I interviewed described getting by as a constant struggle to juggle the cost of bills, rent, and food, let alone unexpected expenditures like school excursions, medication, or specialist appointments (see the discussion of everyday emergencies in chapter 4). Nessa, a young single mother with welfare as her only source of income, articulated the idea of getting by as scraping through: '[You're] Just living so basic. You're like on the poverty line – you're just surviving. You've just paid your rent, your bills, got enough for

food, there's nothing else really'. For Monica, her pride in shielding her daughter from the effects of going without was smothered by the shame of being unemployed and relying on welfare. This serves as a reminder that any attempt to understand or reconceptualise agency in poverty must be critically attuned to the fraught politics of agency in contemporary social policy, whereby the behaviour of people on welfare is subject to intense scrutiny and intervention.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn attention to the hope, pleasure and sustenance, however modest, animated by practices of getting by. I have argued that the emphasis on responsive capacities in the coping and resilience framework tends to prioritise what Ortner calls 'reactive agency' – the capacity to adapt, repurpose, and maneuver within imposed structures. Nonetheless, the generative dimension of getting by is signaled in this literature through recognition of the strength to be drawn from family and community relationships, identity and belonging – although it is submerged in the language of personal and social resources.

I focused on the mundane and muted examples of support that tended to arise in interviews. While it is tempting to dismiss them as minor and inconsequential, I have suggested that they matter to the extent that they nourish social relationships and the obligations they fulfil and engender. My discussion of budgeting signaled the principles borne of practices, though this was counterbalanced with scrounging and stealing as examples that fit less readily into moralistic categorisations of competent and deserving welfare recipients but nonetheless signal their generative capacities. The focus on minute and muted examples of everyday care and accomplishment is perhaps all the more pertinent given the limited resources at the disposal of people struggling to get by. Greg's lifted gifts exemplify this point – they enable him to affirm his familial relationships through a gift economy that impoverishment would otherwise exclude him from (see Komter, 2005 chapter 6). While Ortner and de Certeau provide theoretical direction for understanding the generative agency embedded in getting by, I argue their explanatory framework must be employed in a way that is sensitive to the politics of prioritising agency in contemporary social policy. The interplay of framings of agency in

social policy and social science has been a recurring thread in this thesis that is drawn together in the conclusion.

Chapter seven – Conclusion

> I really do feel she judges herself and others too harshly. But I'm also uncomfortable, despite my reflexes, with reducing her world view to internalised myths about lazy people who just don't want to work. I, like her, have repeatedly experienced and witnessed people making choices that worsen their situations. But I'm still convinced (or perhaps I'm trying to convince myself and it is my doubt that is unsettling) that those poor decisions derive from a sense of limited options (horizons) and limited capacity fostered through circumstance (field notes, 11/01/15).

This excerpt from my field notes records my conflicted feelings after talking at length with Monica. I could see myself in her fierce commitment to family and pained desire to make their lives better despite their circumstances and, sometimes, themselves. This excerpt illustrates some of the impetus for the research presented in this thesis – to understanding how dominant scripts of vulnerability and personal responsibility become entangled or repudiated within situated meanings and modes of obligation. How was this process brought into relief and complicated, I wondered, by the challenges of hardship and the context of multiculture? It also conveys how our feelings about how things ought to be, the reality of how things are, and how others tell us it should be – and the gulf between them – find their way into the understandings we fashion about ourselves and our lives. In short, the excerpt suggests why this thesis has sought to do justice to the messiness and ambiguity that characterises everyday life.

I have endeavoured to offer a 'holistic and humanistic perspective' of the everyday lived experiences of welfare provision that is attuned to the 'social, political, economic, and affective structures' through which culture comes to matter in a highly multicultural suburban context (Alexander, 2016, pp. 1422, 1433). The novelty of this thesis lies in its framing. It situates responsibility and vulnerability as policy frames in the context of Australian multiculture to provide an analysis of the complex cultural logics of contemporary welfare policy and practice. It also foregrounds the experiences of people living at the sharp end of the welfare system, focusing on the sensory-affective elements of their understandings of and relationships to the agents, policies and principles that constitute the welfare state. By combining fine-grained empirical analysis with empirical and theoretical insights from race and ethnic studies and social policy studies, it offers a thick account of individual lived experiences of welfare embedded in histories and structures of racial and socio-

economic injustice and inequality. In doing so it has yielded insights into how culture matters to experiences of welfare provision given the cultural politics of welfare access and the prevailing agency paradigm in social policy and social research. I conclude by synthesising the issues raised in relation to the thesis aims, before elaborating an overarching argument.

Welfare and multiculture

A key aim of this thesis has been to introduce a nuanced understanding of culture to the study of lived experiences of hardship and welfare in multicultural Australia. Consistent with Peel's portrait of life in poverty based on research conducted in the mid-1990s, two decades before my own project, the diverse range of people I encountered shared common practical challenges and indignities arising out of material hardship despite differences of culture, race, gender, or religion.[85] As Peel (2003, p. 7) put it, hardship was a 'common register of complaint and vision'. However, my intensive methodology and conceptual framework afforded an insight into the more subtle shades of experience inflected by historically and structurally embedded cultural differences. For example, chapter four followed Peel's example of analysing the dynamics of describing disadvantage by examining how vulnerability as a condition of insecurity and vulnerability as a cultural script of disadvantage interact. This allowed me to explain the way that people are compelled to perform disadvantage in a specific cultural register, and how its potentially injurious effects are exacerbated by particular histories and biographies of race and inequality. Chapter five explored how individual experiences of acute shame in the face of needing protection are shaped by competing cultural influences that mediate its devastating and activating aspects. In doing so it demonstrated the importance of understanding cultural diversity at the level of the individual and not just between social groups.

Another aim of the thesis was to begin to address the lack of research on how minority groups use or relate to welfare services or benefits by exploring ethno-cultural diversity as factor shaping

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[85] Though, significantly, while Peel concentrated on experiences of entrenched hardship, there was greater variation in the proximity to and intensity of hardship experienced by the people I spoke to. My approach is also more conceptually oriented than Peel's, whose primary aim was to canvas how people talked about their own poverty.

expectations and experiences of the welfare state. The intensive approach taken illuminated the ways in which ethnicity was woven through individual experiences without elevating it to a position of explanatory primacy. For example, in chapter five both Hasan and Monica were deeply ashamed of finding themselves in circumstances of acute dependence, and their shame was entangled with their respective refusal to accept welfare and sense of being trapped on welfare. They both navigated shame by deploying the discourse of meritocratic self-reliance. However, Hasan's shame referenced a particular gendered and classed model of the South Asian family and Islamic principle of charity. In light of her experience of worklessness, the most salient and overwhelming influence for Monica was the cultural primacy of paid work in defining identity and success. However, in the Anglo-dominated Australian context, only Hasan related his sense of shame to his cultural background. A close analysis of their stories reveals how their susceptibility and response to shame arises from the entanglement of competing cultural influences with the practical contingencies of their difficult circumstances. In Small's (2004 cited in Lamont & Small, 2008, pp. 80–81) terms, this illuminates a 'constraint-and-possibility relationship' between culture and behaviour.

I was also attentive to whether and how ethno-cultural background was salient to the way people made sense of their own situation. Chapter three suggested that while the diverse range of people I interviewed tended to draw on dominant moral repertoires to claim, rationalise, and qualify entitlement to government support, differences emerged in the way they fit the messy details of their lives into normative containers of need and deservingness. Consistent with other research (Cardona et al., 2006), I found that CALD and Aboriginal participants more often articulated expectations of welfare (chapter three) and family obligation (chapter five) with reference to cultural background while Anglo-Australian participants did not. This reflects the contextual and relational dynamics of ethnicity (Fox & Jones, 2013, p. 393), through which awareness of inhabiting a non-normative culture may be brought into relief against the dominance of Anglo cultural formations. It also speaks to the ways in which cultural difference can be a 'mobilizing resource' (Atkin & Chattoo, 2007, p. 316) through which pride and dignity is achieved – a point demonstrated in chapter six. However, gauging the salience of ethnicity in everyday life by what people say in an interview

situation risks overlooking practices that may be 'practically present but discursively not valued' (West, 2011, p. 427). This does not preclude attention to more muted or marginal practices. For example, many of the examples of everyday gestures of care in chapter five were extracted from interviewee's descriptions of their daily life, demonstrating the possibility of being attentive to the material traces in interview data. Nonetheless, it betrays the challenge of displacing the dominance of rhetorical analysis and capturing the materiality of practices that the project aspired to but did not entirely pull off.

Despite the challenge I encountered of capturing the materiality of practices, I did pay close attention to the affective dimension of everyday social life. The affective-relational dynamics of reciprocity was a key point of contention in the cultural politics of access on both sides of the frontline of service provision and in wider-conceptions of citizen-state relations. Welfare users' affective relations to the welfare state can be conceptualised, following Hage (2003), as structured by a gift economy through which the gift of social life embodied in welfare, if well-given, may induce a symbolic debt of the recipient. However, welfare practitioners and welfare users may view the spirit of the gift differently. Chapter two showed how frontline community welfare practitioners tended to judge service users as reciprocating when they displayed emotive qualities like gratitude and receptivity. By contrast, some interpreted loudness and ostentatiousness as betraying undue expectation and entitlement. The chapter argued that racialised sensory-affective frames may become entangled with cultural scripts of ideal access in such a way that disposes some bodies to be more readily read as deserving and others as underserving – suggesting the interplay of situated frames and wider cultural scripts. It also demonstrates the persistence of ethnic categories as a way of making sense of social reality in welfare practice despite social processes of diversification (Boccagni, 2015). By contrast, Kane and Nessa, whose experience of welfare agencies was discussed in chapter four, viewed conditional welfare benefits as a poisoned chalice that they received defensively and resentfully. Chapter two elaborated Hage's notion of the social gift to make sense of the affective-relational modes of access that differentiate people's relationship to citizenship, the state, and one another. It situated diverse ways of relating to the welfare state – emerging out of

different histories and biographical circumstances – within the affective and material infrustructures that make certain forms of relationality possible. The motif of the gift reappeared in chapter five in the notion of generative capacities that enrich everyday life and sustain sociality – exemplified by Greg's shoplifted gifts allowing him to participate in a gift economy that affirms his care for his family.

Wrestling with agency

Employing responsibility and vulnerability as conceptual tethers brings the concept of agency to the fore of my project. As demonstrated in chapter one, the currency of both terms in social policy is tied to the dominance of the agency paradigm that orients the welfare state to matters of individual agency. Chapter two showed how this plays out on the frontline of community service provision in what I called 'the bi-polar problem of access'. Chapter two argued that the construction of access as a defining goal and challenge of community service provision hinges on 'deserving vulnerability' and 'empowered responsibility' as scripts of ideal access that colour interpretations of user initiative as evidence of either desirable empowerment or undesirable opportunism. I did not find evidence in the community welfare context I was observing that practitioner judgements of user initiative directly mediated user access to support services and material relief. However, it may still inform the micro-political relations between welfare practitioners and users in a way that has significant bearing on the latter's experiences of welfare provision. Chapter four demonstrated this point by showing how the compulsion to perform vulnerability in a register that conforms to dominant cultural idioms adds insult to the injury of poverty and disadvantage. It drew on Stringer's analysis of constructions of agency to make sense of how the dominant idiom of agency effaces the wounds inflicted by disadvantage and inequality by expecting the wounded to conform to cultural scripts of deserving vulnerability and empowered responsibility in order to be validated. Chapter five used Monica's story as an extended case study of chronic shame, showing how the trope of personal responsibility was both an undermining imposition and an energising resource for Monica in the face of her entrenched unemployment, though not in equal measure. Finally, chapter six drew attention to practices of

getting by that fall outside normative ideas of constructive or responsible agency but nonetheless make life in hardship liveable and sustain sociality.

The thesis also contributes to efforts to clarify the conceptualisation of agency and unsettle its emancipatory hue in social science, which has seen a parallel resurgence of interest in individual agency. Chapter five and six drew together promising efforts to analytically disentangle different forms of agency in order to elaborate on the common themes of shame and getting by in welfare scholarship. Chapter five demonstrated the simultaneously activating and undermining effects of shame, showing that while curtailed agency may constitute injustice the presence of agency does not amount to empowerment. Chapter six developed the concept of generative capacities to recuperate an account of getting by as making life livable. It argued for the need to acknowledge the pleasures, pursuits, and projects – however mundane and muted – that are submerged or sequestered by the reactive orientation of welfare scholarship. The thesis draws attention to the side-effects and blind-spots of the ubiquitous but contested agency paradigm in both social policy and social science.

The normative assumption that, as Hoggett (2001, p. 43) puts it, 'agency is good and lack of agency is bad' animates the polarisation of victimhood and agency that reverberates in cultural politics and social science. Dahl (2009) refers to this as the '"Agents Not Victims" trope' in social science research, arguing that it imbues agency with positive moral qualities and taints victimhood as 'passive' (and passivity as bad) and 'contemptable'. Stringer (2014) identifies this dynamic in the treatment of women's agency in feminist critiques of victim feminism, showing how constructions of women-as-agents contributes to victim-blaming for sexual violence and thereby inscribes a second order of injury. Elliot (2013, p. 87) highlights the 'positive connotations of agency' that underwrite our readings of oppression and 'attest to our belief that the ability to determine the course of one's actions is necessarily an index of the political good.' She counters this reading with an account of neoliberal domination that functions by imposing action on individuals and compelling them to choose between appalling options.

This thesis has demonstrated the ways in which agency operates as cultural idiom and ideology rather than a description of reality at the level of both policy and academic discourse. It attests the need to grapple with the cultural lexicon of agency in both policy and scholarship that 'affirm[s] agency as a value' that is antithetical to victimhood (Elliott, 2013, p. 87). Elliot points to the ideal versions of agency that haunt academic theory, which 'preserve[s] agency as a value at the same time as it demonstrate[s] the necessarily compromised nature of that value' (Elliott, 2013, p. 87). The result can be a preoccupation with the presence or absence of agency at the expense of interrogating the cultural and material significance of existing agency and the political work that implicitly or explicitly affirming agency as a value does both inside and outside the academy. While I have been attentive to the latter, one could say that the considerable energy invested in clarifying aspects of agency and establishing its presence or absence in different forms betrays my own haunted conviction in agency as a value. The need to critically interrogate the cultural lexicon of agency is not decreed from a distance, then, but rather is wrestled with up close. The implication is that we need to 'denaturalise' the concepts of agency that inform our research design and analysis by interrogating the politics of agency in both the empirical world and the academy. This involves sensitising ourselves to what is submerged or sequestered by dominant framings of agency and how questions of agency, to borrow Alexander's (2016, p. 1428) phrasing in relation to culture, 'illuminate, obscure or alibi issues of inequality, injustice and systemic violence'.

Future directions

A key strength of the thesis is the fresh perspective it offers on well-trodden themes allowed by a refined approach to (multi)culture at the level of the everyday and sained conceptual engagement. However, the breadth of the questions driving the research coupled with its narrow empirical scope opens up much to be explored in future research. While I have contributed a nuanced and textured analysis of the welfare experiences of culturally diverse individuals embedded in histories and structures of race and inequality, a more expansive and perhaps comparative study remains to be undertaken. This is warranted given the limited empirical knowledge about how minority groups relate to the welfare state or the diverse cultural frames through which social citizenship is read and

experienced. Such a study might employ a combination of survey methods to explore normative

expectations of welfare and in-depth qualitative methods to see how welfare needs are negotiated in

everyday life.[86] This approach would afford greater insight into when and how cultural scripts and

everyday practices converge and diverge. However, detailed ethnographic research is also needed to

illuminate whether and how ethno-cultural orientations to family and work come to bear on how

minority groups relate to the welfare state. Ethnographic methods are better equipped to shed light

on the interaction of diverse *material cultures* embedded in and on the margins of the welfare state.

How people from ethno-culturally diverse backgrounds relate to welfare state provision, both as a

principle and a practice, has important sociological implications for understanding support for and

expectations of the welfare state that are as yet underexplored.

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[86] Such as employed by Finch and Mason (1993) to understand values and practices of family obligation.

Appendix A – Recruitment procedure and ethics

The Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee approved this project (see Appendix B).

The research for the project was largely conducted through local community organisations. After initial meetings with the Executive Officers of participating organisations, I emailed them the aims and boundaries of the research and asked them to confirm their agreement in writing. All staff at the organisations was made aware that I was a researcher, as were the clients and agency partners I encountered while volunteering.

Both of the organisations I volunteered with had strong and longstanding relationship with local Aboriginal Elders and residents. This was particularly valuable in enabling me to get to know some leaders and members of local Aboriginal communities. All Aboriginal interview participants were recruited through Aboriginal-specific programs run by these organisations and Aboriginality was defined by self and community identification. Ethnicity was defined broadly in terms of common national ancestry, language, and culture reflected in the targeting of Pakistani, Chinese and Lebanese participants (though care was taken to be attentive to differentiation within these categories).

I recruited welfare users for interviews primarily with the help of community welfare organisations. I would explain to potential participants that I was interested in finding out what they think of the welfare system, what kind of support they want and need, and what responsibility and vulnerability means to them. Typically I suggested I follow-up by contacting them with more information, giving potential participants a chance to think about a subsequent meeting and avoid coercion

Potential participants were provided with an information letter explaining the study and the interview process. While interviews were confined to people proficient in English, information sheets were made available in the native languages of target groups to ensure informed consent. A verbal lay account of the content of the information sheet was also given, emphasising that participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw at any time. Given the potential mistrust of authority amongst people of migrant background, Indigenous people, and marginal welfare recipients, I sought verbal consent to mitigate participants feeling uncomfortable with signing a written consent form. I

gave interview participants a $20 Coles Myer Gift Card after each interview to thank them for contributing their time and stories to the study. These aspects of recruitment, engagement, and reimbursement accord with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies protocols for conducting research with Aboriginal people (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [AIATSIS], 2012).

Some people who had already been interviewed and with whom I had developed rapport were invited to participate further by having me join them while they carried out aspects of their routines, such as running errands or attending community activities. In the few cases where this took place, a new information sheet setting out the aims and boundaries of the observation was offered and verbally explained, and verbal consent sought for each visit.

Frontline community welfare workers were emailed an invitation to participate in 30 minute interviews via their staff email address with the permission and assistance of organisation managers. I also encountered staff while volunteering at a community welfare organisation over a period of 18 months and at inter-agency events associated with that volunteer work. As with welfare users, I would explain the study and offer to follow-up by contacting them with more information or to confirm their interest in participating to avoid coercion.

I also conducted participant observation of selected projects and sessions during my time as a volunteer, looking out for how service users and staff defined need, client and staff expectations of support, and the agency's relationship to other institutions. The supervising staff members were informed of the boundaries of the observation and clients and agency partners in attendance were made aware that I was a researcher and told they could choose to be omitted from field notes. Relevant observations were recorded in a notebook after each session, in which neither staff nor clients were identified.

Steps were taken to de-identify participants in the write-up of the findings. All names are fictionalised and some quotes are not attributed to specific participants. The work roles and cultural

backgrounds of staff have been detached from quotes to protect their anonymity. In some cases participants have been de-gendered or minor details changed.

Digital audio recordings and transcriptions of interviews are stored in a password-protected file and hard-copies of interview transcripts and field notes are stored in a locked filing cabinet. They will be stored for the requisite five years after the project's completion.

Appendix B – Ethics clearance

Ethics application ref: 5201300645 - Approved

Tue, Nov 5, 2013 at 10:02 AM

Dear Associate Professor Wise

Re: " Multicultural perspectives of welfare: moral and material economies of responsibility" (Ethics Ref: 5201300645)

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Human Sciences and Humanities) and approval has been granted, effective 05/11/2013. This email constitutes ethical approval only.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/e72

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Associate Professor Amanda Wise Ms Emma Mitchell

Note to Students: Please retain a copy of this approval email to submit with your thesis.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 05 November 2014

Progress Report 2 Due: 05 November 2015

Progress Report 3 Due: 05 November 2016

Progress Report 4 Due: 05 November 2017

Final Report Due: 05 November 2018

NB. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/ human_research_ethics/forms

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/ human_research_ethics/forms

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external organisation as evidence that you

have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat at the address below.

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of ethics approval.

Yours sincerely

Dr Karolyn White

Director, Research Ethics Chair, Human Research Ethics Committees

Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)

Ethics Secretariat Research Office Level 3, Research Hub, Building C5C East Macquarie

University NSW 2109 Australia T: +61 2 9850 6848 F: +61 2 9850 4465

http://www.mq.edu.au/research

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21 March 2014

Associate Professor Amanda Wise Department of Sociology Faculty of Arts Macquarie University

NSW 2109

Dear Associate Professor Wise

Re: Multicultural perspectives of welfare: moral and material economies of responsibility (Ref:

5201300645)

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your response was reviewed by the Executive of the

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (Human Sciences and Humanities). Ethical approval has

been granted to the following amendment:

1. Observations of sessions conducted at the Bankstown Community Resource Group will take place. Participants will be presented with a participant information sheet.

2. A recruitment flyer will be made available in the Bankstown Community Resource Group office and offered to potential participants.

The following documentation submitted with your amendment request has been reviewed and approved by the HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities):

> Macquarie University HREC Request for Amendment Form Version. 2.0
> Participant information sheet
> Recruitment flyer

Please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat should you have any questions regarding your ethics application.

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Karolyn White

Director, Research Ethics & Integrity Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee (Human Sciences and Humanities)

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) (the National Statement) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.

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21 November 2014

Associate Professor Amanda Wise Department of Sociology Faculty of Arts Macquarie University

NSW 2109 Dear Associate Professor Wise

Reference No: 5201300645 Title: Multicultural perspectives of welfare: moral and material economies of responsibility

Thank you for your correspondence dated 10 November 2014 submitting an amendment request to the above study. Your proposed amendment was reviewed and approved by the HREC (Human Sciences & Humanities) Executive at its meeting held on 19 November 2014.

I am pleased to advise that ethical approval of the following amendments to the above study has been granted:

1. Participant observation will be extended to include observations of participants who have consented to take part in an interview of the study. Participants will be observed carrying out aspects of their routines such as: picking up children from school, family gatherings, running errands, attending community activities, etc.

The following documentation submitted with your email correspondence has been reviewed and approved by the HREC (Human Sciences & Humanities):

Macquarie University HREC Request for Amendment Form Version 2.0

Participant Information Sheet: 2nd stage

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures are available from the Research Office website at:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics

Please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat should you have any questions regarding your ethics application.

The HREC (Human Sciences and Humanities) wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Karolyn White

Director, Research Ethics & Integrity Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee (Human Sciences and Humanities)

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) (the National Statement) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.

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